

November-December 2012

BA

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God's Bounty

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- Panic button (p. 6)
- Losing to gain (p. 14)

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1863 — 2013



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2012: Year of the Spirit

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A publication of the

Church of God (Seventh Day)

This magazine is published to advocate the Bible, represent the Church, and glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 146 • Number 6

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The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is published bimonthly by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80023. Periodicals postage is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional offices. Subscription is free to any who ask. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-0677.

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Bible Advocate Press
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233-0677
phone: 303/452-7973
fax: 303/452-0657
e-mail: bibleadvocate@cog7.org
orders: bap.orders@cog7.org

Notice: Send all address changes and other correspondence to the address above.

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

The Bible Advocate Online appears at www.BAonline.org.

Cover photo: @ Photowitch—Dreamstime.com

It's Time . . .

It's November-December; harvest is nearly past. Daylight hours are short; winter looms. It's 2,012 years from the first advent of Christ into the world. How long till His return?

It's time to look back. Our memories of this spring-summer-fall, of our reunions-retreats-camps-trips, of many friends-family-fun times (with sufficient finances!) are still fresh, so it's time to speak up in gratitude. (My 2012 favorites: CoG7 congress near London, seeing England-Scotland, family reunions with fifteen grandchildren, summiting Oregon's Mount Hood, and the continuing privilege of serving the gospel.) If you're grateful, too, it's time to say thanks for this year's rewards and rescues. Say it loud and clear, as did the leper Jesus cleansed (see pp. 4-5, 16-17).

It's time to look ahead. Keeping custom, we include a sturdy section on Bible prophecy in this end-of-year issue (pp. 6-15). Echoing the Bible's wake-up texts (Romans 13:11, for example), we urge readers to allow these messages to refresh and restore your first love for the grace and truth of Christ. What will we do now – today – to assure that 2013 starts with stronger, richer faith-notes and love-harmonies than 2012?

It's time to look down, if only for a moment. In this single paragraph, I'm asking us to not deny that 2012 had its challenges: The election? Church conflict? Illness? Fires and other natural disasters? Personal, family, or financial struggles? In troublesome times like these, read Hosea 10:12 for the Lord's counsel to His people in turmoil, then fill in these blanks: "It's time to _____ until He _____."

And it's time to look up. Our Lord's words about the signs of His return are never more graphic than in Luke 21:25-36. Here in a dozen verses Jesus raises the specter of international distress, personal perplexities, heart failures over the future, daily life cares, and the pleasure-mad throng. Some of these verses predict clouds on the horizon for many.

But these twelve verses also foresee a sunny day for Christ's disciples who know the time and trust His Word. Here's the punch line: "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (v. 28).

What time is it? Christ is coming: It's time to look up!

— Calvin Burrell



Gratitude: Pause and Point

An old familiar thanks story yields new and lasting treasure.
by Phil Huber

Each year in the United States, we set aside the fourth Thursday of November for a day of national thanksgiving. It is, in origin, a harvest festival, a celebration of God's provision of food through the farming season.

Today it is tied less to the harvest and more to reflection on God's blessing throughout the previous year. This emphasis on gratitude is increasingly crowded out by feasting, football, and the frenetic Christmas shopping season.

The gospel story of ten lepers fits this backdrop of thanksgiving neglected (Luke 17:11-19). Rather than shame us with the example of nine ingrates, Jesus encourages us by focusing on one model of gratitude. We too can learn to express gratitude through pausing and pointing.

Pause

Traveling along the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus encounters ten lepers on the

outskirts of a town. Jewish law demands that those with infectious skin diseases must live outside the camp (Leviticus 13:46). These are the societal cast-offs, the men who stand along exit ramps with cardboard signs.

These ten men cry out for mercy, and Christ responds, telling them to go show themselves to the priests. This is the first step in a process of cleansing that involves birds, scarlet yarn, hyssop, cedar wood, bathing, shaving, laundering, two male goats, and flour with oil (Leviticus 14). What to most is a boring litany of rules about cleansing is pointedly relevant to these leprosy-controlled men. They are intimately familiar with what God's Word says about their condition.

This cleansing process hangs like a checklist in their minds, one they have dreamed of utilizing. Now Jesus has instructed them to take the first step. When they set out, they are still covered in leprosy. As they are on the way, the healing occurs. And with this healing, their journey to the priest is infused with urgency. Their minds are full of the checklist, the key to their entry back into society. They are dreaming of white picket fences, flannel sheets, coffee at Panera. Lep-

rosy has hijacked their lives long enough. For the first time in ages, there is hope for their future. They are focused on completing the list.

All but one. One, when he sees he is healed, returns to say thank you to Jesus. This is not on the list, not part of the cleansing process. The birds, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn — these will wait. He will pause from the list to express gratitude. And this is thanksgiving, our willingness to pause from the enjoyment of the gift to express gratitude to the giver. This pause, we struggle with.

I like lists. I work best when I have an agenda. Plop me into that group of ten, and I'm more prone to continue on with the nine than to return with the one. First let me get my feet under me. I'll finish the cleansing, move into a split-level, lease a Corolla, start my new job. Then I'll be in a position to properly express my gratitude. I can entertain. I'll have Jesus over for dinner. We'll have the spiral-cut of meat with the cheesy potatoes. By then, there are new lists I'm focused on.

It's an implicit ingratitude. My failure to pause demonstrates that while I may enjoy the gift, I am indifferent toward the Giver.



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November is an annual reminder of my failure to pause throughout the year to recognize how much God has given me. Sure, it's been a busy year. A year full of lists. But it's also been a blessed year. A year full of gifts from the hands of a loving Giver. Most are enjoyed with the same implicit ingratitude of the nine. But occasionally I join the company of the one and pause.

Point

In that pause, Jesus says to the grateful man, "Your faith has made you well" (v. 19, NIV). Luke recorded this exact phrase on the lips of Jesus earlier, in Luke 7, where He is anointed by a woman of sordid reputation.

The religious folk object, looking down their noses at this sinful woman and her extravagant, perfumed display. Jesus counters that those forgiven much love much. The self-righteous have a polite affection for Jesus; this woman has a desperate love.

Jesus turns His attention to this societal cast-off and says to her, "Your sins are forgiven," then follows it up with these words: "Your faith has saved you" (vv. 48, 50). This phrase is, word for Greek word, what Jesus says to another societal castoff ten chapters later — a leper.

This linguistic parallel is regrettably not evident in the familiar English translations. While the incident in Luke 7 is clearly a case of a sinful woman in need of "saving," the

story in Luke 17 is in the context of physical healing, and so the translators assume that Luke has this in mind. In that sense, the common translation, "Your faith has made you well," fits perfectly. But keep in mind that this is what Jesus says exclusively to the thankful one, not to the afflicted ten. All ten, after all, are healed. Doesn't it follow that what Jesus offers the one grateful leper should go a step beyond that healing? In this sense, "Your faith has saved you" is a better translation.

All ten share in being made well. But this one receives something special, something offered ten chapters earlier to a broken woman: salvation — not merely from leprosy, but from sin. It's through the healing that this man discovers the true nature of his malady. Physical leprosy was destroying his body; spiritual leprosy was destroying his soul. All ten are *cleansed* (Luke 17:14), but only one is *saved* (v. 19).

So we see that God's gifts point us to something greater. He wants to use things that are temporal as pointers toward things eternal. The gift of healing was intended to point them to a greater healing.

Made for more

God has been gracious to me. In this moment I have much to enjoy. A warm fire glowing in our fireplace, a beautiful autumn view out our sliding door, a hot cup of English tea I just brewed, a computer that allows me to edit my first draft errors, a brownie left from last night's dinner with friends. It's all good, but it's not complete. In a few moments I'll leave for work, exchanging these markers of serenity for a frantic shift at the store. I want more.

My appetite for the truest joy is stronger than these fleeting moments can deliver. I delight in them all, but I was made for more. They last for a moment or a span, but they're not eternal. They point beyond themselves to something greater, reminders that this is an appetite only eternity can satisfy. For all I have to be thankful for this year, these time-bound blessings are signposts to eternity.

Pause this season to enjoy the good gifts God has given, but don't let that be the end of gratitude. All the good things God has given point to eternity. They are a foretaste, whetting our appetites for the pure delight of His eternal presence. **BA**

Phil Huber writes from Baldwinsville, NY.



It's Doomsday ... Again!



Ready for another surge of Second Coming speculation? **by James McBride**

Prophetic dates come and go. What about December 21, 2012?

The economic crisis that affects so many, combined with Arab Spring, world overpopulation, acute shortages of food and water, and rampant disease, has generated a fresh rash of print and e-talk on Bible prophecy. Much focus is on November and December 2012. What should you make of it?

Some say the day of doom is at the door. Alignment of planets, a collision with Nibiru, a shifting polar axis, reversal of earth's magnetic field, a "beam" from the Milky Way's center, catastrophic earthquakes and tsunamis — all coming to their climactic focus on December 21 of this year!

You may as well forget your silver, your gold, your investments. No point taking to the hills, for earth's billions won't see tomor-

row's sun. Nor will what you have stashed under the mattress be of any value. Make peace with all whom you've offended — and with God — now, while time lasts. This is the end.

That's the scenario being painted, based on interpretation of an ancient Mayan prophecy. Books, films, theater — no shortage of information about December 21. Millions believe it marks the end of civilization as we know it. Some even assert a conspiracy by the world's scientific and political authorities to hide the facts.

But is it true? Is this "the end" for all of us?

Not that the Mayans predicted such for this now infamous date. For them it simply marks the end of one period, as did, for example, the rolling over of the twentieth century into the twenty-first. But it makes for good TV!

