

# BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

DECEMBER 2013 | VOL. 64 NO. 4



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# FEBRUARY TRIBUNE OFFERING



YOUR GIFT KEEPS THE FELLOWSHIP MAGAZINE COMING





## ON THE TABLE Christmas bells

by Keith Bassham | Editor

On Christmas Day 1863, American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow had little to cheer his own heart. His first wife was long dead, and his second wife had died in a fire a year or two before. Adding to his heartache, his son Charles, who had gone against the wishes of his father and joined the Union Army to fight in the war against the South, had been severely wounded in November. Longfellow's poetic voice had been quieted for a while, but, as church bells rang their familiar songs, he took up his pen and wrote these grim lines:

*And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong, And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

I was thinking of these words as I prepared material for this *Tribune* and as I reviewed news from around the world. Meteorological typhoons wash over millions, while political, economic, cultural, and societal typhoons leave their own forms of devastation in their wake. Turmoil fills the world and no human solution appears equal to the problems. How many have begun their day breathing the same air of despair Longfellow described?

The poem eventually became a Christmas carol, which strikes me as odd given its dark nature and imagery after the first stanza or two.

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet, The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

The next stanzas describe how the bells sound out a good message, but that the reality of life includes cannons thundering and earthquakes tearing the land apart, leading the poet to conclude:

*And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong, And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good will to men!"*

But as is the case with so many of the Psalms of David that contain line upon line of complaint and concern for the "way things are," Mr. Longfellow comes to the same conclusion as David: God is still there, and He has the last say.

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep;  
God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men!*

And of course it is at this point where Mr. Longfellow could use some help from a prophet like Jeremiah who reveals to us the Source of the peace on earth: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." (Jeremiah 33:14-15)

May the Christ of Christmas lift your gaze.

*Keith Bassham*

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DECEMBER 2013

VOL. 64 NO. 4

Embracing hope on the edge of the abyss  
*Jeremiah's message, though dire, was filled with hope*

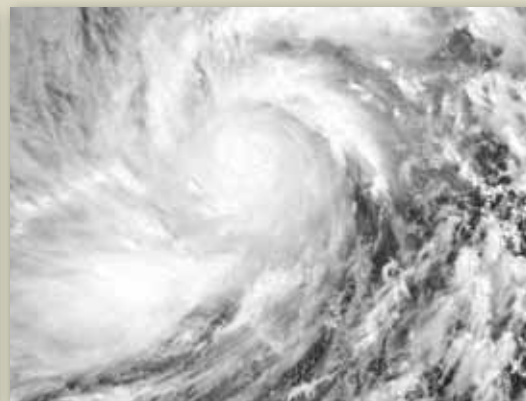
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## PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

## More than a token



by Linzy Slayden | President | BBFI

It's that time of year again — Christmas. Just the mention of the word stirs up a myriad of mental images. The sights and smells and sounds of Christmas are wonderful. We anticipate seeing friends and family, relaxing from our regular routine, and enjoying holiday festivities. Without a doubt Christmas means many things to many people. But we must admit that the one aspect that rises above all others is the giving of gifts. Christmas has become synonymous with giving.

This isn't all bad. It's good to have a holiday with a reputation for giving. Admittedly there are long lines, high prices, and strained nerves. But I do think it's good that when we think of Christmas, we think of giving. What could be better than a holiday centered around this theme. True, it has been exploited by some, but we have the right idea — giving.

After all, what is greater than giving? Giving is the expression of something that is intangible in itself, but urgently needs to be demonstrated. Giving shows care, concern, and commitment. I give because I care. You give because you care. In practice, not every gift is given from this conscious motivation, but in theory, that's the way it should be. Concern and commitment are the ingredients that make significant relationships. But often those attitudes are difficult to express; they can be elusive. Giving becomes the natural way to reveal these silent but significant feelings. Love is intangible; giving is concrete. Giving helps us demonstrate what we say.

Consider the greatest giver — God. He knows a lot about giving. On the very first Christmas He gave just what the prophet foretold: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son in given" (Isaiah 9:6). The Bible teaches that God cared so much that He sent His Son to our planet. This was not some insignificant token but rather the ultimate gift. Operating on the basis of the purest of motives, God went to the limit. In love, He gave His best for us. The result was the greatest gift the world could ever receive.

Several years ago the Hallmark Card Company initiated an ad campaign that used one of the most forceful slogans ever conceived: "When you care enough to send the very best." Nothing could be truer when we consider what Christmas is all about. God cared and sent the very best. We have been the recipients of that giving and now we must ask ourselves if we care enough to give Him the very best. He gave His Son. What will we give Him? Will we submit our plans to His sovereign will? Will we give Him our dreams, time, and energy? All these will be easier when we give Him the gift that pleases Him the most: ourselves. Paul commended the churches of Macedonia for giving themselves first (2 Corinthians 8:5). Giving like that is what this season is all about. Sounds like a great plan. May each of you have a blessed Christmas.

## WORLDWIDE MISSIONS

## The mission of God



by Jon Konnerup | Mission Director | BBFI

God commanded the church to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. When unbelievers hearts are changed through our obedience of sharing the gospel with them, God's glory is exponentially magnified, as they in turn share with someone else, who then shares with someone else. Before you know it, the gospel reaches around the world. This is divine mathematics — the more God's people obey His command to evangelize the world, the more God is glorified.

Evangelism plays a critical role in what God is doing in our churches. We live in a unique point in history where God has entrusted us with His message of salvation and we, His ambassadors, are responsible for taking this message to the whole world. God's unique design and task for each church is world evangelism which includes starting new churches right here in America. This must be the focus of our churches, our state fellowships, and the entire BBFI.

In the history of our Fellowship, pastors possessed a sense of togetherness and loyalty to this task; however, today this does not appear to be as strong. We must get back to the mission that God has given the church, which is fundamental to the mission of our Fellowship. Staying connected with pastors and churches across America in order to more effectively spread the gospel around the world is critical. It was for this purpose that the BBFI was formed, and this resolve should remain the same today.

This does not mean we are to neglect the needs of those who are suffering, as our churches and missionaries regularly minister to those in need in various ways. However, as we minister, our ultimate goal should always be to bring salvation and a lasting relationship with Jesus Christ to the lives of those whom we help.

At the conclusion of each of the gospels (Matthew 28:19-20, Mark 16:7, Luke 24:47, and John 20:21) and in Acts 1:8, a variation of God's Great Commission is given.

With this commission given five times, Jesus, the one whose coming we celebrate this time of year, makes evangelism an issue of obedience — not an issue of skill or opportunity. The church has been given a mission — world evangelism. While not everyone is called to the mission field, we must all be consumed with the mission of God — to get the gospel out to everyone, everywhere. We must carry the gospel to our neighborhoods, cities, states, country, and the uttermost parts of the world at the same time — that is what God has called us to do. We can do it collectively, as a Fellowship, if we join together and remain focused on the mission of God.

# Candidate school included tours of church plants



by Dan Lamb | Interim NCPO Director

What a thrilling week we experienced when the NCPO Church Planters' Candidate School joined the pastors in the Ohio BBF State Meeting October 7-11. We shared candidate school speakers and classes with the Fellowship meeting and toured some area church plants during the week. The host church, Bible Baptist Church of Wilmington, OH, and Pastor Kelly McNerney did a wonderful job caring for the candidates and instructors.

We have nearly always had the schools in or near local churches, but this time we took the school attendees on a road trip and visited the campuses of three fairly new church plants. We had a tour of their facilities and visited with the church planters at these locations. The church planters on the tour were Ryan Bevan, Josh Bevan, Jeremy Griffith, Mike Purdin, Ben York, and Brent Cunningham — and their testimonies added great inspiration and vision of what God is doing in church planting. This was in addition to the subject matter we generally offer about a church planter's spiritual life, preaching, administration, and leadership, and some introduction to the workings of the Baptist Bible Fellowship.

Here are a few of the comments that the candidates shared:

**Patrick Shawhan** – *NCPO Candidate School was a tremendously enriching experience. My wife and I left Ohio inspired, excited, and more driven than ever to plant a church in metro St. Louis.*

**Reginald J. Williams** – *I recently graduated the Fall 2013 NCPO course hosted by Bible Baptist Church Wilmington, OH. I was told to expect some tips to help my church plant. To the credit of the men and women of the program, I was blown away with the wealth of knowledge and available resources to aid in the church planting process. I highly recommend this course to future church planters as the information is invaluable; it was a first-class experience well worth the time.*

**Anthony Smith** – *The NCPO equips and provides resources for a candidate to be successful!*

Although the candidate school is filled with many different dimensions, we are not yet finished expanding the curriculum, and God is not done calling men to plant churches. We are already looking forward to the next school as details are being put together now.



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# DIGRESSIONS

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

—Laurence Sterne

## Obama administration, in court brief, supports prayer at public meetings

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Obama administration has filed a brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of prayer at public meetings.

The Obama administration joined a group that includes the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and congressional Republicans in filing a brief in an appeal of a ruling that invalidated a New York town's prayer policy for its board meetings.

"The case could lead to a major change in the law on religion that would go well beyond prayers at council meetings," the *Los Angeles Times* said Aug. 8. The Obama administration told the court that the town's practice should not be considered an endorsement of religion, the *Times* said. U.S. Solicitor Gen. Donald Verrilli Jr. wrote that opening a town meeting with prayer "does not amount to an unconstitutional establishment of religion merely because most prayer-givers are Christian and many or most of their prayers contain sectarian references." Verrilli added that local councils should not be required to "closely police the content of prayers."

Ken Klukowski of the Family Research Council called the administration's filing "a surprisingly conservative brief, and it came as a pleasant surprise," according to the *Times*. "It's gratifying that even the Obama administration recognizes that courts are not qualified to censor prayers," Klukowski said.

Source: Baptist Press, [www.bpnews.net](http://www.bpnews.net)

## Teaching biology with beer

Parents in Colorado are upset to learn that their kids are being taught how beer is brewed in a high school biology class.

Teachers at Ralston High School in Arvada say studying fermentation helps students better understand aerobic respiration — the metabolic process of producing energy. But Janice Crouse of Concerned Women for America wonders if that can be taught without bringing beer into the picture.

"What kinds of messages are these teachers sending? And in a broader picture, what are the values they are communicating," she poses. "They're teaching kids to be cynical. They're

teaching kids that what you're learning at home is not really all that important, and that's not the kind of message that most parents want their teenagers to hear."

It appears that it took eight years before a concerned parent finally complained enough to garner public attention.

"This is, I think, the parents that are being more diligent, and if they're not, the ... teachers can't be blamed for what's going on if the parents don't care enough to really understand what's happening in their kid's school," Crouse contends.

It is also being reported that the 15-year-old students can earn extra credit by touring Coors Brewery in nearby Golden, which also has parents concerned.

Source: Bob Kellogg, OneNewsNow, [www.onenewsnow.com](http://www.onenewsnow.com)

## PG-13 ratings not true reflection of content regarding on-screen violence

A new study reveals an increase of gun violence in PG-13 films. Hollywood continues to turn a blind eye to exposing America's youth to violent behavior.

The Parent's Television Council is speaking out about a report released by the Annenberg Public Policy Center and Ohio State University.

Melisa Henson, director of grass-roots activism and education at PTC, says the study found several disturbing trends in regards to PG-13 rated films.

"Action films that are released in the summertime, the big blockbuster films that come out in the summertime when kids are home from school, those films tend to get a less restrictive rating of PG-13," she tells OneNewsNow. "And those are the films that quite often contain the highest levels of violence."

Henson says the PTC calls on the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) to immediately institute a more accurate, consistent and publicly accountable content rating system.

"What this study shows is that the entertainment industry really isn't at all concerned about protecting kids from media violence," she says. "Really, they want the less restrictive PG-13 rating because they know that the less restrictive the rating, the more tickets they are going to be able to sell."

According to the study, PG-13 movies portray equal use of gun violence as in R-rated movies since 2009, and even surpassed the violent content in R-rated movies in 2012.

Source: Russ Jones, OneNewsNow, [www.onenewsnow.com](http://www.onenewsnow.com)



# In the NEWS of the WEEK

## GLENWOOD SPRINGS, COLORADO

To The Tribune:

I am sending \$2 for my subscription to The Tribune. We enjoy this paper very much. We believe it is the best.

Our church in New Castle, Colo., has voted, upon my recommendation, to send 10 per cent of all our offerings to the Baptist Bible Fellowship Mission Office in Springfield.

The offerings will be small for a while, as some of our best members have moved. But God is blessing us and we are growing.

Our church secretary will be sending in our first month's

missionary offering before long. We will send the money to the Missions Office to be used where it is most needed.

We were in Fellowship with the Conservative Baptists, but some of the Conservative preachers here fellowshiped with the Seventh Day Adventists. We wish to fellowship with Baptist Bible Fellowship. I believe it is of God, and I know you stand for the Bible and the Spirit-led way, upholding the God-Man, Jesus Christ, the Saviour who has overcome the grave.

