

Newsletter

Central Allegheny Region of CBC

Looking back at 2023



The Authority of the Word in Our Lives

By Grover Duling, Central Allegheny Region Executive Board

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." - 2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)

In a world filled with shifting opinions, ever-changing ideologies, and the clamor of countless voices, it becomes increasingly important for believers to understand and embrace the authority of the Word of God in our lives. The Bible, the living Word of God, holds an unmatched position as the ultimate source of truth and guidance. It is in the pages of Scripture that we find wisdom, comfort, and the revelation of God's plan for us.

The authority of the Word is not a human construct, but it is divinely inspired. The apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all Scripture is God-breathed. Every word, every verse, and every

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Full Board Meeting January 28, 2024

book of the Bible carries the imprint of the divine. It is through the inspired Word that God speaks directly to our hearts, guiding us in every aspect of life.

The authority of the Word is not limited to the past or specific historical context; rather, it transcends time and culture. The truths contained within its pages are timeless, relevant, and applicable to our lives today. The Bible provides us with God's unchanging standards of morality, ethics, and principles that guide us in our relationships, decisions, and actions.

When we acknowledge the authority of the Word, we position ourselves under its transformative power. The Scriptures are not meant to be read casually or treated as a mere collection of stories. Instead, they are intended to be studied, meditated upon, and applied to our lives. As we internalize God's Word, it shapes our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors, aligning us with God's perfect will.

The authority of the Word enables us to discern truth from falsehood. In a world that often promotes deceptive philosophies and misleading doctrines, the Word serves as a compass, pointing us in the right direction. It guards us against deception, provides clarity in times of confusion, and exposes the schemes of the enemy. As Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

"ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED AND IS USEFUL FOR TEACHING, REBUKING, CORRECTING AND TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS." - 2 TIMOTHY 3:16 (NIV)

Let us, therefore, approach the Word of God with reverence and humility, recognizing its supreme authority over our lives. Let us study it diligently, allowing it to penetrate our hearts, and transform our minds. As we meditate on its truths, let us be obedient to its teachings, knowing that it is through obedience that we experience the blessings of God.

As you continue on your journey through life, may the authority of the Word be your guiding light, your source of wisdom, and your foundation for faith. Remember the

psalmist's words: "Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path" (Psalm 119:105). May the authority of the Word continually shape and direct your steps, bringing you closer to the heart of God and the fulfillment of His purpose for your life.

Camp Hope Update

By Jackie Henderson, Camp Manager



We have just ended our summer camps for 2023. I do believe these have been the most productive camps we have had in some time. The spirit of the camp was very peaceful and spiritual. The theme this year for all the camps was Living the Fruit of the Spirit in Today's World.

The youth camp met from Sunday 07/09/23 till Thursday 07/13/23. We closed with a family dinner where the families were invited to join us for the evening dinner before taking the children home. We had 12 teens and of those 6 accepted Christ into their heart. During the week the director, Pastor Kevin Leadbeater, was very in tune with each camper as an individual and really connected with them. There was a dramatic storyteller and a message from a member of the Christian Motorcycle Association. Along with the devotions, Pastor Kevin had praise and worship songs that they enjoyed very much. Each camper was given a very nice Study Bible. There were hatchet throwing contests and football throwing contests and the winners were given tickets they could redeem for candy bars. A hike, crafts, water slide and of course campfire were also enjoyed. One boy and one girl were also

presented with a golden egg, with \$20.00 inside, for showing the best Christian character during camp.

The Junior camp was directed by Pastor Tammy Phillips and was held from Sunday 07/16/23 to Thursday 07/20/23. We had 16 campers for the Junior camp. Pastor Tammy had wonderful classes with workbooks she had made. There were questions and puzzles that required them to get into the word, teaching them how to look up passages and use the Bible. The children were very interactive with her during the class and devotions. The children also were asked to lead prayers and they stepped up for that also. Pastor Tammy had a very good way of teaching that they could really grasp the point of the lesson and how it relates to our life's day to day. There were 12 children who received Christ and were given a certificate at our closing program. We had a police officer come on Wednesday to speak about internet safety and social media. The kids really liked it and were very open to discussion and asked a lot of questions. He then took them up to see his police car which they loved. There were games, water slide, crafts, and campfire as well, but one of the highlights was Miss Gloria in the afternoon. She came with her keyboard and hand bells and taught them songs to reinforce the theme, they were given speaking parts and learned a song on the bells. This musical program was presented to the parents who were with us for dinner on Thursday night. The kids were very good and looked great all dressed in their new camp t-shirts.

