

CREATOR

VOLUME 17

NUMBER 2

CONSIDER THE ANT

Part 2

Go to the ant . . . consider her ways,
and be wise (Proverbs 6:6 ESV).

“Prince of Peace”

Editor’s Note: Our friend Nemala¹ is eager to tell more about the ant world in which she lives. (Please read her accounts in the last issue—*CREATOR 17-1*.) Let’s listen in . . .

Nemala: “Y’all have seen that ants often cooperate with each other. And at times, we work with other insect species as well (like aphids). Now some ants are closely knit to plants, thus proclaiming Christ as the ‘Prince of Peace’ (Isaiah 9:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:16) in the vegetable, as well as the animal, kingdom.

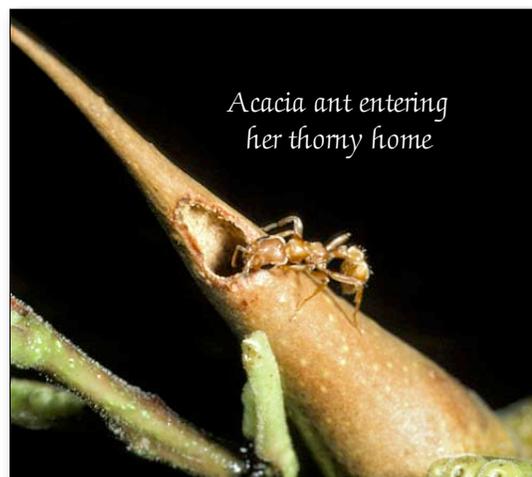
“The *acacia ant* (*Pseudomyrma*) makes her home in the hollowed-out thorns of the acacia tree, native to Mexico and Central America. These ants faithfully protect the plant by viciously biting or stinging any animal that so much as tries to nibble its leaves. In return, our generous Creator provides the ants valuable honeydew, which is secreted from the base of the acacia leaves.

“We also find a unique bond between the

Cecropia tree of tropical America and its resident *azteca ants* (*Azteca* sp.). These resourceful insects construct a large nest in the trunk of the *Cecropia*. God purposely made the trunk hollow so that the ants might live there.”

Editor’s Note: We might see this tree as a “type of Christ” because it protects the ants from storms and feeds them with small fruits located at the base of its leaves. Like the mustard tree in Christ’s parable (Matthew 13:31-32), the branches of the *Cecropia* “reach out” to many other creatures—tree sloths, squirrel monkeys, bats, birds, and moths—all who enjoy its fruits and flowers.

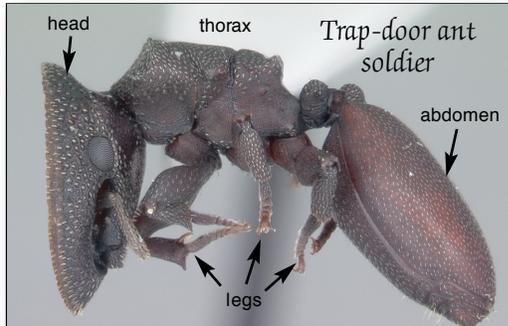
Nemala: “Likewise, *trap-door ants* (*Colobopsis*) make their homes by hollowing out the twigs of white ash and sumac. And



Acacia ant entering
her thorny home

¹ Nemala is a fictional character. “Nemala” is the Hebrew word (נמלה) for “ant.”

they do this without damaging the trees. Their colonies are small—20 or so ants—but well defended. King Jesus molded the head of each soldier ant into a flat shape. The



soldier uses her 'level headedness' to plug up the entrance hole leading into the twig. Now, that's using one's noggin!"

The Slave Makers

Nemala: "There is much about us ants that reflects the wonderful character of our Maker (Romans 1:20). But sadly some of my kind mirror the worst of mankind. And such is the case with ants that make other species of ants their slaves.

