

Can a Pastor *be prepared Online?*

Dr. Thomson K. Mathew

The Association of Theological Schools in USA and Canada (ATS) which is considered the standard bearing organization in theological education in the West is reviewing its accreditation standards. The changing landscape of religion in USA and the rapid changes brought to the world by information technology are the main reasons for this review. There is a major conversation going on among member schools of the ATS about the invasion of technology into human life and its implications for ministry and ministerial training.

I am typing this article on my iPad in an airplane on my way to a church in New York City. People seated near me are also watching the screens of their mobile devices either working or entertaining themselves. Some may be studying.

Online education is becoming common practice in America. There are now so many colleges and universities offering online education. Major universities and theological seminaries are among these institutions. There is intense competition among these schools for new students. Seminaries and Bible Colleges are no exception. One new issue complicating the situation is competition from for-profit universities offering accredited degrees.

Seminaries have been struggling with the concept of online education for ministry. There are two camps on this issue within accredited seminaries. One group is very resistant to the idea of offering any portion of theological degree courses online. There is another vocal and fully convinced group that believes there is nothing wrong with delivering all or most courses online. In fact, they believe that if it is not done, ministry training as we know it will be lost forever and seminaries will be a thing of the past.

Of course, there is a pragmatic group of theological educators between these two camps. I find myself in this group.

Educators who are most resistant to the idea of online education for ministry present many reasons for their position. The most important one is the issue of ministerial formation. Theological education is a form of Christian discipleship. Can this exercise in spiritual formation be effectively done from a distance within a virtual relationship? Even though teachers and students interact on line during their course work, is this virtual relationship real? Does it have the same level of transformational power as a close and in person

relationship between a mentor and a disciple?

Those arguing for full use of technology and distance education for ministry training are convinced that the outcome is the same regardless of the delivery system. In fact, some of them believe that the overall outcome may be even better for online education because students are more transparent online, even the ones who would not speak up in an on campus class will share their thoughts online, and the community of learners remain engaged with each other through email, facebook, etc. even after the course is officially over.

The ATS has been allowing a portion of the seminary degrees to be offered on line and experimenting with selected schools to see the outcome when the percentage of on line courses is increased. The new review of accreditation standards will consider the results of these experiments.

If online ministerial education proves to be as effective as on campus education, do international students have to come to America to study? Do students have to move to any seminary or Bible College campus to be trained for ministry? These are some of the questions being discussed among ATS accredited schools.

Why bring this topic to the readers of a periodical like Suvartha? Because these same issues about training pastors will be facing the churches and Bible Colleges in India soon. Bible schools have become a cottage industry in India, especially in Kerala. Many of them are already struggling to attract students. What will online education for ministry do to these schools? What will be the net result of online education becoming available to future ministerial students in India?

Can a pastor be prepared through distance education alone? How much online education can be incorporated into the seminary or Bible College curriculum without compromising the formational effect of a theological program? Will a pastor fully educated online be as effective in preaching, teaching, healing and leading as one who is trained on a real campus? How would Jesus have used technology had it been available to him for the training of His disciples? These are not just hypothetical questions anymore. The Indian church will be discussing these questions in the near future along with her counterparts in today's globalized and interconnected world.



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Dean,
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Theology
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discusses the
issue that will
be faced by
churches soon
whether a pastor
fully educated
online be as
effective in
preaching,
teaching,
healing and
leading as one
who is trained on
a real campus?

Bible Study



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continues with the study of the New Testament Church and discusses the beginning of the Church and the dual concepts of the Universal Church and the Local Church.

The New Testament Church – Part 3

Through our previous study we have understood that the 'Christ – event' paved the way for the divine mystery (church) to be revealed into history and it became a reality to mankind on the sacred moments of the day of Pentecost. Jesus began to build the church, for He is the Master builder (Matt. 16:16-18). Now we turn to consider the connection of the church to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Advent of the Holy Spirit and the Church

The outpouring of the Spirit on the 50th day was the indispensable result of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus (Acts 2:31,32). Ascension placed Him at the right hand of the Father and He received the promise of the Holy Spirit (John. 16:7, 14:16); The death – resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit are the two sides of one coin, that is New Covenant. By the shedding of the blood Jesus "ratified" the new covenant. The advent of the Holy Spirit then 'inaugurated' the new covenant – the inauguration of that which Christ already has ratified (Matt. 22:20). Though the new covenant is promised to Israel in the OT (Jer. 31:31-34), the church inherits the Abrahamic promise of universal blessings by its relationship to the Mediator of the new covenant.

In short, the church is now the new community of God consisting of both Jews and Gentiles under the new covenant, that is the covenant of Jesus' blood. The veiled mystery of the church to the OT saints was now unveiled to the holy men of the NT. Obviously it was the sacred fruit of sacrificial death, glorious resurrection and the majestic advent of the Holy Spirit.

Apostle Paul clearly states that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus have been essential to the Christ's headship over the church (Eph. 1:20-23; 5:23). While the gospel writers present Jesus as the saviour to mankind, apostle Paul demonstrates Jesus as the Head to the church, the redeemed community. The book of Acts stands like a bridge between gospels and epistles and narrates the descent of the Spirit and the beginning of the church. The coming together of both Jews and Gentiles on equal standing under the right of the new covenant – in one organic body is no more a mystery but actual fact (Eph. 3:5-6).

Presence of the Holy Spirit and the holy church in the world together proves that God is not the God of Jews alone, but of Gentiles too (Rom. 3:29, Acts 8:24, 10:46, 11:18).

The church cannot exist until Jesus took over the headship in heavenly glory. Jesus had to reach the Father, in order to send the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Therefore the headship of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit became prerequisites to the inception of the church in the world.

Now we turn to the nature of the Ekklesia. There are dual concepts of the nature, namely, the universal church and the local church.

The Church as universal:

There is ultimately only one church, the global community of believers on earth. The concept of physical assembly gives a way to the spiritual unity of all believers in Christ. The ekklesia is therefore all those who are united in Christ, who is the Head of the universal church. This unity is that of the Spirit in the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4) The universal meaning is occasionally found in Acts and letters of Paul. In the epistles to Colossians and Ephesians, Paul refers mostly about the universality of the church. Whenever Paul uses the singular 'Church' the nature of universality is obvious (Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 1:22, 3:10, 3:21, 5:32). This nature of the church ventilates to the 'lofty' concept that is, Christ as the Head of the church and the amiable unity of believers in His glorious body. The universal nature of the church, in fact, gives authenticity to local churches. This is often termed as 'invisible'. It leads to a new insight, how God in heaven sees the church. It again signifies the idea that the Lord alone knows those who are His (2 Tim. 2:19). In its true spiritual reality, the fellowship of all genuine believers of the church is invisible. The universal church is the universal fellowship of believers who meet visibly in local assemblies.

