

Front Cover

Single Copy:Rs.5/-

Vineyard Echoes

A monthly Magazine for the
ministry of the Word and tidings
of the Lord's work in India

THE SEED IS THE WORD



THE FIELD IS THE WORLD

DECEMBER 2009

Vol. 3

Issue : 12

Annual: Rs.60/-

PRAY FOR

The Gospel Fellowship Trust of India

(Regd. Society No.183/1968)
(Legal Jurisdiction: Madras)

No.1, Bethesda Centre, Kodungaiyur P.O, Chennai-600 118. India.

Phone: 044- 2555 0598 / 2555 0295

Email: admin@gfti.org.in

Objectives of the ministry of GFTI

1. To encourage the preaching of the Good News of Salvation throughout India and elsewhere.
2. To encourage the planting of New Testament-based Christian Assemblies.
3. To act as a channel to pass on to the Lord's Servants (enjoying current commendations of their home assemblies) the voluntary contributions of God's people. We now serve over 900 brethren.
4. Assistance to those in distress through natural calamities etc.,
5. To support those in extreme need such as widows, the poor and those parents in difficulty to educate their children.
6. Evangelism through Literature, Special Conferences etc.
7. To Support Assembly-based Bible Education.

For Indian Readers

Single Copy: Rs.5/-
Rs. 60/-(Annual)

**Vineyard
Echoes**

For Overseas Readers

U.S. \$ 10 (Annual)
Subscription

**Articles,Subscriptions or gifts for the ministry may be sent to: GFTI,
No.1, Bethesda Centre, Kodungaiyur P.O, Chennai-600 118, TN, INDIA.**

In this Issue

1. The Christian Life (1).....*Koshy Zachariah*.. 1
2. Abraham the Friend of God (5).....*Cliff Jones*..5
3. Splendid Treasures (10)..... *K.Z*...9
4. Facts from the Field..... *Vineyard News*.... 12
5. Know your friends at SBC.....*Ajo Thomas*....cover.. 3

Note: Only Biblically sound articles are accepted for publication in "Vineyard Echoes". However, Vineyard Echoes does not necessarily endorse or hold responsibility for the views expressed by the authors in their articles and the material information furnished by the brethren for the Vineyard News column.

CHRISTIAN LIFE (1)

EXEMPLARY LIVING

It is the intention of the Lord God that people separated from the world and its rudiments, be the models that demonstrate the characteristic of God in every respect. That is where an exemplary living – Christ like – is called for.

The most marvellous thing in the entire range of human possibility is the offer and opportunity of becoming sons and daughters of the Almighty God. It is an extra-ordinary opportunity and that too, to mortals like us who can boast of “our nothingness” only. The scripture tells about us, “We walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the Power of the air...we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph 2:2,3). Paul further records, “We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one

another” (Titus 3:3). We all could testify to the fact that the works of the flesh were manifest in us, “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcrafts, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like” (Gal 5:19-21). Is it not then “wonder of wonders” that such ones are given the opportunity to become sons of an “Eternal God”? We read, “Beloved now are we the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be!” (1 Jn 3:2). Apostle Paul asserts, “That we are the children of God and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:16,17). Though the angels have never fallen as we have fallen, or sinned as we have sinned, they were never invited to so lofty an honour. On the contrary, we the children of a fallen race, have the opportunity of becoming in the most intimate sense, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. That is why Paul wrote, “By grace you are saved” (Eph 2:5,8). What is this

marvellous grace? “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12,13).

How do we become the sons of God? The truth is, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50). What is the way then? The Lord’s opening sentence to Nicodemus who came for the fear of the Jews under the shadow of the night was, “Except a man be born again (the exact rendering is “born from above”), he cannot see (enter into) the Kingdom of God.....Marvel not that I said unto thee “ye must be born again” (John 3:3,7).

John, in his first epistle, gives us at least five signs of one becoming the son of God. In Chapter three verse one, we have the first sign. We are told, “We shall neither be reckoned nor recognized by the world as “the world knew Him not”. Being born again, we have the same characteristics as the Lord Jesus. It is quite natural, then, that the people of the world may not understand us or the way we behave. We are told of our Lord, “He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world

knew Him not. He came unto His own and His own received Him not” (John 1:10,11). But to-day, instead of the Church in the world, the world is in the Church. The Church is supposed to be a collection of born-again Christians whose primary responsibility is to reflect Him. Instead, we have sought after the riches and pleasures of this world, resulting in the lack of “Christ-like characteristics” and naturally the world is not able to differentiate us from the common people.

