



### Jamaica – Baptism in 1889

Jamaica is the third biggest and the most westerly of the large Caribbean islands. Its size is about 150 miles from west to east and about 50 from north to south. Discovering it in 1494, Columbus named it St. Jago, but the Arawak Indian name of Xaymaca ('the land of wood and water') stuck, and "Jamaica" is its Anglicized form. It was a Spanish colony until formally ceded to England in 1670 and it achieved complete independence within the British Commonwealth in 1962.



The Truth came to Jamaica in the spring of 1889. At that time there was a beautiful open space in the centre of Kingston, a well-wooded park with a famous banyan and other brilliantly-flowering trees that made the whole park a showplace of colour. To this park came, one Sunday in April 1889, Brother John Blenman – newly arrived from Barbados – where he spent some weeks witnessing in his native island.

He acquired lodgings at 26 ½ Mark Lane in Kingston, and he 'felt suddenly inspired to begin the work' of preaching. He took up his position at East Queen Street entrance to the park and, as he later wrote:

*I obtained the assistance of a couple of friends to stand by me, just to see that no violence was attempted, and after a prayer to my Father (this, of course, at home and not in the street) I began my lecture on 'Human Nature'. The ice being broken, I need scarcely tell you, I entered vigorously into the discourse, and soon had around me a pretty thick audience. The rush made for the tracts at the close of my lecture was astonishing: had they been £5 notes I do not think more energy could have been displayed.*

On the following Sundays, Brother Blenman discoursed on the 'The Kingdom', 'The Nature of Christ' and 'The Devil'. By the fourth Sunday people were coming to the park in expectation of the meeting. On that occasion, the biblical devil being the topic, the audience was much larger than before. Our brother recounted with obvious relish that meeting:

*A man got up behind me on the stonework of the park rails, and said in a loud voice that I was mentioned in the book of Psalms – I was the man David spoke of when he said: "The fool hath said in his heart, "there is no God". I had just been stating that among the meanings of 'diabolos' was that of slandering and false accusing. I immediately turned to the audience and asked them whether they had ever heard me deny the existence of God; a unanimous reply in the negative being their response. Well now, I said, here is a practical illustration of 'the devil' (diabolos) – a slanderer or false accuser! By this time the poor fellow had vanished from among the audience, and was discovered cooling himself some distance off.*



Brother Blenman's 'prayer' was answered. This first series of open-air meetings at Park was fruitful. The initial interest of a few matured into conviction and it seems clear that some at least of the founder members of the Kingston ecclesia were converted by what they experienced in the park.

The first Christadelphian convert in Jamaica is believed to have been Brother Isaac Barnes, baptized on 15 July 1889. The first Jamaicans to be baptized anywhere were probably Brother and Sister Joseph Gooding at the Sydney (Australia) Central Ecclesia in September 1884.)

Isaac Barnes was a truly remarkable man and, as the first convert of Brother Blenman, seems to have taken on much of his mentor's missionary zeal and enthusiasm. An intimate bond of friendship developed between the two and within a few months they were to be found hard at work preaching in Trinidad (though both fell ill in the process). John Blenman went to British Guiana; in Chapter 16 we shall note something of Isaac Barnes' further exploits, thousands of miles away.

A Brother Skuse was the next to be immersed, in November 1889. Then followed, in July of 1890, William McDonald and Winslow Garcia, previously Roman Catholics, who had written to Robert Roberts for, help. William McDonald became Recording Brother of the new Kinston ecclesia in 1891 and remained so for 34 years until his death in 1925. His wife, Sarah, was baptized in 1892. The fledgling group had a visit from Barbados in May 1893, possibly from Brother Sam Husbands. 'I was glad to find (the brethren) holding on to the Truth... and the instructors doing their duty.'

*(These paragraphs were taken from INTO ALL THE WORLD pages 79 to 81 by Stanley Owen)*



## Jamaica Update 2000 and Beyond

In the year 2000, CBM-UK requested that CBMA assume the support for Jamaica. Since 1889, the Gospel message has continued to burn with some in every generation coming to the Truth. There were six baptisms in 2012 and eight more attending baptismal classes this year.

There are now 11 ecclesias established in this mountainous country with 130 members, 60 Sunday School members and 28 CYC members. Public lectures, postal courses, direct mail and door-to-door work occur each year. The annual Bible school at Easter is well attended.

As the countries in many regions of the world struggle with economic woes, including rising debt loads, these factors have a negative impact on their infrastructure. Road maintenance, public services such as safe drinking water and electricity to homes, along with healthcare are some of the first things to be affected.

The larger cities and towns usually have reasonable water and electrical supplies but water is sometimes shut off for extended periods of time during the dry season and electricity can be turned off without notice for several hours at a time. However, as in many countries today, storage reservoirs can be seen on rooftops to provide a consistent supply of water and stand-by generators are used to power buildings like grocery stores and hospitals. The situation outside of cities can be quite different. For example, in the rural areas of the Free Hill Ecclesia in 2011, there had been no municipal water supply for some homes for 15 to 20 years. The underground pipe kept breaking, so they decided to stop repairing it due to lack of funds!