The Church as local:

Ekklesia more often applies to local assemblies of all those who profess faith and allegiance to Christ. In this sense the plural usage 'ekklesia' designates a group of assemblies or gatherings in a particular region or place (Gal. 1:22, 2 Cor. 11:8, 1 Cor. 16:9). In Paul's theology the local assembly is conceived of as a church in its own right. The local nature of the church implies many truths, such as the geographical setting of each church, the interrelationship between churches, solidarity among believers and mutual responsibility to fulfill the commission of Jesus on the earth. One cannot be the member of universal church without being the member of a local unit because every local church is the revelatory replica of the One Church. In other words the one church takes the form of countless local churches each of which must be viewed as a microcosm - cropping and sample of the larger whole. Jesus Christ's headship of the Church that is His body is a relationship that applies to both the universal church and the local church. Denominational identities are secondary to these primary and fundamental realities.

(To be continued)

"... Treasures in Heaven ..."

(Part II)

Dr. C.P. Varghese, explains that as we have only one life here on earth to invest in heaven, we must make maximum use of this opportunity as there is no chance after this life is over.

Our citizenship is in heaven, our home is in heaven, our eternal Father is in heaven, and our Elder Brother is in heaven. Multitudes that no one can count who are washed by the blood of the Lamb will be in heaven. We also look forward for the coming of our dear Lord from heaven to transform our mortal bodies like unto His glorious body and take us to be with Him in heaven.

We have only one life here on earth to invest in heaven. Make maximum use of this opportunity. There is no chance after this life is over. When we invest in heaven it is eternally insured by the treasury of the Lord of the universe who is our Father. Wise investors look for long-term return. Think, plan, and invest in heaven, so it will last for all eternity with incredible return for the glory of God.

Let me share some practical ways to invest in heaven. First and foremost, every believer should give to his/her local church. Then give to missions and evangelism. When we give to the work of the Kingdom of God we're laying up treasure in heaven. Everyday thousands of people who have never heard the gospel die and enter into a Christ-less eternity. When we prayerfully give to support the work of evangelism it enables others to go without being concerned about the finances. Every time someone accepts Jesus because of your prayerful giving that is treasure in heaven.

When we give to teach and train those who are called for the ministry we are laying up treasures in heaven. "Harvest is great, laborers are few." There is a great need for trained ministers of the gospel. Many are willing to go but they lack funds to receive proper training.

When we give to take care of destitute widows and orphans who are afflicted in many ways we are laying up treasures in heaven. This is very pleasing to the Father in heaven. James 1:27.

According to studies poverty kills 24000 children every day. Each night millions go to sleep hungry. Every three seconds a precious boy or girl dies from hunger or a preventable disease. Almost half of the people on planet earth survive on less than Rs 100/- per day. More than 70% malnourished children live in Asia. Millions lack resources to get a good education. Illiterate people continue in poverty. Cycle of poverty can be broken through education. So when we give to

provide quality education which will prepare people with job skills. This is investing treasure in heaven. "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed" Proverbs 19:17. Bible speaks a lot about money and giving.

Jesus taught that giving to the poor is laying up treasures in heaven on two occasions: At one occasion He was speaking to His disciples in Luke 12:32-33. In another occasion, He was speaking to a rich young ruler in Luke 18:18-27. Any act of kindness done in the name of the Lord as unto the Lord cheerfully is an investment in heaven.

Apostle Paul also connected giving away material wealth with laying up treasures in heaven - 1 Tim 6:17-19. Giving to the poor enables us to free our hearts from covetousness or idolatry. Believers should be rich in good works, ready to give and willing to share. This is how we can store up a good foundation for the time to come. We're saved by grace through faith to do good works which God has ordained for every child of God.

Many types of materialistic luxuries that are found among unbelievers are also found among spirit-filled believers. The standard for luxury changes from culture to culture, but the biblical principle is for Christians of all culture. There is a strong connection between your attitude toward money and your spiritual health. What a privilege it is to be an answer to someone's prayer for food, clothing, education, housing for the homeless, medical care for the sick, and other basic needs.

When God provides increase in income, standard of living goes up, and standard of giving also should go up. Jesus' teaching in Luke 21 regarding a poor widow's giving should be a challenge to those who think that they don't have anything to give. Every child of God has some resource to lay up treasures in heaven. You cannot take it with you, but you can send it on ahead of you where God turns it to eternal treasures!

Christians should plan our purchases. Don't be an impulsive shopper. Ask the question before buying something – Is this a need or greed? Learn to live on less and share with those who are less privileged.

When you leave this earth for eternity, will you be going to your treasures or leaving them behind?



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Guidance from the Holy Spirit: Do we use this Helpline anymore? (Part I)



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In this age of knowledge boom and technological advancement, there is a trade-off every time with every decision that is made by believers all over the world. The question is whether we wait to hear and be led by the Holy Spirit in making our decisions or, whether we use our God-given natural abilities, talents and experiences in making both easy and tough choices in our lives. Is the guidance of the Holy Spirit relevant in our lives anymore? We will examine the Gospels (accounts of the birth and life of Jesus), history (Acts of the Apostles, the epistles and the book of Revelation) and my personal life experiences and generate evidences that will prove without hesitation that the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is as pertinent in our lives today as it was during any historical period until now:

1. Evidence from the Gospels (birth and life of Jesus):

The very birth of Jesus Christ into the world happened through the conception produced by the Holy Spirit that was told to Joseph by an angel of the Lord (Matt. 1:18b, 20b). When young Mary asked Gabriel how she will be able to conceive the Messiah as a virgin, the angel said: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you..." We also see that all the other characters associated with the birth of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit for example, John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), Zacharias (Luke 1:67) and the elderly Simeon (Luke 2:25). It was the Holy Spirit who descended on Jesus in bodily form like a dove (Luke 3:22), and it was the Holy Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1). At the start of His public ministry, Jesus proclaimed in the synagogue that it was the Holy Spirit who anointed Him for all His different facets of ministry (Luke 4:18-19). It was Apostle Peter who revealed later (Acts 10:38) that it was the Holy Spirit had led Jesus to heal all who were oppressed by the devil.

