

# BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

DECEMBER 2012 | VOL. 63 NO. 4



## INSIDE

CELEBRATING MORE THAN JESUS' BIRTH p. 8

ORDINARY PEOPLE WILLING TO BE USED p. 13

JESUS MARRIED? ARTIFACT VS BIBLE p. 30



FEBRUARY  
BBFI  
NATIONAL  
MEETING

18-20 SHILOH HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH  
KENNESAW, GEORGIA

ENDEAVORING

TO KEEP THE

UNITY

OF  
THE  
SPIRIT

IN THE  
BOND OF

PEACE



Vic Bledsoe  
Pastor

### It is our privilege to host the winter meeting of the BBFI!

Someone has said that, by air, Atlanta is within two hours of over one-third of the nation. We hope you will make plans to be with us in February of 2013. Our theme is "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It is an urgent work, and it is the exertion of the soul to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Through...

- **Lowliness**, i.e., humility. The Romans and Greeks had no word for humility, it is distinctively a Christian virtue. In fact, when used to describe believers this term was used in a derogatory way. Humility described a weak person. Someone has said, "that humility is such a slippery creature so that when you think you have it you do not."
- **Meekness** is gentleness; angry at the right time and not angry at the wrong time. (I am frequently getting angry at the wrong time and I fail to get angry at the right time.)
- **Longsuffering** describes the persistence of an individual who has as his primary goal, the unity of the Spirit. Patience with men. Lightfoot says, "It is the spirit which refuses to retaliate."
- **Love** is charity. True charity is giving and expecting nothing in return. Our goal in meeting together is simple and not pretentious – endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We look forward to seeing you in Atlanta!

Shiloh Hills Baptist Church • 75 Hawkins Store Rd. NE • Kennesaw, Georgia 30144  
(770) 926-7729 • [www.shilohhills.com](http://www.shilohhills.com)

## LODGING

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Residence Inn Atlanta  
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Homewood Suites by Hilton  
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(678) 354-2800

Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta NW  
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(678) 322-1140

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Woodstock, GA  
(770) 592-2323

Hampton Inn Atlanta-  
Kennesaw Town Center  
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(770) 426-0017

Comfort Inn - Kennesaw  
2489 Busbee Drive NW  
(678) 275-2090

Fairfield Inn - Kennesaw  
3425 George Busbee Parkway  
(770) 427-9700



ON THE TABLE

## Trouble

by Keith Bassham | Editor

I have lamented more than once in this column the requirements and limitations of a monthly publishing schedule in the matter of current news. Since we last went to the printer's, we have witnessed a massive storm, a dramatic election, and a new spate of scandals among the higher-ups in government. All three will have repercussions for months, years even. It remains our job to work through new situations, but remember to anchor ourselves to the Word and constantly adjust to the revealed mind of God even more thoroughly than we adjust to new circumstances.

In that light, we believers find we have much in common with our spiritual ancestors who awaited the fulfillment of God's promise. I'll not claim that America has a covenant relationship with God as a nation. We do not live in a modern-day holy land, despite what some of our more religious forefathers may have believed in the early days of the nation's founding. I've been saying for some time that believers most anywhere in the world today, even in our nation, have much more in common with Daniel in Babylon or Paul in Athens. Even faithful Israelites in and around first-century Israel had become ersatz foreigners in their own land, oppressed spiritually by a religion with practices gone off the rails, and oppressed politically by a civil power with an official no-truly-serious-observation-of-Yahweh-allowed policy. Sound familiar?

In my feature article this month, I mention the dark and troubled times represented by the phrase, "the days of Herod the king." The fact is Golden Ages are not the norm. Most of human history is characterized by troubled times, and times with less trouble. And of course times with more trouble. The Christian vocation remains constant throughout storms, electoral turmoil, and scandals — we are to help those who are stricken, do what we can to preserve morals, and live lives against the current waves of unfaithfulness. If the recent news tells us anything, it tells us there is more work for Christians than ever before. In that sense, we will never be out of a job.

This time of year is important to the *Tribune*. As we look forward to our midwinter meeting in Atlanta, we are also preparing to receive the February Tribune Offering. We have managed to keep our costs as low as possible, but struggling churches and companies with flagging advertising budgets have meant our revenues are down as well. Not quite a disaster — more a storm than a hurricane — but it is necessary to remind our subscribers and contributors that neglecting the *Tribune* is a sure way to put us on that disaster path. We want to raise \$125,000 in the Tribune Offering. We have done that and more several times, and the value we bring to our Fellowship is surely worth much more than that, so help us help you by participating in the February Tribune Offering.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

*Keith Bassham*

BAPTIST BIBLE  
TRIBUNE

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Celebrate!

*There is more to celebrate than the Savior's birth*

8

Ordinary people

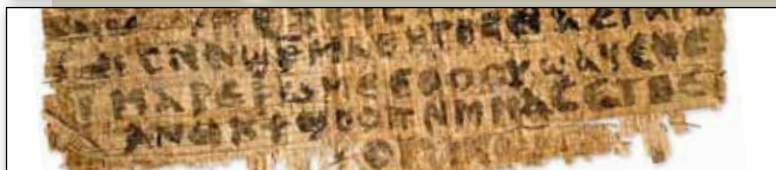
*When you think God cannot use you, Heaven may be laughing*

13

Was Jesus married?

*The latest attempt to "scandalize" the Bible fizzles under scrutiny*

30



## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

BBFI Departments	4
Digressions - <i>News and views</i>	6
Baptist History - <i>A Hindu widow</i>	18
Urban Current - <i>O Jerusalem</i>	19
School News	20
Missionary Letters	21
Fellowship News	24
AfterWords - <i>Was Jesus married?</i>	30

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## PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

# The silent hero of Christmas



by Linzy Slayden | President | BBFI

A worried mother phoned the church office on the afternoon of the Annual Sunday school Christmas program. She was so sorry to say that her son, who was playing the role of Joseph in the nativity scene, had a cold and was in bed on doctor's orders. "Well, it's too late to get another Joseph now," the teacher said, "we'll just write him out of the script." They did, and the sad thing is, no one missed him.

Joseph really is the forgotten man at the manger. In a well-known hymnbook containing 11 Christmas carols, there was not one reference to Joseph in their 41 verses. We sing of the virgin mother and child, angels from the realms of glory, shepherds in the fields, and kings from the orient, but nothing of Joseph. We know he was a common man who did not add much excitement to the scene, but to me, Joseph is the silent hero of Christmas.

We do know he was a devout man of faith in and obedience to God. Scripture doesn't record any words from the mouth of Joseph, but what we know of his life speaks volumes.

The first glimpse we have is in Matthew 1:19 when he discovers Mary's pregnant condition. He had no desire to publicly humiliate her so he was going to sever their relationship privately. There is no angry outburst and no irrational impulse. Before jumping into action, he thinks about what he should do. While he is thinking, the angel speaks to him. Joseph repeatedly exhibits a sensitivity and obedience to God's directions. When God revealed His eternal purpose, Joseph gladly became Mary's husband.

Several passages describe Joseph getting out of bed and immediately following the instructions given to him by God. There was no room for question or debate in Joseph's obedient faith.

Since no words of Joseph are left to us, it is easy to overlook the quality of his life as an example. There are very few messages about such a central figure in the Christmas account. And little is said regarding his influence in the life of and growth of the Lord.

While we proclaim the humanity of Christ we often tiptoe around it. Yet if we believe that Christ was fully human, we must believe that His human father had an impact on his development. Through the account of young Jesus at the Temple we find both Mary and Joseph involved in the spiritual training of their son. Joseph led his family in being faithful to God's house.

By heritage, Joseph was in the royal line of David. The Scripture tells us that Joseph was known in the community as a just man. Our legacy from Joseph is not what he said but in what he did. His life is the most vocal part about him.

He may be described as ordinary to some, but I am so glad God cares about ordinary people. One of the gifts of Christmas is to be reminded that with God everybody is special.

## WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

# World Mission Service Center



by Jon Konnerup | Mission Director | BBFI

The BBFI Mission Office, founded in 1950, serves as the World Mission Service Center for BBFI churches and their missionaries. One of our primary responsibilities is to administrate the mission policies of the BBFI — set forth by pastors who joined together with a vision to establish a mission-focused service center that would provide services and support for BBFI missionaries and churches, yet recognize the sending church as the missionary's final authority and biblical sending agency.

Most pastors appreciate the process our missionaries go through to become partners with BBFI churches. It is not a perfect process, but it assures the supporting pastor that the missionaries have met certain doctrinal, educational, practical, and other requirements.

Following are some of the services we provide for missionaries sent out by BBFI Fellowship churches:

**Processing of Funds** — 100% of what is sent for a missionary is given to the missionary. Monthly statements and annual reports are provided.

**Financial Services** include assistance with any type of foreign government requirements, bank letters of credit, letters of guarantee, loans for vehicles, emergencies, and foreign churches, retirement options from support and assistance with quarterly estimated tax payments.

**Personal Benefits** including worldwide medical coverage including evacuation for medical emergencies, life insurance, and a disability program.

**Training/Networking** through our candidate school and annual missionary family reunion.

**Website Services** such as access to current and archived statements and reports, and data that can be exported.

We strive to efficiently and effectively serve your missionaries every day as the bridge between those who give and those who go.

The operational cost for each missionary contribution we process is approximately \$3.50. We encourage each church or donor to contribute a minimum of this amount every month for each missionary they support. For example, if a church supports 10 missionaries through the BBFI, a \$35 monthly gift to the Mission Office helps cover these operational expenses.

Each Mission Office director is a former missionary. They are able to answer questions concerning the needs of our missionaries, their fields, processing of funds, or the internal workings of the BBFI Mission Office. They are available to speak in mission conferences or to preach in special services.

Consider what the BBFI World Mission Service Center has to offer as you choose a service center for your missionaries.

# January Church Planter's School in San Antonio



by Jason Todd | Assistant Director | NCPO

A question I get asked a lot as I travel around for the National Church Planting Office is, "When and where is the next Church Planter's School and what is it?"

The NCPO has held church planting schools every year since its inception in 2005. Even though a lot of the material that is presented has stayed the same, each school is different. Each school is held in a different region of the country and is usually hosted by one of our BBFI churches. We also usually have a wide variety of church planters that attend the school. Some of them come to be approved as a BBFI church planter, while others come for just the training. It has been our pleasure to see God grow and use these great men of God over the last seven years.

I am excited about our next Church Planter's School that will be held in conjunction with the Texas State Fellowship Meeting at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk in San Antonio, TX. The school will start Monday afternoon January 21 and end Friday afternoon January 25. We will have our usual lineup of presenters, including John Arnold of Library Baptist Church in Finleyville, PA, Duke Hergatt of Temple Baptist Church in Waterford, NY, Dan Lamb of Bible Baptist Church in Hillsboro, OH, Mark Milioni, president of Baptist Bible College, and Keith Bassham, editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune*. We will also have Kelly McInerney of Bible Baptist Church in Wilmington, OH, presenting along with some of the local church planters and pastors.

We will be covering a lot of different subjects that pertain to church planting including, but not limited to, prayer, personal life, finances, start-up/launch, church plant ministry, marketing/branding, and the history and philosophy of the Baptist Bible Fellowship. If you are interested in church planting or maybe know someone who is interested in church planting, let me encourage you to consider attending this Church Planter's School. We also encourage those who attend to bring their wives with them, as we will have child-care available, if needed. You can get more information about this upcoming school by calling the NCPO at (417) 536-8826 or email at [office@bbfncpo.com](mailto:office@bbfncpo.com). You can also download a church planter's application for approval at [www.bbfncpo.com](http://www.bbfncpo.com).

