

BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

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ON THE TABLE

The bare arm of God

by Keith Bassham | Editor

The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." (Isaiah 52:10)

I never quite understood passages like that one until it came to me that a warrior might take off a cloak in preparation for using his sword arm for combat, or he might raise his sword in a sign of victory causing his garment sleeve to slip off his arm and onto his shoulder. I like the first image better and imagine it to be something like a modern "rolling up the sleeves" to prepare for some really hard labor. Imagine, God, whose handiwork is the construction of the universe and all its wonders (Psalm 19:1: "the firmament showeth his handywork"), gets down to the real work and exerts his greatest power when it comes to saving and caring for the people of this earth by the giving of His Son for our sins. This is the image of the strong bare arm of the Lord placed alongside the picture of the suffering and dying savior in the opening words of Isaiah 53: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"

Back in the 1980s I pastored a church near Tinker Air Force Base just outside Oklahoma City. I saw the large and powerful airborne weaponry of our nation every day. I drove by the huge Logistics Center regularly, and occasionally I would minister on base and mingle with people so very important to the safety and defense of our nation. The sheer power represented by those hangars and buildings and offices and aircraft could take your breath away. We consider executive mansions and houses of legislations and buildings filled with logistics and armament to be symbols of this world's power and we are impressed.

But if we want to see real power, the power of God with his sleeves rolled up and his arms bared, we might be surprised. The building housing the power turns out to be a stable in Bethlehem, and there from within a small bundle of cloth in the manger, a tiny little hand on the end of a bare arm reaches up to grasp the finger of his mother Mary — and that tiny arm represents the true power of God. For one day, that same arm was stretched out, as was the other, and with both his arms stretched out bare on the Cross, Jesus died for us, and in so doing, gave us the power to become the children of God.

As the scripture says, "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." I pray, along with my assistants Rob Walker and Karri Joy Perry, that you, your families, and all those you touch this Christmas, experience the power of the bare arm of God.

Keith Bassham

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PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

The shepherds' story



by Linzy Slayden | President | BBFI

Christmas touches our hearts, inspires our imaginations, and stirs the deepest and most creative springs within us. In its celebration, we fashion and paint our best art, write our best music, use our most decorative skills, and tell our best stories.

One such story is of the shepherds. Think for a moment. The night was no different from many others that season. The moon shined brightly surrounded by heaven's stars that watched as the quiet rural pastures around Israel settled in for the night. Just an ordinary night, yet the night wouldn't be soon forgotten. Put yourself in the shepherds' place. You're performing your daily work when suddenly the sky is full of light and an angelic being is telling you, a simple shepherd, that the very Son of God was just born near where you're standing. Then a whole host of angels appear and begin singing praises to God. The skies are no longer dark, but light shines more brightly than the sun. The night is no longer quiet, but all of creation seems to be singing praise.

How did the shepherds respond? They left everything (even their sheep) and ran to Jesus' birthplace. They wanted to see the answer to Israel's prayers. I'm sure thoughts of stories passed down through their families about the Messiah came to mind as they were about to witness the fulfillment of God's promise.

Once in Bethlehem, the shepherds watched as Mary and Joseph cared for Jesus in his first moments on earth. They might have rejoiced and praised God with Mary and Joseph, and reveled in God's great gift. But after they had seen Christ, notice their reaction: "And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child." After all they witnessed, the shepherds couldn't keep the events of the night to themselves. They had to spread the word that the Messiah, Israel's long-awaited hope, had finally come.

Spreading the good news certainly wasn't convenient for the shepherds. They were waking people up in the middle of the night, many of who were visitors traveling for the census, to tell them of the baby's birth. I can just imagine the various responses to the shepherds. As Luke says, "And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds."

As we celebrate the holiday season and take time to remember Jesus' birth, take note of the shepherds' reaction after seeing Jesus. They couldn't wait to tell everyone about God's gift! Our reaction to the story of Christ's birth should be the same. God gave His Son for our salvation. That alone should prompt us to share the first Christmas story with those around us.

Thousands of years ago, we were all given the best Christmas gift possible. Let's do what we do best and tell others about that gift this Christmas.

WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

A gift that should be shared



by Jon Konnerup | Mission Director | BBFI

As I think of all the gifts that will be given this Christmas, my mind turns to the masses of people in the world who do not know about the wonderful gift of Jesus Christ spoken of in Romans 3:23. In fact, there are still many who have never even heard His name.

Jesus gave us the task of making disciples of all nations. The Bible tells us that there will be people from every tribe, language, people, and nation around His throne. Yet, at this very moment there are still over 6,750 unreached people groups in the world.

Even more surprising is that there are 1,015 people groups who are not only unreached, but few are even trying to reach them. Missions strategists refer to them as "unengaged." After 2,000 years, it should be inconceivable to us that there would be any unengaged people groups left in the world.

We need to finish the task given so long ago. It will be accomplished through local congregations around the world planting indigenous churches among these people groups.

It is believed these 1,015 unengaged people groups have populations of more than 50,000 each who are still beyond the reach of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These are groups where, as far as researchers know, there are no full-time Christian workers evangelizing and church planting. These people are spiritually lost and helpless.

Of these 1,015 unengaged peoples, a few hundred have a church or missionary organization that has assumed responsibility of telling them about Jesus Christ. They are at the very heart of the unfinished Great Commission. Can one church make a difference among the other 636 unengaged, unreached peoples of the world? It would be difficult. That is why churches must work together as a Fellowship (Baptist Bible Fellowship International) to do all they can to answer the Great Commission of God to preach the gospel to every person.

Jesus told us to pray for more workers. It is said that if we had a minimum of one full-time worker for every 50,000 people, a group like the Lunia in India, with a population of 5.3 million, would need 106 workers to effectively engage them. By this measure, many unreached people groups are currently "under-engaged" in terms of the number of missionaries needed to reach them.

Some might say we are trying to "engage them all so Jesus comes back," thinking of only His return. However, the concern here is that yet another generation will live and die while these groups of men, women, and children will still be unengaged. We must embrace the heart of God who cares about one lost sheep, one lost coin, and one lost son.

There is only one reason to go to every people group and that is because Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations. Why did He command this? Because He loves the world and is not willing that any should perish!

Church planter heads home



by Wayne Guinn | Director | NCPO

It is always a joy to introduce another church planter and a new church plant. This introduction comes by way of a third party:

Todds to Philly: A burden for "home" By Sam Rogian

SPRINGFIELD, MO — Josh Todd has spent the majority of the past 12 years in Missouri, but his heart is elsewhere. Todd, along with his wife of seven years, Vickie, is attempting to raise financial and prayer support to reach his hometown of Philadelphia, PA with the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Pastor Ed Trinkle, Life Church of Wilmington, DE — Todd's sending church — witnessed this transformation firsthand as Todd's youth pastor at the former First Baptist Church of Aston, PA. "Josh was a wild teenager who grew up in a difficult home situation," Trinkle said. "His conversion was nothing short of amazing."



Trinkle claimed Todd was responsible for more teenagers coming to Christ than any other student the whole time he was Todd's youth pastor. "We had a van route called the 'Josh Route' and he'd have anywhere from 20 to 30 of his friends in our youth services," Trinkle said. "He was probably responsible for 100 teenagers accepting Christ when he was in high school."

Todd graduated from Trinkle's youth ministry in 1999 and headed to Baptist Bible College (BBC) in Springfield. He graduated in 2003 with a degree in pastoral studies. While at BBC, Todd met and married Vickie. The couple now have three children — Isabella (5), Josh Jr. (2), and Jasmine (9 months).

Todd returned home to First Baptist Church and served as youth minister for one year before moving back to Springfield. Coaching high school wrestling the past five years in the Springfield school system, Todd established the Real Life Ministries outreach, which has seen hundreds of area athletes come to Christ. Though he loves Springfield and his current church, Baptist Temple, Josh said he couldn't escape the burden for Philly that God has kept on his heart.

"There are more Christians per capita in India than there are in Philly and the New England states combined. That's my home," says Todd. Trinkle believes the time is right in Todd's life for him to accomplish what God has for him to do in Philly. "I believe that he is maturing in the Lord," Trinkle said. "He's got a great wife who is ready to follow him. 'I think he has an unusual love for Philadelphia and Delaware County and will have a great advantage in connecting with the un-churched culture, especially with that being in his background.'"

Anyone interested in more information on how to support the Todds or to book them can call Josh at (417) 569-6423.

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Digressions incontestably are the sunshine; they are the life, the soul of reading. *-Laurence Sterne*

DOMA faces overturn in U.S. Senate

The Democratic-controlled Senate Judiciary Committee passed a bill November 11 that would overturn the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). In 1996, DOMA passed with margins of 85-14 in the Senate and 342-67 in the House. The committee bill to repeal that very law passed with a vote of 10-8 — with three Democratic members who voted for DOMA in 1996 now voting to overturn it. All 10 Democrats voted for the bill and all eight Republicans opposed it. The bill, S. 598, won't become law anytime soon, because it has only 30 co-sponsors — all Democrats — and apparently is short the necessary votes in the full Senate. Even if it passed the Senate, the Republican-controlled House will likely not take it up for a vote.

Current President Barack Obama says that he opposes same-sex marriage and supported DOMA when he was a candidate in 2008. This year, however, he decided that DOMA is unconstitutional and the Justice Department would no longer defend DOMA in court cases.

Source: Read more at bpnews.net and www.christianpost.com

Christmas celebrations

Under President U. S. Grant, Christmas became a United States federal holiday June 26, 1870, but only applicable to federal employees in the District of Columbia. In 1885, Congress extended the Christmas holiday to the federal employees outside the D.C. area. Today Christmas is one of 11 federal holidays designated by the United States Congress in Title V of the United States Code (5 U.S.C. § 6103).

Members of the Armenian Church observe Christmas on Jan. 6, the traditional day of the Epiphany in western churches. Russian and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches celebrate on Jan. 7.

The 12 Days of Christmas refer to the period between Christmas Dec. 25 and Epiphany on Jan. 6 among Western churches. In Orthodox Churches, the period is between Jan. 7 and Jan. 19.