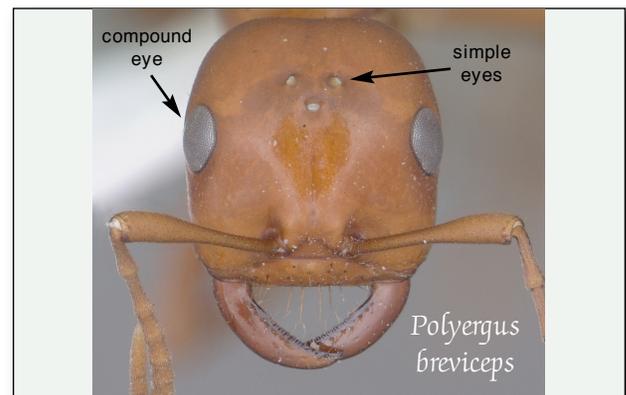
"Here in North America, certain kinds of ants (*Polyergus*) force other species of ants (*Formica*) to work for them. These **slave-making ants** raid neighboring colonies, rob them of their babies and young (larvae and pupae), and carry their 'booty' back to their own nest. Disgusting practice, if you ask me! To add insult to injury, the raiders spray the invaded workers with chemicals (acetates), causing the conquered worker ants to run away in panic. That's just plain mean! Slave-making ants usually perform several raids a year in order to maintain their own nest's large labor force."



Editor's Note: Ant researcher, Howard Topoff, says that slave-making "ants have completely lost the ability to care for themselves. The workers do not forage for food, feed the young or the queen, or even clean up their own nest."² This is direct evidence of the Fall's effect upon creation—Romans 8:19-22.

There is so much we can learn about ourselves by studying ants. The ways in which ants display both how people should and should not treat each other is nothing short of astounding!

Nemala: "I've been told that deep within the Amazon jungle, slave-making ants can also be found. These creatures are so dependent upon their servants that their colonies would literally cease to exist without them. They've even lost the ability to care for themselves and their babies. What a lazy lot they are!"



The face of a slave-making ant
(most ants have five eyes)

Editor's Note: Like the enslaved Jews of Egypt, these conquered ants feed their owners, care for the young, and even carry about their masters. This slave-making

² Howard Topoff, "Slave-Making Queens," *Scientific American*, (November 1999): 86-87.

activity is polar opposite of God’s character. God *always works* to display His glory and benefit His creation (John 5:17; Psalm 145:9).

Ant Altruism

Editor’s Note: *Altruism* (ALL - tru - izm) is a term that comes from the French word, *altruisme*, which means “other.” It describes the tendency of some to be more devoted to the *welfare of others* than to themselves (see Philippians 2:3-4). Now whether or not ants are aware of the self-sacrificing behaviors that Christ liberally displays through them, and toward their fellow nest mates, we simply can’t be certain. But we can say that, in general, ants are far more sociable than people.

Nemala: “King Jesus designed each of us ants with two stomachs—a ‘social’ stomach and a ‘private’ stomach. The purpose of our social stomach is to store liquid food, which can later be shared with our sisters. We



frequently pass food from one to another—your scientists call this *trophallaxis* (tro - fih - LACK - suss.) Food sharing helps bind us ants together as one colony. I guess it’s akin to the special dinners, barbecues, and picnics people host to encourage bonding between friends and family—except sadly y’all don’t pass your food mouth to mouth. How come?

By the way, we ants really love it when you have picnics. Please have more!”

Editor’s Note: Trophallaxis might also be seen as a dim reflection of the Lamb’s wedding feast in Heaven—Revelation 19:9—when the glory of Christ will be shared with all His people.

Ant altruism, however, is not limited to food sharing. As an ant ages, she willingly changes jobs in order to best serve her colony. Older ants perform some of the riskier chores—such as colony defense,



foraging outside the safety of the nest, and disposal of germ-laden trash. Diseased and dying ants voluntarily remove themselves from the nest so as not to expose their sisters to danger. *Would we do this?*

Nemala: “In the last issue of *CREATOR*, we saw how the selfless behavior of weaver ant babies (larvae) provided much-needed silk for nest building. There’s also a rare breed of carpenter ants found on the other side of the world³ that can actually explode itself to protect their nests from enemies. Whoa, that’s gotta hurt! These ‘kamikaze’ ants have large poison glands that run the whole length of their body. When the colony is threatened, soldier ants go outside the nest and violently contract their abdominal

³ In Malaysia, *Camponotus saundersi* is known as the Malaysian exploding ant.



muscles. This ruptures their skin (exoskeleton) and sprays a sticky, corrosive poison everywhere.”

Editor’s Note: We might see this as another “type of Christ”—one willing to “go outside the camp” (Hebrews 13:11-13) and give up their life so that others might live (Mark 10:45).

