



By Dr. David Schuringa, President

WHO Are Jesus' BROTHERS?

PART II

LAST MONTH we began a study of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25. We saw that it was vitally important to identify who Jesus' hungry, sick, naked and incarcerated brothers are since whether or not we care for them is an issue that will come up on Judgment Day.

We learned that some theologians see Jesus' brothers as the Jews while others see them as church members in need. These interpretations are helpful, but is there perhaps more going on here? There are three perspectives which can broaden our view of exactly who His brothers are in this passage: a Social Justice Perspective, a Missiological Perspective and an Experiential Perspective.

As for the Social Justice Perspective, we take our starting point from Matthew as a gospel written for Jewish Christians. It contains many citations from the Old Testament showing Jesus' coming as the fulfillment of OT expectations. There is no question that the original audience would have had the OT backdrop of the parable in view.

The parable contains a social justice theme that saturates the OT as inspired authors constantly urge believers to care for the sick, the poor, orphans and widows (Deut. 15:11; Amos 2:7; Ezek. 18:7-8; Mal. 3:5). In fact, Jesus' parable sounds like it could have been based on Isaiah 58:6-10 which evokes identical pictures of helping the hungry, the sick, the naked and those in chains. God's people are called to care for these because God Himself watches over the down-and-out (Ps. 146). However, a premier reason for the exile was the relentless failure of God's people to keep God's covenant by caring for those in need.

But *which* needy people were God's people to be concerned about? Only believers? The fact is that in the same breath the OT speaks of looking after those at risk it is maintained that the same care was to be extended to "aliens" and "strangers"

(Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 24:22; I Kings 17; II Kings 5; Ps. 146:9). "Outsiders" were to be tended to as well as "insiders." So the original readers of Matthew's gospel would not have understood the parable to be limited to Jews or church members.



The New Testament reveals the fulfillment of this covenant concern. In the place of His people, Jesus came and perfectly cared for the disadvantaged, the hungry, the sick and the outcasts (Mark 1:32-34; Matt. 15:29ff., Luke 15:1-2). He came to set prisoners free (Luke 4:18). He helped Gentiles and Samaritans as well as Jews.

While on the cross breathing His last, He came to the aid of a death row inmate (Luke 23:43). And His death atoned for the sin of His people who couldn't care less for the least.

Having rescued us poor and needy sinners, He now invites us, in gratitude for what He has done, to look out for His distressed

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¡Alabado sea Dios!

Praise God!

By Kathryn Shane

The Spanish program has seen excellent development in the last year and a half, as the number of active Spanish students has grown to over 700 and the number of Spanish Instructors has expanded to over 100. At this time, only the *Great Truths of the Bible* course is in Spanish with other courses to be translated in time. Incredible growth can also be seen in the changed lives of Spanish-speaking prisoners.

José is incarcerated at the Ottawa County Jail in West Olive, MI. In October of 2002, when he enrolled in the Spanish course, his letter was mostly unreadable. Early on his Instructors commented that they were concerned about his ability to understand the materials. They noted that he had horrible spelling, and that he seemed to have a difficult time comprehending even the simplest concepts in the Bible study lessons.

CBI's discipleship program, however, was successful, by God's grace. In October of 2003, José graduated from the course. Here's what he wrote in a letter he included with his last lesson:

When they offered me the study, I asked myself how I was going to get through it, because I couldn't read or write – but little by little, my spelling has gotten better, and more or less now I can read and write. For this, I thank the Lord and you guys, because through this study, I learned so much, and it has helped me a lot. (trans. by K.S.)

He has not only learned about new life in Christ, as a bonus he also improved his ability to read and write, which will also be

valuable for successful reentry. A comment from the Instructor who corrected José's last lesson was, "Very well done."

Another example of the success of the Spanish program is a student named Ramiro who is incarcerated at the Billy Moore Unit in Overton, Texas. After graduating from the course, he wrote CBI this note:

I want to take advantage of this opportunity to tell you that it was a beautiful experience for me to have finished my work since I have never before read even one page of the Bible. I thank God for giving me this opportunity, and I think it's the first step for a change in my life . . . I'm really happy because I finished something that I never imagined I would, and I thank God for giving me the strength to complete my work with you . . . I feel in my heart that I did the best that I could since it was the first time I ever picked up a Bible . . . For me it will be something really special to tell my daughters about all of this someday, and it will be hard for them to believe me because they never even hoped that I would ever pick up a Bible, not to mention earn a certificate. (trans. by K.S.)

In the light of students like José, Ramiro, and the many others who make up our ever-growing Spanish student body, we can only say, "¡Alabado sea Dios! Praise God!"

Kathryn Shane is CBI's Spanish & International Programs Coordinator



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By now you should have received your personal copy of the President's Report for 2003. If you haven't, please contact the CBI offices and they will see to it that you get yours. In this report the President, accountable to you the CBI constituency, provides a detailed, inside look at this powerful ministry of the church to prisoners. Extra copies are also available upon request.

Still On Death Row STILL FAITHFUL



Artwork by Ramon Salcido



“THERE IS A NEW SONG IN MY HEART . . .”

