

bethesda

NEWSLETTER

April/May 2003

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Mary Magdalene

As I read through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John gospels on Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, one name stood out. That name was Mary Magdalene.

At the cross Mary Magdalene was there (John 19:25). When Jesus' lifeless body was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. . . Mary was there (Luke 23:55-56).

Saved from the terrible power of demons (Luke 8:2), she gave of her best to the Saviour. She was ready to become one of the most devoted women disciples of the Lord to whom she owed so much and also loved so much. Not all who have benefited are grateful to Christ. He once healed ten lepers, but only one returned to thank Him for His grace and power. Mary's devotion was expressed when she gave much, loved much and served much.

Many women had followed Jesus from Galilee, "ministering unto Him" (Matt. 27:55), and "of their substance" (Luke.8:2-3). They were prepared to suffer discomfort and inconvenience in order to care

for the physical needs of the Lord and His disciples during their journeys. How blessed to be among those who ministered to Him and His labourers.

Quietly and effectively Mary would do what she knew needed to be done. How much her personal presence and provision must have meant to her dear Lord.

Mary was at the cross and saw how much her Lord suffered. It must have been almost unbearable to see our loved ones suffering in front of our eyes, feeling utterly helpless and unable to relieve their pains. The sight deeply wounded her heart.

Mary was at the cross and heard the Roman centurion declare Him dead. As her heart was broken, her hope was also shaken, "Is this really the end?" The whole crowd who saw that sight beat their breast as they all felt hopeless and "they returned" (Luke 23:48).

But Mary remained there, unmoved and steadfastly gazing at motionless body hanging on the central cross. She wanted so much to touch the body of her Lord and to care for Him, even His precious dead body.

The disciples of the Lord deserted Him though the Lord Jesus poured out His love to them to the end when He knew that His hour had come. It was in the upper room, just a day before the crucifixion. (John 13:1).

Mary stayed on, near to the Lord, at Calvary.

Mary had not bargained for a position in Christ's kingdom. She was content with the lowly place to serve the Master. Her joy was following her Lord and her God with her utmost devotion to Him. And thus she followed Him to the end of His life on earth.

Having lost her beloved Lord, she was not overwhelmed by self-pity. Her mind was still set on the Lord, "What can I do for my Lord, even now?"

"Early on the first day. . . while it was still dark" (John 20:1), Mary Magdalene rushed to the tomb. Never thinking of her own safety or reputation, Mary was at the tomb at



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the dawn of that first Easter morning. The first rays of sunlight spilled across the tomb. As she peered into the stone cave, she saw it was empty and she wept, "The enemy must have taken the body."

Mary rushed to Peter and John to tell them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we know not where they have laid him." The two disciples outran Mary Magdalene to the tomb and found that what she had told them was indeed true. But "the disciples did not understand that he had to rise from the dead went back to their homes" (John 20:9-10). But not Mary!

Mary, so full of her Lord, could not leave the place without seeing her Lord again. So she remained there.

Then a familiar voice called her name, "Mary!" That old familiar tone gripped her heart.

How it must be so delightful for the Lord to see His beloved Mary looking for Him so earnestly. He called her by her name.

The Lord Jesus honored her highly by appearing first to her after His resurrection. What a great honor granted upon the faithful Mary Magdalene in permitting her to be the first witness of that glorious Resurrection!

It was not that her faith was greater than that of the other disciples for everyone seemed to have been fallen into despair. Surely it was her love that drew her to where He was. She knew her Lord and responded to His love for her.

And her love was rewarded. Love seeking Him will ever be rewarded by seeing Him. "He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21).

Not to the proud, the mighty or the intellectual does He reveal Himself, but to the humble, loving heart that longs after Him. (1Cor 1:26-27).

Mary then left the empty tomb, receiving Jesus' commission to announce the greatest news ever proclaimed, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20:17).

*Let me like Mary, through the gloom,
Come with a gift to Thee;
Show to me now the empty tomb-
Lead me to Calvary.*

*Lest I forget Gethsemane,
Lest I forget Thine agony,
Lest I forget Thy love for me,
Lead me to Calvary*

Akiko Tan ■

AssemblyNews

WEDDING

22/3/2003 – Leong Yuen Haur & Doris Loo Hwee San

We bless the Lord for His reality at the wedding and His rejoicing in the bridal couple who pledged their love for each other before Him and their loved ones and friends. Pray that the headship of the Lord and the heart of His love will rule in their home as the newly-weds involve Him in home-building and house-management. ■

FAREWELL

19/2/2003 – Wee Khim Leng who left us to pursue a 2-yr degree course in Electrical & Electronic Engineering at the University of Western Australia with his wife, Bee San joining him later.

22/2/2003 – Tay Lin Hwee who left us to pursue a Bachelor of Arts degree course in Product Design at Curtin University of Technology in Australia for a year.

We praise the Lord for opening the way for the above brothers to study overseas. Pray that the Lord will enable them to settle well in their stay and study, and to identify themselves with an assembly there.