Ant Communication

Nemala: “The vast majority of ants have eyes, but they’re usually small and most of us see rather poorly. For an ant, I’ve got pretty good vision. We don’t have ears, and although we can feel vibrations with our feet, King Jesus didn’t give us the ability to talk with one another as y’all can.”

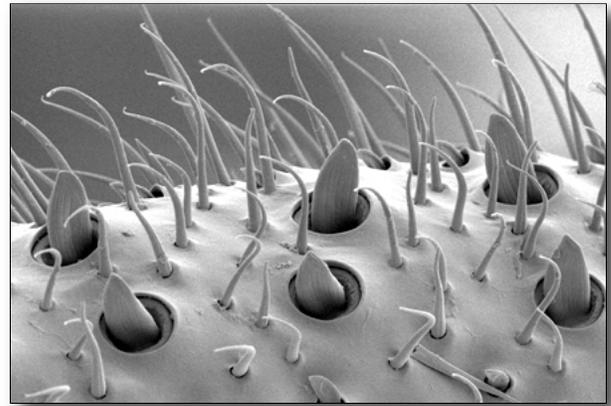
Editor’s Note: In order for any group of individuals to accomplish something together—whether they be a single family or a large city of people—they must first be able to communicate with one another. The same is true for ants. Scientists have discovered that as strange as this might seem—ants communicate with other ants using chemicals, called *pheromones* (FAIR - uh - mones.)

Nemala: “An ant’s sense of smell is really good . . . though none of us has a nose either. The main way we smell something is by moving about our antennae (an - TEN - nee).”

Editor’s Note: God richly supplied an ant’s antennae with numerous olfactory⁴ sense organs.

Nemala: “Our ability to smell far exceeds your own. It’s been said that apart from our keen sense of smell, we ants couldn’t survive—it’s that important to us!

“Y’all have an expression—‘I smell a rat’—for someone you don’t trust. Although I personally don’t see the similarity between



Electron micrograph of the antenna of an African driver ant, *Dorylus helvolus*, showing olfactory sense organs (magnified thousands of times)

y’all and rats. Well, the same could be said of the way we ants identify an enemy. Entomologists⁵ have discovered that each of our ant colonies has a complex . . . ah . . . ah *bouquet* of unique scents that marks that colony. Remember, ants can’t normally see each other very well, so smell is how we identify whether a fellow ant is ‘a sister’ or is ‘sinister’—that is, a potential danger to the nest. We usually attack anything with a foreign odor. Which is why ants

The study of the pheromones produced by ants is a study in basic **organic chemistry**. Among the chemicals ants use to “talk” with each other are alcohols, aldehydes, ketones, esters, hydrocarbons, sulfur compounds, terpenoids, and acids.

frequently bite and sting your ankles. Sorry to say, your feet definitely possess a *foreign odor*. Phew!

“Our King Jesus slathers a layer of grease (long-chain fatty acids) on the skin of all social insects—ants, bees, wasps, termites.

⁴ “Olfactory” is a term referring to the sense of smell. Please read **CREATOR** issues Vol 16 Num 1 and Vol 16 Num 2 to learn more about the olfactory sense in both people and animals.

⁵ Entomologists are scientists who study insects and spiders.

It's this peculiar odor of grease that gives us the ability to tell one another apart.

Scientists now believe that *each ant* in a colony—no matter how large the colony—has its own unique scent, like a fingerprint.”⁶

Editor's Note: If true, what does this tell us about an ant's Creator? It's an amazing testimony that Christ is “the One and only” of God (Greek *monogenes*—see John 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 11:17). He radiates His own uniqueness in the things He has made. It also points to the intimacy of our Maker, who has personally “marked” each and every ant on Earth (all 10 million billion⁷ ants) as His own possession! How much more tenderly does God hold you and me in His loving arms (Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 6:25-34)?

There are so many ants in this photo that together they appear as rich, black soil!



A myriad of ants

Nemala: “When we ants greet, we gently run our delicate antennae over each other, ‘sniffing’ one another much the way dogs do. Ants are also like dogs and cats because we routinely spread our own unique scent over our bodies, licking and grooming ourselves as often as time permits. But odors in our world

⁶ This is incredible when we consider that some colonies possess more than a million ants!

