

July 2018 China, Italy

The *Bible Companion* readings for this Sunday include Matthew 9 and there is an MP3 file about this at <http://www.christadelphia.net/audio/mt9.mp3>

You can see the archives of our MP3 files at <http://christadelphia.net/audio.htm> and on iTunes at <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/podcast/christadelphian-bible-talks/id987163468>

Download the *NEV Bible* with commentary and *Bible Companion* bookmarks at <http://n-e-v.info/NEVBIBLE.pdf>

Helps for the *Bible Companion* readings this week: Jeremiah:

PDF <http://www.n-e-v.info/JeremiahNEVCommentary.pdf>

epub <http://www.n-e-v.info/JeremiahNEVCommentary.epub>

ITALY

Our team of 8 adults and 3 children are in the midst of an amazing cooperation with the Lord Jesus and His Father here in Italy. They clearly have a number on the huge number of African migrants now stranded in Italy. Having suffered awful things on the journey through the Sahara, Libya, the trafficking gangs and the Mediterranean Sea crossing, they find themselves now without documents and work in Italy- and with a new, right wing Government that seeks to make life as uncomfortable for them as possible. Racism is everywhere, and the situation markedly worse than last year. Brother Joseph continues his amazing work amongst the Africans, distributing Bibles and providing material help as he can and as appropriate. On this trip we aimed to provide solid feeding for the brethren and migrants, as well as continuing to teach and preach. And indeed, as in Riga, the teaching of the Gospel was always paramount with the feeding scheme an appropriate back up to it. The need for material help was perhaps even more acute, because many of the camps have been closed by the Government, and our brethren and contacts are just living as best they can on the streets.

We began with the baptisms of SAMSON and MICHAEL, whom we first met whilst distributing Bibles to the homeless around the railway station. However, neither of them are homeless, they are long established African Italians, with jobs and stable accommodation. What was so thrilling about them is the deep testimony to change which they made in the days after their baptisms. Attending standard churches just hadn't done that for them; but the message we shared with them, and their commitment to the Lord in baptism, was something radically different from mere religion. And they shared their baptisms and feelings of transformation with their relatives and friends in the town. It's amazing that the hope of eternal life was given to these people through a 'chance' meeting with us on the streets as we offered Bibles to folks. It's a great encouragement to those involved in street witness worldwide.



There's a brief video of these baptisms at https://youtu.be/dDEBMT_h_Kmo

We were blessed to have sister Liz Hemingray with us, who used her schoolteacher skills to communicate so very effectively to everyone. At all the meetings, whether preaching the basics of the Gospel or pastoral talks to those already baptized, there was serious attention. The men made notes in their Bibles or on scraps of paper, turning up the references quoted and asking sensible questions:



Our pattern was to provide food for the migrants, and then have a Bible study:



You can hear a typical baptism service and doctrinal teaching at <https://youtu.be/CSH772s6yK4>

Near Cervia, we were able to baptize OSAHUN, EMMANUEL, LUCKY, FRANCIS, FRANK, MICHAEL and EZEKIEL, video at https://youtu.be/YrVtx_h_F-k



The testimonies of these men were frightening. They told stories, which corroborate with others we have heard and what you read on the media, of being sold between gangs of traffickers, who tortured them to get them to call home and get money sent to the traffickers. And some were killed to show they were serious. They were brutalized and imprisoned in subhuman conditions in the Libyan desert. Osahun and others were given electric shock treatment, and he still has the marks on his upper arm where this was done. He gave a special testimony of his experiences, on video at https://youtu.be/8QyJo-kD_cA

Here's Steve videoing it, coming in close up to the marks on his arm:



All the testimonies concluded that they had gone through all this in order to bring them to the Father and His Son, and the hope of the Kingdom. And whilst all concerned are bewildered by the extent of the sufferings, unable to precisely attach meaning to event, we were comforted by their firm belief that this was all meant to be from God in His wider plan of salvation for them. And when we are in the Kingdom, we will then realize that for me, for them, there was no other way. It was very encouraging to baptize men who had been given NEV New Testaments by brother Peter and sister Dae from Canada last year, and who had read them, made notes in them, and studied the *Bible Basics* material- and now came to baptism. For the moment, the group will meet in a conference room with brother Osahun leading the meetings; we were able to hold a meeting there just before we left:



Many of the men had left behind wives and children in Africa, and so they all made a great fuss of the children- who held their hands as we walked to the beaches for baptism, and rejoiced with them afterwards:



A trip was also made to a camp far in the mountains of central Italy, which we reported on visiting last year. Again, things had changed. The management was now largely Muslim, and the majority of the men there were Muslims. The few Christians were black Africans who were clearly made to do all the work; cleaning the property, cooking, dish washing and, the week we were there, washing and changing all the sheets in the camp. They were treated like slaves. But once they leave the camp system, then they are on their own totally, having to just live on the streets with no state support. After two trips there, we baptized two very earnest men there who had been studying our material for nearly a year, GODSTIME and GODI. They didn't have enough free time away from the 'duties' imposed upon them in the camp for us to drive them to the sea from their remote location, so we found a mountain stream for the baptisms:



Godstime had been a baptized Jehovah's Witness, but the traumas he went through on his journey through the Sahara, Libya and across the sea, with men dying all around him, made him search for real connection with God and the Lord Jesus. He felt he had been baptized into an organization, and wanted instead real connection with Jesus. He has a great Bible knowledge and zeal for witness. But like so many, he is in a hopeless position- at the top of a mountain with no documents, nor any chance of getting any, and just waiting to be cast out of that camp and have to live like so many others, in derelict buildings, begging for food and money on the streets. Without making a huge issue about it, all this work and the support we give costs money, and we really do appreciate your donations so we can continue.

CHINA

Brother Donald reports:

"Several days ago I baptized a contact, KE, in the river. Brother Ke was influence by idea of being baptized because Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan, it is his dream to go there. However, he finally agreed to be baptized in the Xiangjiang river. We read his favourite verse in Bible and prayed together. Also Mark 1: 9 "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." I will send him Chinese *Bible Basics* for distributing to the friends he knows. God bless"



PRAYER POINTS

- For those recently baptized
- For wisdom in how to help the desperately needy in Italy

- For more workers to come forward

With love from your brothers and sisters of Carelinks