Some of the assembly members who bade farewell to Eng Hock & family (in the middle) at Changi Airport on 12/3/03

12/3/2003 – Dieu Eng Hock, Boon Khim and their two boys left us for Calgary, Canada.

We are grateful to the Lord for having guided Eng Hock and family to take up residence in Calgary, Canada. Pray that the Lord will help the Dieu to settle well especially for the 2 boys in school and the Lord's provision of employment for Eng Hock. ■



BEREAVEMENT

23/1/2003 - Joyce Tan on the passing away of her father-in-law

28/1/2003 - Sim Chear Wah & Mee Foong on the passing away of Mee Foong's brother.

11/2/2003 - Suzanne Tan on the passing away of her brother-in-law.

14/2/2003 - Jason & Celia Lee, Yeoh Ewe Chye, Stephen & Ann Yeoh on the home-

calling of Celia's father, Yeoh Ewe Hock.

2/3/2003 - Patricia Lam on the home-calling of her mother.

13/03/2003 - Mau Teck Hwee & Yoke Leng on the passing away of Teck Hwee's mother in Malacca.

14/03/2003 - Peter & Aileen Fong on the home-calling of Peter's mother.

18/03/2003 - Tan Chee Hwee & Amy on the passing away of Amy's sister-in-law.

We thank the Lord for having comforted His own during their time of bereavement. Pray that the Lord will be their relief and refreshment in their bereavement. ■

139th Sunday School Anniversary & Prizegiving



Singing items presented by the Junior scholars



S1 Scholars recited Psalm 1

16th March '03, 7.30 p.m.

We rejoice with the teachers and scholars in celebrating their 139th Sunday School Anniversary & Prizegiving. The programme for the evening was much blessed of the Lord with Dr Lawrence Chan giving the message on "David & Goliath". Song items were presented by the S1, S2 Scholars and SS Teachers. Mrs Jean Chan gave away the prizes to 184 scholars. We want to thank the Lord for the faithfulness of the teachers and scholars in their weekly study of God's Word where we have an average attendance of more than 300 scholars. Please pray that the seed of God's Word planted in the hearts of the scholars will bear much fruits in the light of eternity. ■



Singing items presented by the S2 Scholars



More than 50 scholars receiving their Roll of Honour awards



Jean Chan presented the prizes to the SS scholars



Ho Kuang Cheng,
General
Superintendent

Lawrence Chan
Speaker for the Prize-
giving ceremony



Singing Item presented by the SS Teachers



Angels and the Christ Event

Scripture defines angels as ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14). Angels are messengers who also serve the saints, but before they served the saints they served the Lord Jesus from His incarnation to His ascension. In our brief meditation, we shall see something of the character of angels and how among other things, they comfort, reassure, support and strengthen those they are sent to.

The Announcement of Jesus' Birth

We do not begin with the Lord's birth but with the announcement of His birth. God's chosen person to bear the Christ child was the virgin Mary. The angel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God (Lk 1:19), was chosen to take God's message to Mary. Gabriel starts with a salutation, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women (Lk 1:28). The salutation's opening words declare the status of Mary, she is highly favoured, she is blessed among women. Clearly she was disturbed by

this heavenly visitor and what he had to say. Even the God-given endorsement of her status did not settle her. Gabriel, recognising Mary's fear, tells her to "fear not". There was good reason for this as she had "found favour with God". Gabriel then tells her she is to bear a son, Jesus, who will be the Son of the Highest. Mary understood these words in an earthly way and because of her virginal and unmarried state, she could not imagine how such a thing could happen. Gabriel explains that this Child will have a supernatural conception and will be called the Son of God. If there were any doubts in Mary's mind as to the possibility of this, Gabriel cites the pregnancy of her cousin Elizabeth, thus showing that with God nothing shall be impossible (Lk 1:37). Mary's reaction to this, despite the stigma of being a single woman and pregnant, was one of complete obedience. The message of the birth of Jesus having been duly delivered and God's word having accomplished what He intended it to, Gabriel left Mary and as far as we know, she never saw an angel again.

Joseph, who was engaged to Mary, did not see an angel as Mary did. Joseph saw an angel in a dream. Joseph, who was perplexed over his betrothed wife and her pregnancy, was assured by the angel that, contrary to what he may have thought, the child that Mary was bearing was conceived of the Holy Spirit and further, he was to take Mary as his wife. Joseph, being an honourable and obedient man, married Mary.

We see here then that there were two different angels sent to announce the conception and birth of Jesus, thus fulfilling the legal requirement of two or three witnesses for a matter to be established (Deut 19:15)

Jesus' Birth & His Early Life

An angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds in a field on the night of Jesus' birth. The shepherds were afraid when they saw the angel and the glory of the Lord that shone around them. As with Mary, the angel spoke the words of comfort, fear not, to the shepherds. He then told them of the birth of Christ the Lord. As the angel finished telling the shepherds the good news of the birth of Christ, the Lord, he was joined by a multitude of other heavenly beings singing praises to God for His unspeakable gift (Lk 2:9-14). We note that the original announcement of the birth of Christ to Mary was on a one-to-one level, that is one angel to one person. With Joseph, it was in a dream. Here there was one angel to several shepherds, then a multitude of heavenly host witnessed to the birth. The original news was quite private, but now the news was made public.