J. B. TOMLINSON.

Rev. Bill Anderson, pastor Independent Bible Baptist church, Elkhart, Kas., has sent The Tribune a check, along with a list of subscriptions.

He writes as follows: "Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ. We wish to report the blessings of the Lord is being poured out upon our church. Ike Foster and his wife will be with us tonight. We do pray that the Lord will manifest Himself in a great way. I am putting the Baptist Bible Tribune in each one of our peoples' home."

Rev. Harvey Springer, editor of the Western Voice, has closed a series of meetings with Tulsa Baptist Temple, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The pastor, Rev. Clifford E. Clark, writes that the meetings were the most successful the church has experienced in a long time.

Fundamental Baptist church, Buffalo, Mo., Gregory Dixon, pastor, had 180 in Sunday school Dec. 20, and an offering for the day of \$200. Gregory became pastor of the church last Nov. 1.

From the bulletin of Bible Baptist church, George Ziemer, pastor, Miami, Florida:

### A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

O Christ, grant us thankful hearts today for Thee, our choicest gift, our dearest guest. Let not our souls be busy fms that have no room for Thee, but quiet homes of prayer and praise where Thou mayest find fit company; where the needful cares of life are wisely ordered and put away, and wide sweet spaces kept for Thee; where holy thoughts pass up and down, and fervent longings watch and wait Thy coming. So when Thou comest again, Thou mayest find all things ready, and Thy family waiting for no new master, but for One long loved and known. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

"Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born, if life is not born in thee, thy life is all forlorn."

### BAPTIST BIBLE CHURCH S. B. Whitfield, Pastor Staunton, Virginia

To The Tribune:

Just a few words to let you know how God is blessing:

Baptist Bible Mission, 432 Commerce Avenue, Waynesboro, Va., was opened on Nov. 8, by Rev. S. B. Whitfield, pastor of the Baptist Bible church, Staunton, Va. Services are being held on Sunday afternoons and Friday nights with plans to organ-

### PARK AVE. BAPTIST CHURCH HAS MISSIONARY OFFERING OF \$1,000

LYNCHBURG, Va. — Park Avenue Baptist church had a special missionary offering of \$1,000 Dec. 20. The regular offering amounted to \$443.37, making a total offering of \$1443.37. There were 489 in Sunday school. Paul S. Donnellson is pastor of the church. Park Avenue church supports the work of the Baptist Bible Fellowship.

ize a new church as God leads. Waynesboro which is 10 miles southeast of Staunton, has a population of 13,000 and does not have a wide-awake Baptist church. "The Baptist Bible Hour," directed by me is heard weekly on station W A Y B (Waynesboro) at 8:00 a. m.

Baptist Bible church, Staunton, had 60 in Sunday school Dec. 6, an offering for the day of \$113.68, and three souls saved. The church is still waiting for a decision from the Corporation court on whether they can continue building on their lots.

Many thanks for the important news in The Tribune. I have really been blessed and inspired by the work being done by the Baptist Bible Fellowship. May God continue to bless all of you who are guiding the great program of evangelism and missions.

S. B. WHITFIELD.

Bible Baptist church, Syracuse, Kas., Al Wells, pastor, had 80 in Sunday school Dec. 6, and a total offering for the day of \$279.00.

More than \$4,000 of church bonds have been bought or pledged for Bible Baptist church, Gardena, Calif., G. R. Thomas, pastor. The bonds are being sold for the erection of the new auditorium.

Calvary Baptist church, Snyder, Texas, T. Gerald Cafes, pastor, presented a Christmas pageant by the Sunday school, "The True Meaning of Christmas." The attendance at Calvary Sunday school is running above 100.

Mr. Vess will conduct a series of meetings in Central Baptist church, Lufkin, Texas, Jack Fisher, pastor, Jan. 17-24. Beginning Jan. 25, he will be in a series with the newly organized Baptist Temple, Warren, Ohio. Rev. Emmett Duckett is pastor at Warren.

The Sunday school of Bible Baptist church, Enid, Okla., Scotty Alexander, pastor, had an attendance of 448 Dec. 13, and an offering of \$389.64. Ronald Lynn Walker, by the way, is a new addition to the Bible Baptist family. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Walker and he arrived last Nov. 10 at 8:30 p. m., weighing 7 lbs., and 12 ounces.

The building fund of Central Baptist church, Sherman, Texas, George Sullivan, pastor, has reached \$1,000.00. Central church Sunday school had an attendance of 476 Dec. 6.

The Sunday school of Grace Baptist church, Oklahoma City, Okla., J. C. Brown, pastor, is running above 300 during these winter months.

From Castleberry Baptist News, weekly paper of Castleberry Baptist church, Ft. Worth, Texas, David Cavin, pastor:

The month of November was one of the highest months in the history of the Castleberry Baptist church, from every standpoint. During the month there were 25 saved, and 23 added to the church by letter, with an average Sunday school attendance of 571, and \$7,028.66 offering for the month. All of these blessings tie in with the fact that this was the greatest month of gifts to missions by the church, which totaled \$1,620.00.

Fellowship Baptist church, Great Bend, Kas., Albert Adrian, pastor, had 119 in Sunday school Dec. 13.

In a series of meetings held in Central Baptist church Sulphur Springs, Texas, by Rev. Charley Dyer, there were 16 additions to the church, 13 by baptism and three by letter. Rev. William Beall is pastor.

Bible Baptist church, Maplewood, Mo., B. E. Rodgers, pastor, lacks less than \$170 of the \$2,000 the church is raising for a down payment on property on Suttan Ave.

There were 20 additions to Beaver Street Baptist church, Jacksonville, Fla., George Hodges, pastor, Dec. 6. Says the Beaver Street Baptist Messenger:

### THE FELLOWSHIP MEETING

The Fellowship Meeting at Miami was greatly enjoyed by those who attended. We were privileged to visit the Jewish mission supported by the Bible Baptist Church of Miami of which Bro. Ziemer is pastor, and is conducted by Rev. Sam Burke and wife—a faithful preacher's wife. They are humble Christians. Then we visited the Indian reservation.

The hospitality in the homes where we stayed was good, also the food at the church was splendid. We heard some great preaching while there. This church had 345 in Sunday school, the Sunday before we arrived.

## KANSAS FELLOWSHIP MEETS WITH BIBLE BAPTIST, WICHITA

WICHITA, Kas. — The Kansas State Baptist Bible Fellowship held its December meeting with First Bible Baptist church here. Rev. Doyle B. Hopper is pastor. The meeting was highlighted by two soul stirring messages in the evening services by Rev. Scotty Alexander, pastor Bible Baptist church, Enid, Oklahoma.

The Kansas Fellowship is growing spiritually and numerically. It was an inspiration to hear each one of the more than 30 preachers present as he stood and told of the blessings of God upon his church. One after another gave witness of how their church attendance and offerings had doubled and even tripled in the last year.

Although Bible Baptist church is less than two years old, on Dec. 13 there were 306 in Sunday school with a total regular offering for the day of \$504.00. During the past nine months there have been 271 additions to the church. The church is completing a new baptistry.

Ministers present were: Rev. Scotty Alexander, Enid, Okla.; Rev. Ralph Boyett, Ponca City, Okla.; Rev. Bill Jackson, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Rev. Leaford Cavin, Topeka, Kas.; Mr. Howard Jewell, Topeka, Kas.; Rev. Frank Rose, Topeka, Kas.; Rev. Jim Nance, Hamilton, Kas.; Missionary H. A. Burnett; Rev. George Wambshons, Emporia, Kas.; Rev. D. J. Sawatsky, Pleasanton, Kas.; Rev. Harry Hayes, Sun City, Kas.; Rev. Ray Schwartz, Hutchinson, Kas.; Rev. Lonnie Smith, Hutchinson, Kas.; Rev. Jim Powders, Hutchinson, Kas.; Rev. Albert Adrian, Great Bend, Kas.; Rev. Jimmy Lambert, Medicine Lodge, Kas.; Rev. Jack Adrian, Pratt, Kas.; Rev. Leslie Lind, Attica, Kas.; Rev. A. C. Worthington, Salina, Kas.; Rev. Bill DeLude, Centropolis, Kas.; Rev. Robert Shank, Camdenton, Mo.; Rev. Robert Jones, Cheney, Kas.; Missionary Dale Barton, Springfield, Mo.; Rev. Ray Franklin, Salina, Kas.; Rev. Charles Channey, Rev. Doyle B. Hopper, Rev. Charles Bainum, Rev. Vernon Meador, Rev. Ted Miller, and Rev. Norman K. Dickerson, all of Wichita.

### LESTER HALL ORDAINED

Lester Hall has been ordained at Bible Baptist church, Ava, Missouri. Mr. Hall is pastor of the church. The ordination council was composed of Rev. John Morgan, pastor Bible Baptist church, Nixa, Mo., moderator, Rev. A. O. Lay, pastor Bible Baptist church, Crane, Mo., clerk, Rev. Faye Blakey, pastor Bible Baptist church, Springfield, Mo.; Herbert West (member Bible Baptist church, Springfield, Mo.); Rev. J. M. "Tate" Roberts, pastor Division Street Baptist church, Springfield. Rev. Charles Workman, Aurora; Mr. J. H. Buzard, Aurora; Rev. Gussie Carlson, Mountain Grove; Rev. Quinton Mallard, Elkland; Rev. Claude Chaney, Wilson Creek, and Rev. Ralph German, Springfield.

[Continued on following page.]





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Staybridge Suites – (512) 733-0942

Red Roof Inn – (512) 310-1111

Hampton Inn – (888) 370-1940

## SPEAKERS

MONDAY



Linzy Slayden



Rick Blackwood

TUESDAY



Fred Young



Keith Bassham



Randy Hogue

WEDNESDAY



William Fluker



Tim Hawks



Cal Thomas

## MINISTRY SESSIONS

Tuesday and Wednesday mornings will start with breakout classes at the Wingate Conference Center designed to benefit just about anyone in ministry.

## HISPANIC FELLOWSHIP

Due to a great initial response, evening sessions have been added for Hispanic pastors and ministry leaders! Sessions will have preaching, worship, testimonies, and special music.







Dona Eggar



Carol Kent

## GOLF TOURNAMENT

Four-man scramble on Thursday  
Contact Steve Ledbetter at (512) 508-0810  
or register at [texasbbf.org](http://texasbbf.org)

Turning Consumers Into Contributors *Monty Maples/John Gross*

Transitions *Randy Harp*

Prayer Ministry *John Arnold*

MANNA Worldwide *Bruce O'Neal*

Conflict Resolution *Kim Beckham*

Sr. Adult Ministry *Larry Lilly*

Water for Life *Mark Reynolds*

Veteran Ministry *Dennis Isbell*

Gateway Project *Steve Johnson*

Student Pastors Panel *Jon Slayden/Jeremy McCarter*



Hugo Campos Sr. *San Diego, CA*

Manuel Tec *San Diego, CA*

Elias Salazar *Houston, TX*

Charlie Bell *Springfield, MO*

Dr. Ezekiel Serrato *Houston, TX*

James Smith *Springfield, MO*

Miguel Carreon *Austin, TX*

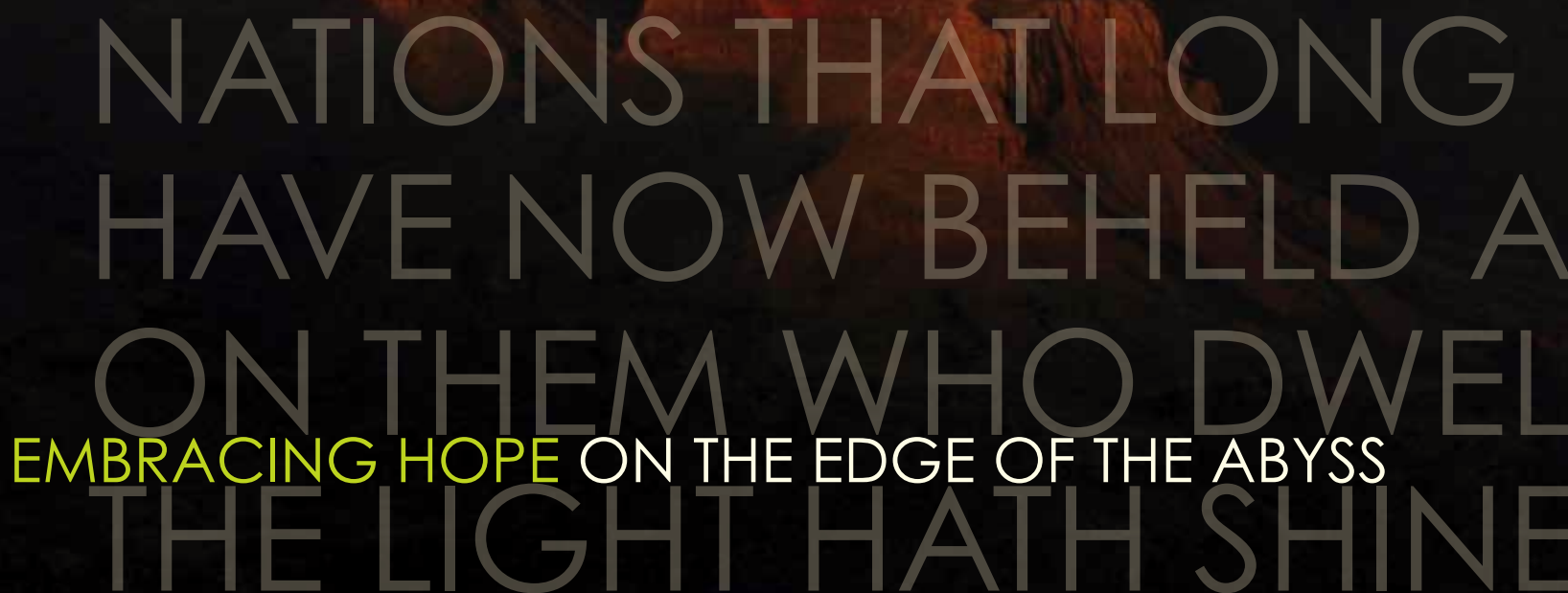
Ricardo Murrillo *Indianapolis, IN*

Ed Hoagland *Mexico City, Mexico*

Russell Johnson *Orlando, FL*



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# NATIONS THAT LONG HAVE NOW BEHELD A ON THEM WHO DWEL EMBRACING HOPE ON THE EDGE OF THE ABYSS THE LIGHT HATH SHINE

