



the Christian Worker MAGAZINE

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Coming
out of
lockdown

Shepherds appointed at
Great Barr

Articles by
Jim McGuiggan,
Sean Niestrath,
Trevor Williams
and Frank Worgan

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ON THE COVER:
Empty building at East Kilbride set up for social distancing worship; above: Great Barr appoints elders.



MY PERSPECTIVE



What
will be
our 'new
normal'?

Changes in life are normal

From my observation, people really don't like change. I remember some improvements we wanted to make at a congregation I worked with in the 1980s. We needed more classroom space which could be remedied by expanding two very small changing rooms. Our wooden chairs had definitely gone past their 'best before' date and often would collapse when people sat on them. Our hymnbooks were also falling to pieces.

The solution to me, as someone who was very young, was to replace them all – after all, we had the funds to do it. An older and wiser Christian advised that we not do them all but tackle them one at a time. Why? Even though these were all improvements, too many changes at one time cause people to object. So we did one at a time and peace remained.

People can even become upset when congregations grow. I've heard some complain when there were many new Christians: "it isn't like it used to be". People, as a whole, don't like change.

Yet here we are having lived through immense changes in the past few months. We haven't been able to leave the house or even see our families (and grandchildren!). We spend most of our time at home with our immediate family. No going out to eat. No going out for entertainment. No shops open except for supermarkets, chemists and grocery stores. Yet most people have understood the need for this change. After all, it is better to have these changes than to see more people lose their lives.

We are just starting to come out of lockdown. On the last Saturday of May we are planning to visit our son, daughter-in-law, and grandson today, as we are now in phase 1 in Scotland coming out of lockdown. England will have this ability from 1st June. But many restrictions remain including not being able to worship together.

What will the 'new normal' be? No one really knows. Even when we are able to resume worship there may be restrictions on how many can be together or even whether or not we can sing. With careful thinking we can find a solution that will allow us to continue praising God and encouraging each other.

This crisis has brought changes to many families. Many of us have lost loved ones and have not been able to have the usual type of memorials we would like – and sometimes not even able to attend the funeral.

Then there are new births. We now have another grandson, born just over a week ago in Tennessee. We can't travel to see him so have to be content with photos, videos, and FaceTime calls. A strange, new normal. We look forward to flying to the USA as soon as it is safe to do so.

What will life be like next year? Who knows? One thing we do know is that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever." In this we can be confident! May we learn to be content in him.

Jon

Coming out of lockdown

Worship with physical distancing

Not being able to worship together as we normally do has been difficult – Christians are meant to be together. We can be thankful that we have the technology that allows us to meet ‘virtually’ – and with Christians from all over the country.

We are now moving out of lockdown but we still cannot legally meet together. Right now all meeting up is to be outdoors, with physical distancing and limited in the number of people and households who can be together. But as we move towards being able to meet indoors with larger groups, there are some areas we need to think through.

Social distancing looks to be part of our lives for quite a while. How do we set up to allow for this? In East Kilbride we met with social distancing on 22nd March before the lockdown was put in place. We discovered that, with a little thought, this is entirely possible. Fortunately, we are not a large congregation and we have quite a bit of room in our building. It took a little time, but one person set out the chairs two metres apart. We could have accommodated around 25 in this way. Larger congregations may need to have multiple meetings of smaller numbers of people. Of course, the customary greetings of shaking hands or hugging is currently against all guidelines.

Communion: Practices such as a communal plate for the bread or a communal cup (for those using one cup) will need to be considered. As the evidence shows that surfaces can retain the virus, how do we go about getting the bread and cup? Passing from hand to hand may not be the best way forward (particularly if we are also sitting physically distanced). We thought through the

taking of the Lord’s Supper and had individual pieces of bread baked. As we already use individual cups, this was not a challenge. Rather than passing these, we had each person/couple go to the table individually to get the communion items.

Hygiene: Door handles, toilet handles, taps, light switches and other contactable surfaces can give rise to the transmission of the virus. Please note, that even if we are given the green light to worship in the summer, **the virus will still be active and out there – it will not have gone away.** Even the chairs, tables and other items such as hymnbooks, Bibles, the collection plate, can all be a means of transmitting the virus. Do we have enough stocks of the appropriate cleaning materials that we will need?

Worship: At East Kilbride we project hymns so there is no need to handle hymnbooks (we have yet to hear what the guidance for singing will be, as this might aid in the spread of the virus). Most bring their own Bibles, whether physical or electronic, so this also was not an issue. We limited the meeting to about an hour (which is shorter than our normal) and afterwards those present were able to converse with others while maintaining distance. Households left individually rather than many leaving at the same time.