The wise men from the east were looking for the one who has been born King of the Jews (Mt 2:2), so it was natural that they went to king Herod. However, Herod clearly intended to do harm to the child Jesus. Although Herod had arranged with the wise men to tell him the location of Jesus, they were warned in a dream by God



not to return to Herod so they went to their own country another way (Matt 2:12). Joseph was warned of the impending danger in a dream by an angel, arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. (Mt 2:13) Having already seen an angel in a dream before, Joseph knew that this was a messenger with a message from God that was totally reliable. He obeyed the message and went to Egypt, thus escaping Herod's ensuing massacre of the innocence. After Herod's death, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream while he, Mary and the child Jesus were in Egypt. The angel, in the dream, told Joseph that it was now safe to return to Israel. Joseph had an encounter with an angel in a dream on three occasions.

The Temptations of Jesus

Jesus had fasted for 40 days and nights in the wilderness prior to his confrontation with Satan who tempted Him three times (Mt 4:1-10, Lk 4:1-13). At the end of what must have been an exhausting time, angels ministered unto Jesus (Mk 4:11). Here is where His heavenly Father provides heavenly messengers to minister to His Son's needs (cf also 1 Ki 19:7).

Angels in Jesus' Teaching

The Lord Jesus gives us some insight into the function of angels. Angels are going to play a large role at the end of the age. Angels will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt 24:31) when they come with the Son of Man in His power and glory (Matt 24:30, 16:27, Lk 9:26). Angels will be the reapers at the end of age who gather not only the elect but also the tares to be burned in the fire (Matt 13:40).

The angels in heaven rejoice at a person's conversion (Lk 15:10). Children, at least, have an angel in heaven who beholds the Father's face (Mt 18:10). Some have taken this to mean we all have guardian angels, but this may be going beyond what we read in scripture.

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Angels are a part of the heavenly company who will hear the confession of the Lord Jesus on behalf of those who confess Him before men (Lk 12:8), and equally, it is before the angels that the Lord Jesus will deny any who deny Him on earth (Lk 12:9).

Jesus in Gethsemane

Jesus underwent great agony while praying in Gethsemane. An angel was sent from the Father to strengthen Him (Lk 22:43). The angel was not at the end of the time of prayer but during the time of prayer. After He had been strengthened, Jesus continued to pray (Luke 22:44). And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Jesus had the Father's ear as it were for He could ask the Father and the Father would send more than twelve legions of angels to His help, if required. We see that the angels are under the command of the Father. The Father would willingly send them to help His Son, if it were necessary. The Lord Jesus did not call on the angels as that was not part of the Father's will for our salvation. There was no other way for our salvation (Mt 26:53-54).

The Resurrection of Jesus

Angels were present at the resurrection of Jesus. It was an angel who rolled away the stone that sealed the tomb of Jesus (Mt 28:2). His appearance was such that the Roman guards were terrified and collapsed as dead. It would seem that when believers meet angels, there is not this kind of fear. We would suggest that these Roman soldiers were far from God and a messenger from the presence of God would indeed have this kind of effect on them. We note the air of triumph in the actions of the angel, who sat upon the rock that was rolled away. He sat there, probably waiting for the women to come to the tomb of Jesus. When the women came an angel told them not to fear. (This seems to be a common salutation of an angel!) The angel then announced the good news to them that the tomb was empty and that Christ was risen. They were invited to see the evidence for themselves (Mt 28:5,6). The angel instructed them to go and tell the disciples the good news also. Luke adds more detail in that there was not one angel but two of them, both appearing in shining white raiment.

The Ascension

Jesus was taken up into heaven by a cloud (see Lk 24:51, Acts 1:9). There were two angels present at the ascension to tell the disciples that this same Jesus would return. These words of comfort and reassurance would have strengthened the disciples in their faith. It was not going to be another Jesus who would return, but this same Jesus (Acts 1:10,11). Jesus says that when He returns, He will come again with the clouds of heaven and with angels (Matt 16:27, 25:31).

Ernie Abbott ■



The mission team at Angkor Wat

Mission Trip To Cambodia

I visited Cambodia for the first time from 29 Nov to 5 Dec 2002. It was my first mission trip. I did not know what to expect, neither did I know what I would see in Cambodia. As I prepared for the trip, I prayed that the Lord will give me eyes to observe and a heart to understand as many precious lessons as He would teach me from this trip. The Lord had indeed answered my prayers.

The team comprised of Kian Huat and family, Andrew Kwan and family, Melvin and myself making a total of 11 members (7 adults and 4 young children). We also enjoyed the happy times together during the trip.