The second in a series of studies from the Book of Jeremiah

by Keith Bassham

## Jeremiah 33

- 12 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.*
- 13 In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord.*
- 14 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.*
- 15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.*
- 16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.*

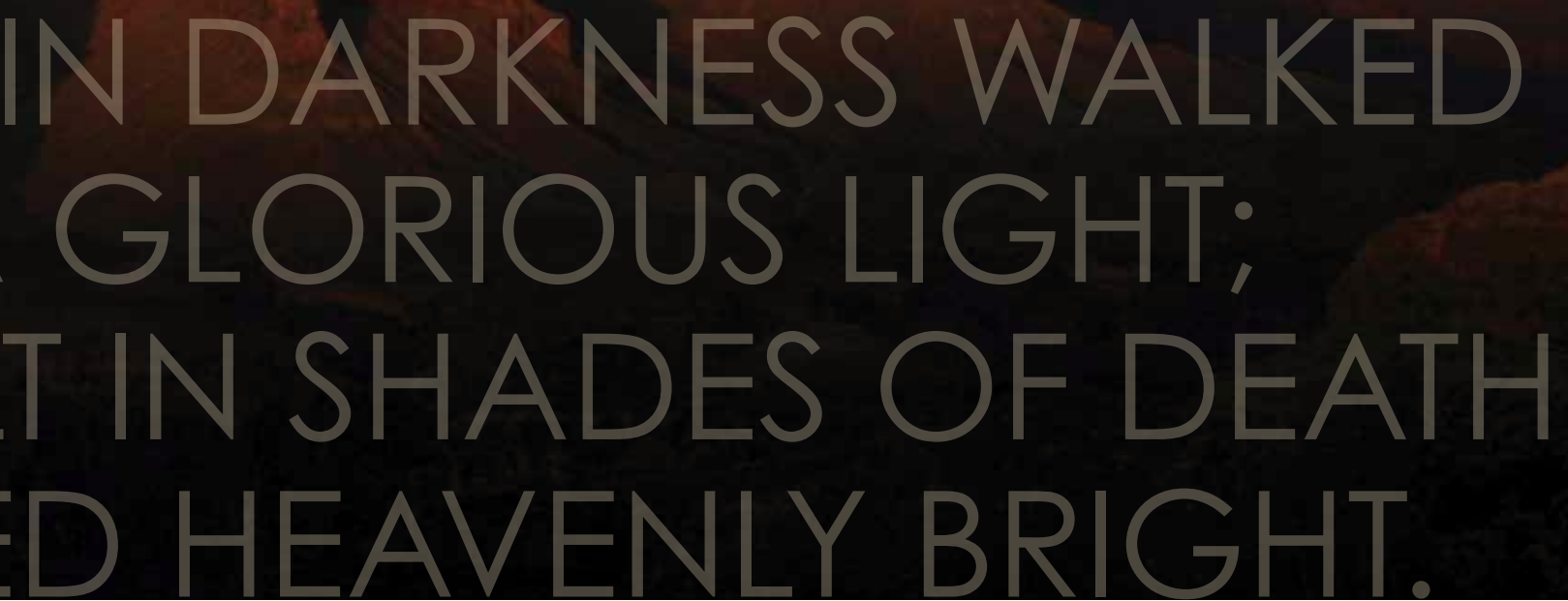
If you are a member of a church following the lectionary, last year on the first Sunday in December, Jeremiah 33:14-16 would have been the Old Testament text read, and likely it would have been the text for the sermon that Sunday morning. I doubt most readers of the Tribune are familiar with the lectionary, but much of Christendom uses it as a guide for Bible reading, preaching, teaching, and worship. Designed around the Christian year and a three-year cycle, it aids worshippers by providing a somewhat uniform approach to the Bible across denominational lines. It is systematic and non-denominational, but it is not evil, I assure you. In fact, I find it ironic that we who consider ourselves the most Bible-oriented churches probably have less scripture text read on any given Sunday than the liturgical churches who use the lectionary.

That being said, sometimes I don't get the sense of a connection of a particular text (the lectionary provides a text from the Old Testament, a Psalm, a text from an

Epistle, and one from a Gospel) with the day in question. The Jeremiah text, however, is obviously appropriate for what the lectionary designates First Sunday of Advent (the days leading up to Christmas). You cannot miss the significance of the shepherd and the flocks, or the "Branch of righteousness" springing up in David, or the "good thing" God promised to His people, or the future salvation of Judah and Jerusalem with all that would entail: righteous governance, good will, security, peace — all pointers to Christmas themes indeed.

The arrival of the Savior among us is the opening theme of the New Testament, of course, but we often forget that the Christmas story was Israel's story first. Granted, a preacher will generally use Old Testament texts to show how the birth of Jesus was prophesied, or perhaps draw attention to types and foreshadows. However, a better way of finding and reading Christmas texts will show the Old Testament and the New coming





# IN DARKNESS WALKED GLORIOUS LIGHT; T IN SHADES OF DEATH ED HEAVENLY BRIGHT.

together to make one continuous story of God at work in the world.

The great New Testament letter writer gives us a demonstration in Romans, the first chapter:

- 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,  
2 (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures),  
3 concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;  
4 and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:  
5 by whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:  
6 among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.*

One thing we learn from these words is

that the coming, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a continuation of a story that began in the Old Testament. The same truth is given in Hebrews 1:1-2:

- 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,  
2 hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

Even in 1 Corinthians 15:1 and following, which is where many Bible students and preachers go to get a capsule definition of the gospel, there the formula goes like this: “Jesus died according to the scriptures, was buried, and rose the third day according to the scriptures.” And when Paul refers to the Scriptures in his epistles, he must be referring to the Old Testament Scriptures since the New Testament (certainly the Corinthian letter itself) was still in process at the time.

And all of this, Paul says in Romans 1:1-2, is the gospel (literally, good tidings — you will want to remember that) of God that He had promised.

Promised to whom? We all know the story of the creation of Adam, and we know how sin entered the world, and we are aware of the consequences. We know of the murders, the evils, the idolatry, to the point that at one time God destroyed all but just a bit of creation in the flood. And even after that, sin and its curse continued to reign. And then, God takes a man and designates him to be the father of a new kind of humanity — a nation of people that in some way will absorb the curse of sin and provide a blessing in its place. The exact details are not spelled out at first, but it involves a set of promises to the nation that will culminate in sin being destroyed and a restoration of the world the way God intended it — and those details are unraveled as the Old Testament proceeds.

God told Abraham that beginning with

him as the patriarch, He would make a great nation. This nation of people, we learn later, would be instructed in God's way, and they would show the world holiness and devotion. In return, God was to exalt them and bless them, and they would be entrusted with the treasure of salvation, and that nation who was to follow after their father Abraham was known as Israel.

But Israel failed. Not once but many times. Instead of being a light to the world, they themselves became increasingly sinful and idolatrous, and often forgot the God who made them. Examples of their sin and rebellion and faithlessness are listed time and again throughout the books of Moses. Things get better occasionally under kings like David and Solomon, but even those years are not picture perfect. And now, roughly 900 years after God had miraculously brought them out of Egypt into the Promised Land, they were hardly any different from the world around them.

This is the situation in which Israel and Jeremiah find themselves. From the second chapter of his prophecy:

*Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying,*

*2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*

*3 Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord.*

*4 Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel:*

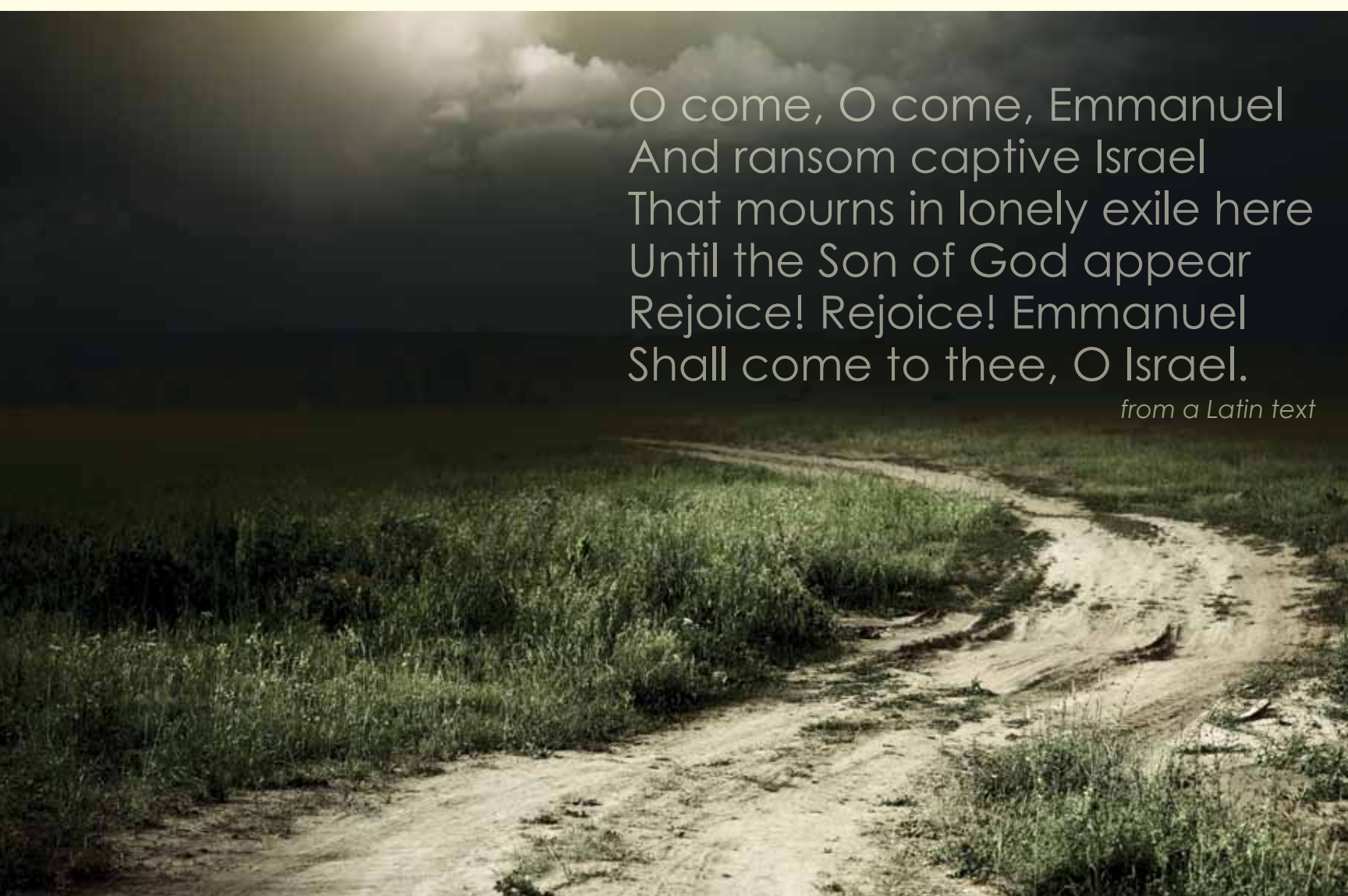
*5 Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?*

*6 Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?*

*7 And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof; but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.*

*8 The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

To bring you up to date, for about 100 years before these words were spoken, the empire in charge of this part of the world was Assyria. Israel, as a nation, had years before



O come, O come, Emmanuel  
And ransom captive Israel  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

*from a Latin text*



split politically just after Solomon, and the northern tribes had already been taken out by Assyria, leaving Judah (including the small tribe of Benjamin), alone as the only remnant of the once great nation of Israel. In the meantime, as all empires do, given time, Assyria was beginning to weaken and to crumble. Egypt was waiting for its chance to move in from the west, and the Babylonians were doing the same in the east. Judah was caught in the crossfire. You would think the situation would cause the population to turn to God, and in fact that did happen early in Jeremiah's life under King Josiah, but it was mostly superficial. In time, even those reforms were a memory. People in Judah were worshipping the gods of the other nations, killing their children in horrible human sacrifices, and giving themselves over to all forms of sexual sin.