I also want to encourage pastors to consider joining a few other churches who have already offered to financially sponsor a church planter who is coming to the school, or maybe you would consider sending one or two of your staff members.

The best way to find out what is going on at the NCPO Church Planter's School is to come see for yourself. It will be worth your time and money! The last thing I ask is for you to pray for our school. Ask that God would continue to send us those that He has called to plant churches in the U.S.

## FEBRUARY TRIBUNE OFFERING

Strength  
COLLEGES  
Support  
CHURCH PLANTING  
Structure  
WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

When you give to the 2013 February Tribune Offering, you are doing more than just helping pay for paper and ink.

The *Tribune* strengthens our pastors and laypeople through challenging and encouraging feature articles.

By highlighting church planters and missionaries alongside local church ministries, the *Tribune* supports and promotes the endeavors of the BBFI.

In an age where bold facades often mask questionable entities, the *Tribune* provides a sense of structure and showcases the BBFI as grounded and organized when introduced to those outside of our Fellowship.

That is what we are doing by sharing the good news of what God is doing in the BBFI, and your support will help us continue to do so.





# DIGRESSIONS

Digressions incontestably are the sunshine; they are the life, the soul of reading.

-Laurence Sterne

## Billy Graham turns 94, grandson says he's normal

On the occasion of Billy Graham's birthday, his grandson wrote this near the end of his tribute: "[He's] normal. He gets mad; he gets sad; he's fun to be around. His favorite restaurant is Morrison's Cafeteria. His favorite movie is Crocodile Dundee. His favorite drink is orange juice and he loves catfish. He's just another man with all of the limitations and idiosyncrasies that the rest of us have — and I love him for it!"

Source: [www.outofur.com](http://www.outofur.com)

## Social media use becoming a hard habit to break

A new study suggests that social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter are more difficult to resist than cigarettes or alcohol. Researchers at University of Chicago's Booth School of Business studied impulse control in 205 Germans ages 18 to 88. They were polled, via Blackberry phones, many times per day for a seven-day period. The researchers asked participants if they were currently experiencing an episode of "desire." This could be desire for sex, an object, a cigarette, a drink, a peek at your Twitter feed, anything. The participants then rated their desire from "mild" to "irresistible."

The researchers recorded 7,827 "desire episodes," then analyzed which forms of desire individuals initially resisted but ultimately gave in to. Checking social media ranked higher than having a smoke or a drink as a "self-control failure."

Source: [www.BGR.com](http://www.BGR.com), Kelly Bourdet on [www.Motherboard.vice.com](http://www.Motherboard.vice.com)

## Three more states legalize same-sex marriage

Voters in Washington, Maryland, and Maine approved measures allowing same sex marriage in the national election held November 6, while Minnesota voters rejected a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. Six other states (New York, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont) and the District of Columbia have allowed same-sex marriage based on legislation or court rulings, but Washington, Maryland, and Maine are the first to approve the measures by public vote.

## LSU sports department altered photo to remove crosses worn by students

In a crowd photo released by the LSU sports department following the October 20 game against South Carolina, some fans noticed that something was missing. Members of the "Painted Posse", a group of Christian students who paint the crosses on their bodies as part of their gameday "attire" realized that the crosses had been removed from the photograph. In an effort to maintain a Christ-like response, the



Posse publicly forgave the university and urged everyone to put the incident to rest.

When contacted by local and national media, LSU spokesman Herb Vincent claimed they altered the photo so as not to offend anyone. "We don't want to imply we are making any religious or political statements, so we airbrushed it out."

Source: [www.bpsports.net](http://www.bpsports.net), Baptist Press, by Mark Hunter

## Barna survey data shows decline in U.S. Bible reading/belief

A new Barna survey for the American Bible Society shows 47% of adults in the U.S. believe the Bible has too little influence in society today; 16% believe it has too much influence.

However, about half the population also sees little difference between the Bible and other religious texts: 46% believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon are different expressions of the same spiritual truths.

The number of people who actually read the Bible has declined: 55% read the Bible to be closer to God, down from 64% in 2011.

Older people are more likely than younger adults to hold the Bible in high regard.

**"The Bible contains everything a person needs to know about living a meaningful life."**

AGREE

**62%** of seniors (over age 65)

**54%** of boomers (age 47-65)

**44%** of busters (age 28-46)

**34%** of millennials (age 18-27)

Source: [christianitytoday.com](http://christianitytoday.com)



## Magnificent Volumes for College Library

Dr. A. Reilly Copeland, pastor Tabernacle Baptist church, Waco, Texas, has presented the Library of Baptist Bible College with two of the greatest biographies ever written in the American language, and with one of the finest works on American history that has been produced.

The biographies are the four great volumes, "R. E. Lee," the Pulitzer Prize Edition, by Douglas Southall Freeman, and the Sangamon Edition of Carl Sandburg's five volumes of "Abraham Lincoln." The historical work is the six splendid volumes of James Thruslow Adams' "The March of Democracy."

These volumes, added to the thousands already on the shelves of the Library of Baptist Bible College, make this library one of the largest and best of any Bible College in the United States. The Library is a gift from Dr. Copeland. He is building it up month by month. He states that before he is through the Library of Baptist Bible College will be one of the best of any Bible college or institute in the United States.

### 37 ADDITIONS TO WICHITA FALLS' BETHEL CHURCH BY ELI HARJU

The Bethel Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Tex., is very much in business for God. A recent revival meeting at which Bro. Loys Vess of Denton was the evangelist, proved to be highly profitable in the matter of souls saved and Christians being prepared for a richer and fuller service. The fact that God has His seal of approval on the meetings can be seen by the results, which totaled 37 additions to the church. But these cold, calculated figures can't begin to tell the entire story of the meeting. The accountant's pencil and the reporter's pen are far too inadequate when it comes to recording the work of the Holy Spirit. But, from the pastor's report as well as from the attitude of the membership, it seems that a previously unified church has been cemented even more in the spirit of oneness for the cause of Christ.

A quartet of young men from the Baptist Bible College, Dennis Carlson, Julius Blasz, Don McSpadden and Bob Mason, who call themselves the "Gospel Ambassadors," were a blessing and received a blessing as they helped close out the revival on Sunday, Nov. 16. This was also the 3rd anniversary service for the Wichita Falls ministry of Bro. Stanford Kruse. The gentleman returned to the college with enthusiastic praise for the work of Bro. Kruse and his assistant Bro. Bill Troutman.

The Lord gave His sanction to the ministry of Bro. Kruse by giving him 13 souls to respond to the invitation on Sunday morning. Your reporter spoke Sunday evening, and, having felt the pulse of the congregation, he reports a healthy church with an attitude of, "you ain't seen nothing yet."

## In the NEWS of the WEEK

Evangelist C. N. Taylor of Somerset, Ky., has closed a 12-day series of evangelistic meetings with Bible Baptist church, Springfield, Mo., Faye Blakey, pastor. There were 23 additions to the church, 12 of them by baptism.

Evangelist Taylor was born in Somerset in 1915. He was graduated from the Somerset high school in 1933. Leaving high school after a highly publicized athletic career, he enlisted in the C. C. C. Camp, spending eight months in the mountains of California. Returning to Cincinnati, Ohio, he accepted a job with the Crosley Radio Corp., then went into the wholesale bread and bakery business with Wonder Bread and Hostess Cake, later becoming sales manager for Rainbo Baking Company in Lexington, Ky. During the second World War he spent three years in the navy as Spec. (A) 1st. Class Petty Officer. While stationed in Bainbridge, Md., he met Mrs. Taylor in Lancaster, Pa. They have two children, Spencer, 5, and Barbara Ann, 3.

After the war he returned to Cincinnati and went into the whiskey business in Covington, Ky., later buying another store in Walton, Ky., where he was saved. After conversion Taylor was called by God to preach the Gospel. He attended Tennessee Temple Bible School in Chattanooga. He was graduated from the Bible school as an outstanding student, being the only Bible School student to ever be elected chaplain for all three schools, Bible, College and Seminary. In his first six months in Bible school in the Evangelism class he memorized and could locate over 350 passages of Scripture. While in school at Chattanooga he founded and pastored the Duncan Park Baptist church.

Taylor now has a daily 30-minute broadcast over WSFC, Somerset, Ky. He has a tent, given to him by his radio audience, which he uses during the warm weather.

Taylor has held revivals in Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky. He held a revival for Dr. Ernest Salome, Tabernacle Baptist church. This church has a membership of over 4500. He has held revivals in the Second Baptist church, Macon Georgia.

His address is Box 713, Somerset, Kentucky.

The Sunday school of Bible Baptist church, Iola, Kas., has increased from 25 to 43 in five Sundays. A series of evangelistic meetings have been held there by Rev. Harold Elder of Pittsburg, Kas., and Rev. W. R. Wambsgans of Toronto, the former doing the preaching and the latter conducting the singing. Mr. Elder has been unanimously called as pastor of the church and Mr. Wambsgans has been called as his associate. Following the revival, the church raised \$1,500 for a new building.

Division Street Baptist church, Springfield, Tate Roberts, pastor, has had 16 additions to the church during the past two Sundays.

Fundamental Baptist church, Sidney, Ohio, William Hovestreydt, pastor, has experienced a powerful series of evangelistic meetings which were conducted by Russell

Singleton, pastor Baptist Tabernacle of Norwood, Ohio. There were 14 additions to the church during the 6-day campaign. The meetings were held in the Sidney armory. Following the meeting the pastor baptized 10 people in the cold waters of a creek on the farm of one of the deacons of the church. There have been nine additions to the church since the campaign by Singleton. The Sunday school attendance is the largest in the history of the church, and the church has raised \$500 on a new building, for which ground has already been broken on Dixie highway. In January the Sidney church will send its first student to Baptist Bible College. They are Mr. and Mrs. Lowell Simes, two of the church's teachers.

Rev. G. E. Hodges, Pastor  
Beaver Street Baptist Church  
2591 W. Beaver Street  
Jacksonville 4, Florida  
Dear Brother Hodges:

Well, we are happy to report a forward movement in every phase of the work since the revival.

We have had an increase in Sunday school each Sunday and the offerings in like manner, in fact, last Sunday our regular offerings, without any special emphasis totaled \$2290.88.

We have a goal set in Sunday school for the 14th of December and if our attendance continues to increase, I feel sure that we will have that many more. The goal is 1999. Last week we had 180 to come for the visitation. There is also a wonderful spirit among the people. The revival and the preaching which you did certainly added a great deal to the unity of our church.

It is interesting to see so many of the new converts that came during the revival and taking such an active part in the church activities.

George, our people really enjoyed your ministry and we certainly thank God for the contribution that you have made to the Lord's work in our church.

Give our regards to the family and church.

Sincerely,

JOHN W. RAWLINGS, Pastor  
Lockland Baptist Church  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Bert Homer, pastor Central Baptist church, Anthony, Kas., held a 12-day meeting with Sun City Baptist church, Sun City, Kas., Harry A. Hayes, pastor. Nine people made public professions of faith in Christ, five of them uniting with the church by baptism, which made a total of 29 that have made professions of faith in Christ and united with the church during 1952. During the past year Sun City church has had many improvements. They have added a new room to the parsonage; built a new cement block garage, 16 ft. by 24 ft., and installed a propane furnace in the basement, which cost \$1036.33. And the church has an indebtedness of only \$334.33!

The pew business at Castleberry

## Research moves toward 3-parent children

New research in which scientists created embryos with genes from two women and a man means three-parent children are one step nearer, bioethics specialist Wesley Smith said.