Meeting the Missionaries in Phnom Penh

We arrived at Phnom Penh International Airport after five hours of flight, transiting at Kuala Lumpur. Just as we were clearing the customs, we caught a glimpse of Brother Kim Han Sik's cheery face, as he waved to us excitedly at the exit outside the airport. When we finally cleared the customs, Brother Kim greeted us with his warmest greetings. And although it was the first time meeting Brother Kim, his warm greetings made me feel as though we have known each other for many years. Along with Brother Kim at the airport were Brother Som An (a Cambodian co-worker with Kim), and Brother Philip An (who was commended by an assembly in Chicago, USA).

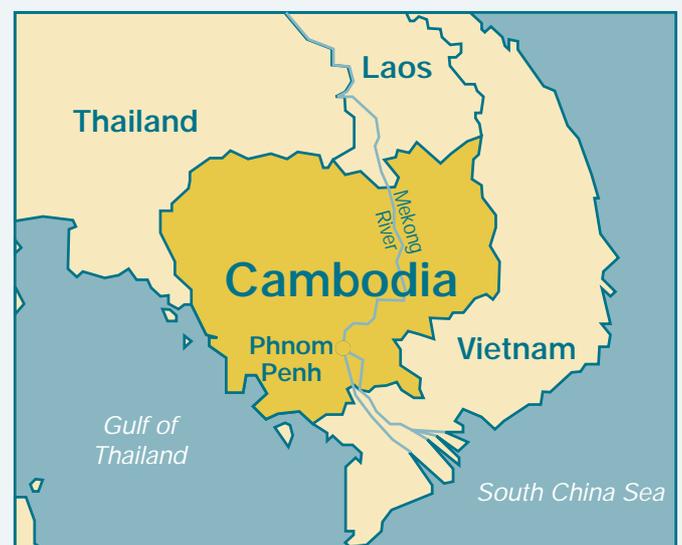
Brother Kim Han Sik was commended by Kimchon Assembly, S Korea and moved to Cambodia in July 1994 (9 years ago). He is also the school master of the Canaan Technical School that he set up as the means to make contacts with the Cambodian and reached them with the Gospel.

Philip An arrived in Cambodia in February 2002 and lives in Sihanoukville (Kampong-som), located 4 hours from Phnom Penh by bus. He plans to start an orphanage to reach the homeless children with the gospel. He had made the trip to Phnom Penh to help as the translator during our visit.

The Canaan Technical School

We had most of our meals at Brother Kim's house, all prepared with love by sister Hannah (Mrs Kim) and sister Mihee (Mrs An). Brother Kim stays in the school which he started in 1994. The Canaan Technical School provides free courses, teaching the locals useful skills such as sewing, and Korean language. Every batch of the Korean class has about 50 students and the sewing class has 30 students. Each batch will have a 2 hour session on every weekday for 3 months. During these times, the teachers will also share the Gospel with them and invite them to the assembly meetings. Those who responded were added to the assembly fellowship. Sister Hannah is the Korean language teacher and two Cambodian sisters teach the sewing classes.

Through the many conversations we had with Brother Kim during meal times, I could sense his burning desire to present the gospel to the Cambodian people in their Khmer language. He had spent the early years in language study so that he is able to communicate with them effectively.



Indeed, I was reminded of the Lord's Commission before His ascension "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost". Matt 28:19. Brother Kim has left a deep impression on me, the greatest of which is to see that he is not just a learner and hearer of the Word, but a doer of the Word (James 1:23).

The Boeng Trobaek Assembly (Phnom Penh)

We visited the Boeng Trobaek assembly on the first night. The assembly had arranged for special ministry meetings which were taken



Kim Han Sik & Hannah

by brother Kian Huat. Once again, we were very warmly greeted by the members of the assembly. At the start of every meeting, the brothers & sisters would present a song item. The hymns they sang were all well known ones, but what made it different was that they sang the Khmer lyrics from their hearts. Without any instrumental accompaniment, the singing was very sweet and melodious. I could sense that they sang with much appreciation. I was reminded of Col 3:16 "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord". One of the hymns they sang really pulled at my heart strings - "I serve a risen Savior". As I reflect on the many hardships these Cambodians faced - many lost their loved ones in the infamous "Killing Fields" only several years ago - their faith in the Almighty God was by no means small. It is very amazing how they can rejoice despite of severe hardships, "He lives! He lives! . . . you ask me how I know He lives? HE lives within my heart!"

Although the assembly was small in number (with about 40 in fellowship), I was reminded that it only takes two or three in a meeting, and the Lord promised to be in their midst. The Lord was definitely there! Everyone could feel His presence as the Centre of the gathering of the saints at Boeng Trobaek.