Remember, these are the people with the Law of God, the promises in their history, Abraham as their father, blessed above all the people of the earth. And into this situation, God places his hand on a man named Jeremiah, to whom God gives a difficult message, much of which is recorded in the book bearing his name. The first part of that message is not surprising — the people are evil, and they should repent. The next part is surprising, (to us, at least, and probably to his countrymen) — whether they repent or not, the nation is doomed, and Jeremiah says they should just get used to living in Babylon (see Jeremiah 29:4-7). Get on with life, he says, and raise your families and work your farms — you will be there a while.

They were, Jeremiah maintains, living on the edge of an abyss, ready for a final plunge. And what is the response? Should we expect the prophet's countrymen to turn as the pagans did in Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah? Hardly. Some denied the reality before their eyes. Others cried out for Jeremiah's execution. Not a soul could believe it. Until it actually began.

The destruction came in stages, a succession of upheavals with some brief respites here and there. This is all documented in Jeremiah and the historical records in the Bible. Finally, when we arrive at Jeremiah 33, the stage is set, and the end is near. There is some big-time political jockeying between Egypt and Babylon (Assyria was already a

## Jeremiah 29:4-7

4 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

7 And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

memory) with Judah in the middle, but there could only be one big dog in that part of the world. As Jeremiah 33 opens, the prophet is in prison, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar are advancing on Jerusalem, and soon, according to the early verses in the chapter, corpses will fill the streets, fields will be bereft of flocks, the fields will be left unattended, filled with weeds and brush, and *desolation* is the only word that comes to the mind. Any hope of a future is gone.

And then — hope! Right there in the text. In the midst of the desolation, God declares, "I will perform that good thing which I have promised!" And shepherds and flocks, lots of them, will cover the land. "Flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them." That's one sign that God is at work performing what He had promised. But there is more.

An heir to the throne of David, a Branch of righteousness will grow out of what looked to be a dead stump. A descendant of David will come and with him will come Justice. Righteousness. Deliverance. Salvation. Safety for those taken out and far away from the abyss where their sin had taken them. And maybe even some political and geographical rethink about what it means to the people of God.

Looking at Christmas through the eyes of Jeremiah the prophet, or through the lens of the Old Testament, helps to explain something about Christmas music. I have always felt the best Christmas music, at least in my judgment, is found in those songs that are full of the longing and expectation of the prophets of the Old Testament. Mind you, we non-liturgical types have lost a great many of them, trading them in for "hymns" filled with dubious facts or sentimentality — songs about three kings and a baby that seems not to cry come to mind.

Anyway, there are some Christmas hymns still around reflecting Jeremiah's thinking. I'm thinking of "Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel," or "Come thou long expected Jesus," or "Nations that long in darkness walked."

Actually, the first Christmas hymns we see in the New Testament reflect these Old Testament themes as they reflect what was happening in and around Judah 2,000 years ago.

Take the song of Mary in Luke 1, sung just

after meeting Elisabeth who was carrying in her womb John the Baptist. Her song does not sound much like the more popular Christmas songs. It turns out God has little interest in making just anyone's day "merry and bright," but He does show mercy to those who fear Him, Mary sings. What follows is praise for God who turns circumstances upside down, makes things right, and fulfills all his promises to Israel — much as Jeremiah 33 indicates. And, remember that this song is sung in reference to the child Mary carries in her body, the one we know as Jesus, that is, Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise of God.

A little later in Luke's text, Zacharias, the husband of Elizabeth and father of the newborn John, confirms Mary's words when he sings a Christmas song after God loosens his tongue in Luke 1:

68 *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he  
hath visited and redeemed his people,*  
69 *and hath raised up an horn of salvation for  
us in the house of his servant David;*  
70 *as he spake by the mouth of his holy  
prophets, which have been since the world  
began:*  
71 *that we should be saved from our enemies,*  
*and from the hand of all that hate us;*  
72 *to perform the mercy promised to our  
fathers, and to remember his holy  
covenant;*  
73 *the oath which he sware to our father  
Abraham,*  
74 *that he would grant unto us, that we being  
delivered out of the hand of our enemies  
might serve him without fear,*  
75 *in holiness and righteousness before him, all  
the days of our life.*

Here we have quite a package from the Old Testament: God has visited the earth; He redeems His people; He has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of David — may we pause here for a moment and see what is in this box Zacharias is opening for us?

The David reference is not mysterious.

We saw it in Jeremiah 33: a Branch of righteousness is to come from David's lineage. However, when Zachariah sings of a horn of salvation coming from David's house, he is using a metaphor not familiar to our western ears. It is a familiar term in the Old Testament, however, and one that comes up in prophetic texts. It is a symbol of power and authority, and the picture is not a horn for blowing, but one for fighting and protecting, as in the animal world.

And then notice the tense Zacharias is using. John is a newborn, and the coming of Jesus in the stable is months off, and yet Zacharias speaks of the visiting and redeeming as already accomplished. Finally, he connects the entire event with the prophets (as in Jeremiah 33) and the promise of God to Abraham (I can't think of Abraham's name coming up in any Christmas music I've ever heard), which is the point Paul made in Romans 1.

Funny thing, isn't it, to see so much about Israel around Christmas time? But we're not quite through yet.

25 *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem,*  
*whose name was Simeon; and the same*  
*man was just and devout, waiting for the*  
*consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost*  
*was upon him.*  
26 *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy*  
*Ghost, that he should not see death, before*  
*he had seen the Lord's Christ.*  
27 *And he came by the Spirit into the temple:*  
*and when the parents brought in the child*  
*Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the*  
*law,*  
28 *then took he him up in his arms, and*  
*blessed God, and said,*  
29 *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in*  
*peace, according to thy word:*  
30 *for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,*  
31 *which thou hast prepared before the face of*  
*all people;*  
32 *a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory*  
*of thy people Israel.*

Simeon, the text says, was anticipating the "consolation of Israel." This is another way of saying Messiah, and it is typical Old Testament language. Rabbis would sometimes refer to the promised Messiah by name as Menachem, or Comforter, and the idea is not far from that used by Jesus when he promised "another comforter" in his Upper Room discourse in John, chapters 14 through 16. At any rate, what we are looking at in Simeon's song is his declaration that he was holding in his arms the fulfilled promise of God: salvation for Israel, certainly, but also salvation for the entire world.

When you combine the elements of the songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon, you have a better understanding of what took place among the shepherds in the fields just outside Bethlehem and the exchange between them and the angels in Luke 2:

10 *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for,*  
*behold, I bring you good tidings of great*  
*joy, which shall be to all people.*  
11 *For unto you is born this day in the city of*  
*David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

And the final phrase given by the angelic multitude is the announcement — peace on earth and good will among men — an echo of Jeremiah 33 and the promise of peace and safety. The coming of Jesus was and is the hope of Israel, and the hope of the entire world.

Today millions still find themselves living on the edge of an abyss — spiritually, emotionally, economically, politically — and there is little hope the present world can offer since we continue to be the children of Adam. Let those of us who are also children of God join with Jeremiah, Mary, Zacharias, Simeon, Paul, the shepherds, and the angels this Christmas season, and anticipate a day when Messiah fully reigns over the cosmos. And until that day comes, let us make a place for Him in our hearts and lives so we can change the bits of the world entrusted to each of us.

Come, thou long expected Jesus, born to set thy people free;  
from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation, hope of all the earth thou art;  
dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart.

- Charles Wesley



## Christina Fulmer | **Kenya**

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Since the inauguration of President Kenyatta, the crime rate has risen from 38 percent to 58 percent. There has been an alarming increase in home invasions and street robberies in broad daylight. One of our missionaries was shot, we believe with a blank, as he returned home Sunday afternoon. We never take safety and protection for granted here in Kenya. Thank you for praying for each of us as we serve the Lord and represent you in an increasingly hostile world.

## Tony & Joy Anzalone | **Ecuador**

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Zonia was one of the first members of our church in Manta back in 2005. She was a faithful witness of Christ. In 2008 she lost her battle with cancer and graduated to the presence of the Lord. During her illness she led Viviana to the Lord and did a great job of teaching her the path of discipleship. Viviana has grown tremendously, and is now one of our faithful children's ministry teachers. She also studies in the Thursday night Bible institute. She has witnessed to her family members, and some of them have come to Christ. Her brother Emilio was saved a couple of years ago on the first Sunday after he was released from a drug rehabilitation center. Last Sunday he, his wife, and another sister were baptized. Pray for Emilio. God is using him to share the good news in rehab centers and addiction clinics.

## Bill & Cindy Hargis | **USLG**

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Anabel is a young lady that accepted Christ in our Norwood congregation several years ago. Last week she came to me and expressed a desire to help disciple some of the new converts. We supplied her with some material and each week she is now meeting with three new converts taking them through the growing process. What a blessing to see God continually work and bring our congregation together.

## Bob & Verna Griggs | **Ute Indians**

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A little while ago, as I was getting the mail at the post office, I heard a lady say, "Is that you?" I looked to see who was speaking and was astonished to see a Southern Ute lady who had been in our ministry. The last time I had seen her she was going to Chicago. She began to weep as she told me how the Lord had drawn her to Himself and what a joy it is to walk with Him. She said, "Oh if only I had listened to the messages you preached and yielded to the Lord then how different my life would have been. It is so wonderful to be right with the Lord and live each day yielded to His will and allowing Him to be Lord in my life." Others were in the post office walking by and so many were witnessed to by the joy that she shared concerning the Lord. When I shared with Verna, we both rejoiced in how the seed sown years before was producing fruit to the glory of the Lord! Truly our labor is not in vain in the Lord!

## Lance & Amy Auterson | **France**

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After coming to understand and accept what Christ did on the cross for our sins, Corrine's heart was clearly touched. She stated warmly, "God gave His very best for me, He gave what was most precious to Him when He sent His son to die on the cross for my sins. I just can't help but share that with others!" She then proceeded to invite a couple of friends for tea and share with them this precious gift that she had found. Since then, she has been faithfully coming to church and usually brings her two children with her. Last week, her husband Phillip, who wants nothing to do with religion in general, came to church with the family! Please pray for Phillip's salvation as well as that of their children, Morgan and Dylan.

## Roy & Anna Hendrickson | **England**

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David Butler (84 years old) trusted Christ as his savior during a morning service. We had been praying for David's salvation for nearly ten years. He uses a wheelchair, has limited sight, and has difficulty hearing. My sermon concerned the widow of Zarephath, Elijah's witness, and God's healing of the widow's son. The widow said, "Behold, now I know..." As I gave the appeal, I included that phrase and asked, "Wouldn't you like to know ... Jesus as your savior?" David's hearing was sufficient for him that day. He raised his hand and asked me to pray with him as he asked for salvation. His spiritual eyes were opened, and though frail in body, he became a new creation as evidenced by the smile on his face. Your prayers and support are a part of David's journey to Jesus.

## Jonathan & Joanna Liggett | **Italy**

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"There is no hope in my business. There is no hope in the economy." These words came from our friend Claudio, a struggling business owner in Rome. He employs only his relatives and recently has had to let two of them go because he can no longer afford to pay them. He said it is very difficult to not take his work home with him since everyone there works for him. As he seeks to make sense of what is currently going on in the Italian economy and his business, he is beginning to search for where he can find hope. Please pray as we build a deeper relationship with him and tell him that true hope can only be found in Christ.