The end

Written into the folk memory of all peoples is the concept of an "end." It may be a subconscious memory of the worldwide destruction of the great Flood. But disasters do happen, and failed predictions of such an end abound.

One certainty of prophecy, writ large in Scripture, is that "the age of man" is about to close. Humanity is "lord of misrule" of our planet since records began, but that misrule ends soon. The Messiah, Jesus, will return to establish the rule of God's universal kingdom.

The Bible maps out for us a God's-eye view of the end times. In essence, our meddling with fundamental spiritual laws provokes varying degrees of physical, economic, and political chaos. Yes, spiritual neglect affects the ground under our feet, our health, our well-being!

To solve the problems, world leaders take their lead from Jesus: globalization. Except, of course, that humanity's solution could lead to a cruel world-ruling religious and political dictator, with his instruments of oppression — all opposition mercilessly eliminated.

Such fearsome factors can be found in Scripture and are highlighted by most who write about prophecy, often with a barely suppressed sense of glee!

Missing factor

The missing factor, however, is a firm trust in the words of our Lord, who told us to not let our hearts be troubled, because He is coming again to receive us unto Himself forever. The question of *when* He will come has intrigued even Christ's most intimate disciples. And it's a question Bible students to this day ask again and again.

Jesus' answer to that question was simple: "That's not your business" (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Only the Father knows when the time will be ripe to halt humanity's madness. There are enigmatic indicators in the Scriptures, but no firm date in sight.

Many Christians infer from various texts of Scripture that God has assigned human beings six thousand years to "do their own thing," after which He will intervene through the return of Jesus to set us right. The starting point and the end of that period are disputed. Some believe the end is imminent, though the Hebrew calendar denotes this year as 5773 (years from creation). Based on creation as 4004 B.C. (a date accepted by many), the six thousand years should have

Mayan Calendar

What exactly is the Mayan calendar about to do? On December 21, 2012, it will display the equivalent of a string of zeros, like the odometer turning over on your car, with the close of something like a millennium.

In Mayan calendrics, however, it's not the end of a thousand years. It's the end of Baktun 13. The Mayan calendar was based on multiple cycles of time, and the baktun was one of them. A baktun is 144,000 days — little more than 394 years.

— NASA

expired before now.

Prophetic events engulf our shores in waves. Generation after generation gears up for the return of the Savior, only to die without experiencing that momentous event. Another wave now laps the shore. Is this "it"? Is this "the end"?

What must be emphasized is that God always acts on time — His time. Yet many siren voices focus on a variety of dates for the end. At this time, there is no "sure word of the Lord" as to when Jesus will return. No matter when, this year or in 228 years, it is for each of us to be daily serving God and preparing to reign with Jesus.

New era

Many prophecy buffs are excited by the thought of the end. That end, biblically, while catastrophic for many, yet heralds a new era. An era of peace among nations, of even-handed justice. An era — a thousand years — of prosperity, of abundant resources properly used, of health and well-being — all resulting from an almost universal change in the human heart.

Jesus *will* return — in the Father's perfect timing. The date you anticipate may or may not be the one. Tot up prophesied events, and the time may, thankfully, be cut short! What Jesus said was "Be vigilant." Watch. Be prepared. Hold fast to the true faith. Don't let your love grow cold. Be patient. Serve until He comes. **BA**

James McBride, from Lincolnshire, England, edits *New Horizon* magazine of the Churches of God Outreach Ministries (Tulsa, OK). He and his wife, Sarah, married 46 years, have four children.

*You know what they say
about crying wolf.
Eighty-eight reasons in '88.
Everything digital
going kerflooy in Y2K.
The Mayans' 2012.
Ha ha ha!
And then one day
the sky splits.*

Connie L. Peters

The Kingdom Question

Will the main facts about this core Bible theme fit primer form? You decide. by Calvin Burrell

@ Zheng Min —Dreamstime.com

Few terms or topics embrace the Bible's total message more accurately and comprehensively than *kingdom of God*. Jesus our Lord used this theme as a synonym for the gospel. When fully explored, it encompasses all the good news of God's love and gracious intent toward men.

So rich is this kingdom motif

in Scripture that any two-page summary can only scratch the surface of its length, breadth, and depth. Here, we use six editorial questions to probe the topic of God's kingdom.

What is it? A kingdom is a realm under authority, a domain under a sovereign. God's king-

dom, then, is that realm over which He rules and reigns. The kingdom of God is also called the *kingdom of heaven* and the *kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. God has bestowed all authority (sovereignty!) upon His dear Son, who will restore the kingdom to the Father when all His enemies are subdued and all things in heaven and earth are united in Him.

When is it? God's kingdom is everlasting; it has neither beginning nor end. King is not a role God has taken of late or that He will assume someday. He has always been and will ever be the only legitimate sovereign of the universe.

The kingdom once prevailed in the perfections of earthly Eden. After the Fall, the Flood, and Babel's tower, it lived largely in Israel's seed for two thousand years. Now it flourishes among followers of Jesus the Messiah, all those who produce its royal fruit. Someday, it will be manifested in both millennial and eternal phases. The kingdom is forever.

Who is it? The kingdom is inseparable from its King. With His Father, Jesus shares the title King of Kings. In His ministry of delivering people from imposter gods (demons), Christ announced that the true kingdom of God had come upon them, with Christ its King. Where and when and over what the Lord of heaven and earth reigns, there and then and that is the kingdom, too.

Why is it? Because the King is personal and present, His kingdom is both reality and necessity. It exists because God himself exists, creating and sustaining all

things through the Spirit, redeeming and restoring them to Himself in Christ.

A creating and caring God necessarily implies the realm over which He rules. The kingdom's purpose is to demonstrate the eternal power and glory of the King and His eternal grace on all those He reigns over.

How is it? By what means, in other words, does the kingdom operate? Its singular source is the eternal Elohim's strong Spirit of holiness and truth. It is Yahweh's Father-power manifested in the flesh as God's Son by *the resurrection from the dead*. This mighty life-giving, regenerating force was the hope of Israel (see sidebar). It is the power of the gospel of grace and truth, and it will be the power of an endless kingdom life for all who believe.

Where is it? While God's kingdom embraces the universe and heaven beyond, Scripture says that earth is the explicit locale where God's reign is partially realized now and will be perfectly established someday. Wherever God's will is done as it is in heaven, there His kingdom is.

Surprisingly little is said in Scripture about heaven as a home for the redeemed. Rather than us going there, we read more about God coming here — once and again in the person of His Son, always and everywhere through His Spirit, and ultimately to dwell with us as Father at the descent of the New Jerusalem. The tabernacle of God — the kingdom of heaven — will then be with men forever. **BA**

Pioneer Principles

Readers are invited to compare kingdom teachings on these pages with those offered by Church pioneers of one hundred fifty years ago. In the first edition of *The Hope of Israel* (forerunner of the *Bible Advocate*), dated August 10, 1863, acting editor Enos Easton wrote among the "principles we shall maintain" . . .

"That sin entered the world and death by sin;" and that the "Dead know not anything," death signifies neither more nor less than a total extinction of being. . . .

That man having sinned, and the sentence of death having been passed upon him, . . . can have no hope of eternal life except through Christ; and that too by a resurrection from the dead. . . . We shall contend that this was the hope of the twelve tribes of Israel, of the Fathers and of the Apostles and all the primitive Church.

That God is about to set up His kingdom in the Earth. That Christ as King will sit upon the throne of His father David. That the twelve apostles will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

That the reward of the righteous as well as of the wicked will be on the Earth. That the faithful saints, with all Abraham's innumerable seed, will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, on the new earth, which will be the final abode of the righteous.

That God will dwell in the New Jerusalem, that paradise will be restored or rather that the earth will be restored to more than its Eden glory and beauty. That man will have a right to the tree of life, from which he was driven on account of transgression. That also "there will be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

It was these several points of teaching that our pioneers had in mind when they spoke of the "kingdom question" and the "age to come." Current CoG7 doctrine retains most or all of these understandings.

— Calvin Burrell



Questions & Answers



Reading Luke 16:19-31 and thinking about judgment, I'm not sure Jesus intended us to take this parable literally. Some of it suggests immortal souls in a state of eternal torment. And it seems to say how we live now determines our fate, irrespective of faith in Christ. What do you believe Jesus is teaching here?

The rich man and Lazarus story has generated a great deal of controversy. For many it serves as a description of life after death and a warning about judgment. They see it as a literal account, rather than as a parable. For others, it is a study in contrasts between the fate of those who enjoy the pleasures of this life and those who bear its burdens. They emphasize the way in which the story functions as a metaphor, rather than as a description of actual events.

Lost in the controversy is the climax of the story itself, in which Abraham tells the rich man, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (v. 31). This statement reminds us of the situation Jesus found Himself in, especially emphasized in Luke's Gospel. Received by the poor but rejected by the powerful, Jesus stood ready to set the worldly order of things on its head by saving the helpless and condemning the mighty. Many of those who, like the rich man, received "good things" in life — including a thorough knowledge of Moses and the prophets — would reject Jesus. On the other hand, many of those who, like Lazarus, received "evil things" would receive Jesus.

Interestingly, it is Jesus' resurrection from the dead, in fulfillment of Moses and the prophets, that serves as the climax of Luke's Gospel (24:44-49) — a fitting parallel to the parable.

This comparison to Jesus' life, death, and res-

urrection, I believe, unveils the primary message of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable promises life to the humble, persecuted soul who follows Christ in simple faith. At the same time, it warns the high and mighty — even those who seek the Scriptures, in which they hope to find eternal life, but who refuse Jesus, of whom the Scriptures testify (John 5:39).

— *Elder Israel Steinmetz*

When will the great white throne judgment take place? Who will be there? What will happen to the many millions who never heard of Christ?