The second sign is in the same chapter verses 9 and 10. We read, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother”. The believer cannot have the sin habit; and he does not continue in sin defiantly. The reason is that His seed remains in him. Though there are divergent views as to the meaning of the term “seed”, the right way to understand this is through the explanation that “this seed” refers to the new life which is imparted to the believer at the time of his regeneration. The divine life

precludes the possibility of continuance in sin as a life style. The greatest hindrance in winning souls to Christ is the absence of “Christ-like nature”; and the Christ-like nature is not in us because sin has become a part of our life style. I have come across recently three instances where evangelists have been absolutely unfaithful in matters of money and testimony. The callousness and the un-repenting nature are the things that baffle me. They justify their actions to their own ruin. (All the three of them have regreted their unchristian-like attitude since then) I have reasons to believe that such nature and characteristic are widely prevalent in the midst of Christian believers and they should see themselves in the light of the second sign – whether the “new life” is in them at all.

The third sign of being born of God is “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). Every one born of God should cherish a holy love to fellow members. Because we love the brethren, we have passed from death to life. One of the measuring yardsticks is this one. Our fellow brethren co-exist with us in the body of Christ; we are to nourish and cherish one another. After all, we are incorporated into

Christ as members of His mystical Body. As He cherishes us as His own Body, we also should cherish our fellow members. But of late, we commonly observe in assemblies, dissensions, hatred towards brethren, divisions and strife. What to say of the decay and rottenness seen by the world. There were divisions in the Corinthian Assembly. Apostle Paul mentioned this to warn us of the perils. But we take it as normal as it was in the earlier Church. John says, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). Not that any murderer cannot be saved, but it is that a man who characteristically hates his fellow believer is a potential murderer and is not saved. Every professed believer should ask the question to himself “am I really saved”? I have reasons to believe that many members of the assemblies who have the “hating tendency” are not really saved, since what I have heard of the foul languages uttered and behavioral pattern demonstrated (if true) are far from that of a born again Christian. We read, “God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Further we read, “If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for

he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? This commandment have we from Him, "That he who loveth God loveth his brother also" (1 John 4:20,21). The fourth sign is, "We shall be conscious of the pulse of God's life and love". That comes through by observing His commandments (1 John 5:2). Those who are saved by the grace of God will be characterized by a desire to do the will of God. The Lord Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). The commandments of the Lord are the instructions which He has given us in the Gospels as well as the rest of the New Testament. The word of God "is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path" (Ps 119:105). It guides us all the way. The life of God, resident in the word of God, should be received into our nature, so that we may be born from above, as "the word of the Lord abideth for ever" (1 Pet 1:25). And our desire and keenness to study the word of God would determine our Christian growth. But to-day, the Bible study meetings are the most neglected meetings of almost all believers and with a little knowledge, they claim to know everything and get puffed up in the process. The fifth sign shall be the fact that we shall be kept true and

faithful by the Saviour for His work. We read, "And we know that the son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true and we are in Him that is true, even in His son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

May the Lord help us to see that our lives are lives of exemplary living. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith, ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing on another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1-3). Paul wrote to the Philippians, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). That mind is explained from verse 6 onwards. We should shine as lights in the world (Phil 2:16). And to the Colossians he wrote, "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (3:12,13). Let us reflect the Lord in our Christian life, for His glory and praise.



ABRAHAM THE FRIEND OF GOD (5)

Cliff Jones, U.K

Call his name Ishmael

God, in His omnipotence, omniscience, love, grace, mercy and wisdom, will always fulfil His promises, His promises will be fulfilled in His perfect way and in His time. This may involve waiting for what a believer may find to be a long and trying time in which his faith in God will be tested.

The Lord hath restrained me from bearing.

God had promised Abraham an heir and Abraham and Sarah had waited ten years for the birth of the promised heir (Gen. 16:3). Faith glorifies God, and God was waiting until Abraham and Sarah would be well past the age when, under normal circumstances, babies are conceived and born. We read "Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (Heb. 11: 11,12).

When Sarah "saw that she was still barren she grew impatient and

wanted to do something so that Abraham's heir would be produced. She suggested to Abraham that he should take her maid, Hagar, as his wife (Gen. 16:1-3). Neither Abraham nor Sarah prayed for guidance. Sarah was correct in saying "the LORD hath restrained me from bearing" (Gen. 16:2). But she was wrong in suggesting that Abraham should take Hagar as his wife. She took the initiative, as indeed did Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-13). Thinking in the way she did, Sarah showed her lack of faith: she wanted to make things happen more quickly than God had planned. We are told to rest and trust, to wait and not try to impose our ideas and our desires on God's plan and timing. In Isaiah 28: 16 we read "he that believeth shall not make haste", and in Proverbs 3:5,6 we are told to "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths".