Towards the end of Jesus' life as he was sharing his heart with his close disciples, Jesus said that it was to their advantage that He goes away so that He can send the Holy Spirit as their Helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), Teacher (John 14:26) and Guide (John 16:13). What Jesus desired was that through the teaching activity of the Holy Spirit, both He and His Heavenly Father would be known and revealed to His disciples. Five times Jesus repeated that fact in the three subsequent chapters of the Gospel of John (14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7-11, 12-15). There are

three ways how the Holy Spirit will enhance our knowledge of God:

a) The Holy Spirit would teach us by bringing experiential knowledge of God. To know Jesus is to know the Father (John 14:7). When the Holy Spirit comes, we will know that Christ is in God and us, and we are in Him (John 14:20). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit will actualize the indwelling of God the Father and God the Son, and thus fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17:21 for our unity with the Godhead. The Holy Spirit will thus cause us to know God through this intimate encounter.

b) The Holy Spirit will communicate the words of Jesus to us. In John 14:25-26, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will remind us everything that He said on the earth. This refers to the historic words of Jesus that He uttered while He was here on earth. The Holy Spirit will bring the fullness of the teachings of Jesus to enlighten our minds with understanding. These commands can be freshly applied to our day-to-day experiences. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit will speak the ongoing message of Jesus – relevant for this age and time – that will indeed glorify Him (John 16:12-15). In other words, the teaching ministry of Jesus will be continued in our lives, even though He is not physically present with us now.

c) The Holy Spirit will be our internal motivator to maintain the standards of our relational life in Christ. The central command of the teachings of Jesus was to "love one another" (John 13:34; 15:9, 10, 12, 17). Love should be our essential characteristic and our motivational force to obey Jesus (John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:13). Through love we have communion with God (John 14:21b, 23b; 16:27). Our witness before the world depends on our love to one another (John 13:35; 14:31). So, the Holy Spirit will actualize within us the new standard of living – obedience to Jesus, communion with God and bearing witness to the world.

It is thus clear that Jesus through His life and words strongly emphasized our need for guidance from the Holy Spirit every waking moment of our life.

2. Evidence from History (Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and Revelation):

The historical period of the New Testament begins in the book of Acts, which can be described as a continuation of the Gospel of Luke being written by Luke to a person named Theophilus. This book tells the story of the beginning of the church starting with the ascension of Jesus, the

giving of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and the life of the early church. In fact the story is not of the whole church but focuses on Peter and tapers off with the ministry of Paul. One of the major themes of Acts is the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and strengthening the church as it spread across the Mediterranean world, due to which many Bible scholars refer to this book as "Acts of the Holy Spirit" instead of "Acts of the Apostles".

In the book of Acts, there is ample evidence of the role of the Holy Spirit in the church through the leading of the individual believers:

- * The Holy Spirit promised to the disciples by Jesus Christ (Acts 1:4-5)

- * The need for the baptism of the Holy Spirit revealed (Acts 1:6-8)

- * The actual and initial baptism of the Holy Spirit, where the 120 disciples spoke with other tongues (Acts 2:1-4)

- * The explanation of the Holy Spirit baptism in the light of the scriptures by Peter and the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers in the future (Acts 2:14-39)

- * The inclusion of the Holy Spirit

baptism in the gospel by Peter (Acts 3:12-26) referred to as "times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19b).

- * The refilling of the Holy Spirit after the prayer for boldness (Acts 4:23-31)

- * Ananias and Sapphira struck dead after "lying to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:1-11)

- * Seven men chosen for administrative tasks who were "full of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:1-7)

- * The believers at Samaria received the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying of hands of Peter and John (Acts 8:14-25).

- * Gentiles receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the first time with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Acts 10:44-48)

- * Peter defends God's grace upon the Gentiles in baptizing them with the Holy Spirit as their entry to the church (Acts 11:1-18)

- * Twelve disciples in Ephesus being baptized by the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues and prophecy after Paul explains to them the true meaning of the baptism of Jesus Christ (Acts 19:1-7)

* The book of Acts ending with a message of the Holy Spirit spoken long ago through prophet Isaiah in 6:9-10 (Acts 28:25-28)

Further, the role of the Holy Spirit is described in detail in Romans 8 in the following manner: frees us from the law of sin and death (v. 2); helps us to fulfill the law (v. 4); gives us peace and life (v. 5-6); gives strength to our physical bodies (v. 11); destroys our evil deeds (v. 13); helps us pray in our weakness (v. 26) and makes us sons of God (v. 15-17). According to 1 Corinthians 6:19, our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The entire chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians speaks about the spiritual gifts meant for the believers through the Holy Spirit, while chapter 14 speaks specifically about prophecy and tongues, as they should operate in the church. Taking this further, the book of Ephesians describes the importance and the necessity of the Holy Spirit to guide the believer, and exhorts us to "be filled by the Spirit" (Eph. 5:17-18) and pray in the Spirit.

- To be concluded in next issue

BIBLE STATISTICS

Old Testament

- Compiled:

No	Book	Chapters	Verses	No.	Book	Chapters	Verses	No.	Book	Chapters	Verses
1	Genesis	50	1533	24	Jeremiah	52	1361	6	Romans	16	432
2	Exodus	40	1212	25	Lamentations	5	154	7	1 Corinthians	16	436
3	Leviticus	27	859	26	Ezekiel	48	1272	8	2 Corinthians	13	255
4	Numbers	36	1288	27	Daniel	12	356	9	Galatians	6	149
5	Deuteronomy	34	956	28	Hosea	14	197	10	Ephesians	6	154
6	Joshua	24	658	29	Joel	3	73	11	Philippians	4	104
7	Judges	21	618	30	Amos	9	146	12	Colossians	4	95
8	Ruth	4	85	31	Obadiah	1	21	13	1 Thessalonians	5	88
9	1 Samuel	31	809	32	Jonah	4	48	14	2 Thessalonians	3	47
10	2 Samuel	24	694	33	Micah	7	105	15	1 Timothy	6	114
11	1 Kings	22	815	34	Nahum	3	47	16	2 Timothy	4	83
12	2 Kings 25	719		35	Habakkuk	3	56	17	Titus	3	46
13	1 Chronicles	29	942	36	Zephaniah	3	53	18	Philemon	1	25
14	2 Chronicles	36	821	37	Haggai	2	38	19	Hebrews	13	303
15	Ezra	10	280	38	Zechariah	14	211	20	James	5	108
16	Nehemiah	13	408	39	Malachi	4	65	21	1 Peter	5	105
17	Esther	10	167					22	2 Peter	3	61
18	Job	42	1009					23	1 John	5	104
19	Psalms	150	2460	1	St. Matthew	28	1071	24	2 John	1	13
20	Proverbs	31	915	2	St. Mark	16	678	25	3 John	1	15
21	Ecclesiastes	12	222	3	St. Luke	24	1151	26	Jude	1	25
22	Song of Solomon	8	117	4	St. John	21	878	27	Revelation	22	404
23	Isaiah	66	1291	5	Acts	28	1005				

New Testament

"Come to the Throne of Grace"

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16)

Next is the laver, or basin with filled with water. The laver, or basin, was a large bowl filled with water located halfway between the brazen altar and the Holy Place. The priests were to wash their hands and their feet in it before entering the Holy Place.