This is something each congregation needs to think through, as this virus will be with us for many more months, even after we are able to resume worship with social distancing. We know the old saying, “if you fail to plan, you plan to fail”. It is essential that congregations give this some real thought and prayer.

Jon Galloway

June 2020



Great Barr appoints elders



Sola Adeosun and family

role in supporting their new shepherds. He remembered the wives as well and encouraged them to be the support that their husbands would need.

Kunle Orekoya, one of Northampton's elders, was given the responsibility of formally 'appointing' Sola and John into their new responsibilities. He encouraged them as they begin serving in this way.

It was a joyful day on Sunday, 31st May, as **Sola Adeosun** and **John Onyebuchi** took on the role of shepherding the Great Barr congregation near Birmingham. Over fifty from throughout the country and all over the world were present on Zoom to listen and rejoice with the Christians in Great Barr.

Martin Huburn served as the host for the occasion. It was his reading of scripture that had helped prompt the congregation to seriously look at their need to "put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders" (Titus 1:5). After much study and discussion, the congregation unanimously put forward Sola and John as the ones who were already helping the congregation in this way and they felt that these two exhibited the qualities that are needed.

Mike Glover, who was instrumental in helping begin the congregation at Great Barr, spoke about his time there and his relationship with Sola and John.

Mark Hill, who serves as a shepherd for the Northampton congregation, gave a 'short admonition'. He emphasised the seriousness of the work that these two men were taking on. He also reminded the congregation of their

Several men led in prayer, including Paul Hill, Stephen Woodcock and Trevor Ralph. It was wonderful to see so many involved in this momentous event who have helped the Great Barr congregation through the years.

Finally we heard from the two new shepherds. Sola was the first to speak, and thanked many who were present who have been an encouragement to him. John paid tribute to his wife and family in their encouragement.

We offer our congratulations to the congregation and to these two men. We pray for their continued good leadership of the Christians in Great Barr.

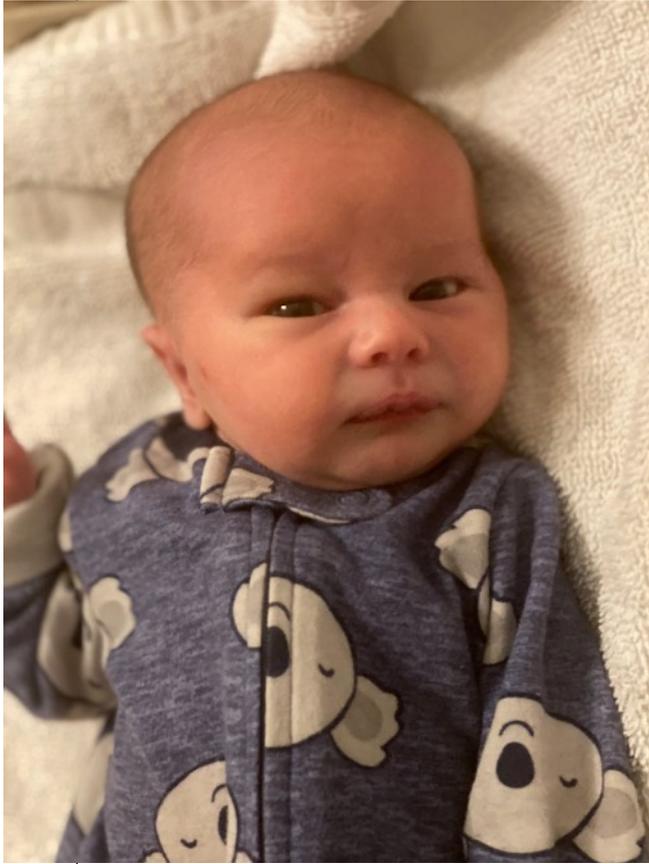
Jon Galloway



John Onyebuchi and family



CONGRATULATIONS!



Grandparents again!

Jon and Arlene Galloway are pleased to announce the birth of another grandson. **Jonathan David Galloway III** was born on Wednesday, 20th May, in Memphis, Tennessee, to David and Christina Galloway. Jay, as he will be called, has a loving big sister, Piper.