When we obey God's Word, acting in faith, then we know that what we do, or refrain from doing, will be in accordance with the will of God, will glorify Him and bring blessing to us and to others. Sarah

and Abraham acted impatiently and without faith and dependence on God. Sarah's action in giving Hagar, her maid, to Abraham was in accordance with the practice of those days. Hagar was an Egyptian, and it is quite possible that she became Sarah's maid when Abraham and Sarah, not having exercised faith in God, had gone down to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan (Gen. 12:10). They had something of the world (Egypt) in their household which was used to lead them away from faith in God and to reliance on their own scheming and working. Once again, Abraham turned out of the separated path of faith.

Bigamy has never been in accordance with the will of God. Marriage was ordained and instituted by God as a permanent union between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:18,24; Matt 19:5,6; Mk. 10:6-9). Marriage is a type of the union of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Church, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:30-32). In Ephesians 5:22-30, wives are told to be in subjection to their husbands, and husbands are to love their wives, "as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"

(Eph. 5:25).

Abraham had believed God's promises when they were given to him (Gen. 15:4-6), but was not willing to wait for God's time for them to be fulfilled. The result of not acting in faith and waiting patiently for God's time to come for the promised heir to be born was that Hagar conceived. The fact that Hagar conceived was not evidence that the taking by Abraham of Hagar as his wife was in accordance with the will of God. Trouble and stress arose between Sarah and Hagar, for when she knew she was pregnant Hagar despised Sarah (Gen. 16:4). Sarah was very annoyed and, despite the fact that she was the one who had suggested that Abraham should take Hagar as his wife, laid all the blame on Abraham for the animosity and unpleasantness which had arisen (Gen. 16:5). Abraham, instead of exerting his authority as head of the household, allowed Sarah to do whatever she wanted to do with Hagar. Sarah treated the pregnant Hagar so badly that she ran away (Gen. 16:6). We can see that both Abraham and Sarah experienced sadness and grief as a result of Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham as his wife in the hope of Abraham obtaining an heir. The conflict and resulting unhappiness was a result of the impatience of Abraham and Sarah. Their departure

from the path of faith had sad results because “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

We can view Abraham and Sarah’s plan to obtain the promised heir through Hagar as an attempt to obtain by their own planning and efforts what God had promised to provide through His grace and power. It is the difference between works and grace. Abraham attempted to obtain the promised heir through his own methods, scheming and efforts, that is, on the ground of works. We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23) and cannot, by our own efforts and works, fulfil the requirements of the Law. We are saved by grace “through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9). We read that “Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise” (Gal. 4:22,23). There was a time when false teachers tried to add to the means of salvation made freely available by the Lord’s substitutionary suffering, bleeding and dying on the cross. They said “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Salvation is based entirely on the completed work and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ and not partly on

that and partly on anything we can do.

The Lord hath heard my affliction

Sarah’s harsh treatment of Hagar caused the handmaid to flee from her mistress, but “the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur” (Gen. 16:7). Shur is between Kadesh-Barnea and Egypt. Hagar might have been on the way back to Egypt. In the future, God Himself would cause Hagar and Ishmael to leave Abraham’s household (Gen. 21:12-14), but now the Angel of the Lord spoke to Hagar, referring to her as Sarah’s maid and not as Abraham’s wife. He told her to return to Sarah, her mistress, and submit to her (Gen. 16:8,9). The Angel of the Lord is mentioned here for the first time in Scripture. The Angel of the Lord is usually regarded as a theophany, that is, a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Angel of the Lord does not appear after the incarnation of the Lord.

Abraham and Sarah had sinned and their sin had brought grief and sorrow to themselves and to Hagar. In His mercy and grace, the Lord came and appeared to Hagar who was to bear Abraham’s child. Hagar’s child would not be Abraham’s heir and the recipient of all the blessings God

had promised to Abraham, but, nevertheless, the child was Abraham's and would be blessed by God. In Genesis 16:10, the Angel of the Lord spoke with the authority of God saying, to Hagar, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly". Her son would become the head of a mighty nation, the numerous Arab peoples who are descendants of Hagar's son.