During a visit to Jamaica in July 2011, ecclesial members readily drove the visitors from one meeting hall to another, only to be faced with varied road conditions. Parts of the journey were travelled on very smooth highways, but when using secondary and rural roads they encountered sections full of potholes. Some brethren knew the pothole locations by memory – and few even had their own names! Jamaicans accept these challenges cheerfully (and with exceptional driving skills), while their vehicles certainly suffer the consequences of these rough conditions.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Jamaican brotherhood though is the lack of brothers. In the eleven ecclesias with regularly scheduled weekly activities, the number of brethren per ecclesia who minister the Word ranges from one to five. In several ecclesias, one or two brethren share the load on behalf of ten or twelve sisters.

Our appeal to the brotherhood is for brothers, in particular, to consider visiting Jamaica for short-term support – ministering the Word by providing preaching and pastoral assistance. If you would like to accompany the link-brother on a trip to Jamaica, make a trip on your own or attend the Easter Bible School, please contact Bro. Phil Snobelen at [philsnobelen@shaw.ca](mailto:philsnobelen@shaw.ca)

## **New Year's Eve in Jamaica – 2012-13**

While some in the world are busy with New Year festivities, the Jamaican brothers and sisters have for many years held a Bible School during the New Year's Eve/New Year's Day time period for about 3 days, which is organized by the CBM Jamaica. For at least 6 years this Bible School has been held at the Kendal Camp and Conference Centre owned by the Missionary Churches of Jamaica, and the facility has little use at that time of the year. The facility consists of a variety of buildings – about 8 – and the Christadelphians only use 2 – for sleeping & washrooms, and the assembly hall & kitchen. The location is ideal, since it is situated centrally on the Island, about 45 minutes west of May Pen in Manchester Parish (near Mandeville) and on an elevated area of about an acre size overlooking the whole region. The air is cooler and fresher, there is always a lovely breeze and the view of the lights in the towns in the valleys below is quite pleasant in the evening. All these conditions help the Jamaican Brotherhood to come apart from the activities and pressures of life, and be refreshed in the things of the Truth!

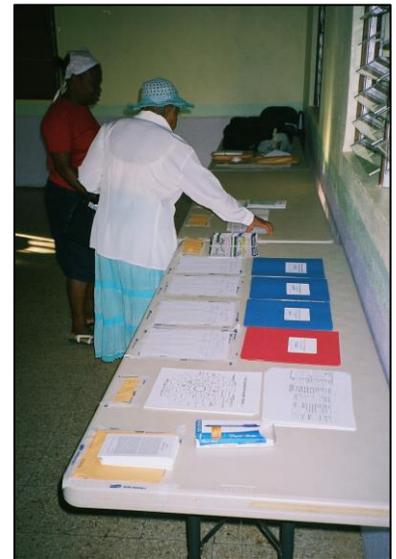




From Saturday evening December 29, 2012 until about mid-day Tuesday, January 1, 2013 approximately 45 brothers, sisters, teens and children enjoyed fellowship around the Word of God by means of a study of the Book of Ruth. This amazing story of dedication, redemption and the maturing of genuine love between Boaz and Ruth is for today! Prepared notes on the Book of Ruth were available for all in attendance. Crossword puzzles on Ruth and the books of the Bible were also handed out during the study sessions – mainly for the younger ones. The daytime activities at Kendal

consisted of morning devotionals, the daily Bible Readings (and lively discussion!), classes on the Book of Ruth – plus “Singspiration” sessions in the evenings – and exhilarating experience! - the next Parish probably heard us. ☺ One of the many high-points of the 3 days was the extra Breaking of Bread Service New Year’s Eve which finished just at mid-night! We were also well taken care of by the Camp cooks with good food. God blessed us with “daily portions” of both natural and spiritual nourishment.

The CBMC sponsored two tables of supplies of “take-one” items or “sign-up” sheets for study notes on display. The take-one items consisted of booklet style Bible Reading Companions, Being a Christadelphian, Kings and Prophets of Israel chart, the Calendar of Ancient Israel and God’s 6,000 Year Plan – to name a few. The sign-up sheets were for study notes on marriage, MIC, Ezra and Nehemiah. A number of used eyeglasses donated by an optical house in Brantford, Ontario were made available to be used as is or for the frames. Another program that is being coordinated with the CBMJ is the distribution of vitamins to various members and children in the ecclesias – multiple vitamins, vitamins C & D, plus calcium pills.



Bro. Don Luff notes that “Our whole enjoyable time with the brothers and sisters in Jamaica was concluded with a Bible Class at the May Pen Ecclesial Hall on January 2<sup>nd</sup> on the topic of “The Fig Tree” – which included sample figs for everyone!”

## North to Alaska!



It's only about two months until 72 year-old Bro. Stan Wilkinson gets on his bike and heads to Alaska! Stan is attempting this crazy trip in an effort to help raise money for the Bible Mission. If you would like to make a pledge to encourage Stan along the way and support CBMA preaching projects, please visit <http://www.cbma.net/help/pledge>.



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