Phillip An & Mihee

I was greatly encouraged to see how the brothers & sisters diligently searched Scriptures and took notes as they listened attentively to the messages. When given a passage to read, the assembly would read it aloud, with one voice. They were all very quick to flip to the references during the ministry, and they never ceased to write down whatever the speaker said. I was greatly

challenged, seeing how they hunger for the Word. My mind was drawn to think of the noble Bereans who received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). Over there, it seemed almost as though the assembly was never constrained by time. Although the meetings ended at 9:30 pm, many would stay behind to ask brother Kian Huat questions on many verses in the Bible. What really struck me was that most of them stayed in villages far from the Assembly, and most had to return home on foot, with no street lamps to guide them. Still, many returned home only after they had their

questions answered. I wish that I had this same desire to read His Word?

Visiting a Believer's Home

On one of the afternoons, we visited Bro Soozhou, a brother from the assembly. Bro Kim told us how this brother had given his life to Christ and how he had changed his ways since then. It was encouraging to hear his testimony that the Lord helped him to break the addiction to the drinking habit that was ruining his life and career as a primary school teacher. Through his daughter, he heard the gospel and trusted in the Lord Jesus. Ever since he gave his life to Christ, he has always shared the glorious Gospel to the little children in his class.

Even though the school master had given him several warnings, Bro Soozhou never ceased to proclaim the Gospel. So instead of doing it in school, he invites them to his house. I prayed that the Lord also grant me the desire to share the precious Gospel with those in my school and work place.

As we arrived at his kampong house, we witnessed a "regional fellowship" group having Bible study. Apparently, believers living in that Kampong gathered weekly at his house to have fellowship and study the Bible. Brother Andrew gave a few words of encouragement at the gathering. He comforted their hearts (especially for brother Suzhuo) from 2 Tim 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."



Jo Dong Hyun & Eun Jin



Fellowship Time

During our short stay in Phnom Penh, we spent many hours learning about the ministry and life-style of the missionaries. The meal time was usually extended by many hours as we enjoyed the fellowship, encouraging one another with our experiences in the Lord.

The missionaries shared many personal experiences from serving the Lord in Cambodia. There were many tears and heartaches. It was never easy to live in a different culture having to endure the harsh climate and learn the new language. Besides there were also struggles for their children's education too. Through it all, they could rejoice in the Lord because they testified that great is His faithfulness! I learnt about practical faith from their lives, especially of how the Lord provided for their every need.

Every one in the team also shared what they have learnt from the visit. Our simple sharing had encouraged one another in the Lord. We were all challenged to pray for one another.



Johnathan Chua

Visit to Siem Reap

After 4 days in Phnom Penh, the team proceeded to Siem Reap to meet up with Brother Jo Dong Hyun and his family. Brother Jo was commended by Su Jung Assembly in Sung Nam, S. Korea and arrived in Cambodia 4 years ago. He moved to Siem Reap 2 1/2 years ago.

Although I had not seen him before, from the photographs and from the description by brother Kian Huat, brother Jo had lost a lot of weight. When asked why, he replied that it was extremely hard to get used to the living conditions in Cambodia. Yet the Lord sustained him and by grace, he and his family are now in better health.

I had also learned how to enjoy Christian fellowship in Phnom Penh, so likewise, we seized every opportunity to ask him about the work, the Lord's blessings, etc. He also shared with us many heartbreaking experiences of losses through burglary; the greatest loss was when three members of the assembly were disciplined and had left the assembly recently. I could almost see tears in his eyes as he requested us to pray for them.

I was glad to meet brother Somol, his Cambodian co-worker. Together, these two brothers are able to present the Gospel effectively to the students that enrolled in their Korean language school known as "Canaan School". Brother Somol is very fluent in the Khmer language and is a powerful gospel preacher.

The Siem Reap Assembly

Despite the recent problems, there are 13 in fellowship at the Siem Reap Assembly. We had a special ministry meeting where brother Andrew shared the word to the believers.

The team also gave a song item with little Ryan accompanying on the violin. After the meeting, we had dinner together with the assembly members.

Do pray for the restoration of the 3 believers. The temptation to work on Sunday as tour guides had drawn some believers away from the meetings. Pray also for the gospel outreach to the students and that many will be saved and be added to the assembly.