The Angel of the Lord said to Hagar, "thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction" (Gen. 16: 11). Ishmael means "God hears". God had heard and reacted to Sarah's ill-treatment of Hagar. Hagar was told that Ishmael was to be a "wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (Gen. 16: 12). Ishmael's descendants would be independent and warlike. Abraham and Sarah did not act in faith when Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham, and "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). Many problems resulted then, and there are problems with us today, such as the continuing hostility between Jews and Arabs, and all because of Abraham's lack of faith. He failed to perform his duty as head of the household and overrule Sarah's suggestion which was caused by impatience. He also failed to stop Sarah's harsh treatment of Hagar.

Thou God seest me

Hagar had been told to name her son Ishmael (God hears), and her experiences led her to give a name to the Lord who had come to her and had spoken to her. She named Him, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13). Hagar must have learned a great deal about God in the time she spent with Abraham, but as a result of meeting and listening to the Angel of the Lord she learned more of His love, mercy, grace and compassion. She was conscious that God is a God who sees and that she had seen the One who saw, watched her and cared for her. The well where these events occurred "was called Beer-Ia-hai-roi; behold it is between Kadesh and Bered" (Gen. 16:14). Beer-Ia-hai-roi means "well of the Living One who sees me". In due time, Hagar, whose misery and plight God had seen, bore the son of whom the Angel of the Lord had spoken. When Ishmael was born, Abraham was eighty-six years old (Gen.16: 15,16). God had promised Abraham an heir ten years before this and the promise had not yet been fulfilled despite the faithless scheming and plotting of Abraham and Sarah. Throughout the account given in Genesis 16 of Ishmael's conception and birth, Hagar, and everything connected with her, represents law, but Sarah and the ultimate birth of the promised heir represents grace (Gal. 4:22-31).



SPLENDID TREASURES

(EPHESIANS STUDIES)

Koshy Zachariah

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

In our last issue, we looked at the mystery of His will. Here we see that Paul explains the nature of the mystery which God has been pleased to reveal to us. This verse in effect is the central theme of all Scripture; its range and meaning are unfathomable. In verse seven, we have a great truth, which we have felt through our experience. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace". And in this verse, we are taken to greater heights; we are taken right up into the heavens enabling us to have a look at God's final purpose with respect to this world. No doubt, this is greater than our personal salvation as we are transported into the realm of the ultimate things. We may not know what is going to happen in this world in the immediate future; uncertainties loom large in the minds of many. But as far as we are concerned, being instructed of the word of God, we are aware what the ultimate plan of God is and that how history will end in a certain given way. Whatever men and nations may do or not do, we have the revelation in verse 10, what is God's ultimate plan. Let us look at what the Apostle says.

Dispensation of the fullness of times: Though we hear of different

dispensations (periods or ages) in the Bible, a close look at the word "dispensation" here though often misinterpreted, gives us two meanings. One meaning is "a plan, a scheme, an economy"; the other meaning is "an office, an administration, a stewardship". Let us now look at the three verses where the term "dispensation" is used by the Apostle in this Epistle. We read in chapter 3 verse 2, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God that is given me to you-ward, how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery". Again we read in 9th verse of the same chapter, "And to make all men see what is the fellowship (dispensation) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ". The word translated "fellowship" is the same Greek word as that translated "dispensation" here. Now in verse 10 which we are considering and verse 9 in chapter 3, the right meaning is "the plan, the scheme, the economy". We could read, "In the dispensation (plan) of the fullness of times" (v 10); the dispensation (plan) of the mystery (3:9)". Apostle says that we have been given this knowledge of God's great plan; whereas in chapter 3, verse 2, the meaning is "office, stewardship". We could read, "If you have heard of the dispensation (office or stewardship) of the grace of God".

The fullness of times

We read in verse 10, "In the dispensation of the fullness of times". What is conveyed to us is the time when this great plan is to be put into operation and completed; rather, when God's plan from eternity is going to be fulfilled really. To have an insight, we need to have a look at what is conveyed in Galatians 4:4,5. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". The Lord Jesus Christ came in the "fullness of the times". The whole span of time is divided by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world; with His birth. God's great plan came into operation and with His coming again the plan will be completed. We are living in the last days. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews brings to our attention this point, "God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by (in) His son" (1:1).

Gather together all things in Christ....even in Him

The great plan carried out involves "gathering together all things in Christ....even in Him". The usages "in Christ", "even in Him" may appear to be a repetition, but in all probability the apostle was not content with saying "in Christ" and hence added "even in Him". For him, Christ was everything; he worshipped and adored Him because all was in Christ. The centre of the message is "He might gather together in one all things in Christ". The authoritative version is that the word "again" should have been there, after the word "together". Then the

reading is "gather together again". Now we see a different dimension. It was "together" earlier and now it is "together again". That means God is going to bring together again all things in Christ; He is going to reunite all things in Christ. In this context we are immediately reminded of what Paul wrote to the Colossians, "By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" (1:20).