Though Christmas is observed all over the world in some fashion, it is not a formal public holiday in several countries, notably People's Republic of China (except Hong Kong and Macao), Japan, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Thailand, Nepal, Iran, Turkey, and North Korea.

In a 2005 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 83% of Americans said displays of Christmas symbols should be allowed on government property.

Eight principles for wise gift-giving

1. The gift encourages growth — including spiritual growth, wisdom, intellect, and emotion (Proverbs 1:2-9; 8:13; 9:10; 10:27; 11:16; 15:33; 16:6; 19:1, 23; 22:1; 25:28).
2. The gift exalts godly values (Proverbs 1:10-18; 2:11-15; 3:29-31; 4:14-18; 12:20-21; 13:11; 16:29; 24:17).
3. The gift promotes Bible memory and application (Proverbs 3:1-8).
4. The gift engenders time with parents and other godly people (Proverbs 4:1-13; 19:20; 22:17-21; 23:12, 19).
5. The gift reinforces sexual morality (Proverbs 5:1-20; 6:20-35; 7:6-27).
6. The gift fosters a stewardship of time and/or work, rather than laziness (Proverbs 6:6-11; 10:26; 12:11, 24; 15:19; 19:15; 20:4; 24:30-34; 26:14-16).
7. The gift builds gratitude, discipline, and service to others rather than self-centered pleasure (Proverbs 16:8, 16; 17:1; 21:17; 27:20; 28:16, 27; 29:7; 30:7-9).
8. The gift fulfills a purpose or fits a real need rather than what others have or is most popular (Proverbs 14:21, 22, 31; 23:17; 24:19-20; 28:16, 21; 29:25).

Source: Kevin Carson



60 years ago in the Baptist Bible Tribune

In the NEWS of the WEEK

BY R. O. WOODWORTH

In the upper bracket of successful Baptist Bible Fellowship pastors today is **Scotty Alexander**, who is currently holding a revival in the South Side Baptist church, Springfield, Mo., **Bro. Bill McTeer**, pastor, pastor. **Bro. Alexander** is pastor of the Bible Baptist church, Enid, Okla., in which he has carried on for many years a very fruitful ministry. For all his sermons he dips freshly into the Scriptures. They come from his heart living and powerful. Every meeting usually is attended by good results. For many years he has been recognized as a strong Fundamentalist. He is a trustee of the Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.

Wayne Imboden, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist church, Altus, Okla., recently closed a successful two-week revival with the Tabernacle Baptist church, Tulsa, Oklahoma. **W. J. Crider**, the pastor, has been with the church for 14 years.

Richard Scott, Baptist College student, who succeeded **Cecil McLeod**, as pastor of the Berean Baptist church, Bolivar, Mo., reports that the Lord continues to bless in this work. Two adults were received into the fellowship of the church by baptism, Sunday, Dec. 2. Richard is one of several of the Baptist Bible College students who are pastoring churches in towns surrounding Springfield which were organized by them or some other student at the college.

High Street Baptist church, brought to Springfield, Mo., Sunday, Dec. 2, **Curtis Goldman**, pastor of the Calvary Baptist church, Chickasha, Okla., as speaker for the regular morning and evening services. Sunday school attendance was 1,835.

Under the capable leadership of **Bro. Jay Chance**, the Antioch Baptist church, Loves Park, Ill., is making notable progress. Organized Feb. 5, 1949, with 24 members, the membership has steadily grown. The first major project undertaken was the purchase of a new bus, which resulted in an immediate increase in the Sunday school attendance. The next venture was the selection and purchase of fine building lot located on 8015 North Second street. Materials for the new church building are now being stored on the new property awaiting the coming of spring, when the work of building will begin. When completed, the building will be tabernacle design, with a permastone finish on the front and Duratex on the sides.

Central Baptist church, Sulphur Springs, Texas, is experiencing an old-fashioned revival brought on by the people uniting themselves in their support of their pastor, **Furmor Suddeth**. **Ralph Lyles**, Baptist Bible College student was guest speaker here, Nov. 25 at both morning and evening services.

Word from **Harold Jayne**, pastor of the Mark Baptist church, Mark, Iowa, indicates he is enjoying God's blessings upon his ministry. He writes that he has recommended our school to a prospective student and that he had a very successful revival with **Melvin Garner** as the evangelist. **Bro. Garner** is a good friend of the College and pastor of

the Bible Baptist church, Chanute, Kansas.

The Grace Baptist church, Oklahoma City, Okla., received 51 new subscriptions and 21 renewals to the Baptist Bible Tribune in the last weeks according to the pastor, **J. C. Brown**. It also received for membership four adults Nov. 25.

A first radio anniversary observance was featured Nov. 11 at the Community Baptist church, Garden City, Mich., promoting the work of propagating the Gospel by means of the radio. Nov. 11, one year ago, **Jimmy Allen**, pastor, began broadcasting each Sunday morning from 10-10:30 over WPAG, Ann Arbor, Michigan. As a result, many souls, among whom were whole families, have been brought to Christ and into the fellowship of the church. A current building program included provides for a new baptistry, a nursery and a large auditorium.

In honor of **George Sullivan**, pastor of the Central Baptist church, Sherman, Texas, his sixth anniversary was celebrated Dec. 2 by a ground-breaking service for the proposed new auditorium, which was attended by the entire congregation and many other friends.

This sentence in an article in an old magazine recently gripped our attention:

Dr. Walter F. Wilcox, editor of 'International Migrations,' finds substantial grounds for holding his estimate of China's population to less than 350,000,000, but the International Statistical Institute maintains it must be more than 450,000,000.

The fact that 100,000,000 people in China—nearly as many as there are in United States—can be lost from sight indicates we have utterly failed in carrying out the great commission of our Lord.

"He who is the Bread of Life began His ministry hungering, and He who is the Water of Life ended His ministry thirsting. Christ hungered as man, and yet fed the hungry as God.

"He was weary and yet He is our rest.

"He paid tribute and yet He is our King.

"He was called a devil, and cast out devils.

"He prayed and yet He hears prayer.

"He wept and yet He dries our tears.

"He was sold for thirty pieces of silver and yet He redeems the world.

"He is led as a lamb to the slaughter and is the good Shepherd.

"He dies and gives His life and by dying destroys death."

All the friends of **Dr. Wm. H. Crofts**, pastor of the Open Door Baptist church will be interested in the following excerpt from a letter from this good brother:

I was quite disappointed that I could not make Denton, but I hope, the Lord willing, to be at Lynchburg and trust I may greet you there. We had a glorious time in the evangelistic services at Laurel, Indiana, with Brother **Steve Sasteel**, who is doing a monumental work for Christ in that little town. The Lord blessed, souls were saved and the church built up and it was made a little easier, by a new financial plan, for its noble pastor and his good wife to carry on there. Brother **Steve Casteel** is to be our speaker for the church's twelfth anniversary, Monday night, Dec. 17. My twelfth anniversary will be on Sunday, Dec. 16 and our morning services for December will be broadcast over WPLH. So we are continuing to "attempt great things for God and we are expecting great things from God."

The Lord is blessing us and while our progress is slow, we are thanking and praising God for the blessings which have come to us. The church recently raised my salary and we are very happy together in the work of the Lord.

It would be a joy to have you with us for one night, say Dec. 18 or 19 in connection with our Special Anniversary Services. Tuesday, Dec. 18 would be the better date for us, if you could arrange it.

A new Sunday school attendance record for the month of November was set by the Beaver Street Baptist church, Jacksonville, Florida. According to a report by the superintendent, **Sterling Ackerman**, the highest average was succeeded by 200. The pastor, **Bro. George Hodges**, urges every Baptist Bible Fellowship pastor to make his plans now to attend the coming fellowship meeting in February at the Beaver Street Baptist church. Elaborate plans are being made to make it one of the biggest events the church has ever sponsored.

A report of work of the Lockland Baptist church, Lockland, Ohio, in the last week's issue of the *News of the Week* showed a steady increase Sunday by Sunday throughout the entire month of November. The records show that the increase was ever greater for Dec. 2, the first Sunday of the month. The highest attendance together in the multitude of the Sunday school classes under **John Rawlings'** administration of 1,770 were on time to be counted. A mission offering of almost \$2,800 was received and 10 additions were accepted into the membership of the church.

Religious people have full plates

Religious activity is generally associated with good physical and mental health. Six major studies of mortality risks in the last 10 years found frequent worship attenders were anywhere from 18% to 35% less likely than non-attenders to have died during the time period studied, says researcher **George Fitchett** of Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Rising obesity rates, however, are a notable exception to the generally positive record, **Fitchett** said. He presented his findings on religion and obesity at the recent joint meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association in Milwaukee.

People who attended services or otherwise participated in organized religion weekly were 62% more like to be obese than those who never participated, according to data from the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis of adults ages 45-84 sponsored by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

In a separate study of 2,500 healthy women and men, researchers following up with participants 18 years later found 32% of frequent worship attenders became obese. In comparison, just 22 percent of non-attenders became obese, **Fitchett** reported. The data was taken from the Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults study funded by the heart and lung institute.

Solving the problem is not going to be easy, researchers say.

Source: Copyright © The Association of Religion Data Archives
- www.thearda.com

Gallup analysis says Democratic Party less religious and more liberal

According to a report released Nov. 7, Democrats in the United States "remain less likely to attend church weekly and more likely to seldom or never attend church than the national average."

Liberals and nonwhites have come to make up a slightly greater percentage of the Democratic base since 2008, perhaps indicating that the decline in Democratic affiliation since 2009 was proportionately greater among conservatives and whites."

Source: www.gallup.com

GLORY TO GOD...



...IN THE LOWEST

By Keith Bassham

Lowest? Are you sure? Doesn't it go more like "Glory to God in the highest?" Yes, that is what the heavenly host said when they appeared to the shepherds the first Christmas, but one essential part of the Christmas story is how God turns things upside down, and in effect shows His glory to the lowest.