The final week from 07/23/23 to 07/26/23 was the Primary camp directed by Myranda McDaniel. We had 12 children, one of which was a 3 year old who came with her sister, she did fine the entire week. Myranda was very good with this age. In consideration of this age groups shorter attention span, she had lots of activities and games to break up the lessons and

devotionals so they were always engaged. On Wednesday they had a movie. One of the crafts was a colorful prayer jar with prayer thoughts on the large popsicle sticks. The children displayed their crafts, had songs and recited scripture at the closing program for the parents. And the children were all presented with a new children's Bible which Myranda had donated. Best of all 3 of these children ask Jesus into their hearts and received a certificate at the program.

There were a total of 40 children. Please do not cease to pray for our youth, the world they live in is so much more perilous than it was even a few years ago and they need the guidance and protection of Christ and the Holy Spirit in their lives in a mighty way. God Bless you all.

Union Rescue Mission

By Andrea Ziler, Assistant Director Union Rescue Mission



The property at 710 N. Centre Street in Cumberland, Maryland, currently known as High Point Furniture Outlet, has officially become the future site of the Union Rescue

Mission of Western Maryland. The physical structure of the current facility is deteriorating as a result of years of withstanding the vibrations from the railroad, with a predicted longevity of between three and five years according to engineers. This new property has blessed the Union Rescue Mission with a vision that can stretch far into the future. Praise God for His provision and for the future He has provided for this ministry! The new property provides better opportunities to serve our residents, including green space, increased square footage, parking areas for volunteers, and increased safety away from the railroad tracks. The increased space will allow for the addition of music and art rooms, and an exercise room to encourage those who lack coping mechanisms, or whose coping mechanisms are self destructive, to develop skills necessary to manage every day stressors. A library with computer access will be constructed, providing a quiet space for those to read and study Christian literature, as well as have internet access. The development of a classroom for on site education (budgeting classes, basic health and hygiene classes, entrepreneurship classes, parenting classes) is another goal. These resources not only provide residents with greater opportunity to learn and change their patterns of life, but also provide volunteer opportunities for the community to serve those in need in areas that have yet to be addressed at the URM. Employment is one of the main goals given to residents within the case management portion of the URM. Lack of job skills, experience, and truly basic patterns that potentiate stability in employment are regular obstacles faced by those served at the Mission. Patterns of life that are developed to maintain employment are not intrinsic in nature but are learned behaviors. The addition of a work rehabilitation program will hopefully assist in developing those patterns. Those who are bodily able to complete job training will select

an area of internship that best suits their interests and serves the greater good. Thus far, five separate job training areas have been identified, including building maintenance, grounds keeping, security, laundry and reception. This program will allow those staying at the URM to receive job training that will better equip them for the workforce and open positions within the Cumberland area, to develop a work history that can be used on applications for future employment, and URM staff can be utilized as professional references for those completing the internship program. It also provides the resident with a sense of accountability, taking responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the URM as their home, not just a temporary bed. The internships will hopefully provide a sense of accomplishment that is often missed when individuals are not productive on a daily basis, encouraging further progression back into the workforce. The sharing and teaching of the Gospel of Christ will always be at the heart and the overarching goal of the Union Rescue Mission. An individual can only experience true change through the power found in Jesus Christ. These future plans are new to the daily workings of the Mission, and our prayer is to make a true impact on those who find themselves as residents at the URM. Please keep the staff of the URM and the Board of Directors in your prayers as we excitedly look toward the future plans for the Union Rescue Mission!

Guatemala Youth Mission Trip



By George Bowers and Craig Howard

A group of 17 teens, young adults and leaders from Covenant Brethren Churches, just returned from a mission trip to Guatemala. While spending the first night with CBC partners Adam and Velma Clemmons in San Lucas, the team was privileged to hear his story and meet

Pastor Walter and Sister Suzie of the Miracle Fishing CBC Congregation.