There are a number of views on the term "all things". One view is that "it means absolutely everything everywhere"; universal redemption of everyone and everything. A second view is that both good and bad men, bad angels and the devil himself are going to be redeemed and restored to God. This is what is called "universalism". A third view is that the expression "things in heaven and things on earth" refers to Jews and Gentiles. A fourth view is that those Christians who have already left this world and are in glory are the ones in heavens and those living on the earth at the return of Christ are the ones that are on earth. The first two views are "universalistic ideas" and do not get with our spiritual insight. The third view that the Jews are of "the heaven" and the Gentiles are of "the earth" is contrary to the Scripture in the light of Col 3:11, "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision.....Christ is all and in all". All in the kingdom are one and there is only one Salvation. The fourth view also lacks credibility as it is not in line with the term "all things in heaven and earth because they speak of "totality". D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones opines, "I suggest then that the "things which are in heaven" includes the good angels which kept their first estate

and that "the things which are on earth" includes not only the redeemed who will be on earth when Christ returns but in addition it refers to the created universe itself including the earth, animals and beasts".

I mentioned earlier that a word "again" is missing. This word tells us that things have been in a perfect condition once but that they are no longer in that condition. They will be so again after they are united. We read in Colossians 1:15-19 that originally all things were in a perfect state of harmony under our Lord Jesus Christ. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature? For in Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the Church: who is the beginning, the first born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell". In a nutshell, the Holy Spirit reveals to us that everything that was made and created was in Him and by Him and through and for Him; not only the world and animals but angels and thrones and principalities and powers. He was overall. But the harmony was spoiled, first by the rebellion of Lucifer and his angels and then by the fall of man engineered by Satan, the fallen angel-Lucifer. The original perfection and unity disappeared.

Now the mystic secret, which we as Christians, are allowed to share is that the original harmony and perfection will be restored and God will reunite all

things again in Christ. This is achieved through His blood shed on the cross. With that the middle wall of partition is broken and He has made peace, blotting out the enmity. No doubt, this is only for those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Others, the unbelieving ones, will be outside the cosmos; the fallen angels are reserved in chains for judgment (2 Pet 2:4, and Satan himself cast into the eternal lake of fire (Rev 20:10). On the contrary, we have a beautiful scene in Revelation chapter 5; not only the saints and redeemed sing praises of the lamb that was once slain, but angels an innumerable company join with the saints. This is part of the harmony that is to be restored (vv 9-14).

A day is coming when the destruction of the present earth by fire will happen (2 Pet 3:12-13). Evil and sin will be burned out of the universe bringing a new heaven and a new earth, with righteousness all around.

The old original harmony will be restored as we read in Isaiah 11:6-9, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb.....they shall not hurt nor destroy.....for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea".

We, who are saved by the grace of God, are part of the economy where we are destined to be elevated as lord's of creation, judging the world (1 Cor 6:2-3). Look at the grand and glorious plan of God revealed to us though a mystery. Let us join with Apostle Paul and affirm, "In the dispensation (plan) of the fullness of times, God will gather us together along with all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him".



Vineyard News

The news items are dated to help those who pray regularly for those labouring in the Lord's Vineyard.

ANDAMANS

01/12/09 **Selvakumar, Cambell Bay**
The ministries done during 29th April to 11th July were immensely blessed by the Lord. They could reach out to almost 1500 children with the word of God, teaching them the truths about God, salvation, hell and eternal life. They also had a follow-up work in the month of October. Pray that God may enlighten these little ones with the light of His gospel.

02/12/09 **M. Joseph, Port Blair**
The Lord's work in this island is being blessed. Bro. Abi. V. Joseph regularly visits Mayalounder and Diglipur which are about 300 kms away from here with a few other brethren for the follow-up work. Pray that the Lord may grant them rented houses to establish the ministries in these places.

ANDHRA PRADESH

03/12/09 **Benarji Raju S., Adoni**
Our brother informed that the 2009 flood has damaged Adoni and nearby

places badly. Many brethren lost their houses and even the Assembly halls are damaged. Adoni and surrounding villages now fear the threat of contagious diseases. Please earnestly pray for these matters.