Only in Revelation 20:11-15 is a "great white throne" judgment found. John's vision of this event follows the one thousand-year reign of Christ and the destruction of Satan at his final rebellion against God and the camp of the saints. Now, with the spiritual forces of evil forever destroyed, the righteous God will show Himself just in the presence of all who ever lived by judging the world according to people's works and who's written in the Book of Life.

The Bible is silent about God's plan for those who lived and died having never heard the message of salvation through Jesus. In this great white throne text, some have seen a final chance for those who never heard to respond to Christ's grace and truth and be judged accordingly, but this inference is too weak to be conclusive, in our opinion.

Perhaps the most and best that can be said in answer to your third question is this: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25b).

— *Elder Calvin Burrell*



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Basic rules of interpretation help us decide if an Old Testament prophecy is future or fulfilled.
by David Kidd

Have you heard a Bible preacher, teacher, or reader use a verse or two, often from the Old Testament prophets, to support some sensational current event or prophetic scenario?

Verses in the Hebrew prophets, for example, have been credited with predicting modern automobiles (Nahum 2:4) and airplanes (Isaiah 31:5), the 9/11 tragedy in America (Isaiah 30:25), and many other things. The prophetic Scriptures are also commonly applied to modern-day Israel and a rebuilt Jewish temple, to the religion of Islam, and to the second coming of Christ and an idyllic millennial age to follow.

Often when passages are pressed into duties like these, the approach taken to the Hebrew text is superficial. The context of the verse or chapter and the content of nearby verses are largely ignored as passages are dogmati-

cally asserted, or assumed, to find fulfillment in our time.

Temple teaching

Let's look in more detail at one example. Many Bible readers see the temple in Ezekiel 40–48 as yet to be built, either during a final seven-year tribulation or in the millennium.

The temple Ezekiel describes requires priests to follow old covenant laws, rituals, and sacrificial rites (40:38, 39; 42:13, 14; 43:18, 25, 27; 44:17-19). They would be allowed to marry but could not marry widows — except of other priests (44:22, 25). Only those circumcised in heart and flesh would be able to enter the sanctuary (v. 9), and animal sacrifices would be a regular occurrence.

What if this is a literal millennial temple yet to be built? Would we also read the above requirements literally? Could we

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem

City of blood and tears, Thou shalt be reborn
a holy city.

Beloved of three thousand years,
A million men and more have died for you.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,
Called to be the leader of a holy nation.
City beloved of my heart,
I shall return to you.

Joyce Frohn
(Revelation 21:2)

have priests marrying in the millennium (cf. Luke 20:34, 35) or their wives dying? Would sacrifices and circumcision of the flesh be reintroduced? If this doesn't apply to redeemed saints, then to whom?

Alternatively, what if Ezekiel is simply using the old covenant language appreciated by those of his time to figuratively describe a future millennial temple, but one not bound by old covenant regulations clearly fulfilled in Christ?

What if we were living at Ezekiel's time – the desolation of Solomon's temple – and we heard this message? Wouldn't we be greatly comforted by the hope it provided? Wouldn't we pass this hope on to our children?

What if we were alive at the time of the temple's rebuilding (Ezra 6), less than one hundred years after Ezekiel's prophecy? Consider how we might view that new temple in light of the

hopeless position of our nation not long before. Would we look for every detail of Ezekiel's temple vision to be literally fulfilled, knowing the colorful and poetic way our prophets usually expressed things? Could we see the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision in the temple just completed, or would we deny that the new temple had anything to do with Ezekiel's prophecy?

Do we really need further fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy when Jesus said, "The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father" (John 4:21)? As the spiritual temples of God (Ephesians 2:19-22), what need do we have for a physical temple anyway?

Checkpoints

Perhaps the reader could accept that we may often

- read the prophetic Scrip-

tures more literally than the Hebrews did;

- pay insufficient attention to the context of verses, of chapters, and of the prophetic books themselves (i.e., who they were written to and why);
- jump too quickly to the end of the world when reading phrases like "the Lord reigning in Mount Zion" or "I will return to Zion," etc.;
- be overzealous to apply things to our era and the end of time;
- fail to appreciate the poetic devices used by the prophets.

Perhaps we could also think through the wonderful implications of the miracles and imperial decrees in Israel's favor over fifty years from Nebuchadnezzar to Artaxerxes, recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. Many nations were in awe of the Jews due to what God had done for them.

Failing to adequately consider the events of the post-captivity period may have caused many to interpret the prophets in ways they wouldn't have, had they been aware of the mighty deeds God did for Israel after its return from captivity. A fuller knowledge of historical fulfillment in the post-captivity period might make some of us more cautious in looking for, and teaching, future fulfillments in many parts of the prophets. **BA**

David and Angela Kidd serve the Church locally (Adelaide, South Australia) and around the world.



Questions & Answers

Is it true that, from its mid-1800s beginning, the Church of God (Seventh Day) held a historicist view of Antichrist, Great Tribulation, and related topics, rather than a futurist view?

The historicist view generally holds that fulfillment of most such prophecies has already occurred, whereas the futurist view usually places their fulfillment in an apocalyptic seven-year period (Daniel's seventieth week) expected to occur.

The Church had no official eschatology from 1858 to 1920, except its doctrines of the pre-millennial advent of Christ and the "age to come." The latter teaching held that Israel would be reestablished as a nation in its biblical homeland at the time of Jesus' second advent.

The Church's response to the futurist eschatology of Seventh-day Adventism was mostly left to writers for its *Hope of Israel* and *Advocate* magazines on the topics of the identity of the two-horned beast of Revelation 13; the messages of the three angels in chapter 14; the seven plagues in chapter 16; and the identity of prophetic Babylon and the time of its fall in chapters 17 and 18.

The Church's apocalyptic writers were greatly influenced by the historicist position of most Protestant churches. They identified the Roman Catholic Church, which lost its authority at the hands of the French in 1798, as Babylon. Henry E. Carver, a former Seventh-day Adventist, became the Church of God's chief apologist for its historicist interpretation of prophecy. From 1866 until his death in the mid-1890s, he wrote exposing errors in the SDAs' futurism.

In the case of the SDAs' identifying the two-horned beast of Revelation 13 as the United States, Carver said it was the "Romish Hierarchy" that "exercised all of the authority of the Roman emperors in both political and ecclesiastical matters but was soon to become extinct." He concluded, "the papacy's loss of authority

does not alter its identity as the 'man of sin, sitting in the temple of God' whom Christ will destroy by the brightness of His coming."¹

Andrew N. Dugger became editor of the *Bible Advocate* magazine in 1914 and a popular president of the General Conference (1921-27; 29-31). He injected futurism into the Church's prophetic interpretation, and championed futurist doctrine amid the controversy that led to the 1933 division between Stanberry and Salem.

In summary, Elder Dugger believed 1) the two-horned beast would be a revived Roman Church, enforcing its mark of Sundaykeeping on Sabbath observers; 2) the Church of God's main task was to give the third angel's message, warning believers against the mark of the beast; 3) the seven plagues were literal and future judgments upon those who received the mark; 4) the giving of the third angel's message and the outpouring of the plagues would lead to Christ's return; and 5) Christ's descent from heaven to receive His kingdom would occur in the midst of Armageddon.²

Elder Dugger's argument for the imminent fulfillment of his end-time prophecies in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s led the Church to become disinterested in his failed version of them. For more than a generation, the Church struggled to recapture its true mission to preach salvation in Christ and His grace alone, rather than serve as a prognosticator of events.

The Church's return to its heritage of preaching Christ and His advent without enigmatic add-ons was reflected in its doctrinal revisions of 1994 and 2006, which dropped the futurist predictions and suppositions that prevailed for much of the past century.

— Elder Robert Coulter

1. H. E. Carver, "An Exposition on Revelation XIII," *The Hope of Israel*, June 26, 1866, pp. 75, 76

2. A. N. Dugger, *A Bible Reading For The Home Fireside*, pp. 450-479



Our earthly ambitions are corrected by one glorious passage in Philippians.
by Dr. David Downey

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Sometimes, our goals outstrip our reality by some distance. I recall thinking at some point that I was just simply not getting ahead. I could look back over what seemed like eons of effort and goodwill and see that I was not advancing much. It seemed unfair, since I was one of the “good guys.” I thought maybe God should chip in a little more and give me a push.

I remembered those old Westerns where the posse was off chasing the “bad guys.” They would always stop somewhere, and the guide would get off his horse, finger the tracks in the

dirt, and then confidently tell the leader, “We’re gainin’ on ‘em!”

That is what I would like to believe, as I forge ahead — that I’m *gainin’ on ‘em*.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he reminds his readers that he had been a zealous persecutor of the church. According to the righteousness of the law, he was blameless. Now he writes those very things that “were gain to me . . . I have counted as loss . . .” (3:7).

Paul had lost ground.

Gamaliel, a teacher of teachers among the Pharisees, had taught Paul, a first century gold-

en boy, grooming him to be a pillar of religious leadership. Paul had it made — and he gave it up. When he wrote these words, he was making tents to survive as an itinerant evangelist.

To clarify his intentions, Paul says in verse 8, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. . . .” He had progressed far enough to see the loss of *all* things (not just those he held dear) as prerequisite to victory.

Paul was decidedly not *gainin’ on ‘em*.

True worth

We cannot put this down to some flight of foolishness. The apostle was a smart man, and rational. He was making a trade. He had realized where true worth was, and he was gaining somewhere else.

Paul wished to be found in Christ. He wanted to have the righteousness that comes through faith. "Not that I have already obtained it . . . but I press on . . . one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal . . ." (vv. 12-14). He counted everything else as loss so that he might gain Christ. This is no legalistic statement of self-righteousness. He was not saying, "If I give up everything, I'm sure Jesus will reward me." Rather, he knew what it was taking to follow Jesus.