Following morning devotions overlooking smoking volcanos, the group traveled by bus to Panajachel and then by boat across Lake Atitlan to spend the next several nights with CBC partner Tom Palmer in San Juan La Laguna. The team installed 15 cook stoves for families who had been using unventilated open fires and breathing the toxic smoke. Each stove and home was prayed over after completion.

While assembly was not difficult, the delivery of the concrete and ceramic components along with 11 cinderblocks required muscle and stamina. The adult leaders were thankful for the youthful strength and energy in getting the pieces up and down hillsides, through cornfields, and down narrow alleys. Although five of the stoves were installed in San Pablo, the other ten went to families 1000 feet higher near Santa Clara and Palestina.

The group also packed two tons of foodstuffs into 200 bags and distributed these and 200 Bibles to families in two different churches.

Several of us were moved to tears watching the recipients weep with joy and share hugs and kisses in return. CBC pastors Craig Howard and George Bowers explained through an interpreter that this was food for both body and soul and gave an invitation to salvation.

Some of the group also started repainting the gym at the New Dawning Christian School in San Juan. We also were privileged to share a day of games and fun with the children as well as a hot dog roast. Some team members also assisted in instructing students in learning English. It was apparent the students had a much better grasp of English than we did of Spanish.

Along the way, the group was able to take advantage of incredible sunrises on the lake as

well as tours of Santiago and Panajachel. Others enjoyed a breathtaking zipline higher than most in the US. We also enjoyed traditional



Guatemalan meals and learned to ride Tuk Tuks when not walking up and down hill. We spent the last day in beautiful Antigua beneath Mt. Fuego before flying out on Saturday.

All members shared how they encountered God at various times and places on this trip. Obvious answers to prayer were witnessed in a returned wallet that had been lost (including credit and debit cards) as well as a returned bag and passport from the airport.



Following some mechanical and storm delays on the way back, the group returned about midnight on June 19th thankful for their experiences. Thanks to each of you for your faithful prayers and financial support of the group. Future trips are planned for both adults and youth in 2024 so plan to participate.

“A CALL TO MINISTRY”

- Do you have a burning desire to want to know more about God, and the Scripture?
- Do you feel God working in your heart, leading you to grow?
- Do you feel called to youth ministry, or just want to get involved in a solid Biblically structured training program?
- Do you sense God is working in your heart, maybe to be a pastor or feel called to some other type of church leadership?
- Do you sense the call to ministry, but not quite sure what the next steps are?

The Covenant Brethren Church offers an in-depth training program that can meet all the above-mentioned needs.

Those sensing a call to the set-apart ministry, searching for God’s direction, or any ministry should be in contact with their congregational leadership and regional leadership, discussing this sense of calling. Enrollment in the Ministerial Training Program could be your next step in preparing for the set-apart ministry or spiritual growth. After completing the first four modules in the program you may apply for Licensure through our region. After completing the entire Ministerial Training Program, you may apply for Ordination through our region.

In the chart below, you can see the list of modules being offered through this program.

Modules	Required Credit Hours
The Bible & Theology 1 and 2 (two modules)	2
Sin and Salvation	1
Bible Study and Interpretation	1
Old Testament 1 and 2 (two modules)	2
New Testament 1 and 2 (two modules)	2
Church History	1
Brethren History, Life & Thought	1
Prayer and Spiritual Growth	0.5
Preaching and Teaching	1
Pastoral Ministry	1
Christian Education	0.5
The Church and its Administration	1
Worship	0.5
Evangelism and Outreach	1
The Return of Jesus Christ	<u>0.5</u>
Total number of credits	16

Each module will consist of eight or four classes. Each class will consist of a video lecture, class discussion on the lecture material, quizzes and/or essays, and, for the Christian Education and Worship modules there will be some hands-on experiences.

Logistics and student enrollment will determine how a module is taught. When possible, it is most desirable that students meet together with a mentor for class discussion. When in-person instruction is not possible, students will be organized in groups for remote instruction via Zoom or a similar meeting platform.