04/12/09 **G. Israel, Padigala**
Here in Kurnool district the recent floods had brought severe aftermath. In a near by village called Chelimilla our believers lost their houses and other valuables. They trust God for all the rehabilitation works. *(We have given the necessary assistance from GFTI Relief Fund)*

05/12/09 **P. Narayanaswami, Madakasra**
Madakasra is a poor, drought-hit and uncivilized area. However, around 100 people regularly gather for the worship meetings. Now they have started a new work in a place called I.D. Halli in Karnataka state. Here an Assembly testimony is established and few believers gather for services.

BIHAR

06/12/09 **Rudal Mandal, Jamalpur**
The Bihar Brethren Conference was held successfully at Bhagalpur under the auspices of Brethren Assembly

Bhagalpur. 22 evangelists and around 250 believers from 16 Assemblies of Bihar attended this conference. Moreover, three days of gospel meetings were conducted and around 45 people have accepted the Lord. Prayers are coveted.

CHATTISGARH

07/12/09 **Pramod Paul, Bastar**
Please note the following prayer points for the blessings of the ministry here. They had a SBS teachers training camp from Oct. 7-10 and 35 believers attended. In Badgaon Brethren Assembly believers are facing great trouble from the Naxalites, forcing them not to attend the meetings and leave the village. His wife had an operation for tumor above the right kidney and this is her ninth major surgery. The operation expenses were too heavy for him to afford. Prayers are requested.

GUJARAT

08/12/09 **Jose Dali, Vapi**
They had a one day sisters meeting on 17th Oct. for the sisters in south Gujarat. They had special Bible studies for the Assembly when Bro. Sajeev Varghese was with them for two days. God graciously granted them a new apartment at Moti Daman. Lord willing, shortly regular Bible study and gospel meeting would begin there.

Continue to pray for the works in Vapi, Moti Daman and Varvada villages.

KARNATAKA

09/12/09 **John Philip, Udupi**
Here about eight new people have joined the fellowship through various outreach activities. The girls Bible group had organized a special programme for university students. The gospel was presented to 60 students in this meeting. They praise God for giving them a new Assembly hall, with space enough to accommodate 200 people. It was dedicated for God's service in the first week of November. Pray that God may add many more souls to this church.

10/12/09 **T.G. Benny, Jalahalli**
Here the Assembly activities are going on well. The regular home Bible study, gospel meeting for Nursing students and other outreach activities are being regularly carried out. They had a three days special meeting from 13-15th November. Prayers coveted for the blessings.

11/12/09 **J.Samson, Ch'nagar**
God established three Assemblies in the surrounding villages through this Assembly activities. In all these three places believers are gathering in rented houses. In addition to the ongoing ministries in these places, they have started a work in Bidali. Pray that God may continue to use them for the extension of His kingdom.

12/12/09 **Paramesh B., Mysore**
Here the ministry is going on well with regular Bible study for the believers and evangelizing the unbelievers. Two families from non-Christian background have come to the Lord. His wife supports him in the ministry by leading the children's ministry. Prayers are coveted.

13/12/09
Venkatesh Murthy, Mysore South
They got a few contacts from the suburban areas of the city and the ministry is regularly being carried out in these areas. In the month of October three members from a family came to the Lord, accepting Him as their personal saviour. Moreover they had one day retreat for the blind children on 24th Oct. Please pray for the spiritual growth of these believers.

MADHYA PRADESH

14/12/09 **Shaji Varghese, Khandwa**
They have started a new work in Burhanpur district, 55 kms away from Khandwa. In the month of September they had an outreach in this district, visiting many houses with the gospel. Please note his new Address: *Shaji Varghese, 56, Ravindra Nagar, Ganesh Talai Road, Khandwa, M.P- 450 001.*

MAHARASHTRA

15/12/09 **Alex Mammen, Sironcha**
By God's grace here the ministry is going on well. They had a special Youth

Camp during the Diwali holidays. Many youths from this area had attended the meeting and were blessed. Continue to pray for the spiritual growth of all who attended this meeting.

ORISSA

16/12/09 **Prasant Pani, Jharigumma**
God's work is being carried out by them in two villages, Jharigumma and Kushumi. Recently six believers obeyed the Lord in the waters of baptism and were added to the Church. Now more than 30 believers are gathering here for the worship service. Now they are gathering in a small hut. As the number increases they are prayerfully trusting upon God to grant them an Assembly hall. Moreover in Kushmi one woman and two village students accepted the Lord. Please prayerfully support this ministry.