Jon Galloway

Trusting the Teacher

... taking him at his word

Autumn Weekend Family Retreat

Friday, 18th to Sunday, 20th September 2020

at Letton Hall in Norfolk

www.britishbibleschool.com

ACTS

British Bible School Autumn Study Week

Bassenfell Manor, Bassenthwaite, Lake District
Monday, 2nd to Friday, 6th November 2020

- Three full days of study and reflection away from the cares of life
- Delightful accommodation, good food and decent company
- All inclusive cost: £150 per student

This module begins to examine this key New Testament book within the context of God's purpose for mankind. The mission implications for the student are immense as the good news of Jesus continues to be taken across cultural boundaries throughout the world.

For full details visit our website: britishbibleschool.com



PERSPECTIVES

“He offers more than that”

Death is more than biological cessation. Paul speaks of it as a king whose universal reign is proven by the universality of Death (Romans 5:21) and though it’s true that many poor souls beg for Death it remains an enemy of God (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Jesus fed two great crowds in the wilderness just as under Moses God fed Israel in the wilderness. In John 6 the people who lived by bread (as we do) wanted Him as their Messiah and He wasn’t having it.

Where are all those who ate with Moses? Dead. Jesus would want to know where would those who ate the bread in the wilderness with Him end up? Dead. They enjoyed the food and so they should have—he gave it to them to enjoy, to ease their hunger, to meet their mortal need but the food that sustains mortal need and keeps people alive is trumped by Death. Humans don’t ‘live’ by food alone—they ‘live’ when they ‘live’ by the promises, the word of God. Where are the people now who ate the bread in the wilderness with Jesus? Dead!

They got the bread but they didn’t get the message of the bread—it pointed to

something, Someone, beyond the bread. When Jesus promised ‘life’ he always had eternal life in view, deathless, immortal life. That mode of living he not only promised, he exhibited it in his resurrection to immortal glory. Only the Lord Jesus can trump Death! Those who in faith embrace him and all down the centuries who are embraced in the redeeming work of God in Christ will rise to life beyond mortal weakness and limitation (John 5, 6, 8, 11 and elsewhere).

All those who survived the first World War are now dead! All those who survived the Black Plague are dead. All those who survive the C-virus will be dead. Death trumps vaccines, surgeries, healthy nutrition, wise exercise, medical skill, political decisions, even wise political decisions. But Jesus of Nazareth defeated and defeats Death.

Feed on me, he claimed, and you don’t die! And yet those who in faith enter into union with His death and share in his resurrection (Romans 6) do die. Jesus knows that for He said, “I will raise them up on the last day.” There is death that is experienced by those who will not have him and that is *Death*. There is death that is experienced by those who trust themselves to him and that he has transformed into non-death (John 6.50 and elsewhere). “That’s not death,” he would say, “That’s the door you go through to meet me and I am Life. I am more than existence after death; I am Resurrection (John 11); I am the destroyer of Death and all that’s entailed in it (Hebrews 2:14-15). How many in countless generations before Jesus came feared Death because of promises that couldn’t be fulfilled because Death reigned? Then came God in and as Jesus



HE OFFERS MORE THAN THAT!

of Nazareth and brought life and immortality to light (2 Timothy 1:10). So now we know beyond doubt, Death can't negate God's promises. This we know via the gospel and the words of the gospel are life-bringing (John 6:63) because they are about an actual, historical Person who lived, died, rose to life and lives forever more (Revelation 1:18).

So, in the meantime, those who are blessed to be Christ's live as he lived. He came, shared the heartache, suffering and loss of humankind and its experience of death on his way to glory, peace, joy, adventure, righteousness. Christians image Jesus in that they too share the hurt, struggles and anguish of fellow-humans on their

way to life at its fullness (see Romans 8:17-39, and v.29 in particular).

Christians, being the Body of Christ, are Christ making himself present in the world by his Holy Spirit. In them the life of Christ is being lived out again before a world that is grateful for skilled and devoted people who make life in the flesh (life within creaturely limits—see Galatians 2:20) safer and more comfortable but who don't know what they're missing. To ask God, "Keep us alive 'in the flesh'" makes sense but it is to ask for too little. In the Lord Jesus, the Firstborn from the dead, he tell us, "I'm offering you and all your beloved ones much more than that. Trust me."

Jim McGuiggan (Nashville, Tennessee)

NEW NORMAL?

Those who have passed through the valley of the shadow of death with someone who died too soon know the meaning of this phrase. As do those who have endured the terror of war, or famine, or natural disaster. Do not forget those children who require a great deal of care. Unemployment. Homelessness. Illness.

