

May 2025

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Ernie Harwell, the famous Detroit baseball announcer, used to quote the KJV from the Song of Songs on the first day of the season: *For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*” It’s a fitting passage for Spring, no doubt, but I’ve often wondered how many people asked themselves (or even asked someone else), what in the world is the “voice of the turtle?” Later translations are an improvement, rendering this as “turtledove.”

Anyway, spring is welcome, the turtle notwithstanding, and indeed, the winter is past!



Recent students in Rostov-on-Don

It has been a busy and fruitful spring. I started off in February with Zoom lectures in Russia at the School of Biblical Studies in Rostov-on-Don on the edge of the Black Sea. In three weeks of lectures, I covered Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Job, using a Russian translator. I have to say a word of praise for translators—they have a huge job in spending three hours a day translating lectures into a second language, and in biblical studies, of course, there is not only the challenge of English, but also, a certain amount of jargon and technical terms with which they have to cope. May God enrich their lives for their service! **PLUS, I will soon have a section on our Diakonos website that features the Russian translations of my Powerpoints for these lectures.** They’ve promise me the translations by this summer.

Occasionally humorous things happen when lecturing with a translator. In my Job lectures, I was explaining the mysterious figure of Leviathan in the Book of Job (which also goes by the Hebrew names Rahab and Yam in the book). Leviathan, a



A stamp seal excavated in 2022 in northern Israel and dating to the 8th century BC depicts a seven-headed serpent held at bay by a hero who with one hand grasps one of its necks while brandishing a spear in his other hand.

sea monster that also appears in the Book of Isaiah, was a widely-known icon for chaos and evil in the ancient Near East, usually depicted as a seven-headed monster, and my translator used her cell phone to look up the word Yam to see how she should translate it. The AI answer was “potato.” Everyone got a big laugh out of the “potato monster.”

In mid-March I was invited back to Macomb Community



This canal in Amsterdam near the U of N campus is typical of this “Venice of the North.”

College to give a lecture on “Texts and Readers in Early Christianity.” This is always a fascinating group, since those who register are from a wide range of backgrounds, both Christian and otherwise.

April saw Peggy and I in the Netherlands for two weeks of lectures at the University of the Nations campus in Amsterdam. Here, I taught in two departments, the School of Biblical Studies and the Discipleship Bible School. In the first, I covered the Book of Isaiah with students from:

Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, and the USA

This was quite a diverse group, but everyone was very engaged in their biblical studies.



Here is one of my classes in Amsterdam (well, at least half the class—the rest of the class is invisible to the right, so it was a large group!)

In the second department, I had another 30+ students for lectures in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Whew! Quite a lot of ground to cover in a single week, but hopefully a sound overview of the major points. Again, as is typical in the University of the Nations, they came from a wide range of countries and cultures:

Albania, Canada, Congo, Costa Rica, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Lebanon, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, South Korea, Switzerland, and the USA

One of my students, who grew up in a Muslim family before coming to Christian faith, was from Albania, a delightful young man and truly fascinating to chat with. Also, having taught at this campus on several other occasions, Peggy and I were delighted to reconnect with faculty and staff members we've known previously. And, while there, Peggy and I had a chance to visit the Rijks Museum to see the works of the great Dutch masters like Rembrandt, Vermeer, Frans Hals, and others as well as the Verzettes Museum, which focused on the Dutch resistance movement in World War II.

In May, we were off to Europe again, this time to the U. of N. campus in Nuneaton, England (near Birmingham). Here, I taught through the books of Ezekiel and Daniel in their School of Biblical Studies. As usual, they were from a variety of countries, many of them Europeans, but also some Canadians, some from India and Africa, and one from Colombia. One of the highlights, especially for me, but I think also for the students, was the field trip we took to London, where I gave a

tour of the biblical artifacts in the British Museum, artifacts from ancient Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.



Here's my group for the British Museum tour in London standing in front of the bas-relief of Xerxes I, the husband of Esther. In addition, we looked at the Rosetta Stone, the Cyrus Cylinder, the Taylor Prism, the Babylonian Lion, the Lachish Letters, the Amarna Letters, the bas-reliefs of Sennacherib's invasion of Lachish near Jerusalem, and a variety of cuneiform texts, some of which mention directly biblical people like Hezekiah, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Cyrus. In addition, I took them to the British Library, where they had a firsthand look at Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete Bible in the world.

Besides the lectures in the Books of Ezekiel and Daniel, I also taught an introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy for a Christian congregation in Coventry that has a biblical studies program, and I would estimate we had about 35-40 attending this class as well.

We arrived home on Friday night, May 30 (and I'm composing this mission letter a couple hours after getting home), and in the morning, we leave for another University of the Nations' campus in Richmond, Virginia, where the first week of June I'll be lecturing on the life and letters of St. Paul. I'll say more about this venue in our next mission letter.

Before closing this missive, I want to apprise you that we have rebuilt our Diakonos website and launched it in February. It is now updated, has much new

material, and in particular I've added the additions of a full Powerpoint for the Book of Job as well as the Powerpoint for my lectures at Macomb Community College on "Texts and Readers in Early Christianity." If you have a chance, be sure to look up the new website and let me know what you think. The internet address is the same as before: www.dkonos.org

May the Lord bless you all!

In God's grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan and Peggy Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dan and Peggy Lewis