Quizzes, essays, and other classwork will be submitted online.

For additional and more detailed information regarding the Covenant Brethren Church Ministry Training Program, please join us at: <https://covenantbrethren.org/training/>



Above: A photo of the group currently enrolled in the Ministerial Training Program in the Central Allegheny Region

Submitted by Thomas Rowan ~ Publication Team Member

Brookside Helping Hands

Submitted by Brad Schmidt, Brookside Church Member



The Brookside Church Helping Hands helped a family in Oakland build a ramp to get their dad in and out of the house. This was a unique ramp because of its size. The ramp had to rise almost 9 feet. The ramp and its platforms are 101 feet long and 4 feet wide. It is constructed on 30- 4 x 4 treated posts. The project took 2-1/2 days to complete. The first Saturday there were 9 members from the church and 5 family members. On the second afternoon/evening, there 5 of us. The next Saturday, 4 of us finished the ramp construction. The family fed us lunch on the 2 Saturdays we worked. We had prayer and fellowship at this time. It is a blessing to be able to use the abilities GOD has given us to help these people in this rough time of their lives. To GOD be the Glory.

Respectfully submitted by Brad Schmidt, Brookside Church Member

Regional Humanitarian Relief Work Team Project

On a crisp August morning several men from the Central Allegheny Region Humanitarian Relief Work Team travelled a few miles outside of Petersburg to build a ramp for an 82-year-old lady who could not move safely in and out of her house. They started a little after nine in the morning but under the direction of Brad Schmidt, one of the team leaders, the 20 foot ramp and porch were built in no time. The whole project was finished by 1:30 with the whole crew gathering on the ramp for a picture and prayer with the homeowner. It was a day of laughter and teasing while the job was being done. It was great to get together with other Christians for a time of fellowship and service.

Everyone was amazed at how quickly the job was completed and the quality of the work that was done. Some of the men said, "I didn't feel like I did much" but when you have a crew like that all working together, as the old saying goes, "many hands make work light."



Above: Members of the Central Allegheny Region under the guidance of the Regional Humanitarian Relief work team, work to build a ramp.

If you or some members of your church would like to help with future projects or know of a project that needs to be done within our region, contact Ronnie Junkins at 301-616-9952, Brad Schmidt at 304-642-3160 or Wallace Whitaker at 301-876-8487 to find out if it is something the group can help with.

2023 Regional Annual Meeting



On Saturday, September 9th our Regional delegate body and other church members met together to celebrate our second year, look forward to the business of our coming year, and to worship our Lord and Savior. The day was filled with wonderful music, praise, and wonderful addresses by our Moderator Mike Bernard and guest speaker George Bowers.

The delegate body was presented with reports of the ongoing work being completed by Regional Teams along with reports about the region in general and the National church. The region's mission project this year was to raise money and items to go to the Union Rescue Mission which were received by David Ziler who also spoke about giving.

At lunch, the group was given the opportunity to learn more about CBC's cooperation with Samaritan's Purse with our Disaster coordinators and about Samaritan Purse's Operation Christmas Child which is another ministry supported by the Central Allegheny Region. Those interested in the call to ministry program were also give an opportunity to hear more about the program during a break-out lunch session. At the end of the day the Regional Teams were invited to the front for a time of prayer for our Region and Regional Leadership.



All-in-all the day was filled with wonderful fellowship and hope of the future of our church region. Many thanks to those who put time and effort into planning the event, including our Regional Meeting Planning Team and Maple Spring church for hosting and preparing lunch and Brookside church for providing the breakfast. Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Teets, Publications Team Member

“GOD IS MOVING IN THE ALLEGHENY REGION”

Over the past several months we have seen God do some very exciting things within our Central Allegheny Region. New churches are being added and God is moving within our region. We are growing, and God is truly blessing our region with new churches, new memberships, and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit across our region.

On August 27 the Harmon Church became an official Covenant Brethren Church after signing a covenant agreement with CBC. This was a great day in the church with a meal after the services to honor this new day within their church.

On October 1, Mount Zion also became another church to join the CBC. Mount Zion is located in the mountains near Beilington, WV. After the service, there was a fellowship meal to Commemorate this special day.