17/12/09 **Debendra Harpal, Sirtol**
Here the Assembly regular activities are in progress. Five brothers from a village called Amsena are attending the meeting for the last few months. Prayers are solicited for the salvation of these brethren and also for the completion of the Assembly hall which needs Rs. 50000/- more for the completion.

18/12/09 **K.C. Thomas, Lamtaput**
A six month long Oriya medium Bible Training Course is in progress here. They had an outreach programme with

the students at Malbangiri district of Orissa during the first two weeks of November. Please pray for these dear ones who are being equipped for the Lord's work.

19/12/09 **C.S. Thomas, Berhampur**

The Lord's ministry is progressing here. A group of six brethren regularly visit the villages in a vehicle and preach the gospel. Pray that the Lord may bring forth some long lasting results as a result of these efforts.

20/12/09 **C.P.Mathew, Bhubaneswar**

Here in Orissa the situation is slowly improving. Assembly work is growing and there are a few new additions. They had a mission conference for the senior evangelists held at Cuttack in the month of September. They have shifted their Shanti Bhavan orphanage to a place called Khurda which is 40 kms. away from Bhubaneswar. There are 21 boys in the home now. God helped them to purchase a piece of land for the orphanage and looking forward prayerfully for a house for the children.

21/12/09 **Bibhuti Pani, J. Gumma**

They have started visiting a new village called Bishaguda which is 12 kms. away from Jhari Gumma. Two families from there are regularly attending the Bible studies. Pray for the salvation of these families

22/12/09

Solomon Pradhan, Simili Pada

Here the ministry is progressing in the villages. From October 1-4 a special meeting was held. Thirteen believers

took baptism on this occasion. Some new people are attending the service. Prayers are solicited for the growth of this Assembly.

RAJASTHAN

23/12/09 **James Paul M, Banswara**

The first fruit of the gospel here, Bro. Chamana was down with old age diseases and is not able to attend the meetings. Now the villagers are teasing him and pressurizing him to go back to his old faith. But he still stands for the Lord. Pray that the Lord may keep him safe before his enemies. Prayers also requested for the completion of the Assembly hall construction which has reached up to the lintel level.

24/12/09 **Aby Joseph, Alwar**

Here the Assembly, Sunday school, youth, Emmaus, and Bible school ministries are going on well. They had a youth camp in Delhi recently. They also had few days of meetings in the Assembly, where bro. Rajan Thomas from Bahrain ministered the word. Moreover they had a special camp for the Evangelists in Rajasthan. Many attended and were blessed. Prayers are coveted.

TAMIL NADU

25/12/09 **D.Ebenezer, Kodungaiyur**

Lord's ministry here in Kodungaiyur and Manali is growing by His grace. They had conducted a baptism service on 22nd October and five believers

were baptized, four of them are from Manali where they have newly started the ministry. Bro. M. G. John conducted the service. Prayers are solicited.

26/12/09 **P. Stephen, Coimbatore**
They are prayerfully planning to arrange a special meeting in Bethel Assembly from December. 4-6. Bro. Paul Immanuel will bring God's word on this occasion. They have started a website for the Assembly, namely www.bethelea.in. Prayers are solicited for the recovery of Bro. Samuel Prabhu and Sis. Sheela who are admitted in the hospital for kidney stone and tumor.

27/12/09
Peter Sunderarajan, Periyakulam
A few months ago six believers obeyed the Lord in water baptism. Moreover some more believers are looking forward to obey the Lord in the near future. Prayers are coveted for the spiritual growth of these believers and also for his wife who is regularly under medication.

28/12/09 **S. John Jacob, Malligai**
Our brother who had a major accident last December, is now by God's grace is able to walk without any support. And now awaiting for his complete recovery. The Lord has enabled him to write a commentary on Psalms in Tamil in his sick bed. The work is still continuing, please pray for the completion.

WEST BENGAL

29/12/09

Achintya Ghosh, New Asansol
They had a blessed VBS Camp from 29th Sep to 1st Oct. in Asansol. More than 65 students attended this three days camp and are immensely blessed. Moreover they had two days of revival meetings for the Assembly believers. On 18th Oct. two sisters witnessed the Lord in the water baptism. From 25-31st Oct. they had special outreach in Jhanjhra. A Nepali family having five members and a Bihari family having four members accepted the Lord. Valuable prayers are sought for the needs and blessings of the ministry here.

30/12/09 **Purnendu Jha, Chinakuri**
At present the Assembly outreach activities are going on in a place called Bejdih Colliery, which is a coal mine area. Here many listen the word eagerly. Children's ministry is going on in three places. Prayers requested for the salvation of the working community.