The laver was located in a convenient place for washing and stood as a reminder that people need cleansing before approaching God. The priests atoned for their sins through a sacrifice at the brazen altar, but they cleansed themselves at the laver before serving in the Holy Place, so that they would be pure and not die before a holy God. Dear brethren, we must have taken baptism by accepting the sacrificial death of our Lord. Our past sins are thus forgiven. No doubt, but it does not mean we are pure before him. We are to be sanctified daily. Water stands for the word of God which washes us. "...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Eph. 5:25-27).

We are called to serve him. We must note this (Heb. 12:14): "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord". Therefore , "Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [with blood] to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water" (Heb. 10:22).

Next is the golden lamp stand placed in the Holy Place. After washing their hands and feet at the laver, the priests could enter the Holy Place, which was the first room in the tent of the tabernacle. There were three pieces of furniture in the Holy Place: the golden lamp stand, the table of showbread and the golden altar of incense.

The lamp stand had a central branch from which three branches extended from each side, forming a total of seven branches. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so



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'Throne of Grace" installed in
the Most Holy Place of the
Old Testament Tabernacle
and its significance to
New Testament believers.

Here is the second part of the
2-parts article.

that the lamps may be kept burning continually. Outside the curtain of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the Lord from evening till morning, continually" (Lev. 24:1-3).

There will be light in the Holy Place because of this lamp stand, so the priest is not dwelling there in dark. He sees the showbread and the alter of incense in this light, and this is enabling the priests to have right fellowship with God and intercede on behalf of God's people. Just as the lamp stand was placed in God's dwelling place so that the priests could approach God, Jesus, the "true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9) came into the world so that man could see God and not live in spiritual darkness anymore. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness" (John 12:46).

Jesus is represented by the main branch of the lamp stand, and we as believers are represented by the six branches that extend from original

branch. Having believed, we are now living as "children of light" (Eph. 5:8) who draw our source of light from Jesus, the true light. Jesus calls us "light of the world" and commands us to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14, 16). Not only so, but the branches serve as a picture of Jesus' description of our relationship with him: "I am the vine, you are the branches ... apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Dear child of God, Are you a light of God? Are you able to shine where you are placed? Do you know that you are the branches of vine, and it is the branches which should bear fruits. Do you know the consequence of not bearing fruits to the Holy one who called us?

We the children of God know well that we are placed in Holy Place and who we are: (1 Pet. 2:9): "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light". If we know who we are, we are to know further, for what we are. We are here to praise Him and declare Him. Are we doing this ministry in the way Lord wanted us to do? If not, let us check our light. Whether this light shines before people of this world or not. If the answer is NO, let us humbly find the reason. Either it is because of no oil or connection problem. We are supposed to be connected with our Lord and without Him we can do nothing. But many believers in this generation are out of range, unavailable for Lord. Why cannot we understand that this is our time to shine. The world is slipping into darkness, and we who are supposed to be the 'children of light' do not understand this. Let us therefore, (Isa. 60:1) "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee".

Next is table of show bread which also kept in holy place. The table of showbread was a small table made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It measured 3 feet by 1.5 feet and was 2 feet, 3 inches high. It stood on the right

side of the Holy Place across from the lampstand and held 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

The table and the bread were a picture of God's willingness to fellowship and communion with man. It was like an invitation to share a meal, an extension of friendship. Eating together often is an act of fellowship. God was willing for man to enter into His presence to fellowship with Him, and this invitation was always open. Jesus exemplified this when He ate with tax collectors, prostitutes and the sinners of Jewish society. But this was more than just a gesture of friendship on earth. Jesus came to call sinners to Him, make them right with God, so that they could enjoy everlasting fellowship with God.

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ... Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die" (John 6:35, 49-50).

God so desires our fellowship that He was willing to come to earth from heaven as our "bread of life" to give eternal life to all those who would partake in it. At Jesus' last Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus described Himself as bread again:

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'" (Mat. 26:26).

Jesus' broken body is our only access to fellowship with God. Today, we celebrate the Lord's Supper, or communion, to remember this important truth. And today, as in the day of Moses' tabernacle, God still desires to have fellowship and sit down for a feast with His people.

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

Next is The golden altar of incense which is also kept in the holy place. This altar was smaller than the brazen altar. It was a square with each side measuring 1.5 feet and was 3 feet high. The priests were commanded to burn incense on the golden altar every morning and evening, the same time that the daily burnt offerings were made. The incense was to be left burning continually throughout the day and night as a

pleasing aroma to the Lord. It was made of an equal part of four precious spices (stacte, onycha, galbanum and frankincense) and was considered holy. God commanded the Israelites not to use the same formula outside the tabernacle to make perfume for their own consumption; otherwise, they were to be cut off from their people (Exo. 30:34-38).

The incense was a symbol of the prayers and intercession of the people going up to God as a sweet fragrance. God wanted His dwelling to be a place where people could approach Him and pray to Him. "...for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isa. 56:7)

The prayer of a saint is like this incense. David says about it: "May my prayer be set before you like incense; may the lifting up of my hands be like the evening sacrifice" (Psa. 141:2). Book of Revelation also gives us this picture: "Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God" (Rev. 8:3-4).

Let us check how is our prayer life before God in this Holy Place where we are placed. We must understand, if we are not praying in the right manner, we are sinning before God: (1 Sam. 12:23) "Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you". As priests, it is our duty to pray for the people. We are their

watchmen before God. So let us pray in the way our Lord had prayed for us. Our prayers will have definite answer from God.