There are people who have been hit terrifically hard by our current crisis. Refugees planning to board an airplane for a new life and never got to the airport. The person starting a new job who never was given a start date. Those who struggle when things were going well, who now are in danger of going under.

The phrase 'new normal' has become part of our

vocabulary. The truth is, we are always experiencing 'new normals'.

Good News: We are called to a new normal in Christ which will help us through all the new normals we will ever face. It is a normal that lives in truth with other people and affirms destructive emotions but gives us the power to control them. It is a normal that encourages honest work and gracious speech. It allows God's Holy Spirit to work in our lives – do that good deed, make that call, listen to that part of our being that calls us to do good. There is no promise of ease. There is no guarantee that we will avoid pain or disaster. What is possible is a new manner of life – a new normal. Back to the normal as God created us.

"Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Sean Niestrath (Kentucky)



AT REST



JOSEPH BOWDEN (Stretford, Manchester)

On 2nd May, after much suffering, our brother Joseph Bowden went to be with our Lord and Saviour, in Paradise, where there is no suffering but peace and joy.

Joe was married on 24th June 1972. He leaves behind his wife Barbara; four children: Clare, Matthew, James, Marina; grandchildren: Charlotte, Brandon, Oscar and a baby granddaughter Leila Josephine.

As a young man he served in the Medical Corps in the Far East. He loved nature, studied horticulture, then worked for the RSPCA. He was commended for risking his life rescuing a dog from the River Mersey.

He also took part in the Stockport aircraft disaster rescue operations. He worked in the archives of Stockport library, where he learned that John Wesley had immersed believers in the Mersey. Later he became a landscape gardener. On retirement he worked with Barbara at Disability Stockport.

He was brought up as a Jew. From birth he learned to love God from his mother and the scriptures in depth

from his uncle, a rabbi. He valued the old covenant scriptures, loved the 23rd Psalm and, becoming a Christian, came to know the Shepherd. The congregation that met in Bloom Street, Stockport, where he became a Christian, is now closed down. He became part of the congregation here about fifty years ago.

He lived and taught the Word. Even though he latterly suffered exceedingly, he was strong in faith to the end, always praising and expressing gratitude to his Lord.

Joe loved everybody and he was much loved by his neighbourhood and all who knew him. In loving appreciation neighbours and friends lined the length of the street as Barbara and the family went on their way to the funeral.

We have lost a wonderful brother, but only temporarily. Barbara and the family have expressed their appreciation for the congregation's support. Please remember them in your prayers.

Allen Ashurst



COMMUNION BREAD

“Unleavened bread is for Passover”

At Passover the bread Jesus would have eaten would more than likely have been made with barley flour, baked and eaten the same day. Matzos as we understand them were not made in a factory situation until the 1900’s and were certainly not used by our churches for many years. I, like many others, have visited churches where Matzos are used and then put back in the packet only to come out over a number of months and they can taste mouldy and bear no resemblance to bread.

The Jewish people only eat Matzo at Passover and they are specially produced. The wheat will have been specially stored and checked by the Rabbis to see that there is no growth of the seed. The flour, when ground, is taken to the bakery and then a Rabbi will check that from the time the water touches the flour until it goes into the oven is less than eighteen minutes; any longer the dough has to be discarded and the whole bakery cleaned down. The reason is that yeast cells are present in air and end up on the flour and multiply every twenty minutes in a moist atmosphere. Jewish laws and traditions mean that only the Matzo specially prepared for Passover are treated this way. Other Matzo are not Kosher and are unsuitable for Passover.

Since lockdown I have seen a number of articles about the necessity of using unleavened bread to celebrate communion and I am concerned. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that we are instructed to eat unleavened bread when we celebrate. Once again we see the wisdom of God with the spread of the gospel. The nations of the world must provide what they can for the act of celebration. I am, of course, very

aware that Jesus would have used unleavened bread as he and his disciples remembered the Passover – it was, therefore, the bread that was on the table. Some will argue that since Jesus ate unleavened bread so must we now at communion. Christians must remember that we are not celebrating Passover but the death and ultimately the resurrection of Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

Christians are not under the Law given to Moses; a speedy reading of Galatians 3 makes that abundantly clear. Thus if we insist on making the eating of unleavened bread an essential we are introducing a law that is not ordained for the church but puts us under the Law of Moses.