Researchers at Oregon Health & Sciences University reported the results October 25 in the journal *Nature*, saying the method could keep children from inheriting incurable diseases that include such symptoms as dementia and blindness, according to the Associated Press.

"[P]reventing illness is just the key that opens the door to many of the Brave New World technologies," Smith blogged at National Review Online.

"Eventually — given the way things go these days — if the procedure ever becomes doable, it will go quickly from the 'medical' to the 'consumerist,' e.g., facilitating lifestyle choices and personal preferences. That's what happened with [in vitro fertilization], after all, which is no longer restricted to treating the infertile. Indeed, if we ever normalize polyamory, one could see the technique as a way for three partners to have biologically related children."

While the scientists said they do not intend to produce children from the embryos, the embryos actually are human beings in their earliest stages.

"Certainly, new human organisms were [made] — and as an experiment," Smith wrote. "That is a big moral deal."

The technique involves taking nucleus DNA from a female patient to replace the nucleus DNA from a donor who has healthy mitochondrial DNA, AP reported. About one in 5,000 babies inherits a disease resulting from defective mitochondrial DNA.

The Oregon scientists transplanted DNA into 64 unfertilized eggs from healthy women and produced 13 embryos that developed after fertilization, according to AP.

Source: www.bpnnews.net

ENCOURAGE  
INTERCESS  
LOVE  
GOSPEL  
PRAYER

CELEBRATE!

by Kevin Carson  
Pastor of Sunrise Baptist Church  
Ozark, MO

LIGHT  
HOPE  
SALVATION  
FELLOWSHIP  
FORGIVENESS

THERE IS MORE TO  
CELEBRATE THAN  
THE SAVIOR'S BIRTH  
AT CHRISTMAS



# MENTION

## “Jesus is the reason for the season.”

You’ve heard it, read it, maybe you even posted or tweeted it. The concern over keeping Christ in CHRISTmas is not new; there are hints of the dilemma as far back as the mid-60s. Who can forget Charlie’s angst at Snoopy and the other children, along with Linus’s recitation of Luke 2:8-14, in *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, which first aired December 9, 1965. For years Americans have struggled to stay focused on what truly matters in celebrating Christmas versus getting caught up in the commercialism of it. In fact, this year the average American is expected to spend \$700 on Christmas gifts and other goodies — that’s more than \$465 billion.

For some of us, we again will seek to help keep our minds focused on Jesus’ birth this year. We will help remind our children, grandchildren, and others that Jesus is the example of the ultimate Gift-giver. As we have heard in the past, we also may say, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Possibly, we will even strive to remind neighbors by including a manger scene out in the yard, or by wearing buttons, or by using a bumper sticker that reminds others of Jesus.

For so many of us, it is easy to be distracted during the Christmas season. Is that saying it too lightly? There are gifts to buy, activities to attend, rehearsals to make, presentations to give, meals to prepare, people to see, miles to

travel, and the list goes on. Although there are so many temptations in the Christmas season to be distracted by, the simple reality for all of us does not change: Christmas is about Jesus. So are Christmas Eve, New Year’s, and President’s Day. Every day is about Jesus — His birth, life, death, resurrection, and continuing ministry. As you celebrate Christmas this year by celebrating Jesus Christ our Savior, consider the following thoughts to help inform your celebration and the celebration you have with others.

### ENJOY YOUR DAY — JESUS CARES!

Did I mention that Christmas can be full of pressure? I’ll spare you the list again; however, there are many concerns and cares packed in the few short days between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Allow this thought to encourage you during your day: Jesus cares.

I recently enjoyed this surprising thought while talking with my seven-year-old. His assignment was to present his favorite Bible verse to his class and tell why it is his favorite. When I asked him about it at supper, he explained that his favorite was John 11:35, “Jesus wept.” I could see very quickly why he chose this verse — it is the shortest in the Bible! So, I asked him why that verse was important. He admitted that it was just because it was the shortest. I took time then to explain to him the rest of the story.

Lazarus’ sisters send a message to Jesus that Lazarus is sick. When Jesus hears of the sickness, He responds, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (11:4). He then proceeds to wait two days before leaving to see Mary and Martha. He explains it to the disciples when he says, “Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe” (v. 15).

He arrives. Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. Martha meets him on the way and Jesus talks with her. Martha then leaves to get Mary and they both return. Jesus’ response is two-fold. He is angry because all that are present mourn, as if the resurrection was not

assured. He also cries. He sees the deep grief of Mary and Martha, their faith in what He could have done if He had been present, and the general unbelief of the crowd. The Jews, however, misunderstand His response and Jesus again is grieved by the general unbelief and misunderstanding of the crowd.

After praying, Jesus then raises Lazarus back to life. John records the scene: “And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, ‘Loose him, and let him go’” (11:43-44).

First, Jesus demonstrates His love and care, even when we as His people do not understand or, at times, even believe. He sees His two heartbroken friends who love Him. Jesus cares that they hurt and mourn with a general sense of unbelief. So Jesus cries. Interesting response, isn’t it? John makes it clear that Jesus had already determined to raise Lazarus from death. “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep” (11:11). So, the end of this story is already known to Jesus. He understands better than anyone present that this is getting ready to change from a funeral to a party. Yet, Jesus still hurt because His friends hurt and were weak in faith. The good news for us is that Jesus is no different today. Friends, Jesus cares.

Jesus also points his friends to the truth of the gospel. He shares with Martha initially, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (11:25-26). Even before His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus shares with Martha the ultimate hope each person has, regardless of one’s pressures and hardships. In Jesus, we live. In your current struggle this season, you may be questioning how much Jesus loves and cares for you. My friend, you do not need to look any further than the cross of Jesus Christ to be encouraged by the love and care of Jesus.

The third important way we are reminded

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of Jesus' care and concern flows from His prayer to God the Father. He prays, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always ..." (11:41-42). In His prayer, we are reminded of Jesus' own communion within the Trinity. The public prayer that Jesus prays here is for Mary, Martha, and the crowd's benefit — and ultimately ours — to get a glimpse of the intimacy of the relationship between God the Father and Jesus. We are reminded today that we enjoy a relationship with Jesus who cares and is concerned for us. But it doesn't end there — Jesus communicates that care and concern with the Father in perfect communion in the Trinity.

Friends, regardless of what pressure you face today or this Christmas season, remember that Jesus cares. The cross is a permanent reminder set in the ages of history as to the care and concern that Jesus has for you. He does not consider your pressures without care. Jesus offers us help in our suffering (Hebrews 2:18).

Jesus welcomes you to bring your concerns, fears, questions, and heaviness to Him today in order that you will receive both mercy and grace (Hebrews 4:15-16). In the middle of your chaos today, take a minute to reflect on the wonderful love and care that Jesus has for you.

### GOOD NEWS — JESUS SAVES!

As you celebrate Christmas this year by celebrating Jesus Christ our Savior, consider also that Jesus' story includes more than just His birth and manger. Jesus came with a specific purpose — with you in mind, even. John writes, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (3:17). Jesus was born that night in Bethlehem as part of God's plan to save you and anyone else who puts faith in Him.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin, comes to Jesus by night to ask some questions regarding what Jesus

believed. Jesus initially tells him that he must be born again. However, Nicodemus does not understand what Jesus is saying. Jesus graciously explains that Nicodemus' problem — and the problem of all those who do not enjoy a relationship with God in Christ — is that he does not believe. In reference to the cross, Jesus says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (3:14-15). The key to Jesus' statement is that one must believe in him, that is, in Jesus for eternal life. It is Jesus, the one born in a manger, the one whose birth we celebrate, it is he that brings salvation to people.

John reminds us of the greatest gift ever given — God's only begotten Son (3:16). God, in unequalled, unparalleled, and undeserved love, chose to send His Son to earth to allow for the salvation of mankind. John makes it clear how incredible this truly is and how worthy of our consideration and celebration He is — God loves the world and makes salvation possible for them. It is this same world that hates Jesus, rejects him, and ridicules him. It is to this world that God offers eternal life to anyone and





everyone who believes: “that the world through Him might be saved” (3:17).

This Christmas season, strive to not lose the big idea of our celebration — Jesus saves! Jesus came as light into a dark world that loves darkness (3:19-21). Frustration is easy for the believer in Christ when the world focuses its attention on Santa, decorations, gift giving, and the holiday season without reference to Christ. Instead of frustration, we can allow the lack of attention on Christ to help sharpen our focus on the need of the world to be saved. When the lines are long and the parking lots are crammed, take advantage of those moments to be reminded of how deep, wide, and great God’s love is for us; then, look around in mercy recognizing the great need of those around us of the person and work we celebrate — Jesus saves!

#### **FRESH HOPE – JESUS FORGIVES!**

The Christmas festivities often bring us around so many people. There are work parties, church functions, extended family gatherings, community events, and so much more. It is in some of these moments that we are faced with the worst inside us and others — sometimes

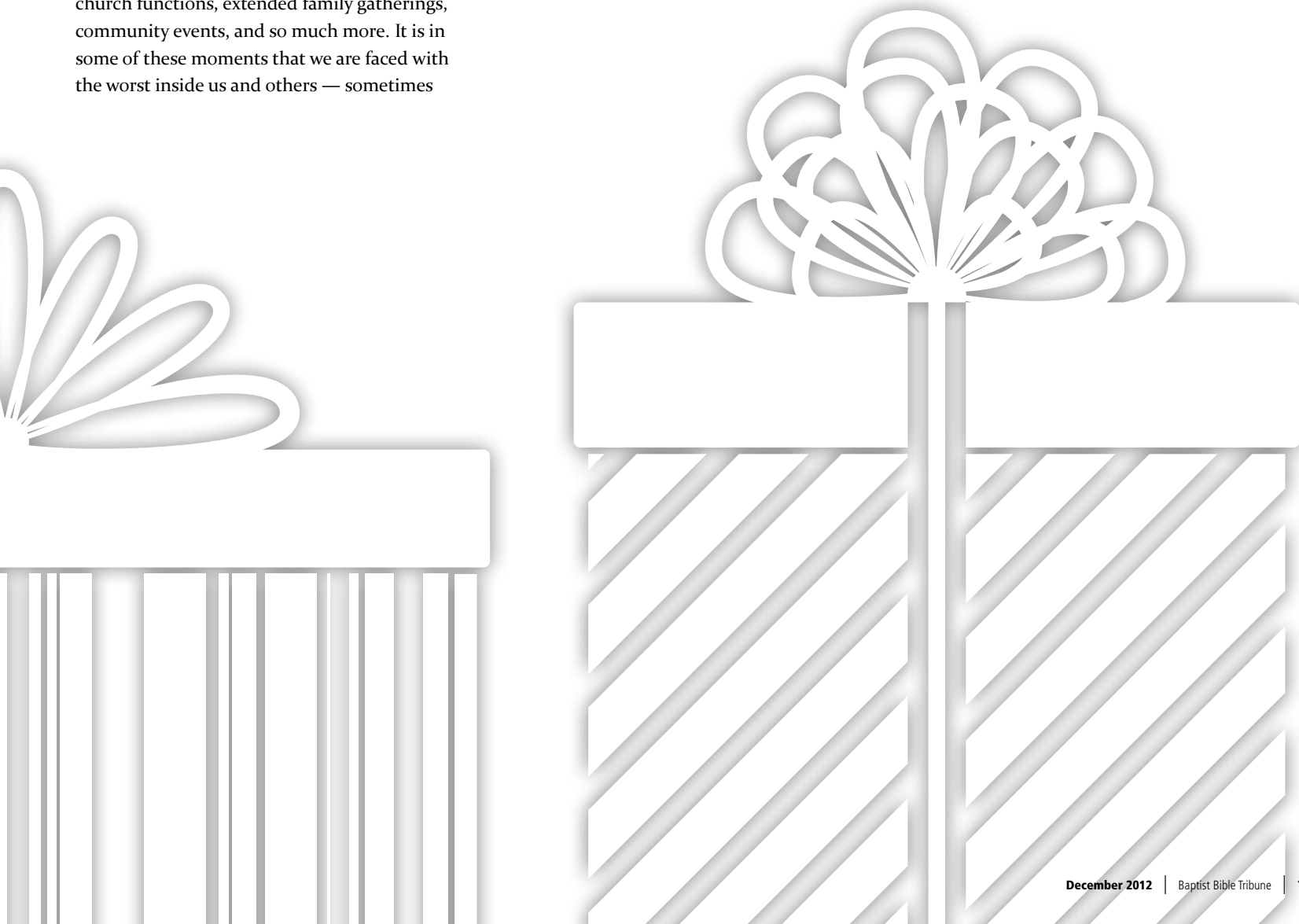
it even slips out so it is on the outside as well! Maybe it is a misplaced compliment, a poorly worded comment about holiday weight, a former spouse, an unwise uncle, or on and on we could go — whatever or whoever it is that provides for us the opportunity for temptation, we take the bait and choose to grumble or complain or judge or become enraged or gossip or ... The very thing we know that dishonors God, minimizes the birth we celebrate, grieves the Spirit, and frustrates the work of grace in our lives, that is what we do. Now what? We remember that the one we celebrate, our Savior Jesus Christ, also brings fresh hope — Jesus forgives!