Like all people with drive, Paul was still in the race. He had not stopped running with energy and excellence. He had just switched tracks. All of his eggs were in another basket, so to speak. He no longer viewed success in the old ways; he now saw it differently. He had run far enough to say that he wanted to fellowship in Jesus' sufferings and death, in order that he might "attain to the resurrection from the dead" (v. 11).

Two worlds

A student of Greek at Trinity University in Dublin surprised the teachers by his rapid grasp of the language. Asked if someone were helping him, he mentioned his uncle, William Kelly. In this way, the professors came to know a man who was a great force for Christ in the late nine-

teenth century. They urged Kelly to take up work at the university so that he might secure his future, but he showed no interest.

One of the professors asked in exasperation, "But Mr. Kelly, aren't you interested in making a name for yourself in the world?"

Kelly answered, "In which world, Sir?"

Which world will establish our values? If our success is determined according to this world's values, then it may appear to most that we are losing ground — even when we are faithful. On the other hand, if we judge success according to Paul's principles of faith, only what enhances our relationship with Jesus will count. Next to this relationship, nothing else can compare. Everything else is "rubbish" (3:8).

I have noticed that God works these values in us in unusual ways. He sometimes leaves us stranded. He may remove every support we have, and not just worldly props either. He may leave us unfulfilled in spiritual activity for a time.

Future resurrection

Wise people have reminded us that when we learn to seek Jesus for His own sake — not for His gifts, blessings, or even comfort — then we will find what can never be lost. Once knowing Christ and being found in Him is all we need, we can never again be truly dissatisfied.

So we may be *gainin' on 'em* yet! It is not our goals or dreams that need fulfillment, but rather our service to Christ and joining with Him — sometimes in His sufferings. With Paul, we can be certain of the glorious resurrection to come. Our hope is built on our faith in His Word, which results in His righteousness and a shout of victory, as we will surely enter in. **BA**

Dr. David Downey writes from Fort Worth, TX. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Repeat these hymn words . . .

When He shall come with trumpet sound,

Oh, may I then in Him be found;

Dressed in His righteousness alone,

Faultless to stand before the throne.

— Edward Mote, "The Solid Rock"
(Based on Philippians 3:9)

We're Blest!

**BA asked, "With trouble
benefits are you mo**

In this world's deep darkness, beautiful shimmering lights can be seen. As I've dealt with divorce, illness, hurt, and many setbacks in 2012, shining lights have helped me through. What lights? Those that come from the hearts of God's loving people. Those He places in our paths to smile, hug, and tell us, "It will be OK." Those who kneel with us in prayer.

We tend to shut our eyes in fear of darkness, but it's then our eyes need to be wide open — to see the lights. I am so grateful that our caring God loves me deeply and that I have a family in Christ that "shines." Thank you for being there. My eyes were not shut.

— *Irma Smith*
El Paso, TX

In this crazy world, it's amazing to wake up each day and see the beauty of the Lord. Look around and you'll see it. Who but God could make fifty flowers, none of the same color or appearance as the others? Thank you Lord for Your creation and for sending Your Son to die for me.

— *Carl E. Childers*
Artesia Wells, TX

While society increasingly turns its back on God and atheism is on the offensive as never before, some Christians suffer persecution for faithfully spreading the gospel by their example, and some by their efforts in making God's Word accessible to everyone — through new forms of communication. In the midst of uproars, more wars, and the masses exploding in anger, God has reserved islands of peace from where Jesus' twenty-first century disciples can reach people everywhere with the gospel. For all we know, we may have reached more people in 2012 than ever before through the great variety of media the Lord has given us. We thank Him for giv-

ing such a high commission before a famine of the word begins and "Men will stagger from sea to sea . . . searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it" (Amos 8:12, NIV).

— *Ernie Klassek*
Western Australia

Prior to 2012, I've expressed gratitude for God's mercy that has helped my seven grandchildren become adults without the evil addictions of illegal drugs and alcohol. I'm honored to report that the same special blessing has continued this year. I'm grateful for the prayers of fellow Christians soliciting God's divine Spirit to control every member of my family.

— *Calvin Ijames*
Mocksville, NC

I drive a lot. This year I decided to listen to the entire Bible read aloud on CD. To my amazement, the Old Testament went quickly, and I gained insights I'd never had before. Doing the same with the New Testament, I finished the whole Bible in a matter of weeks. Then I started over again and began to see threads of truth and meanings I had never noticed or heard anyone preach on. I now listen to the reading of the Bible every day.

— *Dan Sweeney*
Tehachapi, CA

The most unexpected thing I'm dealing with in 2012 is that my wife and I have separated. After she left that night, God got ahold of me and He hasn't let go. He's opened my eyes to things I've not been doing, like showing my wife the love she deserves, being a spiritual leader, showing affection, telling her how much I care, and just sitting down to talk. Let me tell you when God gets ahold of you

and turmoil all around, what unexpected or extra-ordinary most grateful for in 2012?” Readers responded. . . .

like this, you know it. I am praying that we can and will work this out.

So if there are men out there not caring for their wives, I hope this can be your wake-up call. Start the healing now, before it goes too far. My gratitude is that God is in control now and is changing my heart. My spirit is open for God to make me more Christlike – a better person and husband.

Name withheld by request

Extraordinary benefits I am most grateful for are, one, the safe and healthy birth of my second son, Jonathan. When so many things can go wrong, it's comforting to know our heavenly Father still delivers little miracles.

The second thing is my work promotion. Ground under the financial industry is never secure, so I placed my feet on the sure Word. Our God promised His presence, and where that is, wonderful things will be. Brothers and sisters, hold on to God's Word – the only sure thing in a world with turmoil and trouble all around.

*– Lemont Ward
Mississauga, Ontario*

This election year, I've come to realize that the extraordinary benefit God has given me is *freedom*. I've always had freedom, but I've taken it for granted. A lot of us have. We carry our Bibles to church every week – to CoG7 or Methodist or Baptist churches. We have so many choices. We are so blessed to have the right to choose. In some countries you better not be caught having a Bible. Freedom: What a blessing from God!

Recently, I've felt that my freedom is more threatened than ever, with all the trouble and turmoil in the world and even here at home. Our freedom is vulnerable; I never thought that before. Our found-

ing fathers must have been intelligent and godly individuals, for they wrote charters that have lasted all these years based on such truths that all men are *created* equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Then you have the Constitution that starts out "We the people." Hey! That's me! Maybe I need to stand up more for my freedom, be a little more vocal about it and quit taking it for granted. Pray more, and give God thanks. If we don't appreciate and thank God for freedom, He might just take it away.

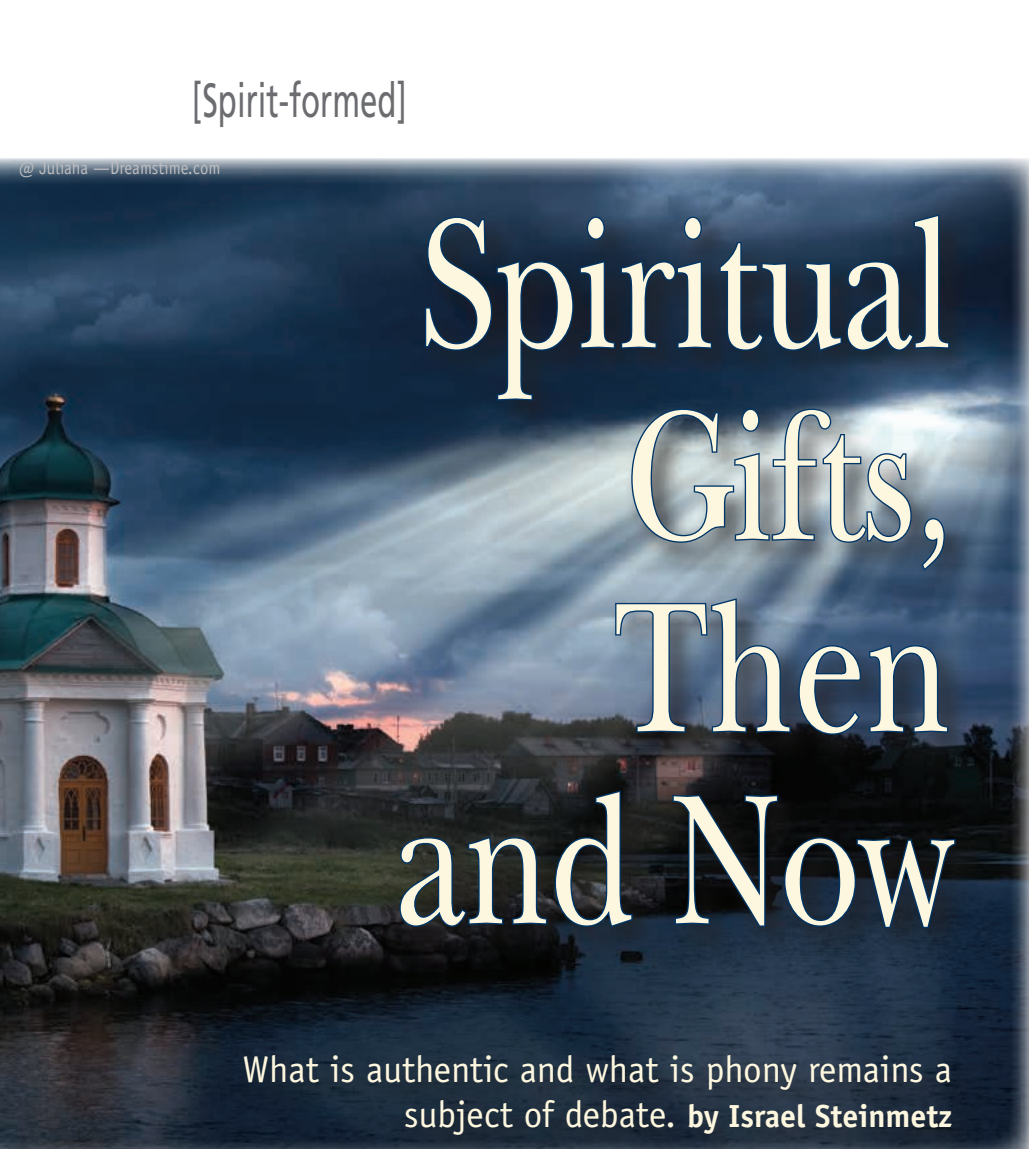
*– Larry King
Albany, MO*

Atending the IMC meeting near London provided an excellent illustration of the beauty found in the divine design of unity within diversity. The IMC's greater benefit was in the testimony of God's faithfulness in human relationships, which can't be experienced apart from personal presence. Thanks be to God for His glorious design and rich providential implementation! Thanks be to God for the global growth of His family adopted together in Jesus Christ!