The eating of unleavened bread, which is without yeast, is for the Jewish festival of Passover and lasted only eight days. The Holy Spirit was released on the apostles at the festival of Pentecost (Acts 2). This was the day when the gospel was preached to the gathered nations and what was special about this time was that it was the time to eat leavened, yeasted bread. Leviticus 23:17 says, “From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour BAKED WITH YEAST, as a wave offering of first-fruits to the LORD”. Passover was a time of restraint; Pentecost was a time of harvest, abundance and fruitfulness, just like the church should be today.

We know that the early church continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42), and that celebration certainly started on a yeasted bread day.

Trevor Williams



Around the World

UPDATE FROM GREECE

Until we see you again! What a time!
What a test! What a journey!

This has certainly been a trip we never planned, a journey we never had in mind to take. Who would have thought this might happen? Some Hollywood producer perhaps could have made an imaginary movie and we would say...oh these things don't really happen.

God knew, our God very well knew that this time had to be allowed for reasons he only knows. All we need to know is that he is in absolute control, he will work out something perfect for those who love him and that he will never allow this to be a bigger test than we can afford.

We were not prepared. This disease crept into our lives, our families, our communities quietly but consistently. Those of us who doubted for a while had to rewrite our books and accept that this disease is real and destroys families.

But God is always prepared. The Psalmist says that God takes him to green pastures. No green pastures in Israel unless someone has really worked at it. God never takes us to a place He has not prepared.

So here we are today remembering what our Lord Jesus said to his students as he was ready to leave and be separated from them. "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and

do not be afraid." And we all receive this promise with joy until we Jesus.

As we long to see Jesus one day, we in the same way long to be with our loved ones again. To hug them, to kiss them, to sit close to them during worship, to sit close to them while we enjoy table fellowship. Not to leave as soon as worship finishes because of some other commitment but make sure we double hug and double kiss everyone. Without fear, without doubt this day will come again.

In our little Omonia church community we use laptops or phone screens to hear each other's voice, to see each other's beautiful face. Time comes to hang up and nobody pushes the red button. The question echoes over the screens...when are we meeting again? We call each other every day, to find out how we slept, what are we cooking for dinner and check on our Bible class readings. We hang on to those screens to find out who is well and who is not, who needs food supplies, and who needs our help. Our community is such a wonderful group of precious people. It only took a few days to learn how to send messages so to be able to notify authorities whether you are going to the pharmacy or grocery store or to take care of someone in need.

We remain surprised at how resilient and obedient our Syrian families are. They came out of war, refugee camps and so many difficulties in the last four years. We have not heard a complaint or question about this situation which has changed our daily lives. They just do what they need to do. They call us so we can translate in the "language of love" a bit of Greek, Arabic and English, what the announcements say every day.

AROUND THE WORLD

Every Sunday we meet over Facebook around the Lord's table. Everyone is waiting way before meeting time which is 11.00 am. Entire families squeeze together are hanging on that phone screen. Then Alexander brings the word of God in Greek and then in English. Rostom translates later in Arabic. When we see on Facebook who watches the lesson we see that our Syrian families listen to all three languages!

Later at 3:00 pm Laura and Siman meet again over Zoom with all our children. They worship, they sing, they read the Bible and make crafts. "God is here with us", "God will never leave us alone" are some of the words they share over and over. He is faithful and he loves us more than we can even imagine.

Monday evenings we all meet over Zoom for our discipleship class. It is planned to last one hour but we go over an hour and a half. Everyone is engaged and as we sometimes lose the meaning of the words because of the language differences – we equally lose ourselves in each other's love and affection. Wednesdays and Fridays evenings we meet again over Zoom for prayer.

We have purchased face masks and will distribute these before this weekend. Since the resurrection day here is celebrated next Sunday, we will distribute love grocery packages by next Tuesday. Then on Thursday we will meet again over Zoom with all the children and make traditional Easter cookies. Each child will also receive a chocolate Easter egg.

Oh how we long to see each other, those close and those afar. We long to go back to our favourite spot in Ancient Corinth, to experience those heavenly retreat moments. We long to travel and be with each other in America or other places. We long to go to each others' homes and sit around to visit and pray and eat. We long

to be with all our precious children from our church community. We long to cook in our church building kitchen all together. We long to laugh, argue whether we should cook potatoes or rice with the chicken. We long to hold our English classes and all the warmth and love that was present daily at the Omonia church building. We long to open the Omonia doors and welcome new people.

We long to hear the voice of God, we long to see you Jesus. We are patiently waiting. Thank you for the company of the comforter, the Holy Spirit who encourages and teaches us.