Plymouth Brethren teacher and author William MacDonald describes the Christmas upside down effect:

"It is wonderful to think that the Great God, who fills heaven and earth, should compress Himself into a human body. As men looked at Him, they could say accurately, 'In Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily.' From the palace of heaven to a cattle shed, a stable, a manger! The omnipotent one became a helpless baby. It is no exaggeration to say that He whom Mary held in her arms held Mary, for He is the sustainer as well as the Maker. The omniscient one is the fountain of all wisdom and knowledge, and yet we read of Him that as a child, He increased in wisdom and knowledge.

These are all truths of the incarnation. It's perhaps the greatest paradox of our faith, but it's proclaimed as absolutely true in the Word of God. Fully God and fully man. The Master came into the world as servant. The Lord of glory veiled that glory in a body of flesh. The Lord of life came into the world for the express purpose of dying. The Holy One, who cannot look upon sin, came into this jungle of sin called earth. The object of the Father's delight, and of angelic worship, hungered, thirsted, sweated, hurt, was weary, slept, He wandered as a "homeless stranger in the world His hands had made."

Gilbert K. Chesterton (see the note about Mr. Chesterton at the end of this article) wrote something similar in his essay, "The God in the Cave." He, just as Mr. MacDonald, calls it a paradox "that the hands that had made the sun and stars were too small to reach the huge heads of the cattle" and he says that the story of Christmas is "something that would be much too good to be true, except that it is true."

Mr. Chesterton would know. An acknowledged master of the art of literary paradox, he called it "truth standing on her head to get attention." And if anything is happening at Christmas, things are surely being turned on their head and upside down. See how the idea is reflected in the Bible narrative as here in Mary's song to Elizabeth in Luke 2:46-55:

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

No wonder God came into the world the way He did. It was, among other things, a way for Him to show what he thinks of the world's system of power and authority, palaces and seats of government, wealth and greed as He sidestepped all these conventional forms to present the world with a different kind of King and a salvation that would extend to the lowest among us.

Mary had been told that her son would receive "the throne of his father David" (Luke 1:32). The shepherds were told that the child they would visit was "Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11; the word Christ and the Hebrew equivalent Messiah both have aspects of kingship attached). Magi from the East, convinced that "the King of the Jews" was making his appearance, made a long journey to do him honor (Matthew 2:1-12). It had all the makings of a thunderous and glorious presentation. However, though the heavens do open for a spectacular light show appropriate for a royal announcement about salvation breaking into the world through the nativity, it is performed in a field outside of town where sheep outnumber people by hundreds to one, while the King himself is actually being birthed in a stable or cave, witnessed only by a few, or perhaps only two, Mary and Joseph. So while the heavenly host says, "Glory to God in the highest," Chesterton points out in a poem what was happening was ...

*Outrushing the fall of man
Is the height of the fall of God.
Glory to God in the Lowest*

The truth contained in the picture of the ruler of the universe coming into the world on the floor of a stable could hardly be more upside down, and thus, a paradox, and one that would extend beyond the Christmas narrative as we hear in the subsequent teaching of Jesus.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is

*the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will
be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit
the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they will be filled.*
(The Sermon on the Mount)

That is paradox. In another place Jesus says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:24-25).

That is another paradox, as is “he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26), and in Luke 18:14, Jesus ends a parable with these words: “... for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” and that parable itself shows the upside down-ness of the gospel.

In it, Jesus describes two men at prayer. One is a man who is busy thanking God, something people should do, but look at his thanksgiving list: “I don’t extort, I’m not unjust, I don’t commit adultery, I fast, I tithe,” and everything he says is true. However, the other man just cries out to God, “Be merciful to me, a sinner,” without even so much as lifting his eyes.

The latter man, the one who would not exalt himself, Jesus says, went home justified, in a right relationship with God, rather than the one who had so much going for him (at least in his own mind). That is a paradox.

The paradoxes continue throughout the New Testament.

In his version of the Christmas narrative, Paul calls attention to the upside down journey the Lord made when he writes that Jesus “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). Taking his cue then

from what he knows about the coming of Jesus, he seeks to imitate the Lord’s descent; for Paul, “to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21), and he refers to himself at one point as “having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10), and speaking of his past life, “what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:7). As his ministry expands, Paul exults in the very thing that binds and tortures him, telling us that God chose to leave the “thorn” in Paul, and he testifies that God “said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may

his paradoxical approach, reflects a reality that Max Lucado says, “is inexplicable. It doesn’t have a drop of logic nor a thread of rationality. And yet, it is that very irrationality that gives the gospel its greatest defense. For only God could love like that.”

It is difficult for a rational and normal mind to take it all in. But just as God has taken the form of humanity, we who are the redeemed of God will someday be fully transformed into His image, and we will live and see reality as completely and fully as He does. Until then, we have the picture of the babe in the manger to help us grasp the truth of Christmas, Glory to God in the Lowest.

...but if it die,
it bringeth forth much fruit
he that believeth in me,
...though he were dead,
yet shall he live
...he that humbleth himself,
shall be exalted.
...what things were gain to me,
those I counted loss for Christ
...when I am weak,
then I am strong

rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 2:9-10).

These all constitute a paradox. And you find paradoxical teaching throughout Scripture: he came unto his own and his own received him not, love your enemies, the first shall be last, man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart, small seeds become large trees, the kingdom is already here but not yet, my burden is light, abundant grace is shown to terrible sinners, God in three persons, foolish wisdom, beauty still present in a sin-marred world, ruined creation groans for redemption, sin is atoned for but not yet eradicated, we are saved but we still struggle with our natural inclinations — all these are paradoxes, and yet they reflect the reality of God.

Christmas, with the love of God shown in

Note: Readers not familiar with Mr. Chesterton should know that he was a Catholic believer. However, evangelicals have found his works useful for apologetics, and I have personally enjoyed both his fiction and essays. Certainly, I differ with him theologically, but truth is truth no matter its source, and you may find these Chesterton quotes interesting and entertaining:

“Thieves respect property. They merely wish the property to become their property that they may more perfectly respect it.”

“You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing and grace before I dip the pen in the ink.”

“There are those who hate Christianity and call their hatred an all-embracing love for all religions.”

“It is absurd for the Evolutionist to complain that it is unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing, and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into everything.”

“Fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions.”

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried.”



quiet & simple

I SUBLIME AND SPLENDID I

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

By Noel Smith
Founding Editor of the Baptist Bible Tribune

*A radio address delivered on a clear,
cold, brilliant Christmas Eve night.
Reprinted from the Baptist Bible
Tribune, December 21, 1951*

On this calm and beautiful Christmas eve, were it within my power, I know what I should bestow upon each of you. I should give to you an increased capacity to appreciate the infinite worth of those simple things within reach of all of us.

By simple I am not thinking of anything associated with simple-mindedness. By simple I am not thinking of rags and bare floors. By simple I am not thinking of that willful ignorance, stupidity and intellectual laziness so commonly seen posing as faith and humility. No, by simple I have not thought of

any of these.

By simple I mean that which by the chastity of its nature would blush at the thought of artificial adornment. By simple I mean a pure pearl of great price. By simple I am thinking of the clothing the lily wears. I am thinking of the softness and fragrance of the rose, the delicious loveliness of the violet. I am thinking of the soft light of a beautiful lamp. I am thinking of the lonely brilliance of a star suspended from a clear sky above a frosty world. I am thinking of the warmth and healing of a voice which, like Cordelia's, is ever soft and

gentle and low. I am thinking of a beautiful face swimming above the milling metropolitan crowd on a damp, chill, foggy afternoon. I am thinking of the notes of the nightingale toying with twilight zephyrs. I am thinking of a child's hand clasping that of its father as the lights are going out. I am thinking of the stooped shoulders of a scholar and the lines in his face. I am thinking of the undertones of sadness in the voices of those who have toiled and labored and fought and suffered. I am thinking of the white head and soft face sitting by the fireside tonight, alone, her thoughts caressing and



fondling the scenes of her childhood; I am thinking of the tear stealing into her eye as she seems to hear a familiar voice, seems to see once again the familiar face; and another tear comes, and they begin to flow gently as she reflects on the nights when her children were babies, when she gathered them to her heart and lullabyed them asleep.

It is in this realm that my thought is brooding when I say that on this night, had I the power, I should give to each of you an increased capacity to appreciate the infinite worth of the simple things within reach of all.

Why is it that after more than a thousand and nine hundred years Bethlehem, one of the smallest of the thousands of Judah, falls upon the ear like a strange music! Why is it that after so many tired and weary ages, Bethlehem tonight has a charm for all that is unselfish and noble and good in the human heart! Why is it that after all these bloody centuries Bethlehem tonight is tugging at the heartstrings here in this old and mellow city, in all the towns and cities, far out upon the lonely plains, deep in the forests, upon the great seas — even yonder in the starry skies?

It is because no artificiality is ever associated with that jewel of all the towns of the earth. The thing that happened in Bethlehem, under the clear Judean skies, was as fresh and real and simple as the breath of Sharon's roses.

I agree with those who say that the circumstances surrounding the birth of the Saviour could not have been more appropriate. I am glad that there was no room in the crowded inn, there in an atmosphere of ribald laughter and careless, flippant talk. I am glad it all happened just as Luke, in the most

restrained and beautiful of all restrained and beautiful writing, tells us it happened. Any semblance of artificiality, any semblance of human adornment would have been wholly incongruous to the birth of Him who was sent into this world to lift the poorest and meekest and lowliest to the celestial heights of Him who inhabiteth eternity.

Sorrow, disappointment, loneliness, shame, guilt — all these are simple and real. There is no artificiality about them. No music ever fell upon the ear, so fascinated the mind or so warmed the heart as the music telling of healing and hope and forgiveness and fellowship: that's the music that came out of Bethlehem on that long ago night; and its blessed notes are still floating over the world and falling upon the ears of the weary sons and daughters of men.