In 1 John, he reminds us of another reason we celebrate Jesus: we enjoy fellowship with God the Father and His son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). John describes us as believers who walk in the light as those who benefit from the cleansing of sin by the blood of Jesus (1:7). Our fellowship with God is guaranteed through the

purification from sin through Christ. In fact, John makes it clear that forgiveness is always available. John writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). This is certainly worth celebrating at Christmas.

Christmas provides us unprecedented opportunities to focus on the forgiveness we have in Christ. It is so sad though when a Christian under conviction of sin fails to enjoy the Christmas season, or even worse, allows a moment of sin to go without confession and repentance. This is where John’s words are so helpful to us. We have the privilege to turn to God and the forgiveness promised through Jesus’ blood to ask for forgiveness of sin.

God desires for you to enjoy Him and other believers. Because of that, John promises two outcomes to our confession of sin. First, he promises that God is always faithful and just to forgive. The sin that hinders our



fellowship with God and others is forgiven. Additionally, he promises cleansing from all unrighteousness. The defilement produced by our sin is gone. The impediment of fellowship is cleared away. Where sin and sorrow existed between God, others, and us, they are replaced with the joy of being one in Christ and experiencing the forgiveness of Christ. This Christmas we celebrate the work of Christ — Jesus forgives!

### CONSTANT ENCOURAGEMENT — JESUS INTERCEDES!

At times the Christmas season can bring an unusual sense of down-ness and discouragement. Possibly, it is a co-worker describing all the wonderful gifts he is going to buy for his children when you know that you can't. Possibly, it is the precarious health of a family member where you wonder if you have seen the last Christmas with this person. Possibly, it is a song or movie that reminds you of past Christmases with former relationships and seemingly better times. Possibly, it is being separated from your family by miles and circumstances. Maybe, it is a combination of these plus so many other life situations that can leave us discouraged at Christmas. Regardless of where we are or what is going on, John encourages us — Jesus intercedes!

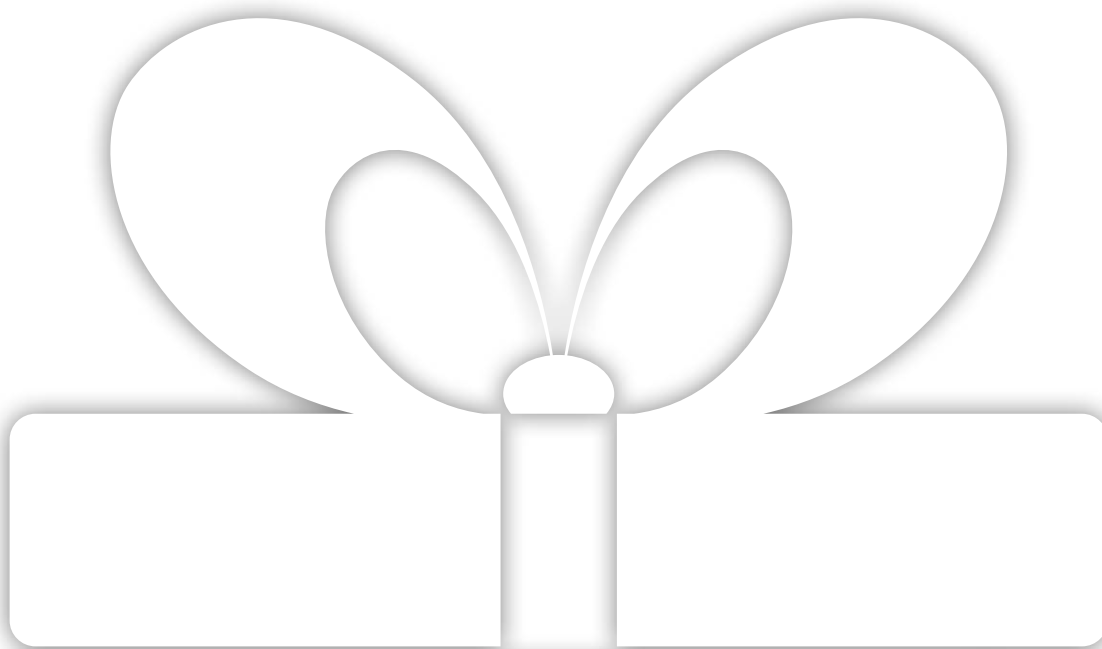
Regardless of how we feel or why we feel a certain way, John makes our day sweeter. He writes to us so that we will not sin. Surprisingly and refreshingly to our ears, he continues, “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And He is the propitiation for our sins ...” (1 John 2:1-2). This is more of the good news we can celebrate this season: the wonderful work of Jesus on our behalf — Jesus intercedes for us. John calls Jesus our *paraclete*, functioning in Heaven as our advocate — speaking on our behalf before God the Father. The perfect righteous One ministers on our account — the righteous for the unrighteous.

John explains what makes Jesus uniquely qualified to intercede with God for us. Jesus is the wrath-bearing sacrifice. There are two incredible implications of this. First, in the moments when we are tempted to feel unusually down and disheartened, we can remember that Jesus bore God's wrath for our sin, and presently continually intercedes for us before the Father. Again, how sweet, refreshing, and encouraging to contemplate what Christ does for us!

The second implication is of equal significance: Christ bore God's wrath for sin so that we have the privilege and solemn responsibility to share Christ with every person with whom we come in contact. It is necessary to stay focused on and receive encouragement from what Christ did on the cross and provides us now in Heaven. We cannot afford to allow the discouragements from this world to distract us from living joyfully in Christ. When we fail to be encouraged by the grace of the work of Christ, it limits our ability and desire to share

Christ with a lost world that needs salvation. Christmas provides us the opportunity to share the good news of salvation available in Christ to the world; therefore, we do not want to miss it because of a lack of joy and focus — Jesus intercedes!

Regardless of where you are today, what you are doing, what your circumstances are, or the pressures you face this Christmas season, Jesus Christ cares, saves, forgives, and intercedes. This season provides you an opportunity to focus on the gracious birth, life, death, and work of our Savior. The world around you — your family, friends, co-workers, fellow church members, neighbors, and community — needs you focused appropriately on Jesus. The true message and meaning of Christmas is lost in your life and community only if you fail to celebrate Christ in his fullness. May it be our joy and privilege this Christmas season to celebrate and live Christ. Merry Christmas.





# ORDINARY

## WHEN YOU THINK GOD CANNOT USE YOU, HEAVEN MAY BE LAUGHING

*By Keith Bassham*

THERE WAS IN THE DAYS OF HEROD, THE KING OF JUDEA, A CERTAIN PRIEST NAMED ZACHARIAS, OF THE COURSE OF ABIA: AND HIS WIFE WAS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF AARON, AND HER NAME WAS ELISABETH.

AND THEY WERE BOTH RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD, WALKING IN ALL THE COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE LORD BLAMELESS.

AND THEY HAD NO CHILD, BECAUSE THAT ELISABETH WAS BARREN, AND THEY BOTH WERE NOW WELL STRICKEN IN YEARS. LUKE 1:5-7

When I pastored, I always began my Christmas message series with this story. I do it for several reasons. First, it shows the connecting link between the two testaments. Did you know that there is a lot of information about the actual coming of Jesus in the Old

Testament, perhaps as much or even more than in the New? It's true. If you consider all the prophecies, beginning in Genesis 3:15, you will find a good deal of information concerning the appearing of Jesus, and surprisingly little about his birth in the New Testament.

Although two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, of the four describe the birth of Jesus, only one of the epistles mentions it explicitly, Galatians 4:4: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made

# PEOPLE





of a woman, made under the law.” In the Gospels, which are made up of 89 chapters, barely four chapters describe anything that happens in the first 30 years of Jesus’ life. On the other hand, nearly all the Gospels are devoted to the three years of Jesus’ ministry, and about half of that material is focused on the last week of his life, his death, and his resurrection. The epistles are filled with references to his death and resurrection, with bare mention of his birth. Funny, is it not, that Christmas has become such a big Christian festival on that basis.

You see, the burden of the New Testament is not so much the birth of Jesus, but his appearing.

*“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our*

*Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:8-11).*

It is the appearing, all that Jesus did — all his life, all his work, his death, and his resurrection — that the New Testament emphasizes. But, as a matter of course, before Jesus is able to taste death for us, he must come as all humans enter the world, through a birth.

Therefore, the verses before us from the Gospel of Luke help us connect the Testaments, and help to tell us that the One promised in the Old Testament is indeed the One who appears in the New.

And the connecting link is in the person of a man named John, who is to announce the appearing to the world. Mark 1:1 opens with the words: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” And as any good narrative should, the storyline in the following verses tells us about the ministry of John, whom we begin to know as John the Baptist.

Now, you should know that this name, like a lot of religious names, was given him because of what John did. He was not a member of

a Baptist church. He was not the founder of Baptist churches. He was called a Baptist because he baptized. He immersed people in water as a symbol. His message was that people should repent and show their repentance, their new way of life, by being baptized. The theology behind the symbol is given to us in Romans 6, where we are taught that baptism represents a death, burial, and resurrection. Thus, when I baptize, I use the phrase, “Buried in the likeness of his death; raised to walk in newness of life.” Of course, when John was baptizing, the death of Jesus was still yet to come, and after that the full meaning of baptism was filled out, so to speak. Yet, people observed what John did with people in the river with some understanding, and called him John the Baptist.

So this story shows the connecting link between the prophets of the Old Testament and the ministry of Jesus Christ in the New.

The second reason I like this story to build Christmas sermons is it shows the very dark days in which Jesus appeared. “In the days of Herod the king ...” Herod was no real king of

# THE MORE ORDINARY THE LIFE,





Israel. Not like David or Solomon. God did not put Herod on the throne except in the sense that He has a hand in the affairs of humans. Herod wasn't even a true Israelite. His lineage was through Esau, not Jacob. He was, quite frankly, a political appointee. "King" was more an honorary title given to a wicked man. Before his death, Herod managed to outrage all true citizens of Israel with the building of numerous idolatrous temples and by killing off anyone in his family who even remotely threatened his own position.