PICTURED RIGHT: PASTOR LARRY POLING SIGNS THE COVENANT AGREEMENT FOR MOUNT ZION CHURCH



On October 22, Philip Matthews was installed as pastor of Old Furnace CBC. This was a big day in the church where friends, family, and CBC representatives gathered together for Philip's pastoral installation. What a great day!!!



PICTURED LEFT: PHIL AND VICKI MATTHEWS ARE SURROUNDED BY CHURCH LEADERS DURING PHIL'S INSTALLATION SERVICE

Shiloh CBC, a church just outside of Phillipi, West Virginia also signed a covenant agreement with CBC. After the service, there was a fellowship meal and celebration of God moving in their church.

PICTURED RIGHT: SHILOH CHURCH
SIGNS THE COVENANT
AGREEMENT



Praise God!!! It is exciting to see God move in the powerful way in which He has. The Central Allegheny Covenant Brethren Church is Growing!

Submitted by Thomas Rowan – Publications Team Member

A Letter from the Stewardship Team

December 14, 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we bid farewell to the year 2023, the Central Allegheny Region Stewardship Team extends heartfelt gratitude to you, our cherished congregations and supporters. Your steadfast commitment has been a guiding light, illuminating our path as we endeavored to make a meaningful impact in Jesus name. In the spirit of reflection, let us together appreciate the moments that have defined our commitment, outreach, and desire to share the love of Jesus with others. Your unwavering support has been

the cornerstone of our endeavors, and we invite you to revisit the milestones that have shaped this remarkable year of stewardship.

Democratic Republic of the Congo Support (\$800):

In the Congo, your \$800 support facilitated providing food and vital supplies to those affected by the disaster.

Guatemala Missions (\$200):

The \$200 dedicated to Guatemala missions has been instrumental in ongoing projects, providing food to those in need, healthcare/dental initiatives, and educational support.

National Youth Mission Trip to Guatemala (\$500):

The National Youth mission trip to Guatemala, supported by your generous \$500 contribution, was not merely a journey but a transformative experience for the youth, promoting cross-cultural understanding and a deepened sense of purpose, while sharing Jesus.

Kenya Baby Rescue Project (\$900):

Through the Kenya Baby Rescue Project, your \$900 donation provided crucial support for infants in vulnerable situations, demonstrating our commitment to the sanctity of life and the well-being of families.

Samaritan's Purse (Greatest Journey) (\$500):

The \$500 allocated to Samaritan's Purse has enabled us to contribute to the Greatest Journey program, impacting the lives of children by providing spiritual guidance, education, and a foundation for a life of faith.

Israel Support (\$1,000):

Your \$1,000 dedicated to Israel support has strengthened our ties with communities in the Holy Land, supporting initiatives that bridge cultural divides and contribute to humanitarian efforts in partnership with Samaritan's Purse.

Turkey Earthquake Relief (\$5,600):

The \$5,600 directed towards Turkey Earthquake Relief has been pivotal in aiding recovery and rebuilding efforts, demonstrating our commitment to standing with communities in times of crisis in partnership with Samaritan's Purse.

Hawaii Fire Relief (\$1,000):

In the aftermath of the Hawaii fires, your \$1,000 donation provided crucial relief, emphasizing our dedication to responding to urgent needs and supporting communities in times of natural disasters in partnership with Samaritan's Purse.

Union Rescue Mission in Cumberland, MD (\$1,200):

Your \$1,200 support for the Union Rescue Mission in Cumberland, MD, has contributed to our local outreach efforts, providing shelter,

food, and hope for those experiencing homelessness.

We are also thrilled with the grant that the National Covenant Brethren Church graciously awarded our region for \$15,000. The grant funds were strategically allocated, including \$5,000 for Camp Galilee's necessary repairs, \$1,200 to fund Camp Galilee's social media promoter, \$5,000 for the Union Rescue Mission's new building renovations, and \$3,800 for the Call to Ministry program. These allocations signify not just financial support but a commitment to addressing specific needs in our region.