*That night when in the Judean skies
The mystic star dispensed its light,
A blind man moved in his sleep
And dreamed that he had sight.*

*That night when shepherds heard the song
Of hosts angelic churning near,
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell
And dreamed that he could hear.*

*That night when in the cattle stall
Slept child and mother cheek by jowl,
A cripple turned his twisted limbs
And dreamed that he was whole!*

*That night when o'er the newborn babe
The tender Mary rose to lean,
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep
And dreamed that he was clean!*

*That night when to the mother's breast
The little King was held secure,
A harlot slept in happy sleep —
And dreamed that she was pure!*

*That night when in the manger lay
The Sanctified who came to save
A man moved in the sleep of death
And dreamed there was no grave!*

Yes, something truly wonderful happened

there on that night, and, my friend, the star is still shining, shining in all its tender appeal. If I were you — tonight, and tomorrow — all through tonight and all through tomorrow — I would forget all my failures, all the aches and groans and disappointments of my life; I would forget all my sins; I would turn from all my guilt and shame: I would think and reflect and brood upon the star which shone on the night the Saviour was born, which is still shining. It isn't shining for your neighborhood; it is shining for you. Think of the smiling warmth and hospitality of that manger. Think of the meekness and humility of the swaddling clothes. All who wished came — came as they were, with their sin, their sorrows, their fears, their guilt and their shame. They all came, and none was turned away. He came into the world to help the likes of you and me.

Oh that tonight — this clear, brilliant Christmas Eve night — oh that tonight the charm and healing of Bethlehem might sink deep into the minds and hearts and bones of you all! Oh the naturalness, simplicity and sweetness of the Saviour's sympathies and love for the worst of us! I am not much given to emotional outbursts; but I tell you when I reflect upon Bethlehem, with all its sweet simplicity, its tenderness, its Divine love for me — burning steadily and gently despite my sin and guilt and shame — when I think upon all of that, as I often do, I tell you my poor heart is profoundly and strangely moved.

But while the birth of our blessed Lord was quiet and simple, it also was splendid and sublime. Over in the fourth chapter of

Galatians there is a statement by St. Paul which has remained in my mind, like the memory of a great cathedral, since I first heard it long year ago. Here it is:

“... when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law ...”

Whatever I may forget, I think I shall never forget this great cathedral-like

“God is in the facts of history...”

...as truly as He is in the march of the seasons, the revolutions of the planets, or the architecture of the worlds.”

declaration of this noble man — who wrote it down through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “... when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law ...”

God, like the great Husbandman He is, works according to times and seasons. With God there is a time, with God there is a season. In the world of nature He has ordained that there shall be first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. It is not to be wondered at therefore that in the world of free moral agents there should be found operating the law of growth, development and maturity.

It is line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. God has revealed Himself to men as they have been able, through their experience and training, to appreciate and appropriate Him. Our Lord wasn't born in the days of Moses because the time and season of His birth had not come. Mt. Sinai must come before Mt. Olivet. The prophets must come before the apostles. Law must come before grace, else men would not appreciate and understand grace when it came.

I am thankful that God has ordained it this way. I am glad that there is first the blade, then the ear, after that the full grown corn in the ear. I am glad that there is first the infant, then the child, then the youth, then the man — and after that the experience, maturity and mellowness of age. Who would want an infant to become a man overnight? Who would want to be robbed of the days of his childhood with all their dreams and associations?

How poor the world would be tonight if you robbed it of the literature of Job, Moses, David and the prophets! How poor the world would be tonight if you robbed it of the preaching of John the Baptist!

Now this universe — sun and moon and stars, winds and seas and earthquakes and — history: they all have one great theme — Jesus Christ, "... the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. In Jesus Christ all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities — all things were created through Him and for Him."

All history centers in Jesus Christ. As has been truthfully said, "History is nothing more than His Story." "God is the King of all the earth ... He makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of his wrath He restrains." That is the doctrine of the Bible.

But it is no less the doctrine of profound and discriminating historians. J. Lanahan said: "God is in the facts of history as truly as He is in the march of the seasons, the revolutions of the planets, or the architecture of the worlds." Bancroft said: "When the hour of conflict is

over, history comes to a right understanding of the strife, and is ready to exclaim, 'Lo, God was here, and we knew it not.'"

The deeper and wider one reads history, the more convinced he is that history, all superficial appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, has a theme and a goal. The theme is Jesus Christ, and the goal is universal righteousness. There was a time when I didn't believe it; but I believe it now.

I say again, History has a theme and a goal: the theme is Jesus Christ, and the goal is universal righteousness.

Ancient history, as a careful study of it will disclose, had a theme. That theme was the coming into the world of Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, Son of God. Ancient history prepared the way for the Incarnation. I do not for a moment mean that the Incarnation was a part of history, that history produced the Incarnation. The Incarnation was a breaking in upon history. The Incarnation was from without history, it was from above. The Incarnation was not the result of historical development. The Incarnation was a miracle.

But all history had been preparing the way for the Incarnation.

Consider the career of Alexander the Great. Some superficial souls have referred to Alexander as a "hair-brained enthusiast whose success was due to dash and luck." But the plain

truth is, Alexander the Great was one of the most remarkable men of history. I am inclined to believe that he was one of the four or five greatest men ever born — if you judge him on the basis of the lasting impact of his life upon the world.

There was something mysterious in his campaigns. Hardly more than a youth, the miles fled from beneath his feet. The Bible pictures him as a winged-leopard. Before a comparative handful of his Macedonians, the mightiest armies ever assembled upon the field of battle to his time, melted. Alexander and Darius, at Gaugamela, fought the greatest battle that was fought in the ancient world. Darius had a million infantry, 40,000 cavalry. Yet Alexander slaughtered that colossal army, and no man ever was able to count the Persian slain. At Issus Alexander slaughtered 100,000 Persians, while his own losses were but 450 killed!

Alexander the Great knew nothing of the God of the Bible, and cared less. But the God of the Bible knew Alexander the Great; He put his bit in Alexander's mouth and made him go as He wished him to go. God is not the Author of murder, nor of any evil; but since offenses must come, God will see to it that they will ultimately praise Him.

Alexander the Great, though he did not know it, was a forerunner of Jesus Christ.



Alexander the Great knew nothing of the God of the Bible, and cared less. But the God of the Bible knew Alexander the Great...

Alexander created a universal world for a universal Saviour. He scattered Greek ideas and the Greek language all over the world, the very language in which the life and teachings of the universal Saviour are recorded.

The Caesars came along and organized Alexander's conquests. They established roads, built cities, established a code of laws which would recognize the legality of Christianity in the Roman world, and protect and send on his way the greatest apostle of Christianity to ever live on the earth — Saul of Tarsus, the apostle to the people of Alexander and the Caesars.

I say again,
Ancient

history had a theme, and it had a goal.

The ancient world was prepared for the birth of Christ politically, socially and linguistically.

And that world was prepared for that birth morally and religiously.

Morally and religiously the world had come to the end of its rope. Write and talk as Plato might about morals, the fact was that a pall of guilt and shame hung over the whole earth. All the blood of bulls and goats, all the ethics and metaphysics of the Greeks were helpless to wash it away. It was there — the guilt and the shame — and day by day it was getting heavier to bear.

To all the profound questions of the mind and heart there was no answer. Whence did we come? Why are we here? Whither do we go? There was no authoritative answer. At best it was all speculation and guess. I am always

moved when I read the *Phaedo*. There, with the hemlock already poured into the cup, the greatest

philosopher of the ancient world — the bravest and calmest and, as one of his friends

said, the wisest and justest — there Socrates sits with his thought concentrated on whither, in a few minutes, he is to go. He talks with his friends. His mind feels through the darkness if haply it might catch a beam of light. But it is all dark. It is all speculation. There is no real evidence. The old philosopher wants to go to other gods that are wise and good, and maybe he will — but — but, he isn't certain.

What is truth? Nobody knows. The fulness of time had not come for One to speak with authority and not as the teachers of the ancient world. In the light of all this, it is not surprising that Christ created a sensation when He declared, "I am the truth."

Again. It is an historical fact that in the days of the birth of Christ there was a worldwide expectancy that some great, universal event was about to happen. Men didn't know what it was. They were unable to articulate their feelings. But they all believed that the old order was dying, and that a new one was about to be ushered in. And, strangely enough, they believed this event would take place somewhere in the East. Students of those times are all familiar with this.

And so, "in the fulness of time," God sent forth His Son.

All this helps to explain the strange naturalness which characterized the quest of the wisest philosophers of the day — the Wise Men.¹ The strange, even wonderful naturalness, of their mien and manner as they searched for Him, and when they found Him, is

explained by the fact that they had been expecting Him, and they had expected to find Him somewhere in the East.

I always thought it incredible that those philosophers acted so naturally before the infant Christ. I always thought it extraordinary that they, the wisest philosophers of the day, would without hesitation, affirm that they had found Him who was born King of the Jews; but after all, it wasn't so strange; they had been expecting Him, and they had expected that He would be found somewhere in the East. God's miraculous star guided them to the very locality.

And now, finally, as it was — so shall it be. History today — its wars, its floods, its earthquakes, its clash of races, its clash of capital and labor — this history being made before your eyes and mine, like the history of the ancient world, has both theme and goal. It is preparing the way for another coming into the world of God's Son. This time not to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, not in the calm and quietness of the shining of Judean stars; but with the sound of the trumpet, with the great voice of the Archangel, with ten thousand times ten thousand kingly faces, in indescribable splendor and glory. The sun, the moon, the stars, the storm churning the waters of the deep, the aches and groans of the earth, the clash of steel, the bursting shell, the fiendish, prolonged growl of the atomic bomb, the cries of the poor, the emptiness of the rich, the distress of all peoples and languages and tongues—

All of that has theme: Jesus Christ is coming the second time.

In the second chapter of Haggai there is a remarkable verse: "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come."

As it was in the ancient world, so it is today. First of all, guilt and shame hang like a pall over all the earth. Colleges, universities, churches, religious denominations — they all boast of their progress. But, alas, everywhere men and women, even boys and girls of tender years, are bowed under the awful weight and burden of guilt and shame.

All the world is longing for somebody who can speak with authority and power. It is longing for somebody who can put an end to these interminable, futile debates. Look at the so-called United Nations — words, words, millions of words; debates, debates, debates — while the sons of the world are dumped into the bloody sinkholes of war, while millions of mothers and babies are crying for a crust of bread!

And then there is today, as in the ancient world, a worldwide expectancy that some great event is about to take place on earth. You listening to me tonight can feel it. You listening to me tonight instinctively feel that these matters of such great magnitude cannot much longer hang in suspense, but soon they must be settled — all these colossal problems now hanging over the world. You feel that some great event is about to happen.