"In the days of Herod the king," those were dark days. Wicked days. The most awful days imaginable for people of God. Yet it was in those dark days that Jesus came.

The third reason I always liked to begin my Christmas messages with this story is the attractive character of the people involved. Zacharias and Elizabeth are in many ways very common, ordinary people upon whom the most extraordinary things are coming.

Now why would that be of interest? I say it is further evidence of a favorite pattern with God. Doesn't He delight to turn the order of

things upside down? What could be more ludicrous than for God to appear to a peasant girl and announce she would be the bearer of the coming king? What could be more hilarious than Him coming into the world in a stable? As Mary would sing a short time later, when she had fuller knowledge of the place she would occupy in God's plan,

*"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."*

Like Mary, this ordinary couple is about to see God do some extraordinary things through them. You should never feel God is here only for someone else, that you don't matter, or that you're not important enough for God to break into your life. The more ordinary the life, the more room God finds to do His work. Jesus called the unrighteous, rather than the righteous, according to the Bible — there is room to work on them. God loves sinners —

there is room to work on them. He comes to those with humble spirits and contrite hearts because they are not so full of themselves that God has no place to stand in their lives.

How ordinary and easily overlooked are Zacharias and Elizabeth? Think of it in these terms. According to Alfred Edersheim, author of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, there were, at any given time, about 20,000 priests and Levites in Israel to take care of the worship needs of the people. Not all of them lived in Jerusalem. There were 24 courses, or shifts of priests and many lived in the country and came to town only when it was their course, or shift. Those who lived in the country were considered, like today, hicks or bumpkins. The term used to refer to these commuting priests in those days, according to Mr. Edersheim, was "idiot priest," not because they were stupid, but just to differentiate them from the Jerusalem priests who lived and served there all the time and were considered much more important. By contrast, Zacharias was quite ordinary.

Well, not quite. They had no children as



an ordinary family would. Like Abraham and Sarah, they were old people with no children. Elizabeth, in very plain language, is barren, and they are well stricken in years — you have to love the language of the Authorized Version in these early chapters of Luke. Now, this barrenness is a tragedy in any family in Israel, but especially so for this family. Why? I think perhaps it is because of their expectation.

A common phrase used among the people in those days was, “When the Messiah comes...”

They would talk about the wicked ways of Herod quietly and among themselves, and then say, “But when the Messiah comes, He will take care of that.” They would see people on the street — beggars, cripples, the most unfortunate of the unfortunate — give them a little something and say, “I can’t help a lot, but when the Messiah comes, you will be healed.” When the Messiah comes. When the Messiah comes.

Yes, when the Messiah comes, He will

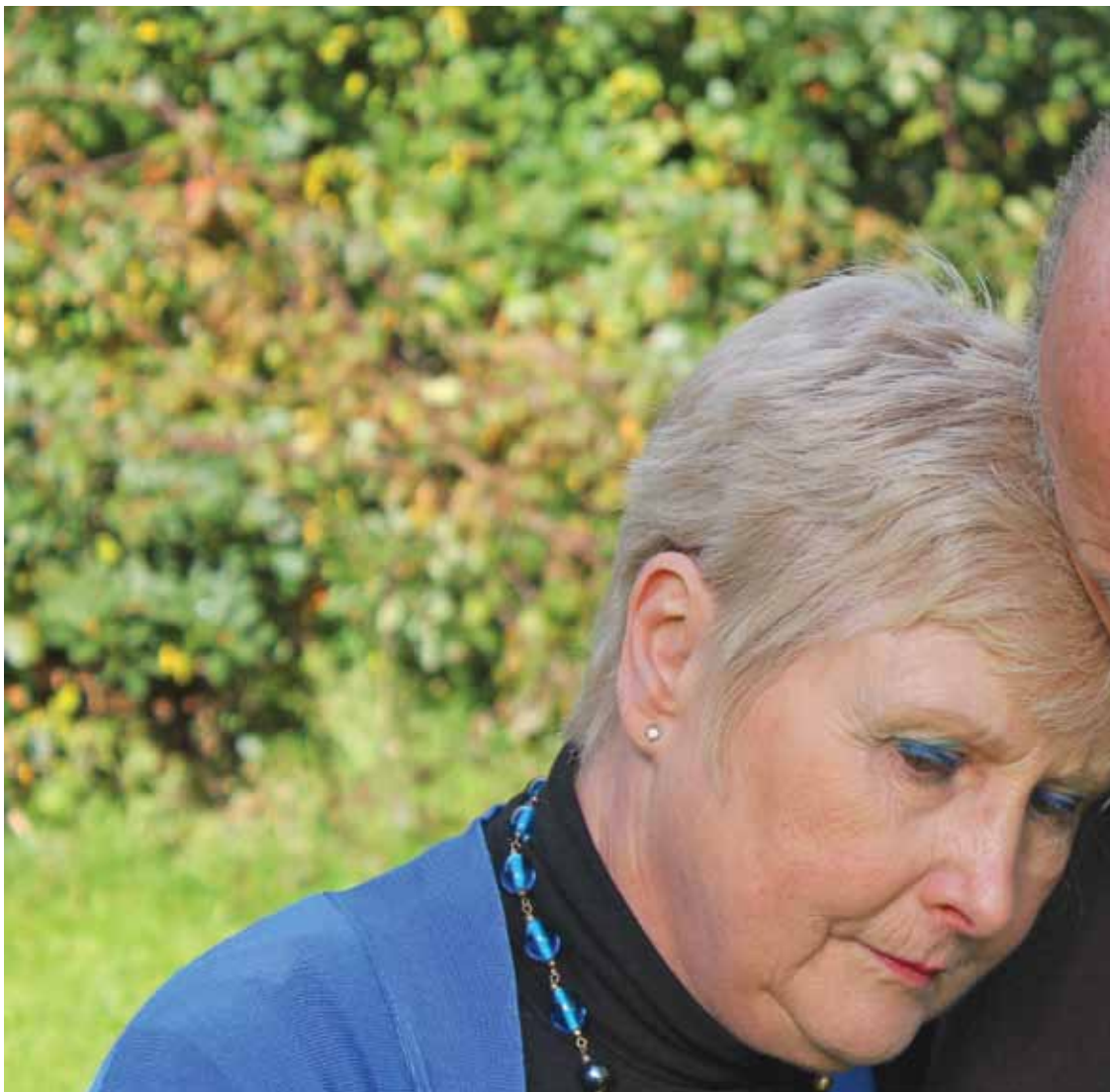
show those Romans and restore the godly. When the Messiah comes, the lame will walk and the blind will see ... well, you know what they wanted and had come to expect.

And how would the Messiah come? He would be born, of course, to the most-favored couple in all Israel. What could be more thrilling than to be the father or mother of the Messiah? And what could be more tragic for a true believer in the Messiah than for year after year to pass with no child — no chance your

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KINGDOM,

# BUT

ALL IN HEAVEN KNOW THAT GOD TAKES ORDINARY DAYS...





child would be Messiah, nor even participate in Messiah's kingdom, because you had no child.

But Zacharias is a priest even though he's one of the country priests. There was only one high priest and he had special tasks. Everything else connected with worship was divided among the priests on duty. Of those jobs, there was one particularly special job, the offering of incense. In the temple, there was a place called the golden altar of incense.

The temple itself, the one built by Herod,

was patterned after the tabernacle in the wilderness, for which Moses had received instructions at Mt. Sinai. Think of the temple as a large complex, enclosed by a wall. There were walls within walls, forming several courts. As you moved from area to area, you were getting closer to the actual building called the temple proper, and thus getting closer to God.

Within that complex one could easily find the court of the Gentiles, and the court of women. These were in the outer areas, and as you can guess, these walls were to keep certain people out, and away, from the actual holy place, the true temple. Finally, you would get to the actual temple area. As you entered that section, before you would be a large brass altar upon which animals were sacrificed and burnt. But you would not be in the holy place yet. Between you and that holy place was the golden laver, a place for the priest to wash his hands and feet before entering the holy place.

The priests, and only the priests, could enter this building. As you stepped inside, you would see to your right the table of shewbread. A low table with 12 flat loaves of bread, changed every day, and blessed, each one representing a tribe of Israel. To your left, the gold lampstand (called in the Authorized Version, candlesticks), with seven branches, something like a menorah. And directly in front of you in this holy place would be the altar of incense. At this altar, a priest would place incense — incense based upon a recipe given to Moses by God, and forbidden to be used for any other purpose — and then pray. The priest would pray for his nation, for his people, for himself, that God would bless them and protect them, and that His judgment would come into the world, that he would send His Messiah. Smoke from the incense would rise through a hole in the top of the building, signifying that prayers were rising to God.

This offering of incense was ordinary, in the sense that it happened every day in the morning and evening. But to be chosen to do it was extraordinary. With 20,000 priests, you might do the job once in a lifetime. So the day you were chosen would be an extraordinary day for you.

It was during the offering time that an angel appeared to Zacharias. Try as he might, Zacharias could not remember anyone telling about an angel appearing. And the angel had a message. Your prayer is answered. What prayer, do you suppose?

Remember that business about when the Messiah comes? While Zacharias is offering the incense, the picture of Israel's prayers wafting up toward God, the people taking part in the service outside, the few believing ones are praying for Messiah to come and deliver them. Now some people think that Gabriel is saying that Zacharias has been praying for a son and that is the prayer that would be answered. I've always felt that Zacharias fully believed his days for becoming a father were over. I find it difficult to believe that an old man prays for his wife to have a baby. But, there is desire still present — the desire that Israel would see the salvation of God. The desire that somehow, somewhere, he could have a part in that.

And so the angel announces a two-part blessing ... you will have a son and he will be part of the salvation of Israel. And this is where Zacharias makes his first mistake in a long time. He asks for a sign. Listen closely and you will hear Abraham and Sarah laughing in the background. They've been there. I imagine everyone in heaven would have laughed if they had seen this old man stumble as he did. But Zacharias's time to laugh will come later, nine months later. Until then, he's silent. Silent to reflect on God's word to him.

Feeling ordinary today? Overlooked by God? That's good, because that's where God works. And don't say, "Through me? I'm a nobody. God won't work through me."

I would be careful. Heaven laughs at you. All in heaven know that God takes ordinary days and makes them extraordinary. They all know that those things that seem very extraordinary to us are just ordinary business with God. They know that God delights in taking ordinary people and doing extraordinary things through them.

May God give you and your family an extraordinary Christmas as you open your life to Him.



# AND MAKES THEM EXTRAORDINARY.

# HISTORY

# BAPTIST

## THE HINDU WIDOW

The following is a true story of a Hindu widow's suffering from the consequences of false religion and evil superstition, and the value of missionaries and their message of love and forgiveness.

"My father was one of India's elite and a man of great wealth. I was his eldest daughter, but sadly my birth brought him no joy. In fact, he was extremely angry and refused to see me because my mother had given him a daughter instead of a son. However, when I was two my mother gave birth to a son, and my father's attitude completely changed towards me.

When I was six, according to custom, I was married. The wedding was elaborate and expensive. My husband was a wealthy friend of my father and 26 years my senior. During the next six years, my mother taught me to cook and how to serve and care for my husband. In my 12th year, my husband arrived on a brightly decorated elephant to take me to my new home, where I was placed under the authority of my mother-in-law whose cruelty knew no bounds. However, all of that changed just before my 13th birthday when I gave birth to a baby boy.