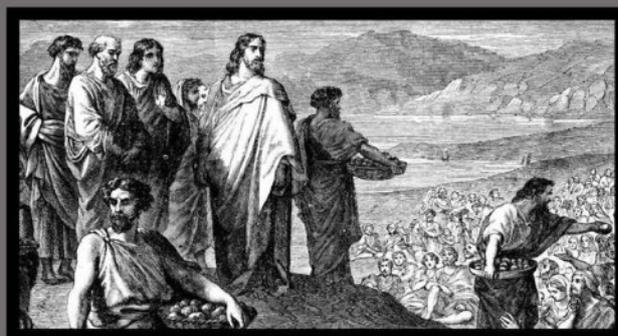
We long to see Jesus.

Alexander Melirrytos (Athens)

Men's Lectureship (2020): Edmonton Church of Christ

Leading by Example

(1 Timothy 4:12)



Date: Saturday, 4th July 2020
Time: 10am - 2pm

Speakers:
1st Speaker Brother Garry Smith (Leicester)
2nd Speaker Brother James Obeng

Mode of Meeting: Zoom

Contacts:
Brother Maxwell (07983435054)
Brother James (07508146074)
Elder Charles (07506689396)
Elder Anthony (07847321141)

Equipping Ourselves to Serve in The Lord's Church



ARMAGEDDON

Are we heading for the end of the world?"

There is no doubt that the world has, in recent weeks, experienced alarming and even terrifying events which have caused many to wonder just where mankind is heading. Man's potential for self-destruction has never been more evident than it is today, and the threat of 'weapons of mass destruction' have further fuelled people's anxiety. Are we heading for the end of the world? Is 'Armageddon' just around the corner?

We realise, of course, that in any time of international unrest, uncertainty or conflict, there have been those who have raised the age-old spectre of 'Armageddon'. Indeed, the word has become something of a by-word; a synonym used to describe any cataclysmic event, whether real or imaginary.

What do the scriptures really tell us about 'Armageddon'? Does the word carry a warning concerning a mighty battle to be waged on Earth? Does it even relate to a forthcoming conflict, either literal or a figurative, in the 16th chapter of the Revelation, where the word occurs? We should bear in mind, whenever we read the 'Revelation' that this 'conflict' is described in the most figurative and symbolic book in the entire Bible, and remember also, that every single figure, symbol or illustration, used in the 'Revelation' comes from elsewhere in the scriptures.

This needs to be emphasised! Not one symbol or illustration, used in the 'Revelation' comes from outside of the scriptures themselves. This means that to understand the term 'Armageddon' it is essential to go back to the Old Testament scriptures for guidance.

Before we turn to the Old Testament scripture, let us notice that the only

reference to 'Armageddon' is found in the chapter already referred to, Revelation 16:16, where, in v.14, it is described as 'the war of the great day of God, the Almighty'. Armageddon is God's Day! This is implied again in ch. 19:19-21, where it is described in terms which remind us of Ezekiel 39:19.

'AR' or 'HAR' Mageddon? The word 'Ar' means 'city' so that 'Armageddon' means 'City of Megiddo'. 'Har' means 'hill' so 'Harmageddon' refers to the 'Hill' of Megiddo. Just as there are to be found in later world history, names of familiar physical locations that tell a story; names such as 'Masada', the 'The Alamo' and 'Waterloo'; names which remind of great or special events. About 60 miles north of Jerusalem, there is a valley about 10 miles long stretching from the River Jordan to the coast and enclosed by mountains at one end, which is called the 'Plain of Jezreel'. Bible maps will also use the name 'The Valley of Megiddo', and this is the valley which is famous in the Old Testament, as the site of many of the bloodiest battles and notable events in Israel's history.

A brief examination of the Old Testament will reveal how significant this place was in those days. Judges 5:19 tells us that it was here that Barak defeated the Canaanites. Judges 7:33 records that it was here that Gideon fought against the Midianites. 2 Samuel 1 tells of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in this area. 2 Kings 23:29, reports that the good King Josiah also died here, when he intervened in a battle in which he really should not have become involved. Here, too, King Ahaziah was killed by Jehu. In a word, the Valley of Megiddo was renowned as

ARMEGGEDON

the location of great battles and terrible conflicts, and thus it came to symbolise conflict.