This worldwide expectancy is as valid tonight as it was in the ancient world.

And once more — as it was then, so it is today: all eyes are turned toward the Middle East. Once again it has become the heart of world politics and economics, as it always

has been the geographical heart. Why has Palestine, after 2,000 years of waste and desolation, suddenly come back to life? Why is it that Jerusalem, after these ages of neglect, has suddenly come alive, its dateline appearing on the front pages of all the great newspapers of the world?

This second great event — this Second Coming of God's Son, is going to take place in the Middle East. It is going to take place on the Mount of Olives, which is east of Jerusalem.

And you yourselves are beginning to believe it, all your efforts to reason it away to the contrary notwithstanding.

Today all nations are being shaken in preparation for the coming of the Desire of all nations.

The morning star tells that the day is ready to break, and the Sun of Righteousness rise. Do not, I beg of you, permit that Day to break upon you and find you unsaved. Now is the accepted time. Today is the day of salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

"At Echatana, Alexander had with him a nucleus of human minds capable of creating a new state. Greek scholars now consulted with Chaldean mathematicians and with Magian wise men. The vast knowledge of these easterners made even the philosophic Greeks appear provincial. In fact, measured by the new standard of intelligence, they were provincials. But they did not feel inclined to admit that."
(Hamid Lamh, Alexander of Macedon, p. 229-Doughleday & Company. Inc., New York. 1946).

The ancient world was prepared for the birth of Christ politically, socially and linguistically... some were even expecting it, and God's miraculous star guided them to the very locality.



Celebrating Christmas?

By Keith Bassham

I really don't want to add fuel to the Christmas feud flame, but I want to go on record with a few things. I know, for instance, that no one knows the date of the birth of Jesus, and even if we did, the Bible in all probability would not instruct us to observe the date. Thus Christmas and Easter are in that sense "man-made" holidays, and not Bible-sanctioned. Not wrong in and of themselves, you understand, but if secularists want to stake their own claims on the holidays and tell Christians to shove off, I do not feel compelled to get out the pitchforks, torches, and boycott threats. As a Christian, a secular Christmas is not so much an oxymoron as it is a paradox.

I also stipulate that secularists and Christians have had to share an uneasy truce in this business, and our long-forgotten syncretistic forebears on both sides probably knew that going in. Southern Europeans had been celebrating something called Saturnalia hundreds of years before Christians began holding any type of festival honoring the birth of Jesus Christ. No one knows just when, but within the first 200 years after the resurrection of Jesus there had been observances of Epiphany (the appearing) connected with Jesus'

baptism in early January, and perhaps some of that celebration drifted back into December and combined with a birthday observance. Some early Egyptian theologians began placing the date of the nativity in late December in the 28th year of Emperor Augustus, and the matter was argued at length until the late 300s when you actually see some regular type of nativity festival taking on a life of its own. The date set, December 25, corresponds with the celebration of Saturnalia and another celebration at the time called Natilis Solis Invicti: the birth of the sun. That's s - u - n, and it was a winter solstice festival marking the shortest day of the year and the first of the days leading up to spring and summer. In northern Europe, they did something similar under different names, but the celebration itself was about the same — making merry, giving gifts, eating a lot — which when you think about it seems a sensible thing for people to do in a bleak part of the year.

There was something else going on in those midwinter celebrations you should know about. Saturnalia celebrants would for a brief time reverse the social arrangement of servants and masters. That is, during the celebration,

the servants would themselves be "served," or at least appear to be served, by their masters. All could legally wear a hat signifying their freeman's status, and a servant could even pretend to be disrespectful without fear of punishment. It was a way of turning things upside down, a nod to a long-forgotten "Golden Age," or maybe a longing for one in the future.

The common theory is that the Church adapted itself to these festivals, even adopting some of the cultural elements to create what would become, much later, *Cristes mæsse*, or Christ Mass. At times, the celebration even mixed with the medieval Feast of Fools, patterned after the ancient Saturnalia (think Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), insofar as it was a time of revelry, drunkenness, gift-giving, and the like. The Catholic Church officially condemned the Feast at various times, but it was hard to extinguish something so deeply embedded in the culture. English Puritans, during the time of Cromwell, recognized all these pagan influences, and noting how the Christmas observances in their day had become so degraded and imitative of the folk festivals, sought to do away with Christmas altogether. Parliament



in 1644 declared the so-called “twelve days of Christmas” a time for fasting if observed at all; businesses were to remain open regular hours, and even the “traditional” Christmas treats, plum pudding and mincemeat pie, were condemned as heathen.

I think I’m right in what I’ve written above, and if so, modern secularists, both in government and in the marketplace, are not really shoving Jesus out (though they think they are) because there has never been a “pure” Christian Christmas observance for them to hijack. In fact, in a curious reversal of the modern situation, you could make the case that English Christians in the 17th century made their own “war on Christmas” for an opposite reason. On the other hand, I don’t want the secularists to think we hijacked their celebration either. Christmas as we know it does not have an unbroken line of ancestry back to the Roman Saturnalia observance (though there are similarities) especially when

you factor in the borrowed elements from all the other midwinter festivals throughout Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to the present. The truth is, most of what we think of as a traditional Christmas today is very much British and American and not all that old either.

Last year I wrote that, overall, maybe observing a season of Advent makes sense. Advent (and Lent, for that matter) was noted in the Almanac section of the first King James Version Bibles in 1611, so that should make it sort of okay. And before you object mightily

to embracing this new bit of liturgy, you might remember that before 1820, observing Christmas among Baptists was almost unheard of, just as it was among Puritans, Presbyterians, and Quakers in the U.S. Congress even met on Christmas Day from 1789 to 1855, public schools met in Boston on Christmas until 1870, and the first state to make the day a legal holiday was Alabama in 1836.

The most popular American Christmas song, “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,” was written by a Jewish person and makes no mention at all of God or Jesus. It’s all about going home and being with friends and remembering good old days. And it reflects Christmas the way it is observed in our culture — almost certain to be mostly secular, materialistic, and commercial. If there is some religious significance for people, it is usually more sentimentality than anything else.

So I don’t think we have to go to the mattresses if a municipality presents a “holiday” tree, but human resource managers really ought to lighten up if they are ready to discipline a clerk for having the temerity to wish a customer a Merry Christmas, and the same goes for school administrators who confiscate red and green crayons in December.

Advent, on the other hand, is all about the appearance of Jesus into the world, which is what we want Christmas to be about.



...before 1820, observing Christmas among Baptists was almost unheard of...

Beacon Baptist turns 50

Taylor, MI

Senior Pastor Herb Gilbert and Beacon Baptist Church celebrated the congregation's 50th anniversary September 18. Special guest for the celebration was Jerry Thorpe, former pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Odessa, TX.

Charter members of Beacon, Eva and Millard Winningham, Edwin and Nellie Legg, Jim and Lou Dalton, Darlus Gonzalez, and Eunice Brown, were present at the church's beginning September 17, 1961, when the new congregation met in the local YMCA building. They were also able to join in the celebration 50 years later. Student Pastor Adam Reilly interviewed the charter members for video presentations shown in the lead-up to the actual anniversary.

Beacon Baptist Church began when a group of people from Gilead Baptist Church in downtown Detroit met to plant a new church on the outskirts of the city. Led by Marion Evans, the group met at a YMCA in Wyandotte, and then in a school gymnasium in Southgate. That first church had about 60 in attendance. Jim Dalton, head of the church deacons, was elected to that position in those early days. A little later, the congregation bought a plot of land in Taylor on Northline Road, the church's current location.

In 1966, Beacon called Pastor Herbert Gilbert and his wife Glenda to serve, something they've been doing now for 45 years. In 1981, John Reilly joined the staff along with his wife Rhonda, and recently John was named co-pastor of the church. Adam Reilly became Student Pastor in 2009, and a mission intern, Caleb Moore, joined the staff in June.

The church moved into their new home in late 2000 when construction was finished on a 1,600-seat facility. Beacon supports more than 200 missionary projects and many local ministries. People continue to be evangelized and added to the church, with a current average attendance of about 800 even in the face of the economic downturn that has affected the area. A recent bulletin shows a week full of activity ahead with opportunities for scores of willing workers.



From top: 50th anniversary banquet, Beacon Baptist building, charter members honored. Bottom left: John and Rhonda Reilly. Bottom right: Herb and Glenda Gilbert.



URBAN CURRENT

Donde mora Satanás

Maria described how at the age of 16 she was lured off the streets by a young man who promised the world, but delivered nothing but pain. She was raped, drugged, and sold for sex. “They took a gallon of gasoline and started pouring it over a girl,” Maria said. “One of the men told me, ‘If you don’t do as I say, I will do the same thing to you.’ I wanted to look away, but they didn’t let me. Even though the girl was on fire, they kept hitting her and they were laughing as if they were enjoying what they were doing.” (CNN.com 1/15/10)

The first car bomb used by drug cartel enforcers was detonated in this volatile city on July 15, killing four including a federal police officer. La Linea claimed that the strike was payback for the arrest of one of its commanders. Three days later, another suspected gang murdered 17 people not far from here. (TIME 9/2/10)

Some 100 native or foreign pastors who live here have had to abandon the city because of the threats and demands for money. Many pastors and their families have been victims of extortion, threats, kidnapping, and homicide. (Compass Direct News 4/15/11)

“Dónde?” you ask, is this horrible place?

Civilians ran a greater risk of being killed in the border city of Juárez, Mexico, last year than in Baghdad, Iraq. (CNSNews.com 1/15/10)

Word on the street is that since the violence began to spike in 2008, murders are closing in on almost 9,000. Over 200,000 people have left this city that just a few years ago was 1.2 million. Of those, 100,000 have moved across the border to El Paso. Daniel Borunda of the El Paso Times argues, in a special report dated June 7, 2010, Juárez deserves the title of the most dangerous city in the world.