Your selfless contributions, whether directed towards the Congo, Guatemala, or any other cause, have touched lives and made an impact across the globe. Having scrutinized the substantial impact of your generous donations, let's shift our focus to a brief financial overview. It's vital to note that your contributions not only fuel our mission, outreach, and evangelism but also play a pivotal role in sustaining essential administrative costs, encompassing background checks, phone bills, postage, office supplies, and more.

As of crafting this letter, our operational expenses stand at 37% of the budgeted amount. Remarkably, our overall budget has reached 71% of the \$31,570 target, driven by a substantial increase in outreach efforts. We gratefully acknowledge the tremendous impact of \$11,777 in mission, outreach, and evangelism, surpassing our initial budget goal of \$2,870. Praise be to God for the abundance of blessings and the collective impact achieved.

While celebrating these achievements, it's important to highlight that we still have ongoing needs for day-to-day operations. Your continued support is crucial in maintaining the momentum of our region and ensuring that our daily operations run smoothly. Whether contributing to specific projects or the general fund, every donation directly contributes to sustaining the core functions that make our region possible.

We wholeheartedly encourage congregations and individuals to sustain their generous support. Whether large or small, your contributions play a vital role.

To facilitate your support, we encourage churches and individuals interested in contributing to send in their donations, as the feel led. Please make checks payable to the Central Allegheny Region. If you wish to specify a particular area or project, such as Mission and Outreach, Humanitarian Relief, or Samaritan's Purse projects, kindly indicate your preference on the memo line. For donations without a specified designation, these funds will be directed to the general operations fund, with 5% allocated to Mission/Outreach and 5% to Humanitarian Relief.

Please direct your checks to our treasurer:
**Central Allegheny Region, c/o Matt Bernard,
1053 Underwood Road, Oakland, MD 21550**

While we appreciate monetary support, we also deeply value your prayers, which hold significant importance. In advance, we express our sincere thanks for your response to this appeal. We trust you will view this opportunity as a means to contribute to the fulfillment of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

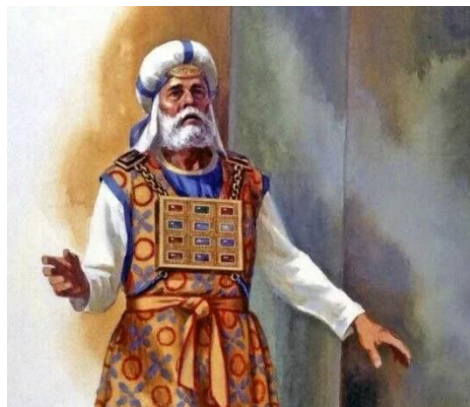
Let's carry the spirit of compassion, love, and generosity forward as we step in the new year. May your hearts be filled with joy, peace, and the anticipation of continued blessings. We trust that the coming year holds even greater opportunities for us to make a positive impact together.

May you be abundantly blessed,
Central Allegheny Region Stewardship Team
Email: centralallegheny@covenantbrethren.org

"CAIAPHAS" A Devotional

"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split."

Matthew 27:50-51



Could you imagine the look on the High Priest's face the day God ripped the veil of Temple in two?

I want you to use your imagination. I also want to ask you do something I hate to ask you to do. I want YOU to become the villain. I want YOU to put on the illustrious robes of Caiaphas the High Priest of Israel.

Today is YOUR day. Today is the Passover. Today is the day YOU trained for your whole life. Today is the day that YOU, as High Priest over Israel; YOU are going to stand before God for the nation. Today is the day YOU are going to go behind the veil. Today is the day YOU are going to plead for YOUR nation. Today is the day YOU will stand before God.

Now, think about all of the events that just took place last night.

YOU were the one responsible for manipulating the crowds. You were the one who paid off Judas Iscariot and then had Jesus arrested. You were the one who instigated the crowds whenever Jesus stood on trial. You were the one who paid-off the false-witnesses so that you could get your way. You were the one who manipulated the crowds into freeing Barabbas and kill Jesus. You were the one who caused Jesus to be whipped and beaten. YOU!!!

Now, because of YOUR actions, Jesus had the crown of thorns jammed down upon His head.