31/12/09 **Jayanta Das, Kolkata**
Our God continues to open new doors for the gospel. They are continually being equipped by the word of the Lord. Two young sisters in the Assembly, who come regularly for the meeting desperately need two bicycles. Please prayerfully support this ministry.



KNOW YOUR FRIENDS AT SBC
AJO THOMAS

I come from Alleppey dt in Kerala. I was born and brought up in a nominal Christian family. Since my father had a job in Rajasthan, he came to know the Lord and was saved, through the ministry of God's people there. Then he was in fellowship of the Bikaner Assembly. As I was brought up in the Assembly background I received good training in the Bible and assembly practices. However, I knew that being born to believing parents will not take me to heaven. So on 12th May-1999, I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour during a Balsangam camp at Kallissery. On 04/04/2004, I was baptized by Evg't Aniy'an Varghese and added to the fellowship of the Assembly at Edathva. In 2007 June 30th, I went to Hissar in Haryana, in search for a job. I was in fellowship with the Hissar Brethren Assembly. It was my plan to serve the Lord along with a job, as I had to support my family. But the Lord Almighty called me for His glorious work on 05/08/08. I was praying for the confirmation of the call and then I decided to resign my job and study the Bible systematically before going to ministry. So I joined the Stewards Bible College and am studying in the first year. Please pray for my studies and for my future ministry.



MEET A BROTHER

A veteran brother, **Mr. Thomas A. Itty (92)**, Chummathravelil Elimullil, Mumndamala, Kerala went to be with the Lord on 19th July 2009. His mortal remains were interred in the Kavungumprayar Brethren Cemetery in the presence of a large number of Lord's people and many others. He had served the Lord as Manager, TMM Hospital, Secretary, KEMF Fund/Bethany Bible School, Kumbanad/Brethren Mercy Home and also as Convenor of Brethren General Convention. His wife Annamma predeceased him. He is survived by his children Kunjumon, Kunjumole, Appu and Joe. Remember the bereaved family in your prayers.

Editors' note: As I was away during this time, his Home call could not be mentioned in the magazine earlier. I have held this elderly brother in good esteem, for his candid views and his commitment to the brethren doctrines and principles. The small booklet for private circulation published by him, "Brethren an Introspection" (sent to me by him with a personal note) though created some ripples among the Brethren believers, the topics "Fundamentals of faith and Assembly Distinctives" is worth noting. There are many valuable observations in that booklet that merit our appreciation.

Postal Reg: No. TN/CCN/304/07-09
LICENSE No.TN/PMG(CCR) WPP-74/08-10
RNI-Regn. No. TNENG/2007/20153

NEWS UPDATES OF THE GFTI ASSOCIATED MINISTRIES

STEWARDS BIBLE COLLEGE

The academic year which started on 5th June-09 is continuing well by the Grace of God. We had the following visiting brethren taking various subjects in this session till Dec-09: Binu Samuel, (Counselling), O.V Poulouse (ICorinthians & Missionary Heroes), K. Paul (Life of Christ), C.C John (The Book of Daniel); Joseph Varghese (Brethren Movement); James Varghese (The Gospel of John); Roy Mathew (IICorinthians); V. Mathew (Galatians); Aji Thomas (Dispensations & Homiletics) and Santosh Thomas (The Book of Revelation).

The local regular teachers are taking lessons assigned to them: Mr. Victor Sunderaraj- Customs & Manners, Bible Geography; K.A. Mathew - Character Studies Christology; Shaiju Varghese - NT Survey, Bibliology, Romans, Charismatic Movement, Greek, and Discipleship; and M. Manoj - O.T Survey; Pentateuch; Poetical Books, Bible Difficulties, Life of Paul, and Greek. Prayers are coveted for this ministry as we have embarked upon a three year programme. Some more guest teachers are awaited during the course of the year.

Outreach

The annual outreach of SBC will be held from 14th - 20th of December-09 at Tiruttani in Tamil Nadu, which is about 100 kms from Chennai. The 20 member students team will be led by Mr. Manoj, SBC teacher. The outreach is organized by Bro. Yacob, the evangelist of the place. Prayers will be valued for this ministry to be fruitful and effective.

SBC will be on winter vacation from 21st Dec-09 to 18th Jan-10.

BIRD MEMORIAL CHILDREN'S HOME (BMCH)

The Children in the Home are all keeping well. This year the total number of children is 17. Their schooling which started in the first week of June-09. is continuing well. Some of them fell sick recently with viral fever and are recovering. Prayers are coveted for this faith ministry.