Jose Reyes Ferriz, the mayor of the sprawling industrial city, got a message affixed to the head of a pig left in a trash bag on the street. The gruesome message left little to the imagination: “Reyes Ferriz has two weeks to live.” The prediction of an early death was hardly a first for the outspoken mayor, a trade attorney who speaks fluent English and teaches law at a university in Juárez. He is still alive and has much to do. (AOLnews.com 3/25/10)

Arturo Farela, Director of the National Fraternity of Evangelical Churches, has asserted that organized crime syndicates and drug cartels have been targeting Christians because they see churches as revenue centers and because churches support rehabilitation programs for drug addicts and alcoholics. “The majority of rehabilitation centers that have been attacked by organized crime in Ciudad Juárez ... belong to the evangelical community.” (Compass Direct News 4/15/11)

We know the growth of Christianity in the first-century Roman world was watered by the blood of martyrs. What does it mean for present-day believers to deliberately venture into dangerous places to live, serve, preach, teach?

One of the striking things about Juárez is its proximity to the U.S. Might Juárez be one of our Samarias? Close but so different, close but undesirable, close but challenging, close but dangerous? Where are the Christian school teachers who will teach in the schools of Juárez, public or Christian? Who are the women who will marry the men who will charge into this war zone where Satan lives, lifting the blood-stained banner? Who among us believes God’s power is greater than that of depraved cartels?

John wrote to the angel of the church in Pergamum. “The one who has the sharp two-edged sword says, ‘I know where you dwell, where

Satan’s throne is; ... you hold fast my name ... *donde mora Satanás*, where Satan dwells”

Robert and Sandra Frazier have been soldiers of the cross in Juárez for 32 years. These Baptist Bible Fellowship International missionaries have been as hard at work for the last three years, with violence making worldwide headlines, as they have in years previous. With 14 churches started, revived, and built up, these folks are agents of light in the Juárez darkness. Their days are filled with pastoral visitation, door-to-door work, tract distribution, children and youth ministries, studying, and preparing for Bible studies and services. They helped start a Bible college that is now under the leadership of a national. The churches they have started and worked with have been turned over to national leadership. In the last few years, they assisted a group that was nothing more than a Bible study meeting in a widow’s house. Last April, the church was organized with pastoral leadership in place. Lighthouse Baptist Church shines brightly where Satan dwells. Come on now, is that awesome or what?

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. A baby is born where the devil reigns. The devil’s son sends his cohorts slashing, hacking into the quiet village. Babies’ cries are choked off. Screams and wails rend the night. These are the very works Jesus came to destroy.

The devil may rule in Juárez, but Jesus lives there. He is at work. Christmas means the devil’s days are numbered.

by Charles Lyons, Pastor
Armitage Baptist Church,
Chicago, Illinois
charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org



HISTORY

BAPTIST

WILLIAM VAUGHN — He refused to compromise the truth

William Vaughn was one of Kentucky's most esteemed and influential pioneer Baptist ministers. He was born into a pious Welsh Baptist family February 22, 1785, in Westmorland County, PA. When he was three years old, his father moved the family to Kentucky, which was still a wilderness. Opportunities on the frontier were limited; William was unable to attend school until he was eight. It is estimated the total time he spent in a classroom was about 12 months. But during those few months, he learned to read and developed an insatiable thirst for knowledge.

However, his choice of reading material would prove extremely harmful. One of the books he read was Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. Unfortunately, after reading Paine's book, William announced he was a Deist and joined an infidel club. This decision seriously affected his lifestyle. He stopped attending religious meetings, his language became vile, and he became a regular patron of the local tavern. But the illness and death of an infidel friend would have a major impact upon his future. This experience made him realize he was not prepared to die. He determined he was going to become a Christian.

He began to diligently study his Bible and to faithfully attend church services. He eventually realized that God's salvation was freely given through the blood of Christ. He related his conversion experience and was baptized into the Friendship Baptist Church. Believing God had called him to the ministry, he attempted to preach, and though his initial efforts ended in disaster, he persevered.

He purchased an English dictionary and devoured its contents. He would eventually master New Testament Greek, and he read every theological book he could find. This man whose early attempts to preach were complete failures would eventually be considered Kentucky's greatest preacher.

William Vaughn's labors were primarily confined to rural and village churches, and each of his churches experienced numerical growth and theological stability. In 1827 he moved to Ohio, but within a year he was back in Kentucky. Upon his return he found the teachings of Alexander Campbell had infiltrated the Baptist churches with devastating results.

Alexander Campbell had initially been considered a Baptist. Baptized by Mathias Luse, a Baptist pastor, Campbell and his church had united with the Red Stone Baptist Association in Virginia. Campbell had originally traveled to Kentucky to debate Methodist and Presbyterian ministers concerning the practice of infant baptism. In these debates, he completely routed his opponents, endearing him to Kentucky Baptists. However, he soon began promulgating his baptismal regeneration heresy. Sadly, several of the leading Baptist pastors in Kentucky embraced his doctrine. Consequently, a large number of lay people who believed they were returning to New Testament Christianity also embraced his teaching. However, the majority of pastors did not support Campbell or his teaching but they feared if they exposed his heresy, it would split their churches.

William Vaughn, recognizing the need to defend the faith, preached a two-and-a-half-hour sermon that exposed Alexander Campbell and proved his doctrine was not scriptural. His sermon stirred up a hornet's nest. The preachers who had embraced Campbellism tried to debate Vaughn, but they soon discovered they were no match for his logic and biblical knowledge. Alexander Campbell, recognizing Vaughn's influence, made a special trip to Kentucky. He told Vaughn, "If you join me, all the Baptists of Kentucky will follow." Vaughn rejected his offer, informing him he could never support teaching what he believed was not scriptural.

Thankfully, the pastors that had previously been too timid to speak joined Vaughn in exposing the evils of Campbellism. Many Baptist churches were split asunder, but when the dust had settled, the Baptists were stronger theologically and numerically, thanks to William Vaughn, the man who refused to compromise the truth.

Vaughn continued pastoring until he was 84 when he fell and crushed his hip. Although he was forced to give up the pastorate, he continued to preach when his health permitted. He preached his last sermon at the age of 93. A few months later, March 31, 1877, this great champion of the faith laid down his sword.

...recognizing the need to defend the faith, he preached a two-and-a-half-hour sermon that exposed Alexander Campbell and proved his doctrine was not scriptural.

by Thomas Ray



BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

An announcement from the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees of Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, announces that Jim Edge, the president of BBC, submitted his resignation as president by letter to the Board on November 14, 2011. The Board has accepted his resignation and expresses its gratitude for the three years of service that President Edge has given to BBC.

The Board wishes to recognize some of President Edge's accomplishments during his tenure at BBC. President Edge has, in difficult economic times, reduced the operational deficit of the college by \$1.6 million, raised approximately \$1.5 million in donations for the college (not including the May college offerings), led the way for the college to revamp its curriculum to better improve the educational product for the students of BBC, signed a reciprocity agreement with Cox School of Nursing, and worked tirelessly for the betterment of this institution and her students.

After an executive session, the Board has selected Ron Sears, senior pastor of First Baptist Church in New Castle, DE, to be the interim president of BBC. Sears, who is a current member of the Board, did his undergraduate work at BBC and has also received a MA degree in Christian Education and a Doctor of Ministry degree, both from Freedom Seminary in Orlando, FL. The Board also announces that it will begin a selection process to find a permanent replacement with a goal of announcing the new president of BBC at the Baptist Bible Fellowship Meeting in Springfield, MO, in May 2012.

For over 60 years, BBC's foremost obligation has been to provide the best educational environment to teach its students the basic, eternal truths of the Book which is part of the name of our college. The Board acknowledges that BBC's greatest asset is not its buildings but its students, who come from across the United States and from around the world to "enter to learn," and the faculty, whose life mission it is to help those students "go forth to serve." We owe to them our best efforts to select the right person to love them, to serve them, and to show fidelity to the calling that brought them to BBC. We promise them to do all we can to honor that calling.

The Board also humbly asks for the advice, and most importantly the prayers of the pastors of the Baptist Bible Fellowship International and all persons who love and support BBC. Pray for the wisdom to select the right man for such a time as this to serve our students and to "commit [our] works unto the Lord" so that our "thoughts shall be established" (Proverbs 16:3). In this spirit we go forward, together, in that faith of those "things hoped for," but "not seen," always seeking the good report of our elders and of our God.

BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE

Big cities, little town



by David Melton | President | Boston Baptist College

I have the best of both worlds — I live in a small town that is a suburb of a big city. I can have "big city stuff" when the mood hits me (and if that includes the occasional traffic jam, I don't even have to have the "mood") but yet I can come home to Kim and the boys and things hardly feel very urban. Still, though, we "live" in a big city. At Christmastime, the big city — Boston — has a lot of pretty cool holiday trappings. They freeze the Frog Pond in Boston Common so you can ice skate ... pretty fun. Okay, it's more fun when it is Boston Baptist College students who skate (who actually can skate), than for me, since I can only manage to be a one-man train wreck on ice. But it's a winter, holiday kind of thing to do in the big city. Our students have a blast in Boston. Many of you kind of did that with us last fall. Big deal. Really big deal.

Sometimes I wonder why God sent Jesus into the world in a little place, a really little place. Bethlehem. If it were me I think I would have gone bigger, had a parade with gigantic inflatables and I know I would have pushed for some ticker tape. Marching bands, too — kind of a Rose-Bowl-parade-sort-of-big-city shindig. Big cities are so good at that kind of thing. We Bostonians love that feel of bigness (probably why we have such issues with New York ... some sort of *polis*-Napoleonic thing — since they are so much bigger than we are, but I digress.

Little place, who celebrates that? I never hear a student say, "Hey I think we should take a day and go hang out in Montpelier, VT, or Ossipee, NH, or Otis, MA" (no offense to anybody). We are drawn to the enormous and spectacular. We tend to overlook the small, the "normal," the basic.

But God didn't.

Bethlehem. Least in Judah. Just a hamlet really — not sure how many stoplights, but certainly no traffic jams. The big city, Jerusalem, was just over the hill to the north, but Joseph and Mary walked right on past it. Little Bethlehem — that is, ironically, where the big things happened.