Pray for Cambodia

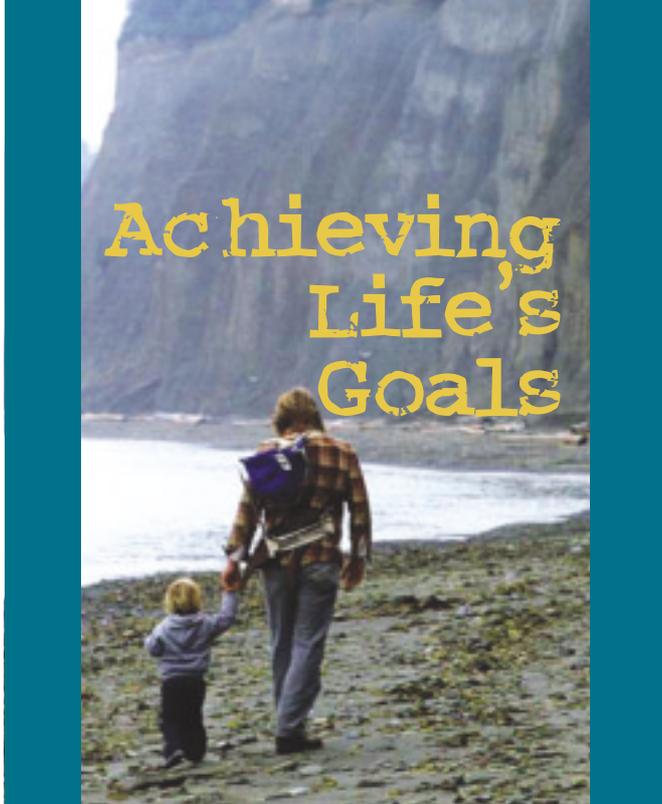
All the missionaries that I met there had one thing in common. They had a burning passion to proclaim the Gospel to the Cambodians. I recall what Bro Phil shared with me when we were on a trip sailing down the Mekong river. Thrusting out his hand and pointing afar at the poor villagers living by the banks of river, he said with deep conviction, "My mission in Cambodia, is to get as many of them as I can into the kingdom of Heaven". I could sense his heart beat, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Cambodia is, that they might be saved." – Rom 10:1.

What really amazed me especially is the testimonies of the missionaries and their callings. They were so willing to forsake all to serve the Lord in a country where living conditions are so poor. There was no turning back when the Lord called them, and even when physical illness set in, they did not murmur. How great and practical is their faith in God, how deep and real is their love for Him. They came to Cambodia, not with silver or gold for these poor locals, but to give them something much more precious – the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The work in Cambodia has grown, only because the Lord started it through them and sustained them daily. The missionaries continued to trust in the Lord, steadfastly, persevering in all circumstances, rejoicing and never doubting His great faithfulness.

This trip to Cambodia has left me many deep impressions. It brought me great challenges and taught me many precious lessons. I remember our prayers at the airport before we left for Cambodia. "That even though our short trip will not change Cambodia, Cambodia will change us, forever." I will be praying for Cambodia.

Jonathan Chua ■

Achieving Life's Goals



It has been well noted that the typical Singaporean looks for the 5 Cs: a condominium, credit card, cash, country club membership, and a car. Underlying those 5Cs is the deeper universal human desire for money, fame and power. When I asked the BTC 2 class members what do they looked for in life, the reply was: career, good health, a happy family and to worship God. No doubt Christian values acquired through years of walk with the Lord moderated their life goals.

As I pondered upon this topic, I cannot help but think of another disciple whose life goals were dramatically changed and shaped by his walk with the Lord: Paul. Whilst preparing for this short talk delivered to the BTC 2 class on 9 March, the Spirit brought my mind to Phil 3: 7–13, which dovetailed seamlessly with BTC 2's memory text for the day, 2 Tim 4:7. Read both passages and you will know what I mean.

Paul was well connected to the Jewish religious and political circles, well educated and, probably, from a wealthy family (Phil 3: 5–6; Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1–2). Yet, when the Lord touched him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3), his life was completely changed. Subsequent years of close walk with the Lord produced a life so powerful, there is without a doubt he was, and still is, the most influential apostle in so far as the spread of Christianity throughout the world is concerned. He treated his background and all that he had achieved up to the point of his conversion as rubbish or as dung (Phil 3:7). And what was his life's ambition? To know Christ in a personal way, to experience the power of His resurrection, and to share in the fellowship of His suffering (Phil 3:10). To be sure, he must have attained those goals to a great degree when he penned those words. Yet, using athletic imagery to express his zeal, he was humble enough to say there was more to strive for (Phil 3: 12–13). 'Philippians' was written around AD 61, during the time of his first imprisonment. He had great hope that he would be released, and that great work laid ahead of him. Even then, he did not just sit under

house arrest and do nothing. Corresponding versus in Act 28: 30–31 tell us that he preached Christ to all he came into contact with, most probably the palace guard and other visitors whom he received from time to time (Phil 1: 12–13).

Commentators mentioned that 'Philippians' was Paul's most personal letter. The church at Philippi was the first church he started in Europe – during his second missionary journey – and twice visited during his third missionary journey. He knew many church members personally and the church had a very good relationship with him. This could explain the extremely personal nature of his writing and thoughts, and the outpouring of his heart and emotion through this letter. Reading through those key versus (Phil 3: 7–14) in the stillness of the night, I could not help but feel the intense emotion in those words. Here was a man whose life was deeply, emotionally and passionately committed to the task God had set for him. Paul, as we know, was a missionary. He never intended to say we should all be one. But he did want to communicate that whatever vocation God has called us to, we ought to perform our duties with the same intensity and passion, the same sense of calling that he approached his. And, one might add, use every opportunity to preach Christ to the unsaved, the way he seized opportunities to preach to the prison guards.