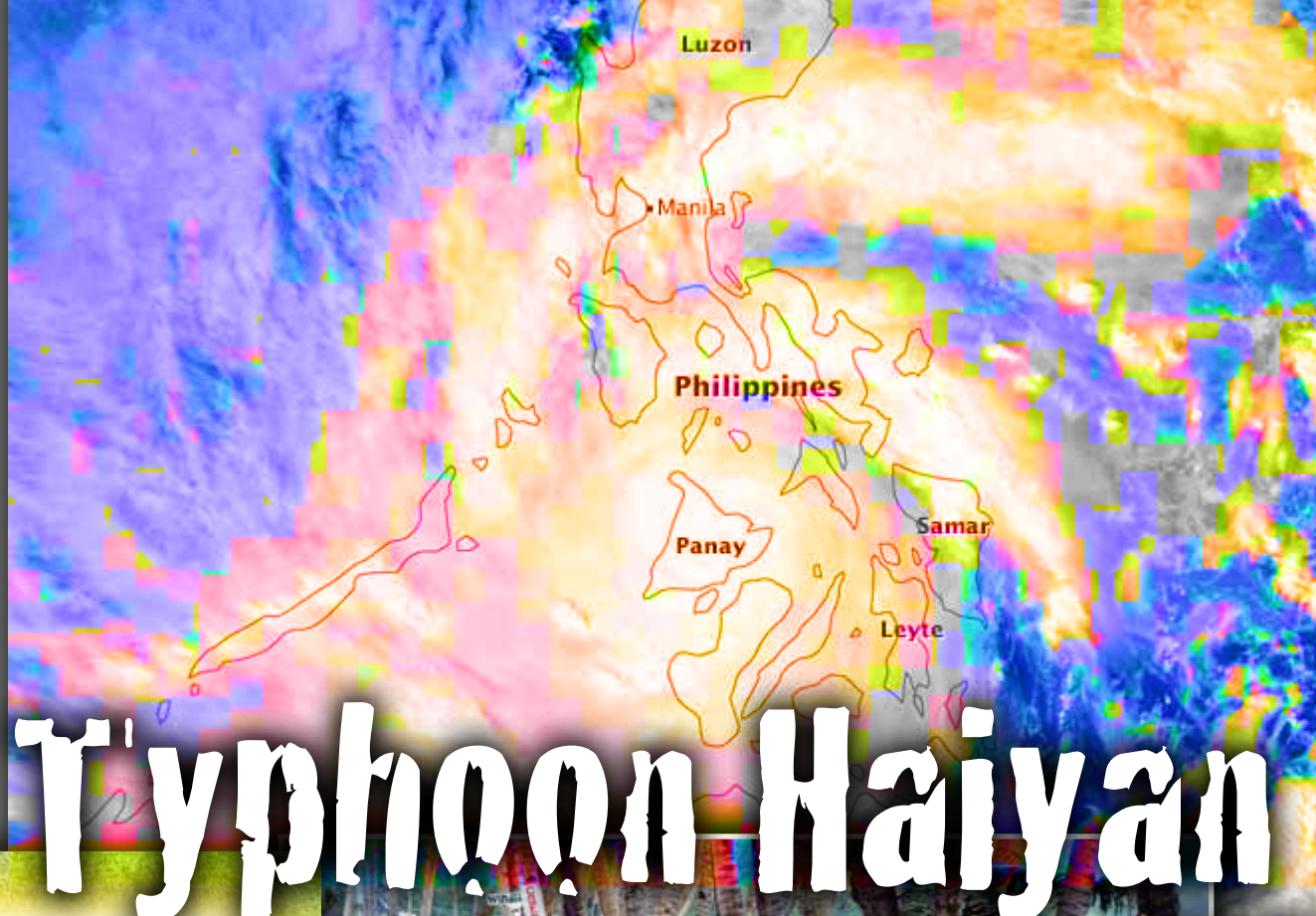
## Scott & Kristi Hudgins | **Colombia**

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It is always wonderful to see young people grow in the Lord and take steps of obedience, especially when they are your own kids. A few months ago, our 13-year-old daughter Joy was finally able to serve as a volunteer at our evangelistic camps. She enjoyed serving by cleaning bathrooms, the dining hall, and the coliseum. She was able to observe others sharing the plan of salvation during the invitation. However, the highlight of her time there was having the opportunity to lead three girls to Christ. She was so excited about the opportunity. It is such a privilege having our children work right alongside us in the ministry He has given us as a family.

Just a few days before the *Tribune* went to press, Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines at 5 a.m. local time, November 7. Relief efforts had already been underway because of an earthquake that hit the islands of Cebu and Bohol in mid-October, but nothing could have prepared the Filipinos for Haiyan. Some predicted wind gusts of up to 235 miles per hour, and unlike the momentary strike of a tornado, a typhoon can make its presence felt for days.

Here is a sample taken from some emails received from BBFI missionaries just after the typhoon moved on to mainland Asia.



#### BOYD AND DONNA LYONS

The super typhoon did not pass through Manila where Donna and I live. We did get some winds and rain but no damage. Thank you for praying for us. We did not know how bad we might be hit with the storm.

I have two pastors on the Island of Samar and Leyte who were hit very, very hard by the eye of the typhoon. I received a text that they were in storm signal four, highest in the Philippines, and were experiencing strong winds. It has been four days and I cannot contact either one of the pastors. I am sure that their church was damaged or completely destroyed. I do not know if they are safe right now.



#### JON STEFFY

Here in Iloilo we experienced wind speed of 135 kph on Friday afternoon. We were without power for several hours. Roxas City to the north of us was directly hit and the city was destroyed. I am still waiting to hear how our churches survived as communication has been cut off. We have also been gathering info on the terrible destruction in Leyte/Samar. There is one pastor friend of mine in Leyte/Samar along with his wife who drowned in the storm surge. The storm surge was approaching tsunami heights close to 20 feet high.

I found out today that at least two of our churches in northern Iloilo were completely destroyed. I would like to make a trip there on Thursday or Friday to assess the damage and bring relief supplies like drinking water, and rice, and canned foods, etc. So I need to get some money quick to get these supplies so we can bring them when we go to assess the damage and take pictures of the damage. Communication is hard to these places because they don't have electricity to charge cell phones even if the cell towers are up and operating, which many may not be. All landline phones are down.



NOEL CELIS/AFP/Getty Images



### JOHN QUINLAN

We are fine as we are located quite north of where the typhoon hit. We got some hard rain and a little wind, but nothing out of the norm.

We do have some pastors and churches in the typhoon area; some we have heard from and some we have not. As of this date we know of three churches who have lost their buildings plus the pastors' houses. All have some damage but are thankful for their lives and that their buildings are still standing.

One of the pastors has been trying to contact the pastors in his area. He keeps in contact with us about it. Yesterday, he and some of his members drove to check on some of the pastors and take them some food. He said they could only go so far as the roads were covered in trash. They went home before dark as there is no power and for safety because some will do anything for food.

The greatest devastation is in Tacloban and Samar. We have some missionary friends there and they are okay but have lost everything. There have been several of their people who have lost their lives. Their church building is not completely destroyed but heavily damaged. The pastor in Samar we have not been able to contact.



Nove foto da Firenze

### GREG LYONS

Our team is involved in relief efforts with our contacts on Cebu Island. If some BBFI churches would like to help, we will be facilitating some clean water systems as well as relief goods to areas around Cebu.

We are specifically focusing on Bantayan Island that was devastated by that storm. Bantayan Island is north of Cebu Island. This is an area that may be overlooked by the larger relief efforts. Initial reports are that 600 people who were gathered in an evacuation center died when the center's roof collapsed. Most of the major structures and houses were destroyed by the storm. Our partners are mobilizing some temporary housing tents, water, and supplies to help with immediate needs. We continue to pray for the thousands of families that have been affected by the storm. There will be much needed over the next few months.



REUTERS/Erik De Castro

### DEL HOOGE

We are fine — about 600 miles from storm center. Dozens of churches/schools and homes destroyed or damaged. We are doing a comprehensive assessment of needs and any help will be appreciated.

One of our national missionaries and his wife were killed by the storm. The family members here in Manila are headed down into the area for services.

### LANCE GOTCHER

This is the worst recorded natural disaster ever in the Philippines and that's saying something. We are fine here in Manila but we are getting some supplies together and trying to get them to Tacloban by boat. We have been in contact with the Jesalvas in Cebu and are trying to coordinate relief work through them. The office of the president told people tonight to not go there right now because it is too dangerous.

We hope to actually get some supplies there by the end of the week and then do follow-up work, but I will keep you updated as to the plans and the need.

Kent Jesalva told me they have lost at least two churches they know of on the island of Leyte but there are many pastors they have not heard from yet.

A couple from Bethany Baptist in Makati who pastored on Leyte died in the storm — Pastor Ed and Janet Ragracias. That information came through Del Hooge.

It looks like on Leyte, many people lost everything. There will be a lot of work to do in the coming weeks. Thanks for your concern and prayers for the Philippines in its darkest hour.

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**Those who want to help with Philippines relief effort may donate online at [www.BBFIMissions.com](http://www.BBFIMissions.com).  
You may also send a check marked "Disaster Relief Fund" to: BBFI Mission Office, PO Box 802757, Kansas City, MO 64180-2757.**

## Vladimir & Debbie Lukyanov | **Russia**

Our daughter Sasha came to us a couple weeks ago and shared how she was telling her friend, Dasha, about the Lord. Dasha accepted Christ! Though we are not allowed to invite any children to church without parental permission, and most parents will not allow their children to come since churches that aren't Russian Orthodox are considered cults, our kids still have the opportunity to share Christ with their friends. I see it as one of the best evangelism tools God has given us.

## Steve & Pam Workman | **Botswana**

Sometimes witchdoctors don't have wild looks in their eyes and chant incantations as you walk by. Sometimes they don't wear animal skins and feathers and dance around a fire. Sometimes they show up at your church with their family. He wore a white shirt and a big smile. His wife was kind and friendly and his children were adorable. He didn't fit the profile of a witchdoctor, but there he was, sitting attentively in the back row. After church he introduced himself as P and told me he would be back next Sunday. And he was! And the next Sunday, and the next.

That Sunday he asked if he could talk to me. When we met he began to unfold his life's story. He had been a successful accountant, but lost his job when the economy went south. Now he was pushing 60 years old and nobody wanted an old accountant. Discouraged and broke, he happened upon an idea. He would train to be a "traditional doctor" as we call them here. There are many of them and the most powerful are well known and feared. They can make things happen that can only be explained as demonic, and to be trained by them means money and power.

P admitted he was not the best traditional doctor — he had trouble recalling what to say and do, and what he had seen scared him! He stopped his training, but began receiving threats if he didn't return — you can't just walk away from such things.

Now, sitting in my office, P felt afraid and depressed. He couldn't find a job to support his family, and now he was a failure as a traditional doctor. With nowhere to turn he was told about our church. He liked what he was experiencing and his family loved the church. He had no other place to turn. I asked him about his relationship with God and P admitted he didn't have one. I took my Bible and walked him through the plan of salvation. I told him about the power of the cross and Christ's power over Satan. It was welcome news to him! When I asked him if he would like to accept Christ as his Savior, he didn't hesitate.

When P looked up from praying, he shot his smile at me. His life had finally changed for the better. We talked a while longer, shook hands, and he left. And then, he disappeared! He missed church the next Sunday and would not answer his phone. His wife said he was away for a while, but would not tell me where he had gone. Finally, four weeks later, he reappeared — he had gone into hiding from the man who had been training him.

P still has a long way to go in his walk with the Lord. But he is growing and faithful. His children attend the youth camps and bring their friends, and his wife is always by his side at church. Pray for them and all our new converts. Great things are happening in Botswana!

## Beau & Valerie Moore | **Portugal**

Duarte, the son of a lady who has been attending our Tuesday night ladies' class for the past few months, was not one of the three kids that were saved at camp this year. But, he did call Beau within a few days after camp asking how to read the Bible and where he should start. Beau has talked to Duarte about setting up some one-on-one time with him in the near future. We are praying for Duarte's salvation!

## Andy & Lisa Simpson | **Taiwan**

Seven years ago, a young man in his 30s who we learned to call Bee came to Taiwan from Thailand to study in the science department at a university near Dali Faith Baptist Church. When he first came, he couldn't speak English or Chinese, and being raised in a traditional Buddhist family he knew nothing about the gospel ... but then another college student invited him to come to our church and the Lord completely changed Bee's life. We are so privileged to be a witness to God's miraculous working and to be His instruments in all that He has done. We can remember the day Bee told us he wanted to believe in Jesus Christ as his savior, and then when he told us that he wanted to be baptized despite his father's opposition. It was a blessing to see him desire to serve the Lord as a song leader in the English service even though his English was still a bit shaky. And then just last month Bee volunteered to teach the Wednesday Bible study for Andy in both English and Chinese. And so it was with tears of joy and sorrow that Bee stood in one of our recent services and gave glory to the Lord for all He has done in his life and asked us to pray for him as he returns to Thailand to be a university professor, marry a fine young Christian lady, and continue to be a witness to his family and his countrymen. So, I guess that makes Dali Faith Baptist Church his "sending church!" Please join us in praying for Bee to be strong in the Lord and to be greatly used of Him.

