



News from the Blue Ridge

Claire & Lorin Cranford

September 2003



Volume 6

Issue 9



Family Events:

Each year the month of August means preparing for a new school year. With both Claire and I in the education business, August signals a dramatic shift from a leisurely pace through the summer to a rather hectic pace at the beginning of school. Claire's schedule is crazier than mine tends to be, since she has teacher in-service days during the first week of the month and the kids returning to school within a few days afterwards. This year the kids returned to school on August 6 in the Rutherford County school system. Fortunately we've had an exceedingly mild summer so the weather hasn't been too uncomfortable for everyone.

My craziness picked up in segments this August. The GWU faculty retreat was at Ridgecrest Conference Center on Aug. 12-13. The first class, Religion 311 in the night school, was on Thursday evening Aug 14, while the day school program began on Aug. 20. With the undergraduate, the graduate school programs and the night school GOAL programs all beginning at different times, one sometimes has trouble remembering when the first class of the semester is.

One change made at the end of July was somewhat signifi-



cant for me. The lease on the Honda Accord was coming due and I had concluded that some shifts needed to be made because of my ongoing health issues. Thus the new lease vehicle is the Honda CRV. It has an automatic transmission, which I haven't had in my car since the early 1970s. It's much easier to get in and out of with the limited use of my legs and feet these days. So far I've enjoyed driving it and it's a nice looking vehicle.

With the slow but steady deterioration of both the legs and feet, the day is coming when I'm going to have to get one of those motorized scooters in order to get around. I'm trying to stave off that day as long as possible. The CRV will enable me to haul the scooter around when it becomes necessary.



University Happenings:

This semester has begun with a lot of fun for me in the four classes that I'm teaching. With a total of less than 50 students in all the classes, I'm going to be able to deal more individually with students. All of the classes are upper level classes meaning that every student is in the classes because they chose to rather than had to in order to meet core course requirements. This generates an entirely different class atmosphere. The first and third semester Greek classes are delightful, as well as the two sections of Religion 311 on the Synoptic Gospels.

Additionally, I have some outstanding students assisting me this semester. Tim Ledford is working as my Student Assistant in the GWU office. Scott Henson is leading the Greek 101 Tutorial Lab sessions on Thursday afternoons. Barry Wilson is doing volunteer work as my Research Assistant. I'm fortunate to have these capable students to help take care of the various responsibilities growing out of the teaching work.

The net result of both the teaching load and the student help is more time to accomplish research and writing in the coming months. In addition to the chapter in the German Festschrift that will be completed in September, I'm finishing up a series of book reviews for the Review and Expositor scholarly journal and beginning early research on a project exploring the connection of ancient concepts of body space and touching in relationship to the biblical idea of 'laying on of hands' in the commissioning passages in the Bible. This socio-psychological analysis of these scripture texts will hopefully throw some light on what was going on as well as possible insights for modern ideas of ordination.

The teaching of the Synoptic Gospels course for the first time is challenging me also to develop manuscript materials related to this kind of Bible study. These are posted at Cranfordville.com under the [Religion 311 Course Room](#) in the [Academic Pages](#) section. I have especially enjoyed developing the materials on learning how to use [commentaries](#), [Bible translations](#), and [gospel synopses](#). Almost nothing seems to exist in either printed form or on the internet giving help on how to use these tools. Thus developing this material has been both challenging and rewarding.

Another thoroughly enjoyable opportunity for Claire and me has come at our church, First Baptist Church of Shelby. When Chris White was elected interim president of Chowan College in the northeastern part of the state this summer, he and his Sunday School class at the church asked me to become their interim Sunday School teacher. This group of about two dozen men are a fun group of people to be around as well as a thoroughly delightful group to study scripture with. Claire goes with me each Sunday since we work together as a team and the men delight in having her in the class. The Sunday School studies are posted each week under [Bible Studies](#) at Cranfordville.com.

105 Twin Lake Drive
Shelby, NC 28152-0660

For all kinds of info about us as well as a PDF copy and an expanded HTML version of this newsletter, check out our homepage [Cranfordville](http://cranfordville.com) at <http://cranfordville.com>

Ph: 704 434-5657
Fax: 704 434-0472
webmaster@cranfordville.com



Claire's Musings:

Aug, 2003

Well, I survived the five weeks of two masters' classes – Understanding and Engaging in Educational Research and Library Administration and Management. I made an "A" in both classes. The day we came home from the two-week driving trip around Texas my classes had begun. It was a very tough five weeks for me and I lost a lot of sleep, but I now have 24 of the 39 hours needed for my degree. I'm not sure if I can keep this up, but if I can I could possibly graduate one year from now.