William Koh ■

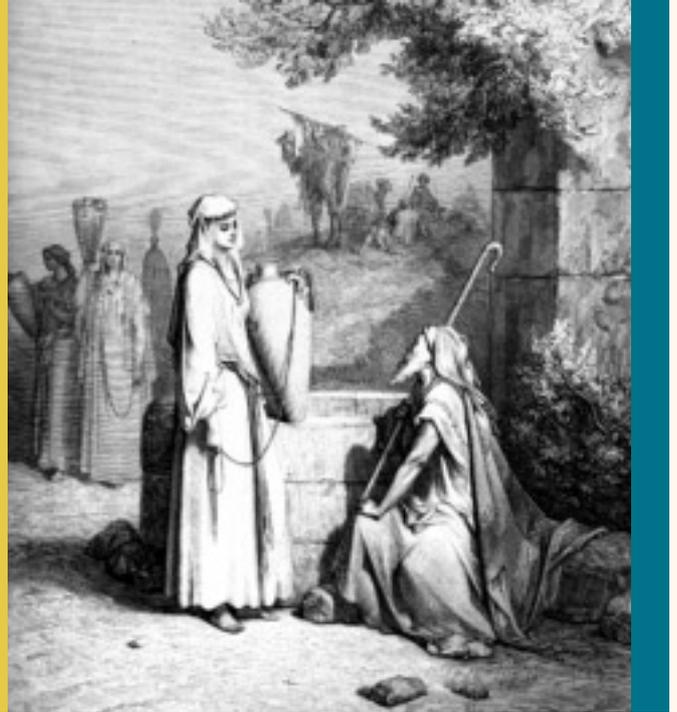
Did that encounter on the road to Damascus account for Paul's state of mind as he penned those stirring words that set the benchmark for our life goals? Powerful and dramatic though it was, by itself it could not have accounted for Paul's passion and zeal. Damascus was the starting point, but more likely those life goals were shaped by a subsequent journey of constant reading God's Word, of prayer, of fellowshiping with His people, and reflection of what it meant to be a true disciple of Christ.

In life, we often look for road maps to give us direction in our earthly sojourn. And then we look for role models who have walked that road before us, who inspire us by showing that a life totally dedicated to Christ is not an illusive dream but a real possibility. We have the Holy Spirit, we have the Bible and we have Paul; we should arrive at the same destination God meant for every Christian: to know Christ, the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. ■

“Serving with Sincerity”

The Loyal Servant

(Gen. 24) Part B



4 Entrusted to honour the Master's name

Eighteen times in this chapter, Eliezer uses the words, “my master.” It was the inspiring theme of his life, to serve Abraham.

a) Honour through humbling

Eliezer took every opportunity afforded him to honour Abraham's name. He could have made a name for himself with all the power and authority that he wielded. Well could he have said I am Abraham's ambassador, or I am the chief executive of the tribe of Abraham. He does not even care to mention his own name, but simply emphasises his servanthood.

Today we have some high profile preachers who delight to display their names and qualities on billboards and magazines, who make sure that a measure of glory comes their way. Such have a self-serving ministry, and their aim seems to be to store up prestige and riches. Not so the true servant of God. The great Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, calls himself the bond-slave of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1) and declares that he was “less than the least.” Likewise James who was by birth the half-brother of Jesus makes no reference to his royal connections but calls himself also a servant of Jesus Christ.

b) Honour through exalting

All through this amazing venture Eliezer is always exalting Abraham. How he loved to pray these words, “my master, Abraham.” So long as Abraham was honoured and lifted up, his servant was fully content. Do we always consider the honour of His name our primary goal? Or do we sometimes try to boost up our own reputation before others. It is not always easy to fade into the background and let the Lord have all the glory, but it is the way of the loyal servant. King Solomon became great in the sight of men. His pomp and power exceeded all other earthly kings. The Queen of Sheba, a very discerning lady came to Jerusalem because she heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord (1 Kings 10:1). She looked past the servant, to

the heavenly Master and said “blessed be the Lord, your God.” Earlier, Solomon delighted in calling himself God's servant (1 Kings 3:7,8,9). Later, power seemed to have gone to his head and he no longer acted as a humble servant of Almighty God but as a potentate following the dictates of his own heart. “His heart was not loyal to the Lord his God” (1 Kings 10:4). “He did not fully follow the Lord his God” (1 Kings 11:6).

5 Entrusted to expedite the Master's plan

Abraham had made his plans very clear to his servant. He wanted the right bride from the right place at the right time.

a) A Divine plan

This was a marriage that was planned in heaven. Abraham the first patriarch successor. All plans must be according to the fore-ordained will of God. Eliezer must be so careful to carry out the will of Abraham who in turn must know the will of God. “I being in the way, the Lord led me” was the delighted comment of the servant. The greatest satisfaction any believer will have is to know he has done the will of God. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” is a prayer that needs to be constantly prayed. The Lord's plans are always so superior to our own for they always bring glory to God. Jeremiah reminds those in captivity in Babylon of a great change about to happen as he encourages them from God's word: “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future, and a hope” (Jer. 29:11).