## Linda Fitzgerald | **Germany**

I was very surprised when a visitor to Extreme Day came up to me and asked if I was one of the ladies who'd held a VBS outdoors in Travis Park ten years ago. Rudy said his brother had wanted him to come to church, but he was not interested. He had, however, come to VBS. Through that, Renae and I played a role in his salvation a few years later. Rudy thanked me for our service. I was overjoyed to have helped sow the seed of God's Word in his heart. Now he's serving in a church and feels called to help reach alcoholics. What a joy! Sometimes it takes a long time before our labors are rewarded. Were the hours of preparation and prayers for the VBS worth it? I reply with a resounding, "Yes!"

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## Austin, TX, church struggles through loss ...and ministers in midst of flood disaster

**F**irst Independent Baptist Church suffered major damage when Austin, TX, received more than a foot of rain overnight and into the early morning October 31. The church, pastored by Mike Marcellus, was partially submerged when Onion Creek reached its 100-year flood plain.

Marcellus, the church's founder, was at the church waiting for the water to recede and to begin neighborhood relief efforts early in the day. Within hours, help began to flow from nearby churches, both in the form of manpower and funds, and First Baptist became the defacto disaster relief center.

Marcellus reported, "Home Depot, HEB (grocery stores), and other merchants have dropped off supplies. Private donations continue pouring in and we distribute items 24/7 as requested, or the neighbors come to the church for food, water, clothing, cleaning supplies, etc. We have also been acquiring dumpsters, contacting city and county officials, FEMA, and even the governor's

office. Our people, on top of working at the church, have been out in the community assisting and serving our neighbors. I'm so proud of our people." He also said Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton pledged the support of his office for rebuilding and relief.

Many film crews and media people came through the area and Marcellus gave several interviews. He says, "Each one gave a positive report of our church and ministry. Even though we have had a solid relationship with most of our community, never before have our neighbors embraced our church so emphatically." The church had witnessed to a next-door neighbor 25 years without a response, and the weekend after the flood she accepted Christ and united with the church. Marcellus is reporting other ministry successes in the wake of the disaster.

The church facilities themselves are heavily damaged, and the buildings' contents are destroyed. Marcellus estimates it will take about \$100,000 to replace the contents alone.

Churches, both in and out of the Fellowship, are sending funds. A Christian businessman has given \$10,000, and he and Century Charity are promising a \$25,000 matching donation. As the *Tribune* went to press, \$8,000 of that had already been raised. Another acquaintance has promised a baby grand piano to the church.

In the midst of the crisis, Marcellus is encouraged. He says, "I could go on and on, God's blessing are falling. We lost everything, so anything will help, and everyone's little bit will add up quickly. God has always provided for us and always will."

Some have wondered how this event will affect the BBFI Midwinter Meeting in Austin, scheduled for February. Pastor Marcellus, who has been directing the preparations for the meeting, assures the *Tribune* that nothing has changed since the meeting venue is a convention center. The meeting itself is being hosted by the Texas State Fellowship, and many people are involved in the preparations.





# HISTORY

# BAPTIST

DANIEL MERRILL – *The Congregationalist who became a Baptist*

Daniel Merrill was born March 18, 1765, in Rowley, MA, into a deeply religious family. His father was the head deacon in the Rowley Congregationalist Church, and two of his brothers were Congregationalist ministers. Daniel was converted when he was 13 years old and, before reaching his 16th birthday, he enlisted in the American Revolutionary struggle and served with distinction and honor. At the conclusion of the war, he returned to Rowley and began praying about his future.

Believing God called him into the ministry, he enrolled at Dartmouth College in about 1782. He completed his studies in 1789 with two degrees and finished at the top of his class. After graduation, he studied theology with a neighboring pastor and did some preaching in and about Rowley and some of the adjoining states.

Merrill's opportunities were unlimited. Some of the largest churches in New England were interested in calling him as their pastor. However, Merrill, like the apostle Paul, refused to build on other men's foundations. He chose instead to begin an itinerant ministry in the wilderness of Maine. Success followed his efforts and revival broke out in every community where he preached. One of his greatest successes occurred in Sedgwick, ME. In 1793, he returned to Sedgwick and was installed as pastor of the newly established church. The church experienced rapid growth becoming the largest congregation in Maine.

Merrill's personal knowledge about Baptists was limited. Most of what he knew came from fellow Congregationalist ministers, and it was extremely negative. In about 1800, several itinerant Baptist ministers began holding meetings in the Sedgwick area. Merrill found them to be men of God, sound in the faith except for their beliefs about baptism, he thought. The Baptists caused quite a stir among the Congregationalists resulting in several of Merrill's members embracing Baptist doctrine. Merrill was not angry at the Baptists, but he saw this as an opportunity to educate his people and convince the Baptists of the error of their doctrine about baptism.

Merrill planned to preach a series of sermons to his people proving from scripture that infant baptism was taught in God's Word. He also planned to write a book that would convince the Baptists of their errors and the correctness of the Congregationalist's faith. He began studying day and night searching the Scriptures from Genesis

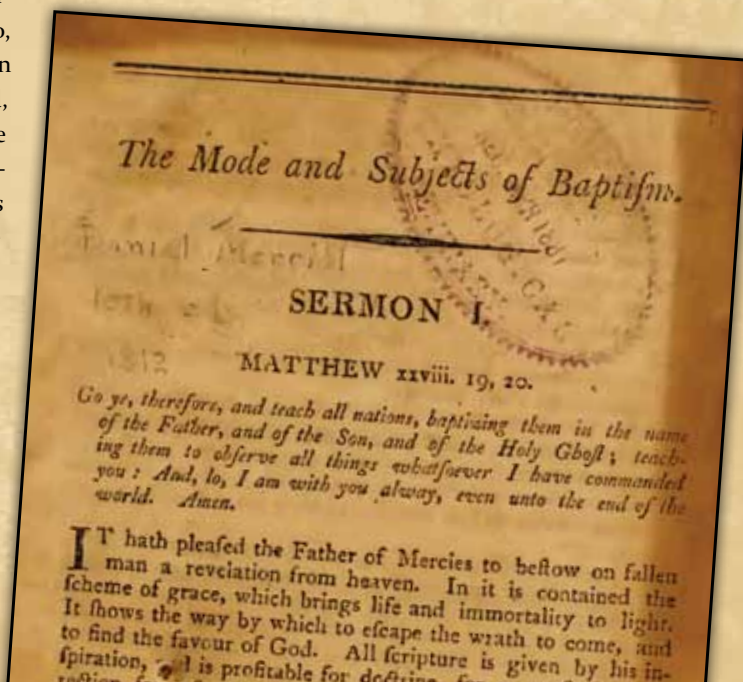
to Revelation, and to his amazement, he soon discovered that infant baptism was not based on the unerring Word of God but was a doctrine invented by fallible men.

He was convinced that infant baptism was unscriptural but the thought of becoming a Baptist was unthinkable. He continued to read, pray, fast, and meditate, but he still could not embrace the Baptist position. Finally, he yielded and submitted unconditionally to the will of God, and the darkness disappeared, and he found peace.

Merrill began a seven-week series of sermons on the subject of baptism. At the conclusion of the series the church voted almost unanimously to become a Baptist church. Dr. Thomas Baldwin, pastor of Second Baptist in Boston, came to Sedgwick, and on May 14, 1805, he baptized Merrill and 66 of his members, and 23 more the next day. A council was called, and the former Congregational church was constituted into a Baptist church and Merrill was ordained a pastor.

He would publish his book, not to expose Baptist errors, but to proclaim the truth of Baptist practices and the error of pedobaptist doctrine. Merrill's books and his preaching had a great impact, especially upon pedobaptists, with numbers of them embracing Baptist principles. The impact of Merrill's ministry reached far beyond Sedgwick. He was one of the founders of Colby College, and he served several terms in the Legislature and on the Governor's Council, but he never neglected his calling. He finally succumbed to a lingering illness on June 2, 1833, in his 68th year.

by Thomas Ray







# URBAN CURRENT

## Babylon and Bethlehem

**G**olden Babylon. Mighty Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar said, “Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?”

Thanks to German archeologist Robert Koldewey, who excavated at Babylon for nearly two decades in the early 1900s, we know quite a bit of the grandeur of this ancient city.

Nebuchadnezzar engaged in aggressive building projects constructing walls, temples, and palaces with bricks inscribed “I am Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.”

During his reign, the city spread over 8.5 square kilometers, making it the largest ancient Mesopotamian city. The city was divided into ten quarters or districts boasting at least 53 temples plus other shrines or religious buildings.

The center of Babylon was enclosed by triple walls and straddled the river Euphrates. Anyone entering passed through one of eight gateways — the most splendid by far was the Ishtar Gate, which controlled the processional road leading to the main temples. This gate had walls decorated with magical animals molded in relief in the brickwork, glazed yellow and brown against a blue background. A road led from this gate about a half mile to the temples of the god of Babylon, Marduk, commonly called Bel, Lord.

According to Nebuchadnezzar’s own records and the report of the Greek writer Herodotus, one of the temples had the walls of the holy place covered with gold and featured a great gold-plated bed and throne for the god. Local priests told Herodotus over 20 tons of gold had been used for the temple and its furniture. Rituals in the temple reportedly required over two tons of imported frankincense each year.

Babylon — big, potent, godless, trying to kill the believers who wouldn’t bow to the golden image. Yet right there in the furnace of trial, “the fourth man,” the Son of God, was present with

His people.

Scripture portrays Babylon as the epitome of man’s arrogance and the center of human wickedness. Yet, God allowed this heathen empire to destroy the nation of Judah and ravage Jerusalem, the city of God.

The Prophet Isaiah declared that Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the splendor and pomp of the Chaldeans, would become like Sodom and Gomorrah. The Revelation of John predicts that Babylon, symbol of the entire world system built on ego and lust, will be suddenly and completely destroyed in one day.

Contrast little Bethlehem — Jacob buried Rachel nearby, Boaz lived there, and the names of Obed, Jesse, and of course David, are forever connected with this ancient place. Originally called Ephrath (*fruitfulness*), Bethlehem (*house of bread*) overlooked the main highway to Hebron and Egypt. Shepherds caused a stir there looking for the Savior. Two thousand years later, in the 20th century, shepherds again made their way to Bethlehem, this time carrying scrolls they had found in caves while caring for their flocks. Today, they are the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, and one of them was a copy of the book Isaiah, 1,000 years older than any copy of the day.

The Dead Sea Scroll find spoke to the veracity of the Old Testament and the reliability of current copies. The Christmas texts were there in those scrolls — Isaiah 7:14, “A virgin shall conceive ...” and Isaiah 9:6, “For unto you a child is born, unto us a Son is given ...” Let’s not be too hard on the Jews of Jesus’ day. They were looking for this mighty conqueror promised in the Old Testament. How could they know there were at least 2,000 years between that first phrase in Isaiah 9:6 and the rest of the verse?

Again, contrast “Babylon the great” with Bethlehem, “... too little to be among the clans of Judah” (Micah 5:2). Isn’t God forever turning our thinking upside down? Isn’t God the God of

small things and weak things? Those things easy to overlook: the seed of the woman, a couple too old to bear children, the forgotten youngest son of Jesse, a stone from a slingshot, a Galilean peasant who turns out to be Messiah.

All around little Bethlehem, the levathan of the power of Rome was at work in a way remarkably similar to Babylon. The emperor mandates a census and the world must migrate to comply. Rome and Babylon always appear to have everything. Looking for an economic engine? Looking for innovative technology? Looking for the power that can make a difference in our world? Looking for the wealth that it takes to get things done? Anybody’s bet would be on the big and powerful Babylon, or Rome, or some similar great city, but not Bethlehem.

Healing for the nations? Transformation for individuals? Hope for families? Bethlehem did not appear to have anything to offer. Meanwhile Babylon brought more of what humanity had plenty of: man’s wisdom, man’s power, man’s glitz and glamour, man’s pride.

And from Bethlehem comes God’s promise, God’s plan. God chose Bethlehem as the entry point for a supernatural, extraterrestrial deliverer bringing good news to the whole world.

God uses the little, the least, the last.

And when that happens, there’s no contest. Bethlehem beats Babylon.



by Charles Lyons, Pastor  
Armitage Baptist Church,  
Chicago, Illinois  
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## All I want for Christmas is...



by Mark Milioni | President | Baptist Bible College

I have never really been a Christmas list kind of guy. When someone asked what I wanted for Christmas I would generally say, “Whatever.” Not my kids. They would begin making out their Christmas lists at the beginning of November so that it was ready in time for Black Friday. One of my boy’s favorite pranks involved stealing their sister’s Christmas list and changing it. Her Christmas list has always included the extravagant, from wanting a cell phone, to a MacBook, to a specific kind of car. Imagine our surprise one year when her list read:

1. Little House on the Prairie TV series.
2. A lime green pair of gauchos.
3. A cat.

We thought it was funny. She was not amused.