The October 2000 issue of *Crossroad News* covered a story regarding Ramon Salcido. One horrible night in April of 1989, under the influence of cocaine and alcohol, Ramon murdered his wife, two of his three daughters, his mother-in-law, her two daughters and a co-worker from the winery where he worked. He was unsuccessful in killing his third daughter. The two-year-old was found left for dead on a dump heap outside town with a slashed throat, barely alive, alongside the dead bodies of her sisters.

When the day of Salcido’s trial came, thousands surrounded the court house shouting, “Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!” The jury returned the verdict of guilty and he now awaits his execution on death row at San Quentin.

Being the high profile case that it was, hundreds of Christians sent letters to Ramon urging repentance. At first he ignored them. The letter God used to awaken him was from an eight-year-old girl, Tatyanna: “Jesus loves you too . . . all you need to do is repent of your sin.” In his cell, the notorious killer dropped to his knees and wept like a baby. He eventually became a CBI student.

In the Fall of 2000, when he graduated from Tier 1 and applied for Tier 2, he sent President Schuringa a letter. “Dr. David,” he

wrote, “I want you to know that there is a new song in my heart, and that I praise God for CBI.” For him, Crossroad has “the best godly Instructors . . . and the Bible education that I always wished to have.”

Having completed the discipleship courses of Tier 2 with honors, Ramon Salcido recently sent another communication to President Schuringa. He writes,



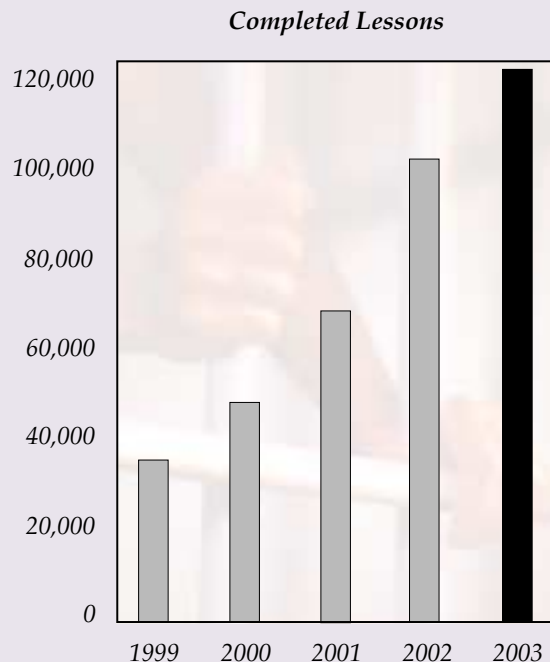
Ramon Salcido

Well, just a short note to let you all know how grateful I am for you, and all the members of your ministry, for guiding me and my daughter in the right path with Christ Jesus Because of your dedication to guide me to Jesus Christ, I was also able to lead my own mother to Jesus Christ’s feet If you know of someone in your ministry who is willing to bless my mother with a Spanish Bible with big letters for her to read, I would appreciate it if they would mail it to her home in Mexico. I believe that my mother can bring other ladies, young people and children to Christ if only she could study Scripture.

Crossroad Bible Institute sent a Bible to Ramon’s mother, along with a CBI application, now that the program is available in Spanish. God is still working in the life of Ramon Salcido. Many are hearing the Good News through the testimony of this CBI graduate on death row.

RECORD NUMBER OF COMPLETED LESSONS

The most accurate, measurable figure for ministry accomplished through CBI consists of lessons actually completed and corrected for the year. A new record was set in 2003: 119,596 lessons were processed! For each lesson, picture an inmate studying the Word in his cell and a caring Instructor correcting that lesson and returning it with a personal letter of encouragement. "For what you have done for the least of these my brothers, you have done it unto me" (Matt. 25:40).



2004 POWERPOINT CD RELEASED

The 2004 CBI "Know Me" CD is now available. A three-minute presentation of the church's prison ministry, it is suitable for showing in a worship service or smaller group settings, to send to a friend, or to view in your own home. You'll be moved by the impressive statistics and inspiring soundtrack! Order your free copy today by mail, email or at www.crossroadbible.org on the web.



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brothers and sisters. All of them. The book of Hebrews appears also to have been written to Jewish Christians. When in 13:2 God's people are called to provide hospitality for strangers, the OT texts on aliens and strangers would again have immediately sprung to mind. While it is understandable to have a particular concern for those loved ones already in the household of faith, we must also do *agathos* to—do good to, do right by, seek justice for—all people (Gal. 6:4).

Only God can judge hearts, but from a Biblical social justice perspective it is clear that we are not only to help hurting Church attendees, we must also be an advocate for all those who are hungry, naked, sick or incarcerated—all who need the truth of God's

Word and the love of God's people. If we truly know God in Jesus Christ, we *must* come to their aid (Jer. 22:16). For what we have done for the least of His brothers, we've done it unto Him (Matt. 25:40). Not a bad thing to remember during an election year. Next time we will look at our question from a missiological perspective.



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