I am sure you watched, at least for a little while, so that you could see the fate of Jesus. I am sure the scene turned bloody quick as the Roman soldiers started flogging Jesus. Who did this Jesus think He was anyways? YOU are the High Priest of Israel and everybody was going to Him, this peasant Rabbi from Galilee. People were looking to Him and His uneducated disciples, whenever YOU are the educated, highly respected, well-trained High Priest of Israel and the head of the great Sanhedrin. YOU were the one chosen by the nation to stand before God.

That was last night. The trial was over. Jesus was at Golgotha. Jesus was being crucified. Jesus was getting what He deserved.

However, even though your curiosity causes you to want to watch Jesus get what He had coming to Him, time was running out. YOU had spiritual responsibilities to take care of. YOU have work to do. After all, YOU are the High Priest of Israel. YOU have to stand before God.

You have spent your entire life training for the priest hood. Today is the day YOU have been waiting for your whole life. Today is the day you are going to slaughter the perfect Passover Lamb. Today is the day when you are going to carry out everything an Israelite High Priest trains for his whole life to do. Today is the day when YOU are going to stand before God.

Think about how proud YOU would be, standing as the spiritual leader **of an entire nation?** Think about how proud YOU would be, the one chosen to stand before God.

Imagine walking through the Outer Precincts of the Temple with all of the Passover pomp and circumstance. Think about how tired you are, being up all night manipulating the conviction of Jesus and even now, how tired you would have been working your way through the massive Passover crowds. However, despite how tired you would have been, again, this is YOUR time to shine, (it is time for YOU to put YOUR game-face on because)...this is it...this is YOUR day to stand before God.

Now, while on your way into the Temple something very eerie happens.

The Bible tells us, from the sixth hour (noon) to the ninth hour (3 o'clock in the afternoon) there was a supernatural darkness that covered the face of the earth. This is significant simply because, noon would have marked the time the high priest, arrayed in his full priestly garments, would have begun his procession into the temple to slaughter the Passover Lamb.

Now, put yourself into the High Priest's robes once again and imagine walking into the inner courts of the Temple. Picture yourself approaching the Passover Lamb, and NOW, whenever everyone's eyes are supposed to be watching YOU, they are looking up at the sky at this supernatural darkness that covers the face of the earth.

Pretending not to notice that nobody is paying attention to you, (because they are overwhelmed by the supernatural darkness) you proceed to slaughter the Passover Lamb. With a slate knife and your bare hands, you murder this innocent animal. Shortly after the screams and gurgles of this dying animal are finished, there you are, covered from head to toe with the blood of this blameless creature.

Covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb, (this is it) it is now time to stand before God.

Now, picture yourself, walking into Temple and standing alone in front of the curtain of the Holy of Holies.

(There were two curtains in the Herodian Temple. There was a curtain going into the Holy Place and then a second curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.)

(According to Jewish Mishnah, the curtain/veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was sixty feet high, thirty feet wide, and an entire handbreadth in thickness.)

After walking through the first veil, there YOU are, either completely ALONE or with only an assistant, standing at the entrance facing the Holy of Holies. The moment has come that YOU have been waiting for your whole life. Now is the time to stand before God.

As YOU start to take a step towards the Veil that leads into the Holy Of Holies...you hear in the distance...the fading scream of Jesus, crying out from the cross with His last dying breath...*"It is finished."*

Feeling vindicated after hearing Jesus' last cries, imagine taking one step **forward then being thrown backward to the ground in an instant** at what probably sounded like two Mac Trucks hitting head-on right in front of you...**as the Veil of the Temple is RIPPED in two right in front of your face.**

The Veil of the Temple has been torn in two, from top to bottom right in front of you and whenever YOU **are able to look up**...THE HOLY OF HOLIES IS OPEN.....RIGHT THERE in front of you.

Today, after all, is YOUR day to stand before God!!!

Hebrews 10:31 tells us, *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

If you were Caiaphas the Priest that day, standing in front of the Temple Curtain, the moment it had just ripped in two, what would you have said to God?

What would you do? What would you say? What would you think? What would you feel?

What will you say - the day you stand before God?

Thomas Rowan – Publication Team Member