The golden altar, furthermore, is a representation of Christ, who is our intercessor before God the Father. During His days on earth, Jesus prayed for the believers. He was like the high priest of the tabernacle, who bore the names of each of the Israelite tribes on his breastplate before God. Just before He was betrayed and sentenced to death, Jesus interceded for His disciples and all believers, asking God to guard them from evil and sanctify them by His Word, and that they may see God's glory and be a witness to the world (John 17:1-26). Today, Jesus still is our high priest at the Father's side, interceding for God's people:

"Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Rom. 8:34).

Since we have been forgiven of our sins through the blood of Christ, we also come boldly in prayer in Jesus' name. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are praying based on the work He has done and not on our own merit. It is in His powerful name that we are saved and baptized, and in His name we live, speak and act. "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

The horns of the golden altar were sprinkled with blood from the animal sacrifice to cleanse and purify it from the sins of the Israelites (Lev. 4:7,16:18). Just as the horns on the brazen altar represent the power of Christ's blood to forgive sins, the horns on golden altar signify the power of His blood in prayer as we confess our sins and ask for His forgiveness. "And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:15-16).

After all of the above, there is the holiest place. A thick curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This curtain, known as the "veil," was made of fine linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn.

Confess Him before men

Meditation

"I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God"
(Luke 12:8-9)

Modern man admires Jesus, but seldom has he acknowledged Him. Some times people say ... "I love Jesus. He knows my heart. I will keep my religion to myself. What's the need to tell it to everyone?" But friend, if your heart is filled with the love of Jesus, what keeps you from pouring it out before people? It is fear, right? You fear men.

Jesus is our bridegroom. No bride is hesitant to confess her groom before people. Rather, she would do it proudly. What is there to be ashamed of to tell others that you are the bride of Jesus and He is your saviour, master and eternal God? Remember, millions were martyred for confessing their faith. Do you consider their confession as foolish?

These days, even churchgoers fail to witness Jesus. Their faith is unknown to those who are always with them in school, office and workplace. They "worship" in church, but are afraid or ashamed to confess Jesus before people. You need to confess your faith "before men," not just inside the church. If you are ashamed, Jesus says, he has to "disown you before the angels of God!"

Whom do you fear? Jesus said; "do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing the body, has power to throw you into hell" (Luke 12:4-5). Fear God! You know what awaits those who deny God and receive the mark of the beast? "... He will be tormented with burning sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb" (Rev 14:10).

Let's be proud to witness Jesus before people. Do you know the reward for it? Jesus will acknowledge us before the angels ... He will proudly say to them, "Look, my bride who loved me so much and confessed me before people without fear and shame!"

What else do we need in heaven?

Prayer: Lord, help me to be shameless and fearless to tell the world that I belong to you, Amen.

For further reading: 1 Peter 4:12-19; 2 Timothy 2:8-11; Revelation 12:7-12.



Saju John Mathew

Reading passage: Luke 12:1-12

"Come to the Throne of Grace" Continuation from previous page

The word "veil" in Hebrew means a screen, divider or separator that hides. What was this curtain hiding? Essentially, it was shielding a holy God from sinful man. Whoever entered into the Holy of Holies was entering the very presence of God. In fact, anyone except the high priest who entered the Holy of Holies would die. Even the high priest, God's chosen mediator with His people, could only pass through the veil and enter this sacred dwelling once a year, on a prescribed day called the Day of Atonement.

The veil was a barrier between man and God, showing the sinful man cannot reach the Holy God. God's eyes are too pure to look on evil and He can tolerate no sin (Hab. 1:13). "But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood,

which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance" (Heb. 9:7).

Thus the presence of God remained shielded from man behind a thick curtain during the history of Israel. However, Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross changed that. When He died, the curtain in the Jerusalem temple was torn in half, from the top to the bottom. Only God could have carried out such an incredible feat because the veil was too high for human hands to have reached it, and too thick to have torn it. (The Jerusalem temple, a replica of the wilderness tabernacle, had a curtain that was about 60 feet in height, 30 feet in width and four inches thick.) Furthermore, it was torn from top down, meaning this act must have come from above.

Dear child of God, if you have entered

through the only one gate, believing and accepting the gospel, cleansed with the word of God, shining among the people in the present world for Lord, having fellowship with God, and having a prayerful life which is an incense before God and standing in the holy place, put your next step without fear to the holiest place, come close to the throne of grace because (Heb 4:14) "we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession". You will find mercy there. You will also receive help in your need. Because you are in the presence of our Holy and Almighty Father with our good Lord who is our high priest, who loved and died for you.

May God bless you with His grace and timely help.

- Concluded

Serving God Despite Adversities

Three of my four children have died before their time. One son died in early infancy. He and his two brothers all suffered from cystic fibrosis, a condition for which there is no curative therapy available.

My wife used to stay awake for days, to give them suction, oxygen, inhalation therapy and artificial respiration. The prolonged exhaustion and stress for over twenty-eight years wore her down, producing muscle paralysis and associated problems. Her death was followed by the deaths of my younger son (age 22) and that of my older son (age 32), after lifelong struggles between life and death.

It was tempting to be discouraged when we faced such insurmountable problems. But those same problems gave us the opportunity to prove whether the One who gave us his promises really would step in. What had happened to us is not so important, we realized. What mattered was what happened though us. What God does inside us, when painful experiences arrive, is of greater value than keeping such sufferings at bay.

Within a space of three years, I lost not only my wife and two sons, but also both of my parents. Yet at their funeral services I was able to celebrate the certainty of our hope in Jesus. Because of this certainty, I am able to decide on the priorities of today. With God's help, we have been able to turn tragedy into triumph, obstacles into opportunities, the worst into the best, and problems into projects that will have great and lasting value.

In an earlier age, this attitude may have been less unusual. In the past, suffering was an incentive to inquiry and not an excuse for unbelief. Only since the Enlightenment has the problem of suffering been seen as ground for unbelief. Rationalism, though, has no answer to evil. Evil cannot be explained in scientific terms. Our understanding of it must come from revelation.

Scripture is very clear on the problem of evil (see Job 5:7; 2 Corinthians 13:4). God made Satan the most beautiful of all creatures, with the gift of free will. Satan rebelled against God, and that



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was the first sin and the pattern for all sin that followed. Nothing outside his own free will caused Satan to sin. He was the first cause of his sin, and we can't go back any further than that. As the story of the Garden of Eden shows, Satan has passed his sin down to man. Man brought evil upon himself, like Satan, by selfishly choosing his own way apart from God's way.