My husband moved me into an elaborate apartment and provided me with servants who catered to my every need, but this life of luxury came to an abrupt end about a year later. My husband contracted cholera and was dead within hours. The women of the compound stormed into my apartment and began to beat and curse me, stating that I was responsible for my husband's death and claiming his death was the result of some horrible sin I had committed in a previous life. The women stripped me of my fine clothes, shaved my head, and dressed me in mourning clothes. They told me if I wanted to escape an eternity of suffering and honor my husband, I would die in the flames of my dead husband's funeral pyre. This I would not do, I could never abandon my little boy.

My husband's family sent me and my son back to my father. He refused to see me and told his servant I had

brought shame upon him, and he would have preferred that I had died in the flames of my husband's funeral pyre than return a cursed widow. My father sent me to live in a bamboo hut along with my old Ayah (nanny), who was also a widow, to help me. My life was one of loneliness and isolation, and even my mother would not visit me fearing she would suffer the wrath of the gods for associating with a cursed widow. One day my Ayah informed me a white man and a white woman had visited our village. This was the first white woman our villagers had ever seen. My Ayah said her clothing was totally different, and she did not cover her face and most surprising, she did not walk behind her husband but by his side. Later she spoke to the women and explained she had come to tell us about the one true God who loved us and sent His son Jesus to die for our sins.



I wanted immediately to go and talk to the white woman, but I had been warned that if I left my hut, my son would be taken from me. I sent my Ayah to find the white woman and tell her about my situation and ask her to visit me. The next day the white woman came to my hut and read words out of a book she called 'God's Word.' She told me God loved me and sent his son Jesus

to die for my sins. She also described the joys of heaven which is free from all pain and sorrow.

Many years have passed since the white women first visited me. My life has been difficult, death has taken my beloved Ayah, and my son has left me and despises me because I am a cursed widow. Although my eyes have grown dim and my hearing dull, the white woman's words are still alive in my heart. I dream of the day when Jesus will come and take me to heaven and I will no longer be a cursed widow. I will pray each day until I die the prayer the white woman taught me: 'God, our creator, all love, all powerful, ever present, all willing to save! In the name of Jesus Christ his Son who died to redeem, forgive, pity, and save me.'

by Thomas Ray







## O Jerusalem

**"T**he history of Jerusalem is the history of the world, but it is also the chronicle of an often penurious, provincial town amid the Judean hills. Jerusalem was once regarded as the center of the world, and today that is more true than ever: The city is the focus of the struggle between the Abrahamic religions, the shrine for increasingly popular Christian, Jewish, and Islamic fundamentalism, the strategic battlefield of clashing civilizations, the frontline between atheism and faith, the cynosure of secular fascination, the object of giddy conspiracism, and internet mythmaking, and the illuminating stage for the cameras of the world and the age of twenty-four hour news. Religious, political, and media interest feed on each other, to make Jerusalem more intensely scrutinized today than ever before." So writes Simone Sebag Montefiore in the preface of his recently released epic titled *Jerusalem, A Biography*.

Today, the urban home of the first church of Jesus Christ is a tourist destination and political hot spot. In the middle of it all is Steven Khoury, Arab-Israeli and founder-pastor of Calvary Baptist Church. Born in Jerusalem and growing up a few miles south in Bethlehem, he watched his father navigate the treacherous waters of planting and pastoring First Baptist Church of Bethlehem during wave after wave of violence.

As a kid, Steven's dream was to serve in Bethlehem. An execution changed that. An uncle trusted Christ. Uncle George's passion was for the gospel advance in Jerusalem. "The vision must continue, Jerusalem must be saved," he said over and over. His love for Christ cost him his life. He was murdered on the Mount of Olives for his faith. What kind of molding and shaping of a life takes place growing up in such an environment? His uncle's passion for Jerusalem, sealed with martyr's blood, marked Steven for life.

Steven came to the states to attend Baptist Bible College, Springfield, MO. Thankfully the lure, the comfort, the attraction of America could not hold him. He returned to Jerusalem heeding God's call, founding Calvary Baptist Church in July 2004. Since opening, some 1,500 people have passed through its doors. Steven leads the congregation to be strong, bold, public. Calvary Church's refusal to go along to get along has meant an existence of constant persecution from the same adversaries that killed his uncle. The church doors have been repeatedly closed and opened. Several times pressure has caused landlords to expel this congregation of believers. Again and again God has provided a new meeting place.

Despite mounting opposition, discrimination, harassment, loss of income, physical assaults, and the always-present threat of death, this called-out assembly persists. "We are with you," a handwritten note to Pastor Steve reads, "we are ready to die for Jesus' sake."

The latest chapter of this modern move of the Holy Spirit in the ancient city has Muslim leaders prevailing over a landlord once again. At the moment of this writing, the congregation is beyond a deadline they had been given to leave their present facility. God has made it possible for them to remain on a week-to-week basis. However, they must find another place. A sympathetic Muslim realtor advises the believers that a new lease is unlikely. "Your reputation for evangelizing in this community makes it impossible for landlords to take the risk of giving you a lease."

What to do? Steven began asking God for clarity. "Is this where You want me to minister? Is this where You want the gospel to bear fruit?" The congregation faces the dilemma. The response is immediate and potent. "If our church shuts down," said a brother, "I will have no meaning to my life." A sister asserts, "If they take away our church, we will build another

# URBAN CURRENT

with our own hands." One of the young people declares, "Even if it costs my life, I want to see the flag of Christ fly free above our church's home."

Pastor Khoury sees the best option as being the purchase of a building. Presently, there is a structure that seems ideal. Its location would permit easy access to people from all backgrounds in Jerusalem regardless of religion or nationality. Still, buying a building in Jerusalem, even if all the other barriers are surmounted, looms as impossible because of cost. Impossible? "Impossible for us," says Pastor Steve, "but not for God, and not for His family of believers standing in unity with us in the city of Jesus' redemptive death and resurrection." Steven Khoury is a fearless young man leading a brave congregation.

Learn more at [www.HolyLandMissions.org](http://www.HolyLandMissions.org).

Jerusalem, the city central to God's Christmas gift. Ground zero for God's unfolding gospel drama. Jerusalem — city of David and Jeremiah, Caiaphas and Pilot, Peter and Herod.

This Christmas, pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Pray for Calvary Baptist Church to obtain a desperately needed facility. The work Jesus started 2,000 years ago needs to continue in this strategic place.

Jerusalem still needs Jesus.



by Charles Lyons, Pastor  
Armitage Baptist Church,  
Chicago, Illinois  
[charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org](mailto:charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org)

## Peace on Earth?



by Mark Milioni | President | Baptist Bible College

I read a funny story about a woman who was late getting her Christmas cards out. At the last minute she bought a box of 50 identical cards. Not bothering to read them she just quickly signed and addressed them and stuck them in the mailbox. Several days later she came across one of the leftover cards and read what the card said on the inside, "This card is just to say, that your gift is on the way!"

Christmas is a time of hope, especially a hope for some peace. People want peace in their lives so badly; they look for it in presents, in friends, and even in churches. But the world misunderstands the peace that Jesus brought into the world. The coming of Jesus Christ to the earth does bring peace, but perhaps not like men like to imagine. Notice, first,

**No Peace in the World** — From the moment Christ was born there has been terrible bloodshed. Did Christ's birth bring peace? No, in fact, the opposite, there is not peace on earth. If this is the kind of peace the Messiah was supposed to bring it hasn't happened, it hasn't worked in the 2,000 years since he was born.

There is nothing wrong in hoping or praying for peace, but understand, this is not the kind of peace His birth would bring.

**No Peace in the Home** — Matthew 10:34 "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Jesus did not come to bring the kind of peace that we often think. He came to bring a sword, he came to divide, and where he is there will be division with those that have not accepted him.

This is perhaps one of the most misunderstood aspects of Christianity. Many come to Christ expecting life to become simple, peaceful. Everything will be nice and easy, no problems, and definitely not a life that seems to have more difficulties.

**Know Peace in the Heart** — In order for us to have peace with God it took Jesus coming as a baby and dying on the cross. Because by nature we are enemies and do not have any peace, we needed a way to receive the peace that only God has. Colossians 1:20, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross" Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We need to understand, the peace of the Messiah was not between the nations, or even between men. Jesus came to bring peace between God and man.

As our Christmas gift we would like to share several Christmas messages with you. Visit [gobbcc.edu](http://gobbcc.edu) where you can find a link to this message in full, several other Christmas messages, and exciting news about Baptist Bible College.

## Getting on the list



by David Melton | President | Boston Baptist College

I live by lists. At my office I call them to-do lists. Before exams my students call them review lists (they may have other secret terms!). At our house, our sons have already started on Christmas lists — truthfully, a couple of our guys started lobbying for Christmas before Labor Day.

Lists help me get organized and do the most important things first — like getting coffee for my wife before I get coffee for myself in the morning (that is probably the best marital advice I have to offer). Right now I am working with about 15 students on research projects, and I have to get them on my list so I don't forget to see somebody.

I'm even starting to compose a mental list of challenges students are giving me this year. I was dared to do "no-shave November" with some guys, but I was too afraid since I am attending a six-state pastors' meeting in November! I haven't been putting "Wow Wednesday" on my list, so guys on our campus look at me almost every Wednesday in chapel and smirk a little bit. They look ready for a wedding and I am not up to par because I didn't write it down! No listing has made me a "Wow Wednesday" failure!

Lists work. On the morning when Hurricane Sandy hit, our staff went down a thorough list of preparing for a big storm, and I was so proud to watch our great staff get buildings, communication, flashlights, all kinds of things done ... that were on the list.

You use lists, don't you? We list our course offerings (and we sure have some good ones), we list tuition and fees, we list emergency contacts, we even list great things to do for cheap in Boston. We can't be the only ones with lists. I'm sure you have them too.

So, here's my question. How can I get Boston Baptist College on your list?

Start with the prayer list. Seriously, talk to God about us. We have a great team of administrators, faculty, and staff, and we have amazing students. But we are doing business in one of the most expensive places in the country, and we are educating leaders in one of the great mission fields of America! Please put us on your list!

It is the end of the fiscal year so you must have a list of budgetary items, too. Let me just come right out and say it ... please put us on the list! I want your prayers, but I also need something I can deposit!

Investing in our college helps us minimize the debt for tomorrow's church leaders. It really is as simple as that. Surely you could ask folks in your church to give us one coffee or Coke a month for Boston ... if your list is really, really long. But do something. I believe with all my heart that we are a worthy endeavor — worth being on your list. Write it down so you don't forget.



Laura Nell Ferrell | **STEP** (*Support Team Endorsement Program*)

I first noticed her waiting on the platform for the train to Athens. After finding an aisle seat in one of the less crowded cars, I glanced up and saw that a beautiful, tall model was seated across from me. I have a habit of giving tracts to passengers and the Holy Spirit urged me to give her one.

I asked her if I could give her something to read from the Bible. She replied, "I am so moved that you would do this for me. It is a very special day for me." Her eyes welled up with tears as she asked, "Could I sit by you?" As she moved beside me, she began to pour out her heart. I repeatedly told her God loved her and had a plan for her life. As we approached my train stop, I gave her Luisa and George Dimakos's phone number in case she wanted to reach me. Her parting words were, "I am Isabelle and I do hope we meet again!"

Upon my arrival at the Oasis, I asked for prayer for Isabelle. On my way home that afternoon, Luisa called and said I needed to return to the Oasis because my friend, Isabelle, wanted me to meet her! After giving her the grand tour and introducing her to my co-workers (who had prayed for her earlier), Luisa and I took Isabelle to a private room. Using English, Greek, and French, we presented the need for a Savior to Isabelle. Satan began to attack by using struggles and doubts. And then miraculously she said yes to the probing question of "Why not today? ... Today is the day of salvation." With tears streaming down her face, she prayed aloud in French and repented of her sins. She repeatedly hugged and squeezed me! The drawing power of the Father was overwhelmingly evident.