I think we have here a good Christmas lesson. In a world absolutely infatuated with the spectacular and mammoth, we must remember to go little. A little Baby born in a little town. Biggest news ever. Let's finish up the year relishing the power of small.

As long as God is big, nothing else is size-sensitive. If the bank account is small, join the crowd. If evil seems to dwarf us, no news there. Feel insignificant in a celebrity-crazed society? I know what you mean. Yet, sometimes less is more. So have a merry "little" Christmas — from all of us in the big city.

Larry & Dawn Nelson | **Australia**

During a teaching session in a home visit, my new friend suddenly grew very quiet and seemed to just stare at the Bible passage we were reading. I wondered what he was thinking and whether he was accepting the truth of the passage. He had been caught up for over 20 years in a legalistic cult group before he and his family started attending our services. He was carrying a lot of hurt and spiritual baggage. But slowly looking up he finally exclaimed, "Now I understand! Now I get it! Jesus Christ paid the full price for sin and the Father is completely satisfied with his Son's payment for my sin! There is nothing I can add to or take away from it." With growing excitement in his voice he continued, "I was never confident of my standing before God. I was never at peace. Now I understand and accept Jesus Christ as my own Savior!" Yes, he did understand indeed! Praise the Lord! As we prayed together he thanked the Lord for the free gift of salvation. His wife has also placed her faith in Christ and we are making plans for their baptism.

Lonnie & Martha Smith | **Mexico**

In Monterrey, Mexico, there is a very exclusive, expensive, buffet-style restaurant called Casino Royal. This month a group of people entered this café to rob, kill, and burn. Fifty-three people died in the confrontation. In June 2006, 35 pastors of Monterrey and Northern Mexico reserved a private room at this restaurant to honor Martha and me on our 50th anniversary in Mexico. It was truly a great celebration as we had won most of the men or their wives to the Lord. Praise God, no pastor or member was a part of the 53 deaths at the Casino Royal this month!

Randy & Linda Perkins | **Australia**

We have had more and more refugees from Burma (now called Myanmar) attending our church. The first family started coming about a year and a half ago and now we have up to 20 Burmese on Sunday mornings.

As these refugees learn English, we have learned they are the Karen people group. They have suffered persecution over the years in Myanmar and many have lived for years under the protection of the refugee camps.

The ministry that Adoniram Judson had in Burma over 150 years ago flowed to these Karen people and was very fruitful among them. Today many of the Karen people are Baptists. I am sure that Adoniram Judson had no idea that his ministry in Burma would continue to bear fruit today. This should be an encouragement for us all to faithfully continue sowing the seeds of God's Word.

Ben & Raelene Walker | **New Zealand**

Amandip is the first Christian in her family — a family filled with religion. Her whole family has displayed very cold hearts toward Christianity. Despite this, her Buddhist brother Talwinder and her Hindu sister Daljit accepted Christ recently. In the past few months, Amandip has requested prayer for her parents' salvation. Would you pray that God would touch her parents' cold hearts as He did her sister and brother's hearts? God is moving a whole family toward salvation one soul at a time and they need prayer warriors.

Eric & Amanda Shadle | **Ethiopia**

The past few months we've been praying about ways to get our church presence out into the community. Our church is located on the east side of Addis Ababa in an area of fast growth. However, because of all the construction it can be hard to locate the church. We've been considering putting up signs to advertise the church and give direction to our building — this would cost up to \$1,500. A few weeks ago, a couple that has been coming to our church said they wanted to help with the signs. We met this couple one day when we were having Aaron's birthday party. They have been faithfully attending since we started holding services in May. A few days after they talked to us, we met them at their business not far from the church. They gave the church \$1,500 cash, the entire estimated cost for the signs! We couldn't believe it and are still amazed God provided the money from a family in the church.

George & Luisa Dimakos | **Greece**

The Lord has given us a time of harvest. We had four who recently were baptized. Dimitri, a Greek man, came to me and said he was ready to take the big step. He and his wife Sarah received the Lord a while back, and though Sarah got baptized he was not ready at that time. My heart was filled with joy when he came forward for baptism. We pray he will walk fervently with the Lord and grow spiritually. That same day, Clement from Nigeria and his wife Amabet from Ethiopia were also baptized.

A couple of weeks later Elpida, an Albanian lady who has been with us for many years, told Luisa she has been having Bible studies with her husband Christo, who is a former Muslim, and that he is ready to take the next step of baptism in his Christian walk. Christo also came to us and confirmed he wanted to be baptized. His wife's strong testimony led him to the Lord and once again she was the instrument to make him see his need for obedience to God and to follow the Lord in baptism. We praise the Lord for this step of faith and we pray Christo and his family will grow in the Lord and in His Word together.

Larry & Tammy Allred | **Mexico**

Gerardo was baptized this past Sunday. It brought tears to our eyes to watch the entire youth group rally around him to congratulate him and take pictures with him after baptism. His testimony is quite amazing. He goes to school with two of the girls in the youth department. They have been witnessing to him and inviting him to church all year. He came to a few youth meetings — he said it was fun, but he wasn't really interested much in the spiritual aspect. At the last minute the girls talked him into going to camp. He was in Larry's room and so Larry went through the plan of salvation with Gerardo the first night at camp. He listened, but at the end he said he thought science had a better explanation than the Bible. There was one service at camp where Larry taught on true repentance. Afterwards, one of the teens who had fallen into sin stood in front of her peers and confessed her sin and asked forgiveness, not only of God but also of the teens for her bad testimony. The teens rallied around her, cried with her, and forgave her. Gerardo sat by and watched. When we had the bonfire and testimony time the last night, Gerardo stood and said that he too had received Christ. When we asked him what it was that made the difference, he said it was the service on true repentance when he saw that there was something real in the lives of these teens — that is when he decided he wanted what they had. Amen!

David & Joy Speights | **Thailand**

Recently I was talking to one of my new Muslim friends. He told me he spends time every day reading the Quran in the Arabic language. I was impressed that he could read Arabic. He said, "Oh, I can't understand it. I have just learned to read the words phonetically but I have no idea what it means." I asked him, "Don't you have a copy of the Quran in Thai so you can understand what it says?" He replied, "No, it isn't good to read the Quran in any language except for the original Arabic. I make merit simply by reading it even if I can't understand what it says."

The people of Thailand already have plenty of religion, but they still don't have the one thing that they most desperately need — Jesus Christ!

Greg & Michelle Windell | **Kenya**

Pastor Kasim has to transport equipment from his apartment to the school we are renting for church services every weekend. During one trip, three thieves caught the pastor. Alex was hit on the back of the head with a club, and then two of the men grabbed his arms while the third repeatedly warned him not to cry for help. Alex cried for help anyway, and the man viciously bit him on the face! Local residents came to the pastor's rescue. All the thugs were able to steal was \$3 in cash. Beaten and bitten, Alex went to the hospital for treatment, and afterwards made it to church for the Sunday morning service — a bit late, but not defeated! The bite damaged the inside of his cheek. It looks like the maniac intended to bite a chunk out of Pastor Kasim's face! Please pray for the safety of this dedicated pastor.

Newly approved missionaries

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Matt and Ericka Moeller | **Scotland**

Sending Church: Aurora Baptist Temple in
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Sending Pastor: Nathan Burch

Contact Information: (417)343-6408,
Matt.Moeller@bbfmissions.org



Dustin and Carla Reinhardt | **Chile**

Sending Church: Brea Baptist Church in Brea, CA

Sending Pastor: David Rader

Contact Information: (714)225-9877,
Dustin.Reinhardt@bbfmissions.org



Stan and Jackie Sherwood | **Panama**

Sending Church: Midlothian Baptist Church in
Midlothian, VA

Sending Pastor: Ken Cornett

Contact Information: (804)379-9500,
Stan.Sherwood@bbfmissions.org



Sam and Megan Beard | **South Korea**

Sending Church: Florence Baptist Temple in
Florence, SC

Sending Pastor: Bill Monroe

Contact Information: (843)662-0453,
Sam.Beard@bbfmissions.org



T.E.A.M.

Elmo and Kathryn Compton | **Peru**

Sending Church: First Baptist Church of Caldwell in
Caldwell, NJ

Sending Pastor: David Bulka

Contact Information: (973)809-6037,
Elmo.Compton@bbfmissions.org



Jaron and Nicki Rogers | **Nicaragua**

Sending Church: First Baptist Church in Webster, TX

Sending Pastor: Tommy Turnbow

Contact Information: (281)332-4041,
Jaron.Rogers@bbfmissions.org



Former BBC coach inducted into MO Sports HOF

Springfield, MO

Retired Baptist Bible College basketball coach and athletic director Harold “Hilly” Beck was inducted into the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame on Wednesday, November 2, 2011, at University Plaza in Springfield, MO. The Missouri Sports Hall of Fame recognizes athletes, coaches and other individuals who have had a positive impact on sports in the state of Missouri.



Harold “Hilly” Beck

In 1983 Baptist Bible College officials asked Hilly to become their assistant men’s basketball

coach — a position he held until 1987. Baptist Bible College won the NCCAA Division II National Championship when Hilly was the assistant coach. Beginning his head coaching duties in 1987, he finished with a record of 271-204. During his coaching career he was named Regional and Conference Coach of the Year.

After his appointment as athletic director in 1998, he expanded the college’s annual high school basketball tournament from eight teams to 24 teams. Two new sports were added under his direction and he was instrumental in starting the Patriot Booster Club to help finance BBC’s athletic programs.

Beck retired from coaching in 2002 and as athletic director in 2005. Many of his former players are in full-time ministry, and he gave his service at BBC *pro bono*. Former BBC President Mike Randall, who worked with Beck, was delighted to hear about the induction. He said, “After more than two decades of observing Hilly Beck as a man and leader, I have always known him to be a Christian gentleman with scrupulous integrity, industry, and dedication. He always gives 100 percent to whatever he does. He is competitive, intense, focused, and prepared. How great that Hilly Beck is being recognized for these excellent qualities.”

Border States Fellowship held at Overland Park

Overland Park, KS

Pastor Tracy Roby and Overland Park Baptist Temple hosted a two-day Border States Fellowship November 7 and 8 to encourage and to discuss community outreach. Preachers for the meeting were BBFI President Linzy Slayden, Boston Baptist College President David Melton, and Brothers of Cyrene Moderator Ira Walton.