*– Chip Hinds
Tahlequah, OK*

Serving as interpreter for the congress and returning home to serve as IMC secretary, I delighted in seeing the power of the Word. God is in control, and His Holy Spirit is at work in our denomination, even as we awkwardly find ourselves with only "five loaves of bread and two small fishes" to offer Him. I am so glad to be alive and active in this century, witnessing His miracles all over the world.

*– Heber Vega
Upper Marlboro, MD BA*



Spiritual Gifts, Then and Now

What is authentic and what is phony remains a subject of debate. **by Israel Steinmetz**

The question of whether the so-called miraculous gifts of the Spirit are intended for the church in every generation has long been debated. Some argue that certain offices (apostle, prophet) and spiritual gifts (prophecy, speaking in tongues, words of wisdom and knowledge) ceased with the death of the last biblical apostle, or at the completion of the New Testament Scriptures.

Others insist that apostle and prophet are still vital offices to the church, along with all the spiritual gifts, including miracles, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. Let's examine these viewpoints more closely.

Cessationists

In modern times, two groups mark opposite ends of the spectrum, answering the question "Are miraculous gifts for today?" On one end, *cessationists* believe that miraculous gifts ceased following the New Testament era. Many ancient Christians have held this position. An up-to-date summary of cessationism by a professor of theology rests on the following arguments:¹

While God may continue to work miracles, including healing, the *gifts* of healing and working of miracles are no longer given to the church. These gifts were given for the unique purpose of spreading the gospel throughout

the world (Acts 1:8). Once a program of evangelism is successful in a new field, the purpose of these gifts is fulfilled.

Words of wisdom and knowledge were associated with apostles and prophets, and these offices were given only for the time the foundation was being laid (Ephesians 2:20). After that, these offices ceased to function along with the revelatory "word gifts" that gave them authority and credibility.

The "word gifts" must have been discontinued upon completion of the biblical canon. Otherwise, distinguishing between biblical prophecy/revelation, and the prophecy and revelation that might occur in later church history, would be difficult or impossible.

First Corinthians 13:8-12 uses prophecy, tongues, and knowledge as *examples* of the kind of things that will not cease until that which is perfect has come: Christ's return. However, this does not mean that these specific things will remain during this time frame, only that things like them (i.e., partial knowledge/prophecy) have usefulness up until Christ's return, when love alone will prevail.

The miraculous gifts of the Spirit "disclose 'the essence of the kingdom and its blessings,' but they do so 'without at the same time constituting or embodying that essence.'"² God's kingdom can still advance in the absence of these "signs," because they are not essential to it.

Missing from this argument is any explicit passage of Scripture indicating that these gifts will cease before Christ's return. Professor Gaffin admits this and refuses to twist 1 Corinthians

13:8-12 into such a passage, although many others have done so. Rather, he claims that Scripture does not explicitly answer the question of whether these gifts will remain. Thus we must rely on the implicit arguments above.

Pentecostals

On the spectrum's other end are those who believe that all gifts of the Spirit are available to the church today. This group is most often referred to as Pentecostal, or Charismatic. Church history testifies to such people from the second century until now, but the emergence of modern Pentecostalism can be traced to January 1, 1901, when a student at Bethel Bible College spoke in tongues after school principal Charles Parham laid hands on her.³ The movement gained momentum during the Azusa Street revivals with William Seymour in Los Angeles (1906-09), and from there it spread around the globe. Pentecostalism varied from its Methodist holiness roots, most notably by the belief that Spirit baptism was a post-conversion experience of power accompanied by speaking in tongues.

The first wave of Pentecostalism coalesced into several denominations, including Assemblies of God, Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and Church of God in Christ. In the 1960s and 70s, a Second Wave emerged as the Charismatic Renewal, consisting of Christians from most denominations. Often through personal experience, Charismatics came to believe that all the Spirit's gifts were intended for the church today,

including speaking in tongues. The impact of the Charismatic Renewal continues to be felt in every major Protestant group and in the Catholic Church. The major distinction was that Charismatics stayed with their own churches, rather than break off to join Pentecostal denominations.

In the century since Azusa Street, the movement grew rapidly and broadly. According to one historian,

By 1995 the global number of Pentecostals and charismatics had reached 463 million, making them the second largest family of Christians in the world after the Roman Catholic Church. The denominational Pentecostals, with 215 million members, continue to experience explosive worldwide growth. Thus the Pentecostal and charismatic movements have become the most vigorous and fastest-growing family of Christians in the world.⁴

Pentecostals and Charismatics are typically identified by a few common beliefs regarding spiritual gifts:

- Baptism in the Spirit is a post-conversion experience, verified by the "initial evidence" of speaking in a language unknown to the one baptized.

- The belief and practice of the New Testament church are normative for the Christian church throughout time. Thus the full complement of New Testament spiritual gifts is available and should be active in the church today.

- Preaching the gospel and the church's advance should be accompanied by miracles, healing, and exorcisms. These are *essential* to the present kingdom, not merely signs that point toward it.

Since the "word gifts" are subject to the Bible's authority, modern prophecy must be evaluated in the Bible's light. Prophecy and words of wisdom/knowledge are not given to add to Scripture's unique revelation, but to provide God's insight into contemporary situations for edification of the church body.

Moderating positions

Between these two extremes are several moderating positions. Nearer the cessationist end of the spectrum are those who have been described as "open but cautious."⁵ This group — probably the majority of non-Pentecostal evangelicals today — are not fully convinced by either side. Wayne Grudem of Trinity Evangelical

Prophecy and words of wisdom/knowledge are not given to add to Scripture's unique revelation, but to provide God's insight into contemporary situations for edification of the church body.

Divinity School describes them this way:

They are open to the possibility of miraculous gifts today, but they are concerned about the possibility of abuses that they have seen in groups that practice these gifts . . . they see many modern examples as not conforming to scriptural guidelines. . . . They think churches should emphasize evangelism, Bible study, and faithful obedience as keys to personal and church growth, rather than miraculous gifts. Yet they appreciate some of the benefits that Pentecostal, charismatic, and Third Wave churches have brought to the evangelical world, especially a refreshing contemporary tone in worship and a challenge to renewal in faith and prayer.⁶

Another moderating position is the movement referred to as the Third Wave. Pentecostals were the First Wave, Charismatics the Second Wave. The Third Wave is made up of groups like the Vineyard Church. Grudem writes:

Third Wave people encourage the equipping of all believers to use New Testament spiritual gifts today and say that the proclamation of the gospel should ordinarily be accompanied by “signs, wonders, and miracles,” ac-

ording to the New Testament pattern. They teach, however, that baptism in the Holy Spirit happens to all Christians at conversion and that subsequent experiences are better called “fillings” or “empowerings” with the Holy Spirit. Though they believe the gift of tongues exists today, they do not emphasize it to the extent that Pentecostals and charismatics do.⁷

Evaluating the views

From my fellowship across North America, I would estimate that the majority of CoG7 members and congregations fall into the “open but cautious” camp, with few notable exceptions on both ends of the spectrum. For my part, I find myself most comfortable with the conclusions of the Third Wave movement regarding the role of spiritual gifts today. I believe that such a position preserves the faith and practice of the New Testament church, not only in welcoming acceptance of all God’s gifts but also in exercising discretion and caution regarding the excesses and abuses that have always accompanied these good gifts.

Using 1 Corinthians 12–14 as a framework, I offer these guidelines for the practice of spiritual gifts:

- It is God himself, through Christ and the Spirit, who gives all the spiritual gifts to His church (12:4-6).

- The gifts are given to edify the body (12:7). If *any* gift is lacking or degraded, the entire body suffers (12:14-26).

- The gifts give us partial knowledge as we await Christ’s return and the perfection He will bring (13:9-12).

- Each gift must be used carefully and with accountability, to ensure the body is edified. The good of the body — not attention to any individual — must be paramount in the practice of spiritual gifts (14:1-33).

- Love after the manner of Christ’s love for us must reign supreme. Without love, the gifts are useless — even destructive. Love brings the church to maturity and Christlikeness (13:1-8).

With these guidelines in mind, we can receive the edifying benefits of all God’s gifts in the church today. **BA**

Israel and Anna Steinmetz are parents to six children (ages 1-9 years) in their Kansas City, MO home.



The Third Wave movement preserves the faith and practice of the New Testament church in welcoming acceptance of all God’s gifts and in exercising caution regarding their excesses and abuses.

1. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “A Cessationist View,” *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, pp. 42-60
2. *Ibid.*, p. 58
3. J. W. Ward, “Pentecostalist Theology,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, p. 503
4. Vinson Synan, “Pentecostalism,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Second Edition, p. 902
5. Wayne A. Grudem, “Preface,” *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, pp. 12-13.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12

A shepherd's 1947 find still fascinates Bible students and scholars.
by John Lemley

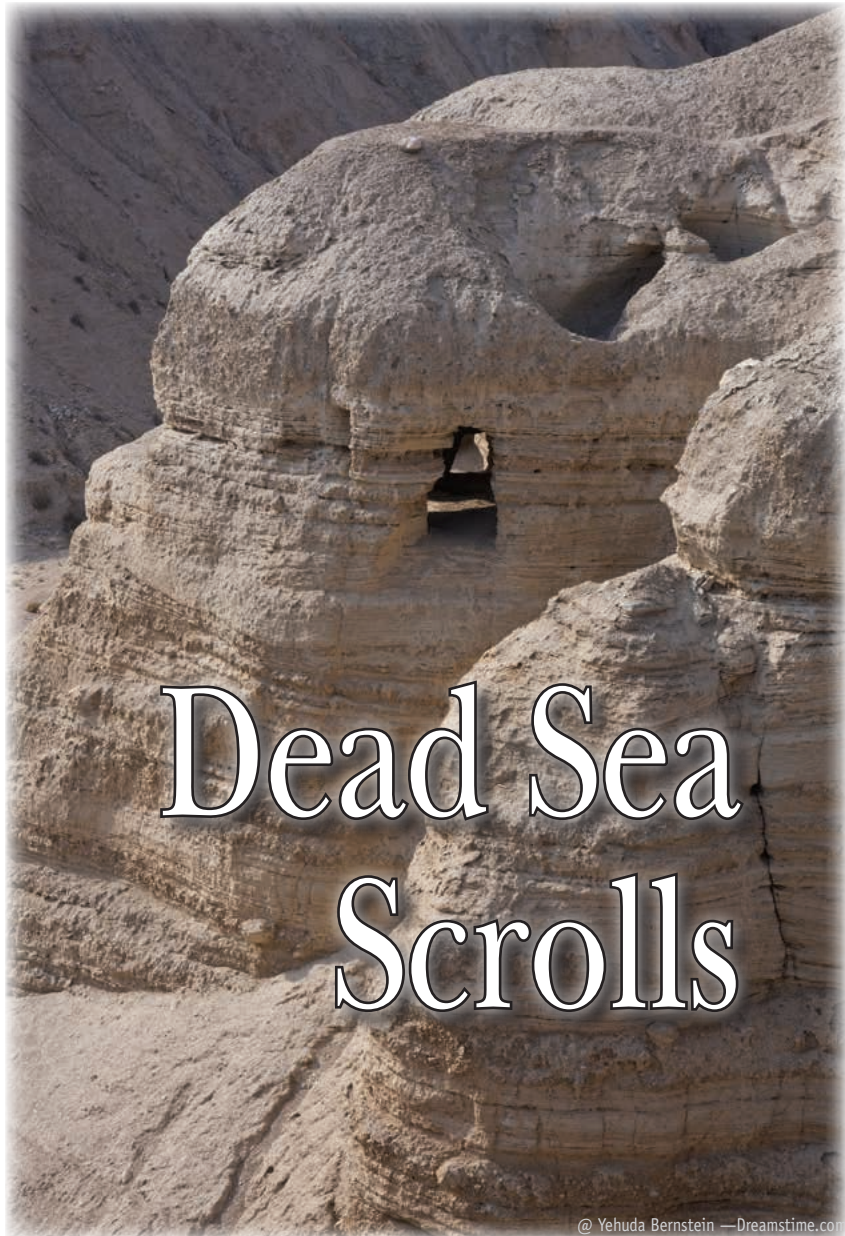
Nineteen forty-seven dawned upon a world exhausted, shattered, and saddened by the atrocities of World War II. Filled with weddings and babies of war-weary soldiers and sailors returned home, 1947 was also the year of the greatest archaeological discovery of the past century.

Early that year, a Bedouin shepherd searching for a lost goat tossed a rock into a hole in a dry cliff on the northwest corner of the Dead Sea. Surprised at the sound of breaking pottery, he peered in to see several jars with leather scrolls in them on the cave floor. He had discovered what we now call the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The ensuing months involved the scrolls in haggling, smuggling, hiding, and more searching of the area called Qumran and other nearby dry ravines known as *wadis*. On April 11, 1948, the discovery of these oldest known biblical manuscripts was announced to the press.

The Christian world was ecstatic! Soon they could have in their hands “. . . a complete manuscript of the Hebrew text of the book of Isaiah and fragments of most of the other biblical books, all of which are more than 1,000 years older than any of the other known manuscripts.”¹ By 1956

This article is based on the introduction of *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, by Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook.



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scholars had identified the remains of about 870 separate scrolls found in eleven different caves at or near Qumran. The fourth cave alone contained an estimated 15,000 fragments.

After publishing the seven intact scrolls, the work of a team of foreign scholars assigned to translate and publish the treasure of these manuscripts bogged down in the early 1950s. Trying to determine which fragments went together was tedious and

highly time-consuming. The Christian world's patience waned and controversy followed.

The scholarly community tired of the translation team's exclusive control of the project. Then copies of a concordance of all the words in the unreleased fragments were sent to a few academic libraries. Another library obtained photographs of the unreleased fragments. "After initially threatening legal action, in November 1991 the new editor-in-



chief of the official team . . . announced that all scholars would have free and unconditional access to all the photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls.”²

Testing theories

Now that all the manuscripts are available, many theories about what they “prove” have been formulated and are being confirmed, revised, or discarded. For example, Hebrew was neither a dead language nor a Jewish invention for the exclusive use of rabbis. The scrolls showed that Hebrew was the language of the common man and that 200 B.C. to A.D. 100 was a time of substantial literary productivity. The scrolls reveal religious diversity among the Jewish people of that era, including the various forms of Messiah they anticipated.

The scrolls’ emphasis on the battle between light and darkness has strong carryovers into

Christianity. They reveal that people were already familiar with John the Baptist’s insistence on repentance (Matthew 3:2, 8, 9). The scrolls’ frequent command to help the poor was an emphasis of the early Christian church (Galatians 2:10). These teachings suggest a Jewish origin, rather than a Greco-Roman one, for the beliefs and practices of the church’s formative years.

Religious content

The Dead Sea Scrolls are entirely religious in content. About a quarter of the find consisted of Old Testament manuscripts — all 39 books in our canon, except Esther.

Even though the two copies of Isaiah . . . were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscripts previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of

the text. . . . The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling.”³

The extra-biblical scrolls can be divided into three categories:

1. Previously unknown stories about biblical figures, such as Enoch, Abraham, and Noah; writings attributed to Moses; additional psalms of David and prophecies of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel.
2. The apocryphal books of Jubilees, 1 Enoch, Tobit, and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.
3. Scrolls written by and for the first century community at Qumran: commentaries, doctrines, a calendar, and descriptions of messiahs and antichrists.

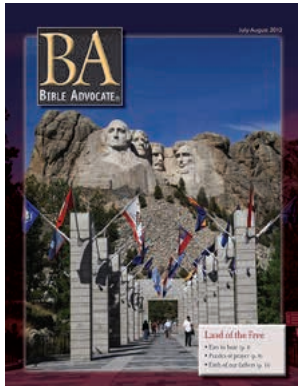
In May of this year a collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls began a five-month tour of the US. Perhaps some readers saw that exhibition. They will know better than others what is so compelling about writings dating from the time of Jesus.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have offered support and clarity to the faith and historical understanding of Christians, and will no doubt continue to do so in years to come. **BA**

Elder John and Lois Lemley attend CoG7 in Kalama, WA. They have four children and ten grandchildren.



1. Gerhard Pfandl, “Is the Bible historically reliable?” *Ministry* (September 2012), p. 23
2. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*, p. 8
3. Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, p. 29



Miracles and politics

In today's parlance, the word *miracle* [July-August '12, pp. 6-15] is used to refer to everything from natural beauty to healing. In biblical terms, something is miraculous only when it causes wonder outside the ordinary, is unexplainable in familiar terms, and must be ascribed to superhuman strength. Thus, sunsets and childbirth — awesome and wonderful works of God though they be — are not miracles in the Biblical sense, while healing is. Why? Because the first two are common, while healing is rare. Similarly, salvation and the process of sanctification are never seen as "miraculous" in the Bible. Rather, these are the typical, predictable course of events for those "in Christ."

[Having stated] my disappointment about the BA's treatment of miracles, I would be remiss if I did not mention how much I appreciated "Keeping Our Balance" (p. 18). The voice of moderation has a distinctively *Christian* ring of truth that I don't often hear from the liberal or conservative. Thanks for speaking in that voice to us. We need it!

I. S.
Kansas City, MO

More on 'Balance'

I often assess [people's] gullibility to the government "spin doctors." From your various articles, you appear to be too trusting of the White House's predigested and approved menu. Am I imbalanced because I read, and basically credit, many non-mainstream current affairs articles per day?

How much alternative news research do you undertake, for "balance's" sake?

S. S.

Adelaide, South Australia

I very much enjoyed "Keeping Our Balance." Thanks for having the courage to share your insight; it needed to be done. Fox News, hate radio without solutions, and some fundamentalist churches have contributed to this huge divide.

L. S.

Jefferson, OR

What makes one a liberal? To be liberal (generous) with someone else's money. Give me your money so I can be generous with it. Government has no money of its own; it takes from people. "Right" people would rather do with their own resources what they think is best. Government governs best when it governs least. Too many "compassionate" government programs are bankrupting us. The war on poverty will never be won.

After Jesus fed two multitudes, why did He quit? Because people saw a source of free food and wanted to make Him king. He knew that would not be good for them (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Out of the liberals' "compassion" developed an entitlement "you owe me" philosophy — at another's expense.