The moral of the story is ... man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. It appeared as if she had her life all together and one would have guessed she was unapproachable. Quite the opposite was true as this broken and desperate lady was in need of a Savior.

Boyd & Donna Lyons | **Philippines**

We recently held our Evangelistic Sunday, where all the songs and messages were centered on soul winning. Our people worked hard and God blessed with 43 visitors and 22 saved. I reminded the people that the work of the church is evangelism. God is still saving people in the Philippines.

Friend Day was also a blessing with 25 visitors and 17 saved. One of our young ladies had six friends she had been inviting for a long time visit. She had them sit with her on the second row and they responded to the message even as I preached. Three of them received Christ. We are all glad she did not give up on them.

Ricky & Jaime Owens | **Wales**

Only time will tell, but so far it is looking good for Vicky. Vicky surrendered her life to be a missionary this year at senior camp and she wants to go to Bible college after high school. I would say she's off to a good start — Vicky even led Shanice to the Lord before we even went to camp! Vicky is already demonstrating a compassionate heart, which every missionary should have. Please pray for her commitment to the Lord. Vicky is under attack daily from her unsaved parents. As soon as she returned home from camp, her parents were calling her a Bible basher. Even with the teasing Vicky is very concerned about her parents' salvation, so pray for them as well.

James & Lori Bradley | **Mexico**

As we write this, our hearts are heavy for our friend and co-laborer Carlos Condado. He is a national pastor that has a mission church close to ours in Mexico City. He has three children, all of whom go the Christian school where Michael attended. In addition to pastoring a church and working more than full time, Carlos also served on the school board for many years. He is currently hospitalized with a brain tumor. As of the writing of this letter, we still do not know if the tumor is benign or malignant, but we are praying and trusting God for a miracle in his life.

Ricky & Angela Freeman | **Argentina**

Even though it sometimes seems the trials outweigh the blessings, we know that is not true. We are so grateful God is still working here. We have seen His hand at work, especially during the trials. The biggest blessing was when Angela was able to lead Rosa to Christ. She is 33 years old and has lived a very hard life. Since accepting Christ as her Savior, her life has changed. As she told me, "I have a reason to live now." Rosa is taking discipleship studies and just last Sunday she asked to follow her Lord and Savior in baptism! Do pray for her because she is fighting some hard battles at this time. Also pray for her two children's salvation.

Lionel & Carol Martin | **Portugal**

I invited a long-time Portuguese pastor friend who was a tremendous help and encouragement to us when we arrived in Portugal to speak at church. Our people also invited friends to come on that day. There were three unsaved men present in the service — one of them a professed Atheist (even antagonistic) who has come many times. During Sunday school, we were taking turns reading scriptures and he wanted to have a turn. When it was his turn to read, the scripture was Romans 3:23. Then later when the questions was asked, "What does God desire for every Jew and Gentile?" he boldly responded, "Salvation!" It appears that after all these years he has the head knowledge, but we are praying he can come to the heart knowledge. It would be a great victory to see this man come to know Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Jeff & Judy Blanton | **South Africa**

Eugenia, who was recently saved and has a baby on the way, and Gavilan had only been married a year when Gavilan announced he was tired of being married. So our church began to pray. One day, as Gavilan was coming home from work, a couple of Christians decided to witness in the train carriage where Gavilan was. The man who testified told of how after five years of marriage all he could think of was getting a divorce! Others encouraged this man to get a divorce also. And then he got saved. After accepting Jesus, he realized that he'd made vows before God that he hadn't kept. He began to work on his marriage and today he's glad to say that he's been saved five years and married ten years. Gavilan arrived home and told Eugenia that he thinks God is trying to tell him to get saved! All of this happened during the week. He didn't respond to the invitation Sunday morning but we're still praising the Lord for hearing our prayers and working on Gavilan.

Marjorie Browning | **Brazil**

This past summer we had our first decision for Christ this year in the new Camacari mission, 16-year-old Alielson living with non-Christian grandparents. When he went home that night, he decided to tell his grandparents about his decision before they had a chance to hear it from someone else. Their reaction was rather violent with angry threats to make him leave home. However, since his grandparents had a trip planned for the next day to take care of their cane crops in the swamps, it was decided that he could stay and take care of the house. That calmed the situation and made it possible for him to continue faithfully attending services.

Craig & Fran Lingo | **Colombia**

It is estimated that more than 40 percent of all couples here in Colombia are living in common law. So when Heidi fell in love with a young man in our church, her friends at work could not understand why she was making such a big deal out of having a civil marriage and then a church wedding. More than one of her friends questioned her on the need of spending so much money and effort on something that was passé. Heidi remembered how her home was before her father and mother came to Christ and before they were married. She remembered the brokenness in their home ... her father's drunken binges, the infidelity, the physical abuse, the extreme poverty. It was not difficult for her to tell her friends why she wanted Christ to be a part of their union. She and Alejandro were united in holy matrimony in our church in August.

Bob & Jan Marshall | **Wales**

We had an exciting contact for the church the other day! We were having lunch in a little café that had exceptional food, and we commented to the cook, David, that he was not a cook he was a chef! He said, "Yes, I am a chef!" He then proceeded to tell us all the different countries and places in which he had received his training. It was quite impressive! We invited David to our church, and he said he thought he would like to come and visit. He has visited some of the local churches, including the Mormon church, but he wasn't happy with any of them and was ready to give up trying to find a church. Please pray for him that he might come visit us before too long so that we can share with him God's plan of salvation.

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By Keith Bassham

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Karen Kolb | **Guatemala**

Prior to a special youth event we were holding in Sumpango, Scott Walter, MANNA marketing administrator, and I were out front on the street visiting and greeting those passing by. It was then that we noticed these three kids that were dirty, needy, and malnourished. Glendy, the six-year-old, was caring for her baby sister with their older brother close by. We were touched. Scott, being moved with compassion, spoke with Damaris, the pastor's wife, wanting to see these children enrolled in our MANNA feeding center. Two times the following week Damaris went to the children's home to explain to their parents about our church and the ministry of the feeding center. Later, as Damaris explained to me that the mother of these three needy children did not want to enroll her kids and receive the much-needed help, my heart sank. In that moment I felt their despair. My burden was heavy and my spirit saddened as I realized that all they needed to do was say yes and receive the blessing. And then it hit me ... on a much bigger scale ... the gut-wrenching sadness of an unbeliever rejecting the greatest gift of all — the salvation provided freely through Jesus Christ, God's Son. So Christian, may we be stirred and moved at the lost state of our friends and family members around us. May we see their despair through the eyes of God. And may we have boldness to let our lights shine as we share our faith in Jesus Christ!

Jim & Sybil Eberhard | **Kenya**

I met Kizito at Berea Baptist this past week. He has been coming for a few weeks from a local HIV positive recovery center. Berea Baptist has been reaching out to the people at the center to try and bring them hope. Sunday Kizito received the hope he needed when he received Jesus Christ as his Savior during the invitation!



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METRO MANILA, PHILIPPINES

## A missionary's response to the U.S. election

By Greg Lyons, President of BBC Asia

I have lived and ministered under governments that range from benign to hostile against Christians, and even more recently in countries where lack of Christian influence is the norm. Somehow, we must learn that the gospel transcends politics. The gospel is a life choice regardless of the political regime. The gospel is moving in dark places like Pakistan, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Thailand, Bangladesh — all where we are teaming with other Christians to impact nations. God opens doors where the government seeks to try to keep them shut. Once a person truly embraces the claims of Jesus Christ, the obvious change in life and living out biblical values may never result in a “Christian favored” government. But that does not mean society cannot be impacted.

I remember a teachers seminar we held

in which we shared Biblical principles with 70 Muslim teachers. They were astonished at the presentation when they realized the entire seminar was principles from the Bible. They knew we were Christians, so they were resistant and some even hostile, standing at the very back ready to walk out. But the love we displayed softened some hearts. Although we were unable to bring any to the point of salvation, we left all with enough truth and information to find Jesus in a clear way. This was all done under a hostile government.

We can be effective change agents for the gospel in spite of any government agenda. We also have no excuse not to be change agents in the presence of hostility. We may need to package the gospel creatively and be persistent, without giving in to discouragement

and distraction by our enemy. We may even encounter distraction and discouragement from within the Christian family. But this is no excuse to expend inordinate amounts of energy on things we cannot change or that will not ultimately affect the eternal destiny of the lost.

Our country is on a path that will reveal even greater needs among our people. This is a great thing for us! The main obstacle to getting the gospel to the lost — the main thing that prevents fervor for Christians in local churches I visit — is apathy, affluence, and the apparent assumption that we have no real needs. May God soften American hearts. If He chooses this path, I'm willing to move with God. Romans 13:1 is still true. All authority comes from God. He surely has a purpose in allowing the current administration to remain in power for now.

### Dan & Vicki Weaver | **Belize**

Alfonso, a young man who was saved three months ago, has been adamant in changing his life. He attends our weekly prayer time and is praying for his family and friends. He has invited several others to church. This past month, three of his brothers and his 17-year-old sister trusted Christ. None of these teenagers were saved during the service. During the week, Alfonso would bring one or more of them by the church and call out to me, “Mr. Dan, this one wants to get saved.” It is an awesome thing to see God moving among our teenagers.

### Dwayne & Valerie Keefe | **Australia**

One of the greatest privileges we have in Australia is teaching young children about Jesus Christ. It is such a blessing to see that these children are listening to the lessons Valerie teaches in children's church. Just recently, a parent shared what happened when her child was in daycare. One of the instructors held up a picture that a few kids thought looked like her husband or just another man. The child who attends our children's church class was adamant that she knew exactly who was in the picture. She thought he looked like Jesus!

Sadly, none of the children even knew who Jesus was. They had never heard of Him. Well, this little girl said to the group of children and the childcare worker, “It is Jesus and I know where He is. He is at my church!”

It is a cute story, but also a very sad one. Children in this generation are being raised by parents who do not go to church or talk about Jesus. Those who have heard the name of Jesus probably heard it used as a swear word. Just last year, Austin's baseball coach made the comment that the next game they would be playing would be a David and Goliath battle. No one on the entire team of teenage boys except for Austin knew what the coach was referring to. So many young people are growing up today without even a basic knowledge of the Bible.

Please pray for the children and youth we are seeking to reach and for their parents. Pray that the Lord continues to give us opportunities to share the gospel with these precious souls. And praise the Lord for one little four-year-old girl who knows exactly where she can find Jesus!

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BOSTON BAPTIST COLLEGE

KANSAS CITY, MO

## Bannister Road Baptist Church celebrates 30 years

The pastor and congregation of Bannister Road Baptist Church celebrated their 30th anniversary in events scheduled for October 26-28, 2012, in Kansas City, MO. The theme for the occasion was "30 Years: A Ministry of Joy."

The church, founded and headed by Pastor Dwight E. Scott, began the anniversary weekend Friday evening with a reception for pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and ministry workers. Guest speakers for the evening were Parker Dailey, Charles Briscoe, Greg Christopher, and Kevin Wyatt.

The church hosted a formal banquet Saturday evening featuring the music of Sylvia Moss Clay and the preaching of Charles Briscoe. Sunday morning, Gary Oulelette of Grace Baptist Church, Portland, ME, spoke in



the main celebration worship service.