The idea of evil lies in the idea of perfection. God made everything perfect. One of the perfect things God made was freedom of choice. Such free will opens the door to evil. We, by our wills, are the cause of the evil we do.

God allowed for that possibility by making us free creatures. He actually took the risk of giving us freedom. Both the opportunities to choose good and ability to choose evil are included. Freedom of choice endows with responsibility and accountability. God created the fact of freedom. We perform the act of freedom. And sadly, those actions are all too often foolish, sinful

The idea of evil lies in the idea of perfection. God made everything perfect. One of the perfect things God made was freedom of choice. Such free will opens the door to evil. We, by our wills, are the cause of the evil we do.

and unwise. Thus imperfection arises from perfection – not directly, but indirectly through freedom.

The idea of a good and powerful God is not irreconcilable with the existence of evil. God's existence and the reality of evil are not logically contradictory. God is morally free, in that nothing can make him do anything against his nature. God's nature is perfectly good. But, having exercised his omnipotence in creating the universe and endowing his creatures with freedom, he does not block the outcome of that freedom – even if that outcome is suffering and pain.

The corollary of this is that evil cannot be destroyed without destroying the freedom. If freedom were destroyed, that would be evil in itself, because it would deprive free creatures of their greatest good.

So what hope do we have against evil and suffering?

The Scripture says that God is victor. The devil is not out of hand. Evil is not running loose and unchecked. God will triumph over all the evils of the world. This is declared on the basis of revelation in God's word and is not a matter of reason.

God is a God of judgment – in history as well as at the end of time (Romans 1-2). We can bind God only to those things that God has promised in his word. God has not promised man everything. We need to learn within the promises of God, and not be thrown into confusion when something bad happens to us. We need not let sufferings confuse our mind between what God wills in his goodness and what Satan wills in his wickedness.

We have to approach the problem of evil with humility and openness. It is better to learn to live with it, while trying our best to alleviate it. Just because evil is not destroyed right now does not mean it will continue forever. God's will is holy, wise, good and just. God will have a good reason for allowing evil and suffering.

God grieves over tragedy, sin and evil. God can work in the area where there is evil, rebellion and sin, no matter how great the evil is (see Genesis 50:20; Acts 2:23; Romans 9:17). Whenever he wills, God can enter the very arena of evil,

A Christian approach to Entertainment

According to Advance Learner's Dictionary, entertainment means shows, films, television, music or other performances or activities that entertain people.

Today our society has undergone a tremendous change, it has transitioned from a rural agricultural economy to an urban industrial one. The result is that we have plenty of modes of entertainment like TV, radio, internet, games, fantasy parks, multiplexes, party clubs, shopping malls and a host of other things. We have more disposable income at our hands. Entertainment has become an integral part of our everyday life. It is difficult to imagine a life without it. Hence the importance of this topic cannot be overstated.

But even then, we Christians must consider that some things do not change since biblical days. These are biblical truths and principles that must still guide us in these last days. So let us look into what the Bible says about entertainment. Phil. 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice". 1 Tim 4:4,5 says, "For every thing God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer".

The verses above show that entertainment can have a place in a Christian's life. But lets take a deeper



Jaison Varghese

look. Entertainment is only good if it is a means to a higher end and purpose. For example, recreation and exercise for keeping good health and sports as relaxation are fine in order to serve God better.

But as soon as entertainment goes beyond that, as soon as entertainment consumes us and becomes an end in itself, then we abuse God's gift. We live in the last days in the midst of perils and among the things that happen in the last days. Apostle Paul even says in 2 Tim. 3:1-4 that people will become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

King Solomon indulged in all that his heart desired like wine, women singers, everything his heart desired. But in the end he realizes that all these are just vanity and meaningless (Ecc. 2:25). The Chapter ends by saying that we can find enjoyment only in God. Consider this: What will we say of a man who was compelled to kill a man sent by God

because of his love for entertainment? Or, What will you say of a man who lost his kingship and brought an end to his glorious empire just because of entertainment?

This was the very misery which fell upon king Herod and king Belshazzar when they were enjoying their time in pagan ways of entertainment. Herod's love for entertainment caused him to behead John the Baptist, As king Belshazzar and his guests was getting drunk in his maddening way, on the other side, the Medo-Persian army was putting an end to the legendary Babylonian kingdom.

From the above instances, we can learn that we should not indulge in worldly entertainment. Psa. 1:2 says that the delight of a righteous man is in the law of the Lord.

Col. 3:2: "Set your minds on things above"

Psa. 37:4: "Delight yourself in the Lord"

We should be aware of the Devil's schemes. Entertainment is the aspect about which we are most careless, while at the same time the devil is spinning a web and using it to catch the unaware Christians in his schemes. So let us not take delight in entertainment but have delight in the Lord and in His laws.

Serving God despite adversities Continuation from previous page

and turn it to his purposes.

Remember, God allowed the occurrence of evil in his universe from the very beginning. He did this in order to display his own perfection. His plan was to punish evil by taking the punishment on himself and pardoning those who committed it. That involves saving us from the power of evil, while using it to build virtues we couldn't have gained without it.

The cross gives us the ability and the strength to withstand evil, to endure suffering, and to live in this context of confusion. We are challenged to do good

and noble things and to overcome evil tendencies. Courage is only possible where there is real danger. Self-sacrifice is only noble when there is selfishness to overcome.

Hope in God enables us to cope with sufferings in this present life. Just as suffering is real, so are the promises of God and the hope of eternal life. We are on our way to the best world.

Revelation 21:8,27 foretells a day when everyone has free will but no one will sin. The God who himself suffered transfigures the sufferings of his people. The glorious transfiguration of suffering

is an integral part of our faith. Suffering and glorification are part of the same process of growth in the Christian life. We have nothing in this world to compare with the glory that is to come (see Romans 8:18). When we hold such a purpose before us, the suffering of today is not felt as suffering. In this world of suffering and evil, we know that, wherever we go, the God of all compassion goes ahead of us and journeys with us, consoling and strengthening us until we see him face to face.

The Crown of Life: Who inherits?

It is the greatest and honest desire of a child of God to be victorious; to be overcomers as long as we live on the face of this earth. People have a tendency to strive to overcome many circumstances they face in life and be successful; however this often comes short, not being able to have control over the situation. Is it because we try to take control with our own knowledge or because we've been in a Pentecostal church for so many years and we feel that we have group support? Or do we think that we're well experienced in tackling issues because of our seniority in our Christian life? What is the real reason for our failure and what can be done to step out of this monotonous cycle? Rev 21: 7 says, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be My son". How true, is this going to be in our life?