This led to a great conversation. Why do you ask for such extravagant gifts? Her answer, “You never know what you might get unless you ask. The Bible says that you have not because you ask not. I will keep asking so that I can be blessed.” Looking back, I realize she is right. She now has a cell phone, a MacBook, and a great car. Blessed indeed. As her father, I have experienced the joy of being able to give her the gifts that she really desired.

With that thought in mind, I made out a Christmas list for Baptist Bible College. The list does not include fruitcakes for the staff or a lovely knickknack, but the extravagant. Extravagant because these are things that we truly need but are simply beyond the means of our budget this year. Maybe you are looking for a way to be a blessing to someone this Christmas. Would you, your family, your church, or your Sunday school class consider giving a special gift from our Christmas list to BBC this year?

### BBC Christmas Wish List:

New lighting in W.E. Dowell Fieldhouse	\$35,000
New scoreboard in Fieldhouse	\$35,000
Travel team sound system	\$10,000
Heat and a/c repairs	\$10,000
Media computers	\$8,000
Main parking lot repair	\$7,000
New mattresses	\$7,000
Tools for maintenance	\$3,000
Landscaping	\$2,000
Parking lot light repair	\$2,000
Paint	\$2,000

Christmas is a time of extravagant giving. It began when God gave the most extravagant, greatest gift of all times, His only son. Emmanuel, God with us. God gave His son, who gave his life as a ransom for us. Your gift to BBC this Christmas will help us continue to share the news of God’s gift for generations to come.

From all of us at Baptist Bible College, Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

## Christmas is for Him and us



by David Melton | President | Boston Baptist College

This is the best time of year. Even in a society that is hesitant to say “Merry Christmas” any longer, deep down ... it is obvious. Jesus made and makes all things better.

We all know that historically and chronologically the December 25 observance is nothing more than a guess, some might even say a synthesis. For me, that matters little. It’s an opportunity to focus on Jesus.

The Christmas season is “low season” for us in college work. Everything else gets hectic, but at Boston Baptist College not much happens. Students head to their homes for a couple of weeks. We even shut down the whole operation for a few days. It gives us a great chance to take time for Him. We will work to remind our college family to make the Christmas season His season.

Yet, in no way diminishing the Incarnate Lord, Christmas is the time for Him and for us. The Christmas story is replete with the community of Christmas. Mary could have that precious baby, with only Joseph there to assist (apparently). But in the heart of the Heavenly Father, Christmas, from its origin, was about a broader “us.” Shepherds, at the direction of those angels, leave their third shift to worship the newborn Savior. They seem to be the first converts of the hours-old Savior! The best guess is that one of those shepherds shares his home with Jesus and Joseph and Mary — so that when the Magi arrive some time later, they find the Child “in the house.” Those Magi add to the Christmas community, a lesson I see for all of us. Something so joyous as the gift of Christ is not for mere solitude. Worship Him personally, to be sure, but find in Him a common denominator to create an “us.”

I see “us” every day. When I walk the halls of our campus I try to remember that we come from all over the place. Sure there is Bobby, and Devonne, and David from Massachusetts. But “we” are also Jillian from Michigan, Mike from Kansas, Brent from Ohio, Drake from Virginia, Jeremiah from North Carolina, Carolina from Texas (that was too fun not to write!), Megan from New Hampshire, Rachel from Maine, Trisha from Florida, Keith from Missouri ... and on and on it goes. Us. And what binds us together, and binds us to you is Him. We come from all different places, all different stories; we have all kinds of issues, and all sorts of dreams. We come in all shapes and sizes, all levels of GPAs, all unique interests. But the Christmas event is what takes us from our individual worlds and brings us together. He does it. It started in that manger and now it happens on our college campus, and in your church, and in our network of churches. He is the greatest gift of all. But He is the gift that really does keep on giving. He gave us “us.” Merry Christmas ... God bless “us” every one!



SPRINGFIELD, MO

## BBC offers new Bachelor of Science in Biblical Counseling

By Kevin Carson

This fall Baptist Bible College began offering a new bachelors program in biblical counseling. This new degree responds to prospective students, BBFI missionaries and pastors who, over the past several years, have asked if BBC could offer an undergraduate degree in biblical counseling. Twenty students entered the new degree major with many others pursuing a biblical counseling minor. Tim Michalak, one of the new students in this degree program, commented, "I chose this degree because I want to effectively counsel people from God's Word to live life for His glory in the midst of tough circumstances."

The Bachelor of Science in Biblical Counseling prepares students to counsel individuals, couples, and families in a congregation, a counseling center, or a missions setting. The degree is designed for staff members, church leaders, missionaries, or volunteers.

The degree helps the student develop four key areas: personal character, counseling content, counseling skills, and understanding the unique ministry context. Paul observed these same qualities in the Roman believers, "And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14).

Regarding personal character development, the program is designed to encourage personal growth toward Christlikeness for God's honor in preparation for counseling others. Students will demonstrate the skills necessary for life-long growth toward Christlikeness by learning how to identify the need for and implement personal self-counsel.

In relationship to classroom coursework, the student will learn a basic knowledge of biblical counseling content. The program seeks to help the counselor understand the counselee in a particular situation with respect to God and others.

- Understanding God: basic theological foundations, the place and importance of the local church in counseling, the purpose and plan of God, the sufficiency of Christ and the Scriptures, the power and work of the Holy

Spirit in change, and a biblical philosophy of ministry

- Understanding the person: heart/inner man issues, motivation, interpersonal communication, problem solving
- Understanding the situation: key areas of suffering such as medical issues and abuse; key areas of sin such as fear, worry, anxiety, bitterness, anger, and moral impurity; key relationships such as marriage, parenting, and the workplace

Pertaining to counseling skills, the student learns ministry as it relates to the aspects of the local church.

- Key elements of biblical counseling: data gathering, discerning the problem, gaining involvement, providing biblical instruction, giving hope, discipleship, and personal accountability
- Comparison of counseling theories and methods
- Recognizing the mandate and ability to counsel in a cross-cultural context, including ethnic, socio-economic, and educational differences
- Observing and engaging in supervised biblical counseling

Biblical counseling students learn from an experienced and qualified faculty. Program faculty share the following characteristics:

- Years of experience in formal biblical counseling
- Years of experience in biblical counseling training
- Accredited degrees in the field
- Ongoing involvement in local church counseling ministry
- Maintains personal, professional, academic, and spiritual accountability

This new biblical counseling degree continues to demonstrate the commitment of Baptist Bible College to educate and train effective, Christlike leaders for ministry in a global context.

The Biblical Counseling Department of Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary is certified by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors ([www.biblicalcounseling.com](http://www.biblicalcounseling.com)). The department is also an organizational partner with the Biblical Counseling Coalition ([www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.com](http://www.biblicalcounselingcoalition.com)).

# THINK SUMMER!

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SPRINGFIELD, MO

## BBC hosts first conference for young men

Over 100 young men and youth leaders attended Primed, a conference designed specifically for young men, held October 4-5 on the campus of Baptist Bible College.

Primed was hosted by Caleb McClure, a recent BBC graduate, and Chris Todd, a current student. The teens were welcomed to campus in the Texas Auditorium with an opening service led by BBC's band, Breakaway, followed by a message from Pastor Lonnie Lehrman, a 1991 graduate of BBC and pastor of Granbury Baptist Church in Granbury, TX. Lehrman used the life of Samson to draw parallels between Samson's life and the dangers young men face. The men were then led to the cafeteria where they were encouraged to "Eat Like a Man." The evening concluded with a game of *Mano e Mano* dodge ball.

The conference continued Saturday morning with a challenge from BBC President Mark Milioni. Attendees were then given the opportunity to go to breakout sessions led by Rick Blue, Reuben Herrin, and Russell Kirkpatrick. The conference concluded with a final message from Pastor Lehrman.

It is reported that the success of Primed was shown in the results. Two young men were saved, several committed to becoming the men God wants them to be, and many expressed a desire to serve the Lord in full-time ministry. Primed received great reviews from those in attendance and from pastors who have seen a positive change in those who attended. Plan now to attend next year's conference October 3-4, 2014.



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SPRINGFIELD, MO

## Imagine 320: New drama group

Baptist Bible College and President Mark Milioni announce a new drama group, Imagine320, available for ministry.

Imagine 320 was started by Paul May, a new addition to BBC's staff this year. May is the leader of Clear Vision Drama Company that performs at many youth camps and other venues throughout the United States and is well known for the quality and intensity of their performances as they present the gospel and encourage discipleship.

Imagine320 is a sketch-based drama team comprised of six BBC students: Nicole Frericks, Edna Mancia, Kaylee McElroy, Jessica McKnight, Kyle Reedy, and Chris Todd. The group has trained and practiced since September. The group recently performed for the first time at Capitol City Baptist Church in Des Moines, IA, where BBC alumnus Mark Carter serves as pastor. Their presentation of the gospel resulted in 15 salvation decisions!

"This dynamic group of students is able to connect with your audience in minutes," says President Milioni. "Imagine320 will make your audience laugh — even while being challenged with Biblical truths — through their comedic sketches. Most importantly, they will use their talents as a tool to introduce your audience to the One who is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine."

To host Imagine320, contact Paul May at [pmay@gobbbc.edu](mailto:pmay@gobbbc.edu) or (417) 268-6000.

SPRINGFIELD, MO

## BBC Alumni Days – Next Generation Conference

Alumni Days at Baptist Bible College took on a new format this year with the Next Generation Conference held October 28-30 on the campus of BBC.

The three-day event featured BBC alumni Bryan Olden, worship leader, and Pastor Greg Dixon, speaker. Dixon shared the ups and downs of local church ministry and how God blessed and led Indianapolis Baptist Temple to start 18 churches around their city in the last ten years.

Breakout sessions were held by speakers Bryan Olden, Blake Housley, Carla Slayden, Herb Koonce, Lance Harrington, and Mark Frost on topics ranging from personal holiness, to building a church, to operating a Christian business. Students and alumni also enjoyed a cookout and bonfire.

BBC invites all alumni and friends to update their information at [www.bbcalumni.org](http://www.bbcalumni.org) and be a part of their next Alumni and Friends event!

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BANGOR, ME

## Bangor church opens new student center

Just in time for the school year to begin, Thrive Student Ministries, an outreach of Bangor Baptist Church, launched a new 8,000-square-foot, \$900,000 student center (see the January 2013 *Tribune* for story on groundbreaking). The open house and dedication included a ribbon-cutting ceremony, guided tours, light refreshments, and a brief dedication service that included Bangor Mayor Nelson Durgin, Chief of Police Mark Hathaway, and two state legislators.

Pastor Jerry Mick says, "The new Trudy Wilson Thrive Student Center is a building that gives the church the flexibility to meet numerous needs for students in the Bangor community. The building is named after Trudy Wilson, who along with her husband, foster-parented a number of students in our community. Trudy passed away in 2012 and her husband Glen wanted a way to reach out to our teens and at the same time honor the memory of his wife and her impact on our community. The Thrive Student Center seemed to be an ideal way to accomplish those goals."

Thrive Student Ministries began in the fall 2009. Pencil Boone, pastor of Thrive Student Ministries, explained the name for local reporters. He said, "In over 30 years of working with teens, one of the comments I hear most often from teenagers is 'They just want to survive...' whatever it may be: middle school, chemistry, high school, dating, etc. At Thrive we want our students to do more than just survive, we want them to thrive in three areas of their lives: with their peers, with their families, and in their relationship with God."

The project is the final piece of the puzzle that began ten years ago with Pastor Mick's goal to reach young families. The student center was preceded by a state-of-the-art nursery in 2005, followed in 2006 by a state-of-the-art



6,000-square-foot children's center, and now the Thrive Center. The Thrive Center will be fully paid for in the next three years.

Bangor Baptist Church is located in Bangor, ME, and has an average morning attendance of 950-1,000. The church also founded Bangor Christian Schools in 1970 and has over 300 students K4-12, and is accredited by the NEACS. Pastor Mick will celebrate 30 years of ministry at Bangor Baptist Church in January 2014.

GAINESVILLE, VA

## Battlefield Baptist hosts mission revival

Battlefield Baptist Church and Pastor Karl Skinner has always taken their mission conferences to another level, preferring to call the conferences "missions revivals." The emphasis has paid off. In the church's 33-year history, \$6.5 million has been raised for missions, and the congregation supports about

100 missionaries throughout the world.

The 2013 version of the mission revival took place September 18-22 and filled five days with activity, culminating with a faith promise offering of more than \$497,000 for the coming year. The keynote speaker for the conference was Pastor Vic Bledsoe. Missionaries attending were Karen Marvin (Papua New Guinea), Chris and Lisa Moore (Kenya), and Gerry and Erin Dumoulin (IBJM).

Activities early in the revival included an opening parade of flags performed by the church's Xtreme Vision Teen group, an adult choir and drama tribute, a ladies' brunch attended by 177 women, presentations from the Kid's Choir and Puppet Team, and a Saturday men's breakfast.