Akin to this is the lottery mentality: I'll put in a dollar if I can get

a million back. Many fall for government handouts, and individual initiative is trampled.

Those associated with the left don't think we have enough sense to do what's good for us. Take for instance what's happening in New York to limit salt, large soft drinks, etc. Where does it stop? This is government gone amok. As a side tongue-in-cheek note, read Ecclesiastes 10:2 (KJV, NASB, or NIV).

Our country was founded on the Judeo-Christian ethic. Under current leadership it is trying to return to the days of King George: taxation without representation and undermining Christianity. The Constitution was so constructed as to limit the government's role in personal lives and churches. All has been twisted 180 degrees from the intent, especially the First Amendment. This blatant disregard of our Declaration of Independence (but "dependence" on God), Constitution, and Bill of Rights leaves no "moderate" recourse if this country is to survive.

D. G.

Meridian, ID

Sin and sanctification

Back-to-back sermons I heard on Romans 1 stopped at homosexuality — the sins of others and not our own. Frustrated, I wondered when we'd get to Romans 3, where we all sin and fall short — and are justified by His grace. We never got there. Brother Rose ["Holy Spirit: Strength in Our Weakness," p. 4, September-October '12] gets us even further to understand our continued struggle with sin (chapter 7) and our continued sanctification by the Holy Spirit (chapter 8). I will read this great article over and over.

J. H.

Facebook

Replete

*I can no longer climb the
pasture fence
to wander in the wood,
but God has given beauty to
suit my every mood.
December snowflakes fall —
in spring He brings bright
blossoms
and the morning call
of meadowlark and
pheasant.*

*Unafraid, the tawny deer
feed and play nearby
while, above, the searching
hawk circles
in the sky.*

*How can I thank that Power
who each year
blesses me with summer sun
and shower
and autumn's sunset glow —
He who fills our lives
with color, morning, noon,
and night
and offers us a future in His
eternal light?*

Carmen F. Hicks



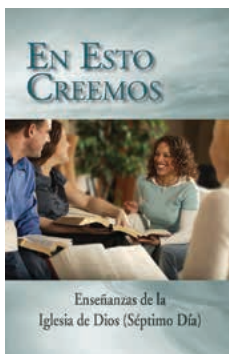


SHINE will minister in
Haiti March 25 –
April 1, 2013. Deadline
for application is
December 17. Visit
shinecog7.org for more
information.

SWD Winter Youth Retreat - December 27-30; Camp Hobtlizelle, Midlothian, TX; contact: Jason and Rose Rodriguez (text or call 832-390-8833 or e-mail: swdstudentministries@gmail.com). Find us on Facebook!

Coming soon . . .

This We Believe
in Spanish
December
2012



Missions Abroad Cristo Viene



The living water of God's grace in Christ is free. Buckets to carry it have their price tag!

In a dozen years since the new millennium, more missionaries have taken the gospel to more people in more places around the globe than at any other time in our church's 150-year history.

How was this accomplished? By God's grace; by strong leadership; by courageous pastors-evangelists in many nations; and by the generosity of dedicated members and friends in Canada, the US, Mexico, and a few other countries.

What was the plan? *Cristo Viene*: Christ is coming! Under this banner, hundreds – maybe thousands – of faithful CoG7 folks in dozens of congregations (often Spanish-speaking) have given a small offering – from \$5 to \$50 each month. As a result, these overseas pastors and evangelists have been free to preach, teach, and evangelize right where God planted them.

And He has blessed! CoG7 has grown more in other countries since 2000 than at any other time since it began in 1858. Praise the Lord!

To keep the gospel of grace and truth in Jesus going, with buckets filled and flowing, a new wave of dedicated members and friends is needed to stand up and step out. Do it today, won't you? November is Missions Emphasis. Mark an offering from \$5 to \$50 each month for *Cristo Viene* and drop it in your local church offering. Or mail it to P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

Christ is coming!

Don't forget . . .

December is **G. C. Ministries Emphasis**.
We appreciate your gifts to kingdom work!

Faithful to the End

Elder Delvin L. O'Banion was born to Hugh and Avus (Summa) O'Banion on July 26, 1924, in Gentry County, Missouri. He died August 19, 2012, in Independence, Missouri. Services were held August 24 in Thornton, Colorado (Robert Coulter and Ray Straub, officiating), with burial near Last Chance, Colorado.

Raised by his mother and grandparents, Delvin graduated high school in Stanberry, Missouri; served the US Army during World War II; and attended Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. As a youth, he was active in several sports — a love he never outgrew.

After college, Delvin joined an evangelistic tour that confirmed his desire to make ministry his life's work. On this tour he met Wilma Presler, and they married July 25, 1954. Together, Delvin and Wilma served churches in Fresno, California; Denver, Colorado; Eureka, South Dakota; New Auburn, Wisconsin; McAlester, Oklahoma City, and Shawnee, Oklahoma; and Joplin, Missouri.

He also served on the G. C. board and as a district overseer.

Delvin was an outgoing person who rarely met a stranger. A core quality of his 50-plus-year ministry was his passion to see the unsaved disciplined for Christ. His dedication to preaching the rewards of obedience brought consistent fruit, as promised in Psalm 1:1-3. He left a pleasing legacy — a congenial, optimistic, committed, loyal, and loving influence that his family, co-workers, and friends remember clearly. He remained a trusted advisor and compassionate encourager till his death.

Delvin was preceded in death by his wife; his daughter, Phyllis Tuller; and his son-in-law, Lynn Taylor. Survivors include son Dennis and wife Kathy (McCoy), daughter Wanda Taylor, son-in-law Dwayne Tuller, seven grandchildren, and nine great-grandchildren.



BAP in Personal Wills

To support the BA and other gospel literature in the future, have you considered including the Bible Advocate Press in your will?

Do this by wording a statement to designate all or a portion

of your assets to go to Church of God (Seventh Day) in behalf of the Bible Advocate Press or to another ministry of the Church. Because confusion can result when detail is lacking, we provide this suggestion in wording such a statement:

"I want to give [an amount, one asset, a percentage] of my assets to the General Conference Church of God (Seventh Day) in behalf of the Bible Advocate Press [or some other ministry of the Church] at P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233 (physical address: 330 W. 152nd Avenue, Broomfield, CO 80023)." Contact the G. C. office about the tax I.D. number.

If no specific ministry of the



Spring Vale Academy students on the Owosso, MI campus this fall. Second semester begins January 7, 2013. Visit www.springvale.us.

Church is designated, your gift will be considered unrestricted and used for the overall operation of the General Conference. If you want your gift to be used by one or more specific ministry(ies) of the Church, you can add: "Further, I specify that this amount should be designated for the _____

G. C. ministry(ies)." These ministries are Bible Advocate Press, LifeSpring School, G. C. Missions, North American Women's Ministries, Young Adult Ministry (SWORD), National Youth Ministry, and Spring Vale Academy.

Another option is to designate funds to our G. C. Pooled Endowment Fund, which restricts use of the principal amount to long-term investments. Earnings from those investments may be designated for the General Conference and/or for one or more of the ministries listed above.

It is appropriate to notify the General Conference office when you include it or any of its ministries in your will. This confidential information will be kept on file.

STATEMENT

Of the ownership, management, and circulation (required by the Act of Congress of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code) of the BIBLE ADVOCATE, published bimonthly at Broomfield, Colorado for September 30, 2012.

Publisher: Bible Advocate Press, 330 West 152nd Ave., Broomfield, Colorado.

Editor: Calvin Burrell, Box 33677, Denver, Colorado.

Owner: The General Conference of the Church of God (Seventh Day), 330 West 152nd Ave., Broomfield, Colorado 80020.

The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed through the mail and otherwise, to paid subscriptions during the 12 months preceding the date shown above is 11,508.



Rejuvenated marriages. A two-day conference on "Oneness" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) was planned and hosted by the Arlington, Texas church. After Sabbath workshops on marriage, folks dressed up for an evening dinner where couples serenaded their partners, wrote and read love notes, or just held hands during worship. In a final skit, every character tried and failed to kill "love" in a marriage, until the daily routine finally succeeded. Sunday was time for fun and games, Texas style. Some couples enjoyed team building through horseback riding and "goat dressing," while others waited their turn to speak with a Christian marriage counselor or Crown Financial coach. An "Art of Love" evening ended the weekend. Each couple worked on a canvas painting, the wife on one side and her husband on the other. At the end, **one** beautiful work of art came together!

To learn more, contact Claudia Acosta: 817 300-8312; claudia.acosta@alamotitle.com, or Pastor Gustavo Salcido, 2222 E. Park Row Drive, Arlington, TX 76010.



Southeastern District leaders group. The Port St. Lucie, FL church hosted the district's southern area leadership conference in Ft. Pierce on June 29. Pastor Al Haynes and Superintendent Steve Krome gave presentations. Contact the district at www.cog7-sed.org.

Sierra Leone

Diamonds in the Rough

by **Brian Baker**

A civil war broke out in Sierra Leone, West Africa, in 1991 and lasted eleven years. This war was mainly an outcry of the poor revolting against those in power over the diamond trade, this country's most valuable resource. The rebel soldiers brutally killed over 50,000 people (mostly civilians) as they marched on the capital city of Freetown and then back into the outlying bush.

After this war, the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Sierra Leone was formed by Pastor Peter Blackie, with a few people and a single copy of the *Bible Advocate*. Their small band quickly grew to about 70 people living in a compound, sharing resources, and trying to rebuild their lives. Now the church is made up of over 900 people – mostly orphans and widows, with only a few dozen men to lead the church. Three years ago, the Orphans and Widows Ministry started a safe house to assist and rescue minor girls who had not only lost their parents in the war but also were caught up in sex trafficking. We now rent a home for 60 girls – Daughters of the King (DOKs).