At the beginning of this school year my two schools overlapped by a couple of days, which I thought was not too bad. Now my graduate class is Books & Other Media for Children and Young Adults. I know it will be hard, but I am more excited about this class, because it will help me the most in my job. I am anxious to learn more about what books are recommended for my young school students.



At the end of the last school year I had given a party for the highest readers in our school and it was a great success. This year I had a get-together lunch for the fourth and fifth grade teachers on the third floor where I work. We did this during one of the beginning teacher workdays and it was perfect. We just had sandwiches and talked and laughed. It's always good to see these hard working teachers, who are special friends, relaxing together. I hope to make this a yearly event, also. I work with some great teachers, which make the days at school worthwhile. I am very fortunate indeed.

What can be concluded from all this? For one thing, we should not be surprised that Jesus and the apostles made use of methods of interpreting scripture and developing theological expression that were current in their Jewish world. To the contrary, we should be surprised if they hadn't done this. After all, the documents of the NT were written initially for audiences who lived in that world, not to us in the twenty-first century.

Additionally, if we want to dig deeper into the meaning of the NT, we must spend time learning more about how not only Jesus and the apostles developed their religious ideas but also how they utilized the procedures and the methodologies of influential groups of people who lived and wrote during their period of time. While those same procedures may not be relevant methods for us to use today, we can greatly profit by understanding how the beginning Christian leaders made use of them. One must remember that interpretative methodology is profoundly conditioned by the culture etc. that it exists in. The culture of the ancient Jewish world is dramatically different than modern American culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century.



Lorin's Musings:

After almost two months delay in treating interpretative issues we pick things back up this month. In the July column we explored a bit of the NT use of the ancient Jewish Peshet approach to interpreting sacred texts. The other ancient Jewish method that needs discussing is the [Midrash](#) approach.

This [Hebrew based word](#) comes from the verb *daras* meaning 'to search for an answer.' Thus midrash basically means inquiry, examination, commentary. It reflects an ancient Jewish rabbinic examination of scripture with the intent of explaining its meaning in contemporary application or relevance.

One challenge here is determining the relevant aspects to the NT era, since the Jewish rabbinic period extended for a long period. The first segment of that era, the Tannaim from about 50 BC to AD 200, is of importance for NT issues, although some insights can be gleaned from the Amoraim, both early (AD 200-500) and late (AD 500-1500). The written materials of the Tannaim comprise the Mishnah which was finalized around AD 200. Large chunks of this material circulated in memorized oral form during the first Christian century.

Toward the end of the OT era a shift in Israelite thinking took place. Early on the will of God was frequently sought through an oracle delivered by a prophet. But by the time of Ezra the searching of the scriptures to determine God's will began to replace the prophet oracle delivered verbally (cf. Ezra 7:10). This growing interest in searching the written scriptures during the intertestamental period resulted in the development of established guidelines for discerning God's desire for today from scriptures written in a former day and time. The seven rules of Rabbi Hillel the Elder (the grandfather of Gamaliel, Paul's rabbinic teacher during his Pharisee days) were widely adopted by the beginning of the Christian era.

That the gospel writers and Paul made use of these principles in their use of the OT scriptures can be demonstrated clearly. Additionally other NT writers clearly were influenced by these approaches to the OT, and also applied them to the words of Jesus in the subsequent decades after Jesus' ascension into Heaven in AD 30. In James 1:17-18 the contention that we can trust that all good things happening to us now come from God because previously He gave us salvation through new birth represents an application of Hillel's first rule of 'light and heavy.' In similar fashion the assurance that God will take care of us is seen in his care of the birds of the air in Mt. 6:26 and Lk 12:24 is a use of this principle.

In a book chapter that I'm working on at the moment that will be published this winter in Germany, one important foundation to my interpretation of Matt. 7:6 is that the six petitions of the Model Prayer (Mt. 6:9-13) become a 'father rule' (Hillel's principle 3) for the amplification found in Mt. 6:19-7:6. Thus the specific meaning of Mt. 7:6 (don't give holy things to dogs, nor pearls to swine) is largely determined by the final petition of the Model Prayer (don't lead us into temptation but deliver us from the Evil One). This follows a consistent pattern for all the six petitions and the subsequent amplification of 6:19-7:6 establishes the prescribed postures and attitudes of the disciple that are necessary for legitimate praying of the petitions addressed in the model prayer. More about that later when the book has been published.