

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 10 January 2021

Welcome & Notices
Session Clerk: Keith Ferres

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 63 (R)
To God be the glory

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: John 1:35-42
Alistair Ross

Hymn 584 (R)
The Lord's my shepherd

Sermon
Quo Vadis
Where are you going?

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 480 (R)
Guide me

Benediction



NOTICES

10 January 2021

The Wednesday Prayer Meeting is in recess till February.

Sunday 17 January 11 am Divine Worship. All Welcome
Guests will be Greg and Mignon Goswell.
Greg is the Academic Dean at Christ College, Sydney, and will conduct the service.



For your prayers this week:
Congregational member: **Amanda Fairs**



Hannah DAVIES: Quarantine completed Hannah is now in Wangaratta preparing for service in South Korea. Please pray for needed funds and permissions.

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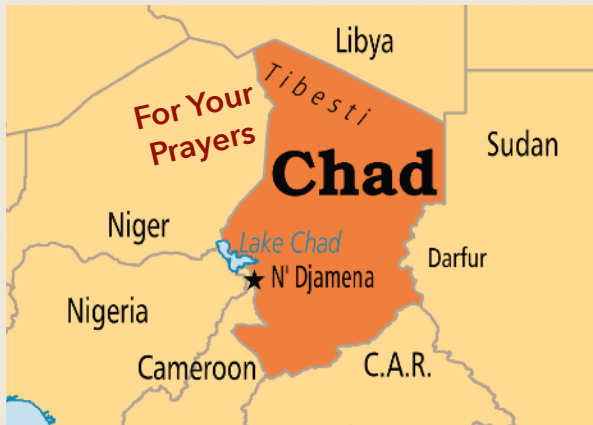
10 January 2021



QUO VADIS

GENESIS 5:21-24

WELCOME



Although modern Chad is a secular state, with a separation between state and religion, the Muslim majority dominates Chadian politics, civil service, armed forces and business. Uneducated Christians are still vulnerable to exploitation, and Muslim cattle raiders try to grab their land.

The Chadian military dealt a major blow to the Boko Haram Islamist terrorist group in April 2020, but Boko Haram attacks were still a threat as they took advantage of the global focus on coronavirus and local Covid-19 lockdowns.

With help from Islamic nations, Muslim missionaries were also very active in Chad in 2020, making use of the multiple humanitarian disasters to advance Islam. Chad faced not only Covid-19 but also five other dangerous diseases, floods and drought in different parts of the country, causing widespread malnutrition.

There is "a serious threat to the survival of the Christian faith in Chad", said one church leader.

Barnabas Notes 2021

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were repressed, and the justice system was used to crack down on dissent. Several cases of excessive use of force by defence and security forces were reported. Detention conditions remained deplorable.

Amnesty International 2019

Quo Vadis

What have we, who survived a 2020 free of Covid 19 infection learned from the global pandemic? How has it affected our hopes and prayers and dreams for 2021?

When John pointed his disciples to Jesus, the Lamb of God, Jesus asked them a question.

Jesus' question: What are you after? What are you looking for in 2021? Peace on earth? Employment? Good health? Family unity? Vaccine? Political healing in the USA?

Jesus' question suggests that human beings are always focussed on some *thing*. Improved appliances, automobiles, and administration, to name just three things beginning with 'a'.

Could this be true of us? Have we forgotten some of the things we valued in 2020 during lockdown?

Less time on the roads, more time with family... Simple things, board games and jigsaws with grandchildren, cooking together, more time for the garden, learning an instrument (!)... The sound of the voices of those we love?

Disciples' question: where are you staying? John described Jesus to the disciples as 'the Lamb of God'. We can only imagine the significance of the phrase to them, we hear it with twenty centuries of liturgical and musical tradition.

John, who had already baptised Jesus, was able to see him as "the Passover Lamb who takes away the world's sin" (1:29,36). What this meant to the disciples at this stage is not clear.

The disciples want to know where he is "staying" (1:38). Where is his place?

If they know this they can find him. They seem intent on transferring their allegiance to Jesus. They are to discover more than His place in Capernaum! They will experience His place in their lives, and His place in Israel's history.

In 2021 we might be interested in exploring His place in world history, but the more important question is about His place in our own lives.

Enoch: his life and times Genesis 5 is a list of Hebrew ancestors with their long ages. We should remember numbers here were not written by people with a 21st century way of thinking. In fact numerical symbols did not yet exist. Hebrew and other languages of the time used the letters of their alphabets for numbers.

RK Harrison comments: "But when the Hebrew and the Sumerian sources are set side by side it becomes apparent that the large numbers reflect a common if poorly- understood Mesopotamian tradition and that the Genesis tabulation should accordingly be viewed against such a cultural background."

If you want to pursue this matter you might try the Biologos website. <https://biologos.org/articles/long-life-spans-in-genesis-literal-or-symbolic/> Our concern today is with Enoch.

Enoch: whose 'walk' breaks the cycle There were dark days around Enoch. The sonorous refrain of Genesis 5 is a kind of roll-call of funerals. Enoch breaks that grim cycle.

He "walked with God", or as the GNB translates, "Enoch spent his life in fellowship with God" While we are not told what this meant, Moses, the likely compiler of the narrative, believed that before the flood it was possible for the ancestors to enjoy an intimacy with God. [After the flood intimacy with Yahweh is clearly described. We see Abraham 'obeyed' God and Jacob 'wrestled' with the Lord.]

Has Enoch escaped the cycle of death? Notice that he disappears from the scene at 365 years, much younger than any others listed. Could his early departure to be with God be a blessing?

The blueprint and the nail prints From Genesis 12 (verse 3) the plan of God was to bring blessing through Abraham's family to all nations, Jews and Gentiles alike. Just as surely as that entailed a birth, it also entailed a death (as in TS Eliot's poem *Journey of the Magi*).

In 1939 in England TS Eliot explored the vision of a Christian society. He recognised that the plan of God is not implemented and legislated by political ideology. It has to deal with sin and evil in the heart.

In his famous poem, *Four Quartets*, he writes: *the wounded surgeon plies the steel/that questions the distempered part/ beneath the bleeding hands we feel/the sharp compassion of the healers art/resolving the enigma of the fever chart*

Without any reference to this poem an orthopaedic surgeon friend told me this week of a fellow surgeon who developed MND, yet continued to work and serve his patients until it was totally impossible.

The shocking image of the bleeding surgeon turns our eyes to the terrible image of the crucified saviour. Eliot has picked up this great theme of how God deals with sin and evil. Our eyes must turn from the blueprint, to the nail prints.

Eliot continues: *the dripping blood our only drink/the bloody flesh our only food/in spite of which we like to think/that we are sound substantial flesh and blood-/again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good.*

Whatever we are looking for in 2021, let us find where "the wounded surgeon" is and say close to Him. Let us walk with Him into all that 2021 has in store.