Look at the events described in Judges 4. Jabin, king of the Canaanites, had oppressed Israel for 20 years, and the reason for his apparent superiority and invincibility was the fact that his army commander, Sisera, had at his disposal 900 war-chariots which supported his army. And what weapons did the Israelites have? None! Not a sword, shield or spear (Judges 5:8)! This is because the Canaanites had followed the example of the Moabites before them, who, having conquered the Israelites, disarmed them. They had stripped them of their weapons. This was the usual policy adopted by victorious armies in those days, designed to make rebellion impossible. It is, therefore, not surprising that, when Sisera's army attacked the Israelites, they turned and fled. So, what followed?

In the mountains there lived a woman named Deborah, a prophetess, to whom the Israelites turned for advice. She stated plainly, "You are not able to deal with this enemy. But God is!" Then, at the right moment, she told Barak, "Up! For this is the day when YAHVEH will deliver Sisera into your hands. Is not YAHVEH gone up before you?"

The two armies faced each other: the mighty army of the Canaanites and the unarmed men of Israel. They met in the Valley of Megiddo and the seemingly impossible happened! The Canaanites were defeated. Not by Israel, but by God.

Now this is the first Bible reference to 'Megiddo' and it is a story which reveals that when the need of his people was greatest and his time was right, God himself defeated their enemy for them without his people lifting a finger to defend themselves. Consequently, whenever the ancient Israelites, and the Jews in later years, heard the word 'Armageddon', far from striking fear into their hearts, it was a word of comfort and encouragement, just as in New Testament times, the word 'Maranatha' became a word of comfort for Christians. 'Harmageddon' – the Hill of Megiddo – is still there. It is the hill upon

which the ruins of 'Armageddon', the City of Megiddo, are found.

When, in Revelation 16:18, where 'Harmageddon' appears again, God is telling the early Christians, suffering under the rule of the pagan Roman Empire, that opposition raised against his people and his cause will meet with the same overwhelming defeat that was inflicted on Sisera. In the ongoing conflict between Truth and Error, Good and Evil, the slaves of Satan and the Children of God, the outcome is already determined. It will be God's Day and his war, once again! He will inflict the final defeat on evil!

This means that there is no literal, physical conflict predicted in the 16th chapter of Revelation. The reference to 'Armageddon' can only be properly understood if we recognise that it represents God's assurance that the victory lies with his cause and his people, because he is in control and his purpose will be accomplished.

How can these references to 'Armageddon' possibly relate to a literal, great, world-conflict? We must not forget that the Valley of Megiddo is a very small valley in a very small country in which the type of warfare to which the world has become accustomed would be physically impossible. I suggest, therefore, that common-sense alone should tell us that the idea of a literal battle, involving modern armies with modern weapons, fighting in a real geographical location such as the Valley of Megiddo, is nothing short of ridiculous.

The scene is symbolic. It declares that, although the church may experience difficult times as she faces persecution and false doctrine, her final victory is guaranteed. This will not be because she becomes numerically or politically or financially strong, or strong in any other conceivable way, but because this is God's spiritual war and his spiritual victory. If we understand this, we shall realise that, whatever the future holds in store for the world, the church has nothing to fear, because her future is secure.

Frank Worgan (Corby)



DIARY

June

27th – **Liverpool**: Annual All Day Fellowship – “Faithfulness in Steadfastness”; speaker: Patrick Boyns. Venue: Zoom. Contact: Charles Yankiah (07891 262910 or cyankiah@hotmail.com).

July

4th – **Edmonton (London)**: Men’s lectureship on Zoom – “Leading by Example”, 10.00 am-2.00 pm. Speakers: Garry Smith and James Obeng. Contact: Maxwell (07983 435054), James (07508 146074), Charles (07506 689396), or Anthony (07847 321141).

August

27th-29th – **European Christian Workshop**: Lessons online. Theme – ‘AWAKE’. Contact: Stephen Woodcock (01509 768789 or registration@europeanchristianworkshop.com).

September

5th – **Great Barr**: Fellowship Day. Venue: Main Hall, Collingwood Community Centre, Collingwood Drive, Birmingham. B43 7NF. Contact: Sola Adeosun (sola.adeosun@gmail.com).

18th-20th – **BBS Family Retreat**: “Trusting the Teacher...taking him at his word”. Venue: Letton Hall, Norfolk. Contact: study@britishbibleschool.com.

26th – **Peterhead**: Annual Social Day, 1.00 pm. Speakers: Tony Coffey and Graham McDonald. To help with catering, please send number attending by beginning of September. Contact: William Strachan (wstrachan007@gmail.com).

October

2nd-3rd – **Wembley (London)**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Contact: John Griffiths (griffiths.jhg@virgin.net).