b) A Difficult plan

It seemed almost an impossibility that Abraham's plan would meet with total success. After all the servant must make a long journey to contact an obscure family in an unfamiliar country, and find the right kind of bride who would be willing to go on a difficult journey to



marry a man she had never seen or even heard of before. It is the Devil's practice to frustrate the plans of God and anything he could do to confuse the issue would be his great delight. Against all odds the right girl is found and she is willing to go. Now begins the difficult journey and no doubt dangers lurked along the road. But the servant was committed to deliver his precious "treasure" to Isaac. Again the Lord proved His faithfulness every step of the way. "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord" (Ps. 37:33).

c) Delightful plan

No doubt Rebekah had great delight along the way hearing of the virtues of the beloved son as related by Eliezer. At the same time Isaac was waiting in expectancy and with prayerfulness for his chosen bride to come. And when the journey was finally ended the two chosen ones had a delightful meeting in the fields. Rebekah in her humility alights from the camel and veils her glory. Isaac in his sincerity leads her into the family wedding tent and love consummates their union. It was a wonderful day with everything going according to plan. The journey that began in faith, went on in hope, and ended up in love. God's plans always turn out best in the end. "All this wisdom comes from the Lord Almighty. The plans God makes are wise and always succeed" (Isa. 28:29 G.N.B.). Let us remember that we too have been commissioned to carry out the Lord's plans. "Go" He says, "and make disciples of all nations." "And lo, I am with you always." It is both a challenging and a comforting word from the Lord. God's call to carry out His will is always accompanied by God's empowering. Our responsibility is to keep in touch with heaven and be sensitive to the leading of the Lord even in the little details. The Lord has never led any one astray!

Conclusion

Eliezer, the loyal servant was given a task to perform which he faithfully and carefully carried out. His utter dedication could not be faulted. He reported back to Isaac all that he had done (v.66) but no doubt when he returned to his master, Abraham, and said the same thing, he heard those glorious words, "well done thou good and faithful servant." This was the only reward he really wanted. For in fulfilling his ministry he had brought great honour to his master and soul satisfaction to himself. Loyalty is servant-love lived out for the Master. The Lord is worthy of our best dedicated obedience.

*// Go labour on, spend and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Father's will,
It is the way the Master went,
Should not the servant tread it still? //*

Alfred Chote ■

All Glory, Laud and Honour



*All glory, laud and honour, to Thee, Redeemer, King
To whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring;
Thou art the King of Israel, Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest, the King and blessed One!*

*The company of angels, are praising Thee on high,
And mortal men and all things created make reply:
The people of the Hebrews with palms before Thee went;
Our praise and prayer and anthems before Thee we present.*

*To Thee, before Thy passion, they sang their hymns of praise;
To Thee, now high exalted, our melody we raise:
Thou didst accept their praises, Thou David's royal Son,
Who in all good delightest, Thou good and gracious King!*

Thoedulph of Orleans, 760 – 821.
Melchor Teschner, 1584 – 1635. ■

Footprints



One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.

“Lord, You said that once I decided to follow You, You’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed You most You would leave me.”

The Lord replied, “My son, My precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.” ■

Bethesda Hall (Ang Mo Kio) 2003 Speakers & Chairmen List

Morning Ministry				Tuesday Prayer Meeting		
Gospel Service					Galatians	
2003	Speaker	Speaker	Chairman	2003	Galatians	Speaker
6th Apr	Kenneth Wong	Tan Kian Huat	Daniel Thein	1st Apr	3:15-18	Edmund Yong
13th Apr	Kenneth Wong	Tan Kian Huat	Lee Kam Wing	8th Apr	3:19-22	Lee Poh Heng
20th Apr	Fred Kosin	Fred Kosin	Lee Kam Wing	15th Apr	3:23-25	Jeffrey Yap
27th Apr	Eric Choa	Samuel Wee	Lee Chong Kiat	22nd Apr	3:26-29	Loo Wee Boon
4th May	Harry Tan	Charles Linggam	Alex Kwok	29th Apr	4:1-7	Chua Teck Koon
11th May	Harry Tan	Mau Teck Hwee	Melvin Foo	6th May	4:8-11	Erik Erh
18th May	Wong Kok Seng	Aaron Wong	Chua Teck Koon	13th May	4:12-15	Alex Matthews
25th May	Wong Kok Seng	Wong Peng Sang	Ng Lee Peng	20th May	4:16-20	George Varughese
1st Jun	Lawrence Chan	Collin Leong	Lim Yi Jia	27th May	4:21-23	Stephen Chang
8th Jun	Roy Hill	Roy Hill	Tan Chee Hwee	3rd Jun	4:24-27	Roy Hill
15th Jun	Roy Hill	Roy Hill	Mau Teck Hwee	10th Jun	4:28-31	Sim Chear Wah
22nd Jun	Khoo Oon Soo	Sum Siew Tak	Jeremy Wee	17th Jun	5:1-6	Kurien Kurian
29th Jun	Khoo Oon Soo	Chan Man Wong	Ho Kuang Cheng	24th Jun	5:7-12	Andrew Prem Sundar