The Bannister Road church began meeting in 1982 as a mission of Blue Ridge Baptist Temple where Parker Dailey was pastor and met in a local YMCA building. Dwight, an Arkansas native and 1979 graduate of Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, led the church as it met in rented school facilities and then to their own property. The pastor and congregation began with and continue to maintain a priority for evangelism at home

and worldwide. The congregation moved to their current location in 1987. The church grew, supported missions, and sent out one of its own, Kevin Wyatt, to plant a church in Denver, CO.

Pastor Scott says, "We set this time aside to celebrate and reflect back on the past; however, our focus must be clearly upon the future. The past 30 years have been truly wonderful but the best is yet to come."



CONWAY, MO

## Beth-Eden camp looking forward to 2013

Pastor Terry Brown of Beth-Eden Bible Camp reports that 4,355 souls were saved during the 2012 summer season of camps. He states, "We look ahead to the future with great anticipation! Please mark your calendar — and know your church is welcome to attend our camps and participate in a terrific agenda."

Events for 2013 include:

- Strongman Conference January 25 and 26 — led by Eric Campbell and Paul Blake
- Junior camp (ages 8-12) June 3-7 — led by Jim Fryer
- Teen camp July 8-12 — led by Gary Fuller with speakers Mark Milioni and Joey Candillo

For information on agendas, prices, and more, visit Beth-Eden's website at [bethedenbiblecamp.org](http://bethedenbiblecamp.org).



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EL PASO, TX

## Garland Hamilton organizes new church in El Paso

IBBFI missionary Garland Hamilton organized Bible Baptist Church of El Paso (Iglesia Bautista Biblica del Paso), TX, Thursday, September 27. Over 60 people attended the service, including Hamilton's sending pastor Jerry Beaver of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Roswell, NM, with Alejandro Velazquez of Juarez Baptist Temple (Templo Bautista Juarense) officiating. Jack

Berg of Sun Valley Baptist Temple, El Paso, TX, gave the organizational prayer. Twenty-seven members signed the charter document.

Bible Baptist Church began as a mission of Juarez Baptist Temple, the church Hamilton started in 1979. After he broke two vertebrae in his back and could no longer travel to and from the church, Hamilton turned the Juarez church

over to Velazquez.

Hamilton has served as a missionary for over 44 years, serving in Venezuela, Mexico, and currently serving in Northwest Baptist Institute (Instituto Bautista Noroeste) of Juarez and Hispanic people of El Paso.

*From left: Jerry Beaver, Alejandro Velazquez, and Garland Hamilton*



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## BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

SPRINGFIELD, MO

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KANSAS CITY, MO

## Faith first, sports second

Sports talk radio programs are popular and ubiquitous. Not so common are sports talk programs with a witnessing Christian taking calls and manning the microphone. Enter John Losh, member of Glenwood Baptist Church in Kansas City, MO, aka "The Losh-Man" on Losh-Man Sports Radio, a radio ministry of Calvary Chapel in Overland Park, KS.

Losh and his on-air partner, "Downtown" Stephen Brown, began the program in September this year, but he was no stranger to the job. He had previously worked at KCXL in Liberty, MO, hosting, reporting, and even doing voice-overs for commercials, earning the nickname "One Take Losh Man" for his ability to sight-read and record a script in one take. At KCXL, he hosted a sports program but

Losh says, "I wasn't very good, because I only knew about baseball and football at first." He had a co-host, though, James Puester, who believed in John and urged him to branch out into a variety format, still with a Christian faith message. He left the station in 2008 when the many responsibilities of programming stretched him beyond his availability.

A social media friend put him in touch with station manager Mitch

Stewart at the Calvary Chapel station this past summer, who had been praying that someone in the Kansas City area could come on the station and do sports. They met, formed the show, and Stewart says, "It has been a great thing. The



NEWTON, KS

## Kansas BBF meets

The Kansas BBF meeting theme in October was "The Old Time Religion," and preachers met at People's Bible Baptist Church October 8 and 9 in Newton where Vern Bender is pastor. The church meets in a Baptist meeting house dating back to 1877, and preachers for the meeting, while not that old, had at least 50 years each in ministry. Pictured (from left) are Vern Bender, K. B. Murray, Chester Furman, Loyd Stewart, and Ken Armstrong.



show has a tremendous potential to connect with people that would not normally listen to a Christian station but want to hear about all kinds of local sports. John and his co-host Stephen have the right perspective to always keep things about the main reason, Jesus Christ, and keep Him the priority when talking about sports on the show."

Neither John nor co-host Stephen are paid to do the program. They do it with the motto, "Faith First, Sports Second." Their program can be heard on 107.9FM The Fountain in the Kansas City area Saturdays 2-3 p.m. or online at that same time on [www.fountainradio.com](http://www.fountainradio.com). Programs are also available at their podcast at [www.loshmanradio.podomatic.com](http://www.loshmanradio.podomatic.com). Losh is also the author of the book, *God Did What?? — Stories Of Family And Friendship Found By The Grace Of God, When You Least Expected It*, available on Amazon.com.

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CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO

## Chihuahua, Mexico church celebrates 30 years

Templo Bautista Biblico (Baptist Bible Temple) of Chihuahua, Mexico, celebrated 30 years of ministry in October with a revival meeting. The church was founded by Les and Donna Garner the second Sunday in 1982 with 29 people attending the first service.

Pastor Bruce Garner of Huntington Beach, CA, and son of the missionary couple, preached for the four-day meeting, and 135 first-time visitors attended with 30 of them accepting Christ as Savior. Les Garner reports, "The attendance on anniversary Sunday was full and overflowing in both of the morning preaching services. The Lord has richly blessed the church's ministry in this community of more than one million people."

During the first 30 years of the church's ministry, more than 7,000 souls have been saved and 2,000 baptized. Fifteen pastors are serving the Lord full time with the majority of them accepting Christ in the church when they were

children or young adolescents. Included in this group of full-time workers are the wives of two pastors in Mexico who were saved and sent to Bible school from our church.



Les and Donna Garner

The church also for many years has had the testimony of giving to missions, contributing as much as 40 percent of their offerings for missions. Seven other churches in the state of Chihuahua have been started as home mission projects of the church as well as a youth camp.

Les and Donna Garner are now in their 41st year as missionaries and are grateful to the Lord for his blessing and for the prayer and support of faithful pastors and churches who have supported them all these many years.

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## DON ROBINSON



Donald L. Robinson, 61, joined the Lord in glory October 24, 2012. Don was born June 19, 1951, and graduated from Crothersville High School. He served in the United States Navy from

1969-1975. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class. He was a graduate of Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, and Andersonville Baptist Seminary and College in Camilla, GA. Don served in the ministry over 30 years, most recently at Grace Baptist Temple in Bloomington, IN, where he pastored more than 22 years.

He is survived by his wife Pat, two sons, five grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Services were held October 27, 2012, at Grace Baptist Temple in Bloomington.

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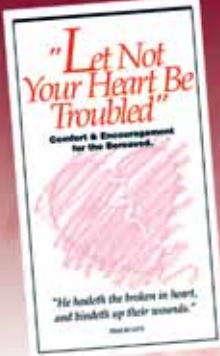
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# Was Jesus married?

By Doug Kutilek

There was a recent “sensation” in the world of religion when it was announced by a Harvard professor that an allegedly ancient scrap of papyrus (tentatively dated to the 3rd to 5th centuries), written in Coptic, the ancient language of Egypt, had been discovered and deciphered, which contained words ascribed to Jesus in only partially preserved sentences which mentioned his wife, who was further identified as one of his disciples. Jesus with a wife? And a wife who was further described as a disciple? The impression intended to be left by those who announced this “find” was that here, in this document, was a picture of “real Christianity,” with truths about Jesus suppressed and concealed by his later “orthodox” followers, to avoid scandal.

A swirl of controversy arose immediately. First, it was “unprovenanced,” that is, its time and place of discovery — its historical context — as well as the name of the discoverer were unstated and presumably unknown. This is always a red flag. It doesn’t necessarily mean the find is bogus, but it screams, “proceed with caution.” Second, the scrap of papyrus, smaller than a standard business card, had remarkably neat edges. Fragmentary papyrus documents from antiquity all but invariably have jagged edges, at least on two or three, and usually on all four edges. Red flag number two. And then when the Coptic writing was examined it turns out the shape of the letters was decidedly non-standard Coptic, and the language, vocabulary, and sentence structure were definitely not those of someone who used Coptic on a regular basis. Red flag — I might say, strike three. A later critique noted that a line of the text had been copied from the text of the pseudepigraphal Coptic “Gospel of Thomas” as posted on a website, complete with a modern copying error! As quickly as the sensational find was announced, it was dismissed and discredited as a forgery, and not a very good one at that.

Central to this whole sensation — and clearly the intent of the modern forger, whoever he or she may be — was the implication that the early disciples must have known that Jesus was married, and that he, as a good modern feminist (!) had at least one female apostle, and that the chauvinistic men who dominated early Christianity suppressed these truths, concealing the real Jesus.

Allowing for the sake of argument their basic premises — that Jesus, a first-century Jewish rabbi-philosopher (an entirely human one they would insist), had a wife — I want to explore the gratuitous assumption that Christians would have had motive to suppress this “truth.” Though Jesus was not formally trained in the schools of Jerusalem as a teacher or scholar in the Gospels, he is reported to have been commonly called “rabbi” (in the sense of “teacher”) by His disciples (Mark 9:5; 11:21; John 1:38, 49), by Judas

(Matthew 26:25, 49), by the crowds at Capernaum (John 6:25), and even by Nicodemus, the learned Sanhedrin member and Pharisee.

Among the Jews of that era (and later as well) there was no “scandal” in a religious teacher being married, indeed marriage was generally considered a sacred duty, with religious teachers expected to set a worthy example. So, had Jesus been married, as many other Jewish religious teachers of that day, He would have been entirely within the “norm” of social custom and practice; there would be no motive for the Christians in the first two centuries to conceal that fact.

Furthermore, Jesus expressly endorsed marriage as an honorable, divinely ordained and ordered institution (Matthew 19:1-10). Not only so, but He graced the marriage at Cana of Galilee with His attendance and that of His early followers (John 2:1-11). By no means was he “anti-marriage.”

But the *coup de grâce* in this discussion comes from the apostle Paul. He wrote 1 Corinthians about 25 years after the death of Jesus, while there were still thousands of living witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus (compare 1 Corinthians 15:6), who would have known from direct personal knowledge whether Jesus was married or not. In chapter nine, Paul is building a case defending the right of Bible teachers to receive financial compensation sufficient to support them without their having to secure secular employment as well, and support not only sufficient for themselves, but also to support any immediate family they may have, including a wife.

To prove his own right to financial support from the churches, not only for himself but also for a wife if he had one, Paul appeals to the example of the other apostles in chapter nine, verses three through five, and the Lord’s brothers — that would include at least James and Jude (in Galatians 1:19, Paul clearly refers to James as an “apostle” in some sense of the word), and naturally Cephas (Peter). Of course, to really clinch his case, the most obvious example to refer to would be Jesus Himself, if in fact He was married, as the forged Coptic document under consideration suggests. But Paul is strangely, remarkably silent about such — impossible to explain if the assumption were true. No, in an ideal situation where appeal to Jesus’ marital status would yield an unanswerable argument, Paul is completely, absolutely silent. The only viable explanation of his silence is that Jesus was in fact not ever married — as the New Testament unmistakably attests. There is but one explanation: Jesus was not ever married.



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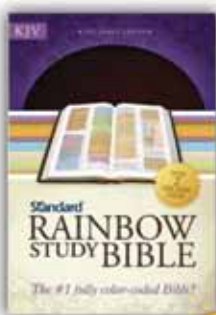
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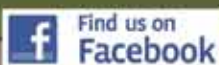
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