As a child of God, in our daily lives, it is important to crucify the affections of this world because we belong to Jesus Christ. We often forget to think about how others see us with regards to our behavior as a child of God. In our social life, instead we get carried away with our inherited worldly nature and as a result we fail to represent Christ through us. We proclaim that we are overcomers, but are we really? We are faced with many of these kinds of questions. Are we really thinking seriously about these questions? If not, it is time to do so. In order to overcome this nature, we need to crucify all corrupt conversations, behaviors and attitudes and put on the garment of Christ and be like Him so that we can overcome. 1 John 5:4 says, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith."

As Christians, it is important to ask ourselves whether we reveal Christ in our actions, thoughts and dealings. The primary question to ask is: "Am I a true follower of Jesus Christ?" We can easily hide our ungodly actions from those who are around us. Is that temporary "victory" truly giving us the courage to stand up to



P.Y. Philip

give a testimony stating that God has done great things in our lives? Or the boldness to stand on a pulpit and deliver a message that was prepared by referencing different books? It is important to rise above such practices for the benefit of our spiritual growth as well as for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, our old man is crucified with him that the

We proclaim that we are overcomers, but are we really? We are faced with many of these kinds of questions. Are we really thinking seriously about these questions? If not, it is time to do so. In order to overcome this nature, we need to crucify all corrupt conversations, behaviors and attitudes and put on the garment of Christ and be like Him so that we can overcome. The writer exhorts believers to come forward to call for a change and to stand firm for Christ, crucified.

body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Until we prevail over this old man, it is difficult to please God, and whatever we do in God's name is called an abomination. When we are right with God, our actions reveal the glory of His name and edify the spiritual lives of others as well. We should ask ourselves: "Am I really setting a standard to the people around me?" It does not matter what part of the world we are in or the church denomination we follow; we need to be able to identify our faith. The Holy Spirit inspired Word of God is not written for a certain country. The language may be different but the content is the same. Are we among the overcomers by faith?

It is time for us to lead our lives by projecting actions based on faith. God is the author and the finisher of our faith and remember, He will crown us according to our deeds. Often we begin our Christian lives based on a very strong faith, but gradually it loses its power and the old man's nature in us increases its hold; this leads us to failure. Apostle Paul throughout the epistle vigorously writes against the "gospel of work" and defends the Gospel of Faith to the Galatians. Paul writes to the Galatians: "Do not give up your priceless liberty you possess in Christ to some depressing legal mysticism found among you." It is ironic to see a group standing for unfair legalism which only works for them. As a result the true believers often get disappointed, for nothing can be done unless there is a change. There is no need to be concerned if we stand firm for the Lord, our Redeemer calls us overcomers and the crown of life is ours in eternity. Are we willing to adapt a life based on the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Let us come forward to call for a change and to stand firm for Christ, crucified. May God enable us to obey His words and not to forget to ask this question "Am I among the overcomers?"



News & Views

J K S



'Miracle Village' of Haiti

After the devastating 7.1-magnitude earthquake in Haiti 21 months ago, only 20 percent of the rubble has been cleared and 600,000 remain homeless. However, one private charity, funded by donors and built by Love A Child, Inc., has completed construction on a new village with almost 500 homes. This village called 'Miracle Village' has 500 houses built to withstand hurricane-force winds and earthquakes in future. Each house is fully furnished with a small garden area to grow fresh vegetables. The village contains wells, playgrounds and a medical clinic.

It goes to prove that people driven by love of God can make selfless efforts and achieve their goal!

A new choice for non-violent criminals: Jail or church

According to a report in CBS News, non-violent offenders in an Alabama town in USA will have a new choice: Go to jail, or go to church every Sunday for a year. Misdemeanor offenders will be allowed to choose a place of worship and check in weekly with the pastor and police, instead of paying a fine and serving jail time. If the one-year church attendance program is completed, the offender's case will be dismissed. So far, 56 churches are participating in the program. Police chief Mike Rowland says the program could change the lives of people heading down the wrong path.

True, Gospel can transform people. We have many examples of this in the Bible. Onesimus is one such example.

Iranian Youth - Open to the Gospel

According to a report in the Christian Newswire, a significant number of young Iranians, searching for answers to the issues they face, are coming to Christ. Nader, a Christian leader working among youth, says young Iranians are thirsty for the Gospel. Young people are coming to Christ through personal evangelism, satellite TV, websites and Facebook. Ramin, another Christian leader says

that believers must be careful; they face challenges from their families and sometimes suffer or are arrested if they become too outspoken. Iran is ranked No. 2 in the list of 50 worst persecutors of Christians!

An Iranian news agency says: "The fear of the spread of Christianity among the younger generation of Iran has caused the regime to use every possible strategy to crack down on the followers of Christianity and to prevent its growth among the youth and Iranian families. One of the boldest strategies is to burn confiscated Bibles. And still the religious figures of the regime acknowledge that the gospel is spreading throughout the country. Although talking about the gospel and discussing Christian theology is a risky endeavor with potentially serious consequences, Christian youth and many other people clearly talk about these issues and share the message of Christ's love with others".

Christian faith has been proved to grow in the face of prosecutions. Iran situation is, therefore, no exception!

More Americans say: I believe whatever I want

Americans are drifting from clearly defined religious denominations to faiths cut to fit personal preferences, according to a report by 'USA Today'. Religion statistics expert George Barna tracks changes from 1991 to 2011 and concludes that all the major trend lines of religious belief and behavior ran downward. More people claim they have accepted Jesus as their savior and expect to go to heaven, and more say they haven't been to church in the past six months except for special occasions! In 1991, 24% were "unchurched." Today, it's 37%. When people were surveyed for their belief in seven essential doctrines, defined by the National Association of Evangelicals' Statement of Faith, only 7% of those surveyed qualified. People say: 'I believe in God. I believe the Bible is a good book. And then I believe whatever I want'. They tailor religion to fit their needs!

Preachers who attract crowds through

doctrines like 'Prosperity Theology' should be held responsible for such a situation. People's faith remain shallow and just serves to meet their financial or emotional needs!

God Missing from the new Martin Luther King Memorial!