⁷ Ten quadrillion



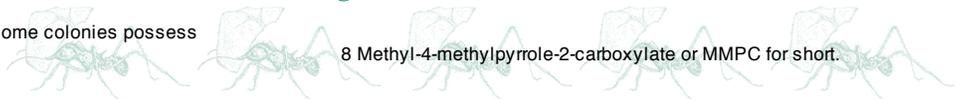
Well, hello there!

communicate a lot more than personality. Our pheromones help warn other ants of approaching danger and broadcast when we are injured. Ants can even tell the type of work that a fellow ant *does* simply by smelling them. Neat, huh? In addition, we use chemicals to point to the location of a new nest site or to direct one another toward food. When we ants go outside our nest in search of food, we lay down a trail of pheromones to mark the path we've taken.”

Editor's Note: This is similar to a cave explorer using string or rope to ensure safe return in the blackened passageways of a dark cave. Now, entomologists have discovered a “vocabulary” of at least 20 or 30 different chemical signals that ants use to “converse” with each other.

Nemala: “We apply trail scents using glands on the underside of our abdomen by simply dragging our belly along the ground. From our perspective, these scents are about as strong as any odor can get. I've been told that the trail pheromone from just one colony of leafcutter ants (*Atta vollenweirderi*) has enough *potency* to lay a trail of scent⁸—a trail that we ants can easily follow—*60 times around the world!* Our Creator is incredibly kind because He makes certain that His tiny creatures can mark the way to food that others of our species can follow. *He's so good!*”

⁸ Methyl-4-methylpyrrole-2-carboxylate or MMPC for short.



“But, as I mentioned earlier, unfamiliar odors make us ants nuttier than a pecan pie. They confuse us! In any well-established colony, the interior of the nest is kept spotlessly clean and free from foreign material. This is also why we ants lick each other—we’re always trying to spread our unique scent throughout the colony.”

Editor’s Note: We might see an analogy here between the Church and an ant colony. The true “aroma of Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:15)—that is, a right understanding of His character—should permeate those of us who believe in Him. “Foreign odors” or false gospels/false teaching will then be easily identified and quickly eliminated!

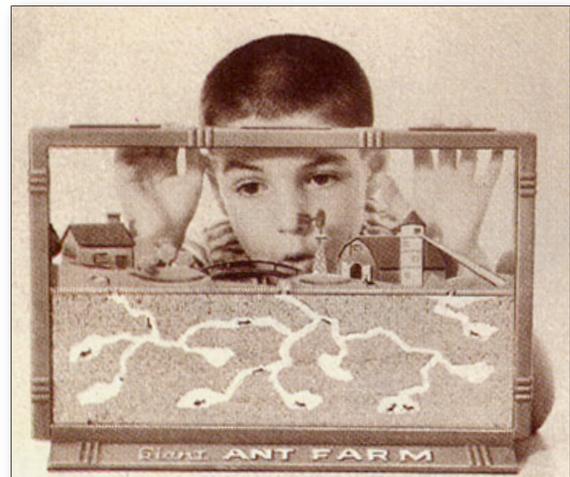
The Wisdom of Christ

Editor’s Note: The Bible clearly states that we can see the wisdom of God revealed in the way ants live their lives, *if we’re willing* to make the effort to look. When I quoted Proverbs 6:6 at the beginning—“Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise”—I purposely left out the phrase, “O sluggard.” I did this initially to prevent the reader from saying to himself, “Oh, this command doesn’t apply to me because I’m a hard-working person!”

This command, however, is not just a warning to those who are physically lazy, but also an admonishment to those of us who are slack in knowing the glory of our Lord. After all, who of us can claim that he or she truly knows God perfectly? In this sense, we all need to apply ourselves diligently in order to plumb the depths of our precious Creator’s character. *This takes effort!* If we want to see the wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ displayed in His creation of the ant, for instance, we will need to work hard at it. But the reward of knowing and understanding our Creator and

Should the study of ants be neglected because we’re too busy? Should it be limited to scientists? Or does God expect all of us to learn as much as we can about these incredible insects, and especially their Creator? Although this command—consider the ant—is directed at those prone to laziness, the truth is that each of us can be quite neglectful in our study of Christ and His revealed glory. In this sense, the admonishment above applies to us all!

Savior better (Jeremiah 9:24) is well worth getting a little dirty! I humbly suggest that it’s necessary for us to develop a child-like heart in order to see God’s glory (Matthew 5:8; 18:3; Ephesians 1:18).