The event, attended by about 150 pastors, missionaries, and church staff members, included presentations from the main speakers and open discussion about successful evangelism and outreach methods in individual communities. Attendees came from the bordering states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Ira Walton, who pastors a multiracial church in Luvern, AL, made an impassioned appeal for serious work among African Americans. Noting the success of Muslims among young black men, he urged pastors to set a priority to win black men and encourage them to begin churches in predominantly African American communities.

Slayden, who pastors in Oklahoma, and Melton, who pastors in Boston in addition to his college duties, encouraged attendees to spend the time necessary to build relationships over a long period to see solid results in their evangelistic effort.

Tribune Editor Keith Bassham said, “I am convinced meetings like these, where ideas are discussed and leaders can address groups in a

regional setting, uncovers where the real successes are in our movement. They can also help highlight our shortcomings, such as failures to effectively evangelize among black Americans. Regional meetings are great for forming networks among our preachers who might not get together otherwise.”

Pastor Roby and the church, whose members had just finished a mission conference before hosting the Border States Meeting, also provided meals and books to all who attended the conference.



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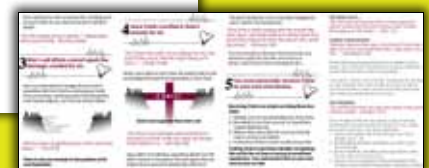
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Another fully indigenous, autonomous church in Spain

Leganés, Spain

This past summer has been a whirlwind of anniversaries and events for missionaries Bill and Therese Williams. In May they celebrated their 25th anniversary as BBFI missionaries to Spain. In June the church they founded in Leganés, Madrid, Spain, celebrated its 10th year as an organized church with 120 in attendance. Finally, on September 4 Bill resigned as pastor and the church unanimously elected as their new pastor Harry Garris Ureña. Harry is originally from the Dominican Republic but has since obtained his Spanish nationality. He had served as associate pastor of the church for the last three years. After graduating from Calvary Bible Baptist Institute in May 2010, he was ordained by the church in October of the same year.

The Leganés Baptist Church averages 110 in



Leganés Baptist Church celebrating its 10th anniversary on June 19, 2011

attendance with 91 members and has had a record attendance this past year of 142. In addition to their Spanish members, the church is composed of 17 different nationalities from Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. It presently has three deacons, three young men called into and studying for the ministry, and a faith promise mission goal of \$20,000 supporting seven missionaries.

"Souls continue to be saved, baptized, and 'taught all things,' as was evidenced by the salvation of a Romanian woman during our last service on September 14," says Bill. "These characteristics and more are evidences of a truly autonomous, independent Baptist church that has been estab-

lished in this city with a population of 220,000." The Leganés Baptist Church is the only Baptist church that has ever been established in the 400-year history of this southern suburb of Madrid.

Bill and Therese are presently on furlough and are reporting to their supporting churches. Upon their return to Spain next spring, they believe it is the Lord's will to start a new church in Palencia as a mission out of the Leganés Baptist Church in the city of Palencia, Spain. The Williams' plan to work as a team with one of the young men called to the ministry in the Leganés church. Palencia is a city in Northern Spain with a population of 80,000 and no Baptist church in its history. It is a very traditional Catholic area with many Roman Catholic convents and seminaries.



Bill Williams hands over the keys to pastor Ureña

Southwest Baptist honors Les and Donna Garner

Amarillo, TX

Southwest Baptist Church and Pastor Bradley Speer held a dinner honoring BBFI missionaries Les and Donna Garner November 5 in conjunc-

tion with the church's mission conference. The Garners have been missionaries in Mexico 40 years.

About 200 people attended the dinner arranged by Southwest, the home church for Les and Donna. BBFI Associate Mission Director Jim Smith was a guest for the conference and dinner. Donna, who is awaiting spinal surgery in Mexico, was unable to attend.

The church presented congratulatory cards, letters, and emails along with a love offering. Southwest Associate Pastor Chester Beaver noted, "People in Amarillo have known Les and Donna since they were very young." Les's father, Mo Garner, had a long and successful pastoral ministry in Amarillo.



From left: Jim Smith, Les Garner, and Bradley Speer

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Bible Baptist holds Souped Up Saturday

Gulfport, MS

Bible Baptist Church and Pastor Jim Stady held their fifth annual Souped Up Saturday on October 1. This year 397 hot rods were present and a

record crowd, well over 1,700, filled the church campus. Once again numerous prizes and awards were given away to both the viewing pub-

lic and the vehicle owners. The grand prizes were a new transmission and a brand new 350 small block Chevy engine. However, more important than the prizes is that this "bridge event," as Stady calls it, is designed to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with hot rod car enthusiasts. Prior to the drawing for the grand prizes, the gospel was



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presented by Jarrad Lee, former Assistant Pastor at Bible Baptist. An invitation was extended for people to receive Christ as Savior and between 25-30 people responded.

Eddie Klein, the event coordinator said, "Our 5th annual Souped Up Saturday left us with the need to re-evaluate our parking strategy for next year. With almost 400 (1980 model or older) registered show cars in attendance, our display area was near capacity. The hundreds of spectator vehicles overwhelmed our soccer field and spilled over into the football/baseball complex. However, with the number of salvations that took place during the gospel presentation, this is not a problem, it's an opportunity! Once again I must say, to God be the glory, great things He hath done."

Bible Baptist invites all those who love hot rods and old cars to attend Souped Up Saturday #6 to be held October 6, 2012.

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With the Lord

Marvin Hooge

Hidalgo, TX



Marvin Hooge, BBFI missionary to Mexico, went home to be with his Lord October 25, 2011. He was born in 1934 in Johnstown, CO, and spent his early life on his grandfather's ranch in Harden, CO. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Hooge, became missionaries to the Philippines and he accompanied them for their first term in 1948. He returned to the U.S. a few years later, entered Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, and graduated in 1955. He met his wife, Rosalie Collier, in Lebanon, MO, while working with Raymon Tracy in Lebanon. The Hooges married in 1957, and he spent the rest of his life as a missionary, planting churches in Mexico, Spain, and the U.S.

Marvin is survived by his wife of 54 years Rosalie, his three children, and eight grandchildren. A memorial service was held October 29 at First Baptist Church of Hidalgo, TX.


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I don't even feel like me!

A testimony of a transformed life

Editor's note – This is part of a letter from Lori, a new believer, to her pastor, Ben Feldott. She struggled with faith a long time, and this letter picks up at the point just after she was saved.

Once I made the decision to accept Christ, I thought I should do it with someone else present. Then I thought, “If I ask Pastor Ben to join me in this prayer, I’m going to stumble over my words. I always do when I speak out loud. So, I’ll rehearse.”

So, late at night, sitting there, planning just the right words to say, I realized it was absolutely ridiculous. How could I be sitting here practicing what to say to God, while worrying about how it might sound to Pastor Ben? God doesn’t want me to perform. He wants the full sincerity of my heart focused on Him, confessing my sin, asking his forgiveness, gratefully accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only means of my salvation. There are many things I don’t understand fully, but these things I DO understand — I need to ask God’s forgiveness for my sin, and to confess to him my belief that I can be saved only through faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to ask Him to take over my life to help me to follow His will, His way, and His plan for His glory — I sure don’t need to have an appointment or a buddy to do that. So, I quit rehearsing and just did it.

I could not possibly have imagined or been prepared for how this would make me feel. I’m sure different people have different experiences, but I’m blown away. Does this happen to everybody? Seriously? I totally wasn’t expecting something so drastic and sudden. I thought, hoped, that I would begin to slowly and gradually feel changed, to begin to understand more about God and His plan, how He works in my life, how I can better serve Him. I’m sure that gradual change will come, but I didn’t in any way expect to feel so different so quickly. It’s absolutely fantastic, unspeakably wondrous, and a little scary to have just a taste of such inconceivable, extraordinary power — in me. I don’t even feel like me. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Mired in the same set of obstacles that I was just days before, I now clearly see pathways through them. God hasn’t removed them; He just removed their dominance over my life, and my husband’s asking why I’m peaceful and calm.

Blame and stress have been a problem for me. I didn’t realize

how much, and how angry I was, whether I expressed it or not. It consumed me at times. I had tried the “don’t-sweat-the-small-stuff” approach, a little yoga, some positive affirmations — all that lasts like two hours. But now, it’s like a light switch turned it all off. It just seems so pointless and damaging to me now to point fingers and be angry when things don’t work out as planned.

Oh, and then this ... I want to lose weight. Three weeks ago I prayed for willpower to stick with my diet. Now, though, it’s a different prayer. Now I pray that God will let that happen while simultaneously strengthening me against my own vanity.

See, it’s okay to feel happier and healthier — it’s not

okay to get full of myself or to start relying on the opinions of other people, wanting to be witnessed by other people and not being satisfied with God as my witness. But there’s also another level — something I’ve been very guilty of in the past: feeding my vanity by inviting the lust of others. Sounds heavy-duty when it’s phrased that way, but that’s pretty much what it comes down to, isn’t it? I wanted to know I’ve still “got it” by making sure I can still turn the head of an old boyfriend. And this is doubly sinful, because I’m sinning myself, and also enticing another to sin along with me, even if it’s just in thought.

It’s really hard for me to believe that this is me saying all this stuff. I have lived most of my 43 years as such a godless skeptic, and if there were any way to explain this as something other than God acting directly in my life, I’d be the first one to jump all over it. But I can’t deny my own experience.

I am deeply humbled by the vastness of what I don’t know or understand. I’m certain that our family’s daily stresses will not stop — they’ll just change — and that more serious trials, temptations, and tests of faith are sure to come, but for now I’m really soaking up a new joy I’ve never experienced before. Wanting to live in a way that glorifies Him and follows His will is really what I need to start listening to and asking for right now.

I can see that God has clearly been at work in my life, but he’s used Ben Feldott and Cape Cod Church as part of his plan to lead me to the greatest choice I have ever and will ever make in my life. I’m deeply, deeply grateful for that and really want you to know.

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