3rd-4th – **East Kilbride**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “Contemporary Christianity” (part 1 – exploring the history of churches of Christ), teachers: Jon Galloway and Mark Hill.

30th-31st – **Wembley (London)**: British Bible School Study Weekend, part 2. Contact: John Griffiths (griffiths.jhg@virgin.net).

31st-1st November – **East Kilbride**: British Bible School Study Weekend. Module: “Contemporary Christianity” (part 2 – exploring the practice of contemporary Christianity), teachers: Jon Galloway and Mark Hill.

November

2nd-6th – **British Bible School**: Residential Study Week at Bassenfell Manor, near Keswick; module: “Acts”. Teachers: Patrick Boyns, Jon Galloway, Mark Hill and Jack Paton. Contact: study@britishbibleschool.com.

7th – **Eastwood (Nottinghamshire)**: Quarterly Outreach meeting – “Jesus – when you feel forsaken”. Light refreshments at 6.00 pm and lesson at 7.00 pm. Contact: Adrian Limb (cofceastwood@aol.com).

European Events Calendar

February 2021

15th-21st – **Gemünden, Germany**: Advanced Bible Study Series. Arrive Monday evening for ABSS I, which begins on Tuesday morning. ABSS I – Tuesday-Friday; ABSS II – Friday-Sunday. Contact: Paul Brazle (brazle.paul@gmail.com).

Worship and study opportunities during lockdown:

Aberdeen: Sunday worship on Zoom – contact David Murray for details (dgmsem@gmail.com).

British Bible School: Sunday message and archive of Zoom classes – <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkLxLiDuK79HWVIEVPVZOHA>

Classes through the week on Zoom: James, Job, Ecclesiastes, Galatians, Ephesians and a Quiz night – <http://britishbibleschool.com/news-and-events/online-events>

Corby: three hymns and a lesson by Frank Worgan – <https://www.facebook.com/Graeme-Bible-Resources-111596180225734/> or https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF4I0_UtKgd514EUKITW7Jg

Cumbernauld: Worship on Zoom. Contact cumbernauldchurchofchrist@gmail.com.

East Kilbride: Weekly lesson – www.youtube.com/channel/UCRS16tzz3JzqdtXgKPfyJYg

Hylvots Bank (Edinburgh): Sunday worship – <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHGhhjh3hBe3VOi5dFGKzlw/featured>

Leicester: Contact Paul Hill for a weekly mp3 file – paulh41@hotmail.co.uk.

Mark Wilson messages (Edinburgh): “from the soapbox” – <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgibxjpkb3gE67HuQ1wVyuQ>



THE FINAL WORD



Getting
ready
to
reopen

The church has never been shut these past few weeks. Our places of worship may have temporarily had to close the doors, we may not have been able to meet together as normal but the church did not close down, it simply left the building. During this time a number of skills have been developed – preaching on the internet, worship by Zoom, being able to visit several places to see or hear what is happening there. So many have developed skills for public use that may not have ordinarily been available. Homes have had to be the centre for times of worship. We have had to adapt, develop, rethink and I for one am thankful.

How often have church services been a rerun of previous services? Sometimes meetings have been like watching a football match when a particular manoeuvre or goal is shown from every way possible. Sometimes going to church has been that way and it has ended up as boring. The same people sit in the same places, saying the same things, praying the same prayers, wearing the same clothes, looking the same way, doing the same things.

Now I doubt very much that things will change but we have had a chance to

think. Our homes have been our place of worship and I hope that our readers will have taken

the chance to spend time with their family to read the Bible, pray together and if able even sing together – but at least talk together. For those alone it will have been hard to keep encouraging yourself but with the aid of phones at least we can encourage someone else.

There is every possibility that we can start to worship together soon, what plans are you making?

If you own a place of worship can you get some people in to clean out some of the rubbish that always seems to be around? How about that painting job that needs doing or a cupboard that needs tidying? Through social distancing all sorts of things can be done to get ready for getting back. Then there are the activities that you hope to start again. Is everything clean, repaired, scrubbed and polished?

If you thought that church was getting a bit boring what are you doing to make it better? If you think the prayers seem the same what are you as worship leaders going to do about it? Do not blame others if you think the church one way or another could do with a boost.

Each one of us is a workman for God. Let's be active now in preparing for what is to come and let's be excited about it.

Trevor

Lord God of mercy, love and joy, rekindle the hearts and minds of your people.

Light the fire in our souls; be the brightness of the sun in our lives and the thrill of our hearts.

Amen