A new memorial has been erected in Washington, D.C. in honor of (Late) Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. After visiting the site, his niece, Rev. Alveda King says that she is surprised to see no mention of God or Jesus Christ at the memorial. She adds, if she had been asked, she would have recommended scriptural passages from her uncle's sermons to be added to the quotes engraved on the memorial. She is hopeful, though, that visitors who seek to learn more about her uncle will look deeper into his memory and "meet the man who loved and served the Lord".

In the present day USA, it may be politically correct not to mention God in public places!! May God have mercy upon the country.

Religious minorities in Iraq are suffering

According to a report in 'Christian Post', Christians and other religious minorities there live in constant fear and face potential genocide. Assyrian Christians are not Muslim converts but an ethnic group that dates back to ancient times, and along with two other native minority groups, they face extinction and banishment. Many Iraqis say that life was surprisingly better under Saddam Hussein. Iraqi religious minorities might be wiped out unless action is taken to protect them. Gwendolen Cates, a filmmaker who spent the last three years in Iraq to make a documentary on religious refugees from Iraq, 'Mourning in the Garden of Eden', says, "The mood in Iraq is one of fear".

Let us pray that our brothers and sisters passing through persecution in different nations of the world may continue to remain steadfast in their faith and look for deliverance from the Lord.

Poem**D.G. Martin**

The Lord was searching for a good leader to lead,
In our Christian community there are many to lead,
Which one did he choose as a true leader to lead.

He met a cardinal, who said I am qualified to lead,
I possesses all wisdom and I am perfect to lead
My knowledge and calibre will out do the rest
And he said Lord, There is none like me to do the best
Choose me said the Cardinal there is no doubt
I am the best

The Lord moved further ahead with non comment at all
Now he met a Arch bishop. Very handsome and tall
My eloquence, speech, sharpness and acts
are quick every time
Myself I am the only one who can progress all the time
Choose me said the Archbishop, I am yours all the time

The Lord went ahead with no words to draft
This time he met a Bishop with sharpness and craft
Here I am, Here I am, cried the Bishop I can lead
Put me among the people, you want me to lead
Look at me, my life - style and transparency is very clear
Choose me said the Bishop my life-style is very dear

The Lord passed on further with no words to tell
Incidentally he met a presbyter, who said
I will serve with pride
And Lord you'll be happy and happy in all my strides
Polished and trained - I can create an impact
without any doubt
For I am a post Graduate and learned
with ideas and thoughts
leave aside all the rest there is none like me
which is a fact
Choose me oh Lord to lead your people in my raft .

The Lord turned around and saw a shepherd leader
Who was simple and humble, affectionate
and passionate to lead
No thought had the shepherd leader for the Lords choice
The Lord transformed and reformed him to his voice
Yes this one is mine, I have been searching all the time
I will shape him and structure him for he is mine

Yes I need no leader who's perfect and right
Yes I need no leader who's handsome and bright
Yes I need no leader with sharpness and craft
Yes I need no leader who's trained with tacts
Yes this one I need who's with power and might

The Lord Moved gently to the Shepherd leader
He re-anointed him and empowered him to lead
He spoke to him kindly for there is much labor
for you to do
Just pour out and pour out to others as I pour for you to do ●

News and Views Continued from previous page

Pray for North Korea and the suffering Christians who live there

Kim Jong-II, the leader of North Korea, has died. Some speculate that his son Kim Jong-Un will be just as cruel to all dissenters. There are an estimated 50,000 to 70,000 Christians being held in North Korean prison camps. North Korea holds the No. 1 spot in the list of the top 50 countries which are the worst persecutors of Christians. In North Korea, any form of worship to anyone other than the "Supreme Leader" (Kim Jong-II) is seen as treason. North Korean Christians are often arrested, tortured or even killed for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Let us hope 2012 will see real change politically and economically, especially in freedom to believe in North Korea. Let

us pray for freedom for all citizens so that they may be free to live how they want and allowed to believe what they want.

Harold Camping apologizes for false teachings

Family Radio Stations, Inc., founder and chairman Harold Camping said he was wrong to predict Christ's return and confessed that, after decades of misleading his followers, he regrets his misdeeds. Camping, 90, who falsely predicted the world would end Sept. 6, 1994, then May 21, 2011, then finally on Oct. 21, 2011, also said he was



wrong to say that God had stopped saving people after May 21. When Camping's final doomsday prediction failed to happen, Family Radio removed its teachings regarding both the May 21 and Oct. 21 rapture dates. According to a member of Camping's staff, he is no longer able to lead Family Radio or his ministry.

Those who heard about his apology, commented: "Regret is different from repentance. He should repent and ask forgiveness to those who are suffering now caused by his false prophecy? The people around him should know that a person who claim to know Christ's return surely is a false prophet. It would be in order for him to return to the church, become a member and submit to the elders of the church, the teaching of the word to show his repentance". ●



During World War II, a US soldier was separated from his unit on a Pacific Island. The fighting had been intense, and in the smoke and cross fire the soldier had lost touch with his comrades.

He was alone in the jungle, and could hear enemy soldiers coming in his direction. He hid himself in one of the caves. Although safe for the moment, he realized that the enemy soldiers would quickly search all the caves and he would be killed. As he waited, he prayed, "Lord, if it be your will, please protect me. I love you and trust you. Amen". After praying, he lay quietly listening to the noise of the enemy. Then he noticed a spider beginning to build a web over the front of his cave.

As he watched, listening to the

Children's

God's ways

enemy searching for him all the while, the spider layered strand after strand of web across the opening of the cave. Ha, he thought. "What I need is a brick wall and what the Lord has sent me is a spider web. God doesn't understand my needs!" As the enemy drew closer he watched from the darkness of his hideout and could see them searching one cave after another. As they came to his, he got ready to make his last stand. To his amazement, however, after

glancing in the direction of his cave, they moved on.

Suddenly, he realized that with the spider web over the entrance, his cave looked as if no one had entered it for quite a while. "Lord, forgive me," prayed the young man. "I had forgotten that for you a spider's web is stronger than a brick wall".

Moral: With God, a mere spider's web can become a brick wall of protection. Sometimes God works in the most surprising ways in our lives. God's ways are always best for us. Isa 55: 9 says, "as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts". ■



Juby Varghese



corner



*What we see now is like a Dim image in a mirror
(1 Corinthians 13:12)*



Lincymol G.
IPC Bhosari

*Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom
Matthew 5 : 19*



Sunumol George
IPC Bhosari

*Help to carry one another's burdens
(Galatians 6 : 2)*



Ansumol George
IPC Bhosari



They told me to bring big donation for meeting

By P. Banage