

ately believed” (cited by Brother Alfred Nicholls in *The Spirit of God*, p. 110, 1976 edition).

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The letters by brethren Walding and Bartholomew both express some disquiet that I should have so closely identified Jesus’s words in John 6, relating to his flesh and blood, with the bread and wine of our Lord’s Table. Rather they prefer to think of the words used by Jesus, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you”, as the imbibing of his words. With that aspect I have no argument, and when I partake of the emblems I rehearse those thoughts in my own mind.

It seems strange to me that there should be any problem here. Jesus stated, “the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (v. 51), and clearly he spoke of his death upon the cross, which he was in a short time to accomplish. Why then should there be any doubt that, when a little later Jesus instituted this memorial using the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood, he intended them to relate back to his earlier words?

Jesus was our Passover Lamb offered once for all. But compare with his offering the Passover lambs offered year by year under the Law, which had the prohibition attached to the eating of the animal’s blood. And why was the blood forbidden them? It must have been to tell them of the inadequacy of their offering, which could not bring for them eternal redemption. But the blood of Jesus’s offering, or, we might say, the life which Jesus gave, did provide eternal redemption. It seems to me for it to be right, therefore, as we share in the memorial of our Passover Lamb, that we see in the bread and wine symbols of the flesh and blood of Jesus as described in this sixth chapter of John.—*B.G.S.*

The catacombs

Brother Dennis Elliott’s letter ([Dec. 2002, p. 451](#)) has confirmed my own studies of the matter, which I have converted into a slide lecture.

In order to help sceptical friends who have difficulty in accepting the reliability of the Bible, we often point to the remarkable accuracy of Bible prophecy and the way it has been fulfilled, presenting archaeological evidence to prove the point. Typical examples would be Jeremiah’s

prophecies concerning Babylon, Ezekiel’s words about Tyre or, even more dramatically, Nahum’s prophecies concerning Nineveh and Assyria.

In dealing with the latter subject, for example, we first set the historical context from the Second Book of Kings, then move to the explicit prophecies of Isaiah and Nahum. Having shown what God said *would* happen, we proceed to show visually what *did* happen by means of photographs of the site of Nineveh today, the sketches and records of the Victorian diplomat-archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard, and the burnt wall slabs from Nineveh on display at the British Museum.

We can apply the same process to Babylon, showing the historical background from the Bible, then the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jeremiah 50 and 51, as dramatically confirmed by pictures from the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, or, perhaps even more dramatically, by the failed, futile attempts of Saddam Hussein, in his self-delusionary role as Nebuchadnezzar Mark II, to rebuild the city of Babylon, a failure which confirms the truth of Jeremiah 51:64. Again, Ezekiel’s prophecies concerning Tyre can likewise be set in historic context before showing photographs of nothing more than the waves breaking on the submerged offshore ruins of the ancient city, showing the fulfilment of Ezekiel 26:19-21.

But can we demonstrate with the aid of archaeology what the early Christians believed if our friends are reluctant to believe the Bible records? One way of doing this is to visit the catacombs on the outskirts of Rome, as my wife and I did a year or two ago. There one learns that the early Christians thought much as the brethren and sisters today. If you visit your local cemetery you will find headstones featuring angels with wings, inscriptions about how the deceased has gone to heaven or has ‘yielded to the home call from above’, whereas Christadelphian headstones will often refer to the grave’s occupant being asleep in the Lord, awaiting resurrection at the return of Christ.

Likewise, among the 600 miles of underground catacombs, one will come across crude sketches bearing evidence of belief in the covenants of promise, the hope of redemption or the promises of salvation. Photographing such pictures is extremely difficult, but from certain nineteenth-century books on the subject it is possible to get pictures of, for example, Jacob crossing his arms and blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses crossing the Red Sea and later striking the rock,

Daniel surrounded by lions, his three friends in the fiery furnace, Jonah, Elijah, Jesus carrying a lamb, Jesus and the disciples breakfasting upon the seashore and many more besides. One such book is *The Catacombs of Rome* by Benjamin Scott, described as “the substance of lectures originally delivered before an audience of working men in London”, in the 1890s.

What is equally interesting, however, is to learn that it was not until the fourth century that pictures began to appear bearing halos, crosses, Madonnas, Trinitarian symbology and all the paraphernalia of the apostate church. Might this be a remarkable reflection of the Constantinian earthquake of conversion to pseudo-Christianity (Rev. 6:12-17)?

What makes such a visit even more impressive is to bear in mind the accounts in Acts and

Romans of what Paul actually preached while he was in Rome. The ecclesia in Rome was a multi-cultural, multiracial group, as is evidenced by the twenty-seven Greek, Latin and Jewish names on the ecclesial roll, as noted in Romans 16. It was to people such as these that Paul “expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening” (Acts 28:23). It is true that he did not convince everybody (v. 24), but one is prompted to wonder why it is that, if Paul found prophecy so useful in preaching the gospel, more ecclesias do not make greater use of Old Testament promises and prophecies in their gospel proclamation activities.

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Around the Sea of Galilee

3. The fishermen

Tony Benson

ABOUT HALFWAY along the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee is a kibbutz called En Gev, founded in 1937. It nestles under the steep slopes of the Golan Heights, and from the War of Independence in 1948 until the Six-Day War of 1967 it was the subject of regular shelling by the Syrians from the heights above. The Israeli conquest of the Golan Heights in the Six-Day War brought peace. Now it has a popular hotel, where visitors stay in chalets or mobile homes under date palms and eucalyptus trees by the edge of the lake.

It is a lovely experience to spend some time here, overlooking the lake on which some of the disciples of Christ earned their living and over which they and their Master often sailed. In the course of a number of stays here I have experienced the calmness of the lake at sunrise, with pied kingfishers hovering over the water and a little egret standing sentinel by the water's edge;

supper overlooking the lake on a balmy evening with the sun setting behind the hills opposite; then, as darkness draws on, the lights of Tiberias opposite cascading down the slope like a waterfall; a stormy night, with the wind soughing in the trees and the rain lashing at the windows, provoking thoughts of Jesus and the disciples out on the lake in such fear-producing conditions.

En Gev is the home of Mendel Nun, who was born in Latvia in 1918, emigrated to Israel in 1939, and has lived at the kibbutz since 1941. He has become the greatest expert on the Sea of Galilee in all its aspects. His book about the lake is available only in Hebrew, but two booklets in English are available locally, *The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament* and *Sea of Galilee: Newly Discovered Harbours from New Testament Days* (both published in 1989), and he has written articles in *Biblical Archaeology*