Saturday evening, the church hosted an International Expo

and invited the community to attend. All the church's Sunday school classes competed in their presentations of countries representing six continents. Hundreds came to see the church gymnasium transformed into a global experience with international dining and two performances of the world-renowned Washington Korean Dance Company. Sunday services included testimonies, a choir dressed in international costumes and flag parade, and the faith promise commitments.

November 9, Battlefield Baptist Church celebrated its 33rd anniversary and in that time five families have surrendered as missionaries and 42 people have been called into full-time service from the church. The anniversary also served as an opportunity to honor Pastor Skinner who is retiring as the church's full-time pastor. He will be available to assist churches with mission conferences and revivals. He can be reached at (540) 341-4000 or [karl711@verizon.net](mailto:karl711@verizon.net).



ROSWELL, NM

## Tabernacle Baptist in Roswell celebrates 85 years

Tabernacle Baptist Church of Roswell, NM, celebrated 85 years of ministry October 26 and 27 with guest speaker Clyde Spain. Spain pastored the church from 1959-1965. Other special guests for the event, hosted by Pastor Jerry Beaver, were Pastor Emeritus Onsy Whicker (25 years retired), Jerry Byars, Jim and Lawanda Beard, Kenneth and Joanne Heck, and Loretta Ingram, the widow of the late Howard Ingram.

Beaver says the church was celebrating their rich heritage of planting churches and sending out men all over the world to

preach the gospel. As one pastor said, "There was a time years ago that there was not an independent Baptist church in New Mexico that was not started out of Tabernacle Baptist Church." According to Beaver, at least 40 men



Pastor Beaver (left) and Clyde Spain

were saved and called into the ministry as a result of the ministry of Tabernacle. Some notable pastors and missionaries include J.C. Joiner, Cecil Wagner, Jerry Byars, Chester Dick Cunningham, Tommy Dunnihio, Art George, Garland Hamilton, Kenneth Heck, Chester Henry, Jack Henry, Ed Hughlett, Joe Penrod, Stan White, Bill Whitehead, and Charles Yates.

The church continues to build on its heritage and grow in many areas, with highlights in its missions program and bus ministry.

PADUCAH, KY

## Paducah church celebrates mortgage payoff

Highland Baptist Church held a mortgage burning celebration Sunday, November 3, 2013, in morning and evening services. In the morning worship service, guest evangelist Ronnie Warren provided special music and *Tribune* editor Keith Bassham preached. Richard Beck is the pastor.

The day of celebration continued with an outdoor bonfire and meal on the property of church members that evening. Keith Bassham spoke briefly after a song service, encouraging the church to not consider a paid-off mortgage as the end of their journey, but another step in their effort to be a witness to their community.



Highland Baptist Church officers (on the left) and charter members (right) received copies of the church's mortgage release document during the mortgage burning celebration.

After the service and a meal of hot dogs and chili, a facsimile of the bank's mortgage release

was placed into the bonfire. The mortgage was paid off before maturity.

JACKSON, MS

## We can make a big difference in February

By Dan Lamb, NCPO Interim Director

There are plenty of opportunities in life, but not all opportunities make much of a difference. This opportunity will make an eternal difference.

Pastor Bill Fluker and his family are no strangers to us. Bill has a record of faithfulness. He has been an active participant in the Baptist Bible Fellowship and the Brothers of Cyrene. When he retired from the U.S. Air Force he and his family started Grace and Mercy Baptist Church in Jackson, MS. That was eight years ago. They have been able to purchase their first building, but because the building started out

as a nightclub, it needs quite a lot of renovation. Pastor Fluker smiles and says they have no need for the dance pole any longer.

The estimated cost of remodeling is \$50,000. The BBFI builders will have a part in this project. In the Midwinter BBFI meeting in February we want to ask our pastors to help this church as much as we assisted Victor Baxter and the church in Eastman, GA,

Bill Fluker



in last February's meeting. Please don't miss this opportunity! You could send whatever God would lay on your heart to the NCPO office and every penny will be forwarded to Grace and Mercy Baptist Church.



## FELLOWSHIP NOTE

Don't forget that the 2014 May Fellowship Week will take place one week earlier than it has in the past!

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SPRINGFIELD, MO

### MARIE E. STRICKLAND

Marie E. Strickland, former BBFI missionary to Argentina, was received by the Lord November 8, 2013. Born April 2, 1927, Marie's family were members of First Baptist Church in Englewood, CO, where she met her husband Jimmy. The couple married during Bible college, and became missionaries to Uruguay, and then to Argentina in 1960. Their ministry spanned more than 50 years. Jimmy passed away in 2009.

Marie is survived by five daughters, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Services were held November 16, 2013, at Berean Baptist Church.

LOGAN, OH

### RUTH ANN WALZ

Ruth Ann Walz, wife of Pastor Tom Walz, entered glory September 30, 2013, at age 66.

Ruth Ann was born October 13, 1946, in Highland County. She received Jesus Christ November of 1972 and served alongside her pastor husband 42 years. Ruth Ann helped establish Cornerstone Baptist Church in Logan and was involved in all aspects of the church.

Surviving Ruth Ann are her husband, Pastor Tom Walz, three children, and seven grandchildren. The funeral was held October 3, 2013, with Dan Lamb officiating.

SPRINGFIELD, MO

### JEAN PENICK

Elizabeth Jean (Bonds) Penick, BBFI missionary, left this world to meet her heavenly Father October 18, 2013. Jean was born August 20, 1926, in San Diego. She accepted Jesus as her Lord and attended the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now BIOLA University) where she met and married James Arnold Penick. They were missionaries to Brazil through Baptist Bible Fellowship International. After Arnold's death, Jean continued their missionary work, completing 40 years of service before retiring to her home in Springfield, MO.

A memorial service was held October 24, 2013, at Seminole Baptist Temple with Don Baier officiating.

PADUCAH, KY

### HAROLD & SUE COUNCIL

Long-time Paducah pastor Harold Council and his wife Sue passed from this life in October. Mr. Council died October 1 as a result of illness and injuries sustained in an auto accident, and Mrs. Council died a few weeks later on October 22. The couple was married 66 years.

The Councils founded Southland Baptist Temple in Paducah in 1953, and Mr. Council served the church as senior pastor until ten years ago when he was named advisory pastor.

The ministry couple is survived by three children, six grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren.

GAINESVILLE, TX

### WILLIAM HOWARD FINCHER

William "Bill" Fincher passed from this life October 24, 2013, at the age of 82. Born August 21, 1931, in Atlanta, GA, he married Evelyn Jenkins while serving in the U.S. Army. After his service, the couple joined New Testament Baptist Church in Miami, FL, where he served as the youth minister. He eventually surrendered to full-time ministry and attended Baptist Bible College in Springfield, MO, graduating in 1973. He was pastor of Central Baptist Church in Gainesville, TX, 33 years, and he retired in December 2012.

Bill is survived by his wife of 61 years, three children, nine grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Services were held October 29, 2013, at Southside Baptist Church in Denison.



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## ARIZONA

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## ARKANSAS

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• **Calvary Baptist Church of Oakhurst**, At the corner of Highway 49 and Redbud (location only), 559/641-7984. *Pastor Bob Wilson*

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# The Incarnation

By Noel Smith, founding editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune*

Excerpted from "The Incarnation," published in the *Tribune* December 25, 1953

When I first heard this exalted term, *Incarnation*, many long weary years ago, my age, background, and capacities precluded any appreciation and understanding of its nature and consequences. But the term itself fell upon my ears like the peals of a great organ rolling out from the brooding mountains. I have never been quite the same since. I felt that *Incarnation* meant that something vast and profound had taken place on earth.

[And now] as Christmas approaches, *Incarnation* has for me all the wonder, sublime mystery and deep and abiding appeal that it had the first time it ever fell upon my ears. I can't remember any time when the circumstances were so drab and monotonous that reflection on the Incarnation did not elevate my thought and lift my spirit into realms of wonder and amazement. For me Incarnation has never become commonplace.

I read from the first chapter of John's Gospel. I am not going to attempt a profound or theological exposition of these verses. I wish to take them as they appear here in our English Bible. I wish to talk to you about them as they have appealed to me.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

Many things are true in that statement. But one thing is clearly true: in the beginning the Word dwelt alone, apart from men. Who is God? What is God like? What does God think of me? What does God think of sinning men? What is His attitude toward the poor, distracted human race? Those are the oldest questions of the human mind and heart.

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

That's the Incarnation! God who inhabited eternity, came down — and down, and down, and down — until He reached a bed of straw in a Judean village — a bed of straw that was not made for Him, but for a beast of burden.

He, who was wrapped in the garments of eternity; Creator of heaven and earth and all that in them is; He who was responsible for eternity;

He who scattered the stars in space; He who fixed the boundaries of the mighty seas — God came down to Bethlehem, became Mary's infant, and was wrapped in torn strips of a discarded garment which Luke delicately calls swaddling

clothes: that's the Incarnation! I don't wonder that the Judean sky was filled with kingly-faced hosts. I don't wonder that the Judean hills were baptized with the golden music of Paradise. I don't wonder that plain and simple shepherds suddenly found themselves caught up in a great and strange dignity. I don't wonder that wise men suddenly saw a strange and brilliant star. The Cause of Eternity, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying close to a Virgin's heart! That's the Incarnation. You need not hesitate to accept the wonderful truth. He Himself said, "... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

And this brings us back to our questions. Who is God like? He is like Jesus talking of hens and chickens, and boys and girls, and the poor sewing new patches on old garments.

He is like Jesus talking of kings on a long journey, of a sower sowing his seed, of a rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, of a poor widow seeking redress at the hands of a harsh judge, of a sparrow falling from its nest in the storm, of the lilies smiling in the Judean sunlight.

What does God think of lonely politicians with their empty hearts and barren spirits? He thinks what Jesus thought of Matthew when He looked into his sad eyes, and said, "Come, follow me."

What does God think of young men who have disgraced their parents, wrecked their lives and reduced themselves to poverty and shame? He thinks what Jesus thought when He told of a prodigal who came back home in rags, expecting to be made a hired servant, but sat down to a feast — with a robe on his back, shoes on his feet, and a ring on his finger.

What does God think when we stand by the open grave, watch the casket lowered, hear the dirt fall with dull thuds? He thinks what Jesus thought when He wept at Lazarus' grave.

What does God think of this world of tired, weary, worn-out men and women and boys and girls? He thinks what Jesus thought when He looked out upon them and, in a voice of appealing tenderness and compassion, cried: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The Incarnation says that God is like Jesus. My heart rejoices when I reflect that the Creator, before whom eternity itself is but a vapor above the morning hills, is moved when the sparrow falls, and weeps when the children of men die. I tell you, I am deeply moved when I reflect that He who brought forth the everlasting hills, "thinketh upon me," and is moved to tenderness and pity when He remembers that my frame is dust. I can understand hell, but I never have been able to understand the compassionate love of God.



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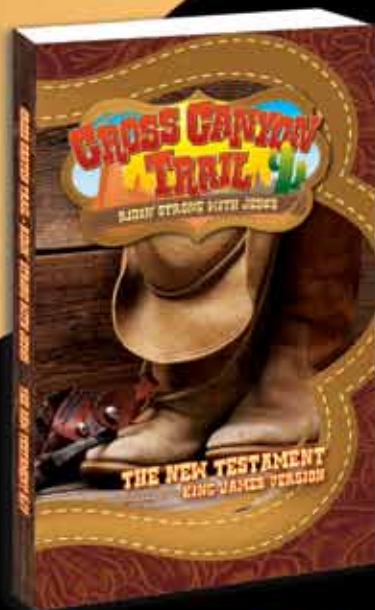
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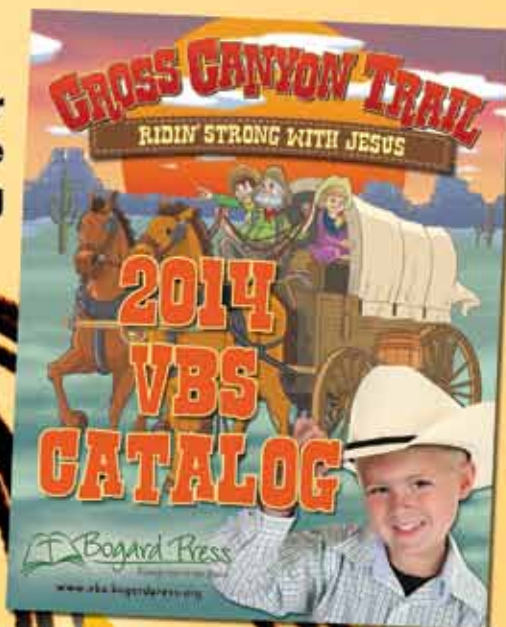
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