Pastor Samuel Turay (with Bible, in back) does street evangelism with Sierra Leone youths. A sad story of the tall youth (red shirt) can be read online at baonline.org.

The refining by fire and the pressure of the world have polished these ladies into royalty – precious diamonds. Fiery trials still come and worldly pressures arrive often, but these Daughters of the King resist the Devil and his schemes.

The diligent life of Christ is a battle for our very souls, a far cry from the health-and-wealth gospel. Those who are making impact for the kingdom will be in the heat of the battle with pressure on every side. Does your life resemble this diamond-forming and polishing model?

Brian Baker is director of the Orphans and Widows Ministry of Missions Abroad, assisting over 700 persons in India, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Zambia. Contact him at brian.baker@cog7.org. For an update on the safe house and a personal story of someone touched by CoG7's ministry during Sierra Leone's civil war, visit baonline.org.

Remembering Africa

by **Tom Benzen**

Pastor Blackie and I went on walking evangelistic tours around Moyamba Junction and Allentown, Sierra Leone. We shared the gospel kingdom message to all who would listen, handing out salvation tracts. We spoke to Muslims. Some were cold, some listened politely, others asked questions. Once or twice I felt uneasy about the threat level.

Rain or shine, we went. My bum knee was at its limits, but the experience was great. We spent 30 minutes or more with a few families if they showed interest or asked questions. Pastor Blackie prayed with most of them. From his prayers, we heard many women's groans about their poor marriage situation – a universal problem. I spoke with two women about Christ's love for humanity and His imminent return. They listened but politely said, "We are Muslim."

Christianity holds about 30 percent of the total population of Sierra Leone. Sixty percent are

Muslim, and the rest are heathen or practitioners of witchcraft.

The cultural shock for Americans on this continent is great. I had forgotten the level of filth, but it all came rushing back within minutes of arrival: sewage and gray water running in the streets; children with runny noses, coughs, and open sores; trash in the streets, in the streams — everywhere. The natives no longer see it. I see it as an assault against God's environment, and it leaves me uneasy.

I thought about being isolated there forever, like from losing my passport or being held hostage or being caught in another civil war. Some of my sadness was that I would just catch a plane and leave this country behind with all its human problems, and I would have done so little to help so few.

* * * *

Nights are long in Africa. From 7:15 p.m. to 6 a.m. you sleep or pray. No electricity. You can visit in the dark or use a flashlight to move around a little, but I want to be near my bunk by dark. I have a wind-up flashlight that provides enough light to get to the outhouse or the shower area, but long walks are excluded.

As Sabbath nears, I decline food and revise my message. We go to Pastor Edwards' house and stay there a few minutes while many people begin to gather for services. We go to the veranda, and the space fills up. Pastor Blackie talks a while. Pastor Edwards admonishes that all the work without time to worship is like being in a boat with only one oar in the water: You go around in circles, no direction to your life without Christ. I speak, and the service winds down.

Pastor Edwards sends for his sick wife who has been in bed two weeks. He demands that she dress, come to the service, and kneel at the altar. I should pray for her. I feel like the king of Israel who received a letter from the king of Syria about Naaman's healing! *Am I God?*

It is my pleasure to pray for the lady, but my expectations for her healing may not be the same as Pastor Edwards'. After I pray for her, we close.



The author with his arms full of Sierra Leone orphans.

The next morning I ask Pastor Edwards about his wife's condition. He reports she has fully recovered. Praise God!

* * * *

I go to the safe house two times and visit the Daughters of the King (DOK). We pray, Joseph plays the keyboard, and I speak positive words to them. Their expectations are high for a new safe house. I feel some sadness for them but never show any elements of discouragement. I tell them that God is in control and knows their plight. Sia and Jemima speak to me about their desire to leave this safe house for another location. I acknowledge their words and leave on a positive note.

Sister Josephine helps the girls with her prayers and her positive attitude. I am grateful for the challenge. It has been a great experience for me. I cannot say that I do not wish for a different outcome, but God is still on His throne. My expectation is that all the DOKs will be taken care of. Praise God!



Tom and Carol Benzen serve in Pocahontas, AR. Here, Tom serves in Sierra Leone.



@ Pariwattip—Dreamstime.com

International Congress

IMC Meets in UK .org

The International Ministerial Congress of 2012 — the congress that almost wasn't — became the congress of harmony and increase, by God's grace! Highlights of this five-day, late August meeting near London, England, included

Growth in Latin America.

Argentina, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay came to congress in force, while Chile, Paraguay, and Venezuela were received as new members. Now the IMC or CoG7 missions exist throughout Central America and in eleven of thirteen nations in South America.

Nigeria's presence and participation. A delegation of five from this largest IMC member conference raised its influence to new levels. Nigeria will host a Pan-African CoG7 conference in December 2012. Ten more IMC nation-members in Africa did not attend this congress due to travel restrictions or financial factors.

Our UK hosts. This congress in the United Kingdom marked the first time it met outside Mexico or the US. More than 500 folks from the British Conference joined us for a Sabbath of energetic celebration (August 25). Their generous cooperation in hosting this event is warmly appreciated.

Seven world zones all present. Beyond those mentioned



Congress officers, 2012-2016 (L to R): Carlos Ceron, treasurer; Ramon Ruiz, president; Henry Harley and Calvin Burrell, vice presidents; Heber Vega, secretary.

earlier, two delegates came from India; three from Australia; and one from The Philippines, plus delegations from Canada (Aubrey and Janet Williams); France; Italy; Jamaica; Portugal; Spain; and the US (Ernesto Frausto, Chip Hinds, Steve Kyner, Whaid Rose, and Heber Vega).

"Unity Within Diversity."

Congress delegates and observers heard presentations on this theme, then raised their voices to reflect, discuss, and apply its truth — in Christ — to the Church of God (Seventh Day) scattered abroad.

Enrique Vega, delegate from Chile, warmed our hearts as he reported that church's change from seven weeping Christian brothers, thinking themselves the only ones, to a group celebrating their unity with thousands of other like-minded believers in dozens of nations. This hap-

pened in just two days, as they became aware of CoG7 and IMC through contact with our member conference in Italy!

Gustavo Hultgren, delegate from Argentina, told how CoG7 was planted in Paraguay. Due to a wide river between them, it had been difficult for Argentinians to evangelize their Paraguayan neighbors. Then somebody built a bridge, and the gospel flowed freely across that river separating two nations!

Similar things happened at this year's congress. Brethren in places previously unconnected became aware of others just like them (in faith and love), yet different (in many details). Our unity in Christ was affirmed, broadcast, and celebrated!

Somebody built a bridge!

For more on the 2012 IMC, visit baonline.org.



Keepers of the Springs

The small town grew up at the foot of a mountain range, obtaining its water supply from springs high in the hills above. In those hills, a quiet and diligent forest dweller took it upon himself to patrol the springs, clearing them of fallen leaves, mud, and other debris. He eventually became known as “keeper of the springs.” In appreciation, the town council put him on its payroll, and he performed his duties with care and dedication for many years.

Then one day the council decided it no longer needed anyone to keep the springs. Surmising that the water they enjoyed had little to do with this man’s work, they dispensed with his service and built a reservoir for their supply.

The reservoir soon filled, but the water wasn’t the same. It no longer seemed as clean or tasted as good. A green scum appeared on its surface. Before long, sickness troubled the town. Then an epidemic raged, leaving no citizen unaffected. Keeping the springs, they learned, is imperative, not optional: The town’s life depended on it.

This story, told by the late Peter Marshall, former chaplain of the US Senate (1946-48), can be applied in numerous ways. Marshall first applied it to womanhood, keeping the springs of life and home. Here I’m applying it to the springs of the gospel, in our church and in our hearts.

Scripture promises we’ll draw waters from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3), but those waters become muddy from time to time. So it was in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, when what someone has called the “polluted mixture of piety, politics and greed” drove the likes of Wycliffe, Hus, and Luther to the hills above medieval religion to clear the springs of the gospel.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul, as if standing at the head of a fountain, confronts those who would pollute its waters. He asserts that justifi-

cation is by faith alone, the act whereby God declares unbelievers “not guilty” and places them in right standing with Himself, eliminating the pride of human effort. This puts obedience in proper perspective: not a means to salvation but a joyful response to God’s gift.

Right standing with God frees us from sin’s penalty, not from its continued presence and influence. So we must also keep the springs of our hearts: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

“The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols,” John Calvin observed. In recent times, through relational conflict, I’ve come to better understand what Ken Sande calls “the process of idolatry.” Idolatry reflects our heart’s desires. Desires become demands. Demands carry expectations. Unmet expectations lead to disappointment. We judge those who disappoint us. And those we judge, we punish, because, as Sande says, every idol needs a sacrifice (*The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Conflict*).

This has been a difficult year for the General Conference, conflict among its leadership being at the heart of this difficulty. In times like these, what the Church needs most are keepers of the springs, guarding the Church from things unworthy of our Savior’s name. We guard our church best by guarding our hearts, making them well-springs of life and peace, not strife and schism.

Looking to a new year, let’s be keepers of the springs. In the economy of the kingdom, this is not optional. Life depends on it.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference
President



Photos by John Klassek



IMC

International Ministerial Congress

August 24-29, 2012

Whittlebury Inn, near London, England, UK

- All seven world IMC zones represented
- Delegates/observers from 20+ nations
- Three new nations welcomed as members
- “Unity Amid Diversity” theme realized
- More congress report inside (p. 30)



International Ministerial Congress
Church of God (Seventh Day)



*Top: All delegates, observers, IMC team
Middle: Attendees from Nigeria, UK, Portugal
Bottom: Delegates from Chile, Argentina, Venezuela*