Nemala: “No two kinds of ants are exactly alike in the way they organize their colonies. Each ant species has its own special culture. When y’all consider that King Jesus has created at least 12,000 species of our kin, and therefore at least 12,000 unique types of ant societies, it’s not hard to see the incredible wisdom of our amazing God!



King of the Ants

“Christ also uses us ants to lovingly humble y’all because ant societies reflect your own. Who other than God could have orchestrated such incredible similarities between ants and people? King Jesus could have used more noble beasts—eagles, lions, horses, whales—to teach y’all how to behave. But God purposely chose us lowly ants to remind folks of their own lowliness before the Almighty (Isaiah 40:6, 15). I guess it’s terribly humbling for y’all to realize that of all creatures in the animal kingdom, you’re most like us ants in behavior! Personally, I don’t mind—it makes me feel special. Ants illustrate the many ways in which God wants y’all to treat each other, and how *not* to treat each other.”

Editor’s Note: When I consider the countless colonies of ants spread across the face of the earth, and the wisdom of my Lord displayed in them (Proverbs 30:24-25), I find myself quietly singing a beloved hymn: *O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made . . . then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee, how great Thou art, how great Thou art!*⁹



The beautiful velvet ant

Nemala: “We ants reveal the beauty, wisdom, sovereignty, terror, holiness, omnipresence, care, provision, and kindness of our Creator! King Jesus knows each of us personally and He made ants quite unique.

Nemala: “Christ is Lord over all He’s made (Colossians 1:16-17). I think we especially see this in the fact that He constructed our ant communities using only females.¹⁰ He’s a jealous God, and He’s jealous to be seen as the only true Ruler over the entire creation! In your human realm, God allows men (males)—kings, governors, presidents, ministers—to rule, but not so with His ants. Our ant colonies have no *visible* ruler. The queen ant doesn’t rule, she mainly lays eggs. King Jesus is our Commander!”

Editor’s Note: Even a brief study of an ant colony should produce a shout in our hearts, “Christ must be the Leader over these countless creatures—look at how orderly they are!”



Nemala: “The only sane conclusion your scientists should come to is that our kindly Creator is the invisible King over us ants. It’s such a joy knowing that Christ rules and cares so much for us!”

Editor’s Note: The ant realm is a *true theocracy*¹¹ and it points us to the glorious hope that someday soon our Prince will reveal His sovereign rule over all creation as its only true King—see Isaiah 11.

In the meantime, how should we then live? What has the ant taught us? One thing

⁹ The words to “How Great Thou Art” were written by Carl Gustav Boberg of Sweden in 1885.

¹⁰ God also makes male ants, but these live only long enough to mate with the queen(s).

¹¹ A theocracy is a government with God as its ruler.

is clear—He who made ants is to be feared! His ways of thinking and creating are very alien to us (Isaiah 55:8); a closeup glance of an ant’s face will prove my point!



And although ants, like people, are affected by the Fall, their savagery toward their enemies cannot be so easily explained away. If we compare the “justice” that ants apply to potential invaders with the divine justice Christ exacts upon His enemies (Revelation 19:11-21), we see a spine-chilling similarity.

So, how should we approach this King called Jesus, the Son of God? The Bible tells us: “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him” (Psalm 2:12). But how do we “kiss” the One we cannot see? And how do we take refuge in Him? Simply this—we *freely receive Christ into our lives*. Normally, our pride and sin will prevent us from surrendering ourselves to God’s sovereign rule in this way. But the King of Creation shows us how to humble ourselves before God. As God, Jesus clothed Himself with human flesh (which might be like you or me becoming a lowly ant), lived a perfect life of obedience to all the commands of His Heavenly Father, and died on a cross that our sins might be forgiven. Christ rose up from the grave so that we might have entrance into His eternal

kingdom—a paradise where there is no pain or disease or death or crying (Revelation 21:4).

Would you like to be included in Christ’s glorious kingdom forever? Then receive His kingship over your heart and life. Jesus is King over the ants. *Will He be your King?*

“Oh, Father in Heaven, I confess that I have lived my life in rebellion against You, and that this is foul sin before You. Please wash me clean by the blood of Your Son, Jesus, and forgive me because of His death on the cross—not because of anything I have done. King Jesus, please come into my heart right now. I embrace You as my all-powerful God, my sweet Savior, and my Eternal Life. Show me how to live the way You want me to live, so that I might express a wonderful aroma of worship before You for all eternity! In Your name, Lord Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.” □

On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16 ESV).



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