

July-August 2007

BA

BIBLE ADVOCATE



Let All Nations Gather

Land of the Prophets (p. 4)

Two esteemed leaders (p. 16)

Search for a church (p. 19)



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Coming in the September '07 BA: Christ and the Gospels, discipleship, peacemaking

In the July and August issues of *Now What?*: a Jew finds Christ, an adopted child finds her birth mother (<http://nowwhat.cog7.org>)

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Ten-Year Trek



With this issue, your editor completes
 ten years at this job, following the
 work of Roy Marris ('92-'97), Jerry Grif-
 fin ('81-'92), and Floyd Turner ('70-'81). Ten-
 year tenures were not always the norm for our
 magazine; twenty different men served the BA
 as editor between 1900 and 1970.

Fifty years ago (1957) Max Morrow began a seven-year stint at this desk in the Stanberry, Missouri, publishing house. At age 24, he was the senior member of a staff that included BA shop foreman LeRoy Dais, 22. Elder Morrow is not our oldest living editor, however: Roy Marris and Robert Coulter (interim editor briefly in 1981) are both older than he. We're reliving a journey here, so bear with us.

We'll celebrate more of the CoG7 journey at convention in Kansas July 2-7. Highlights of our first 150 years in America appear on pages 28-29 of this issue. Many of our sister churches in the world (p. 30) will be represented at the July 7-11 International Ministerial Congress, a meeting that overlaps convention on the noteworthy date of 7-7-07.

"Journey Through the Bible" is our theme for all year here in the magazine. In this issue we sprint the last lap of the Old Testament: the prophets. These books, Isaiah through Malachi, stem from the preaching of sixteen men, most of whose personal stories are obscure.

Question for today: What Old Testament personalities are most admired? Here's my list of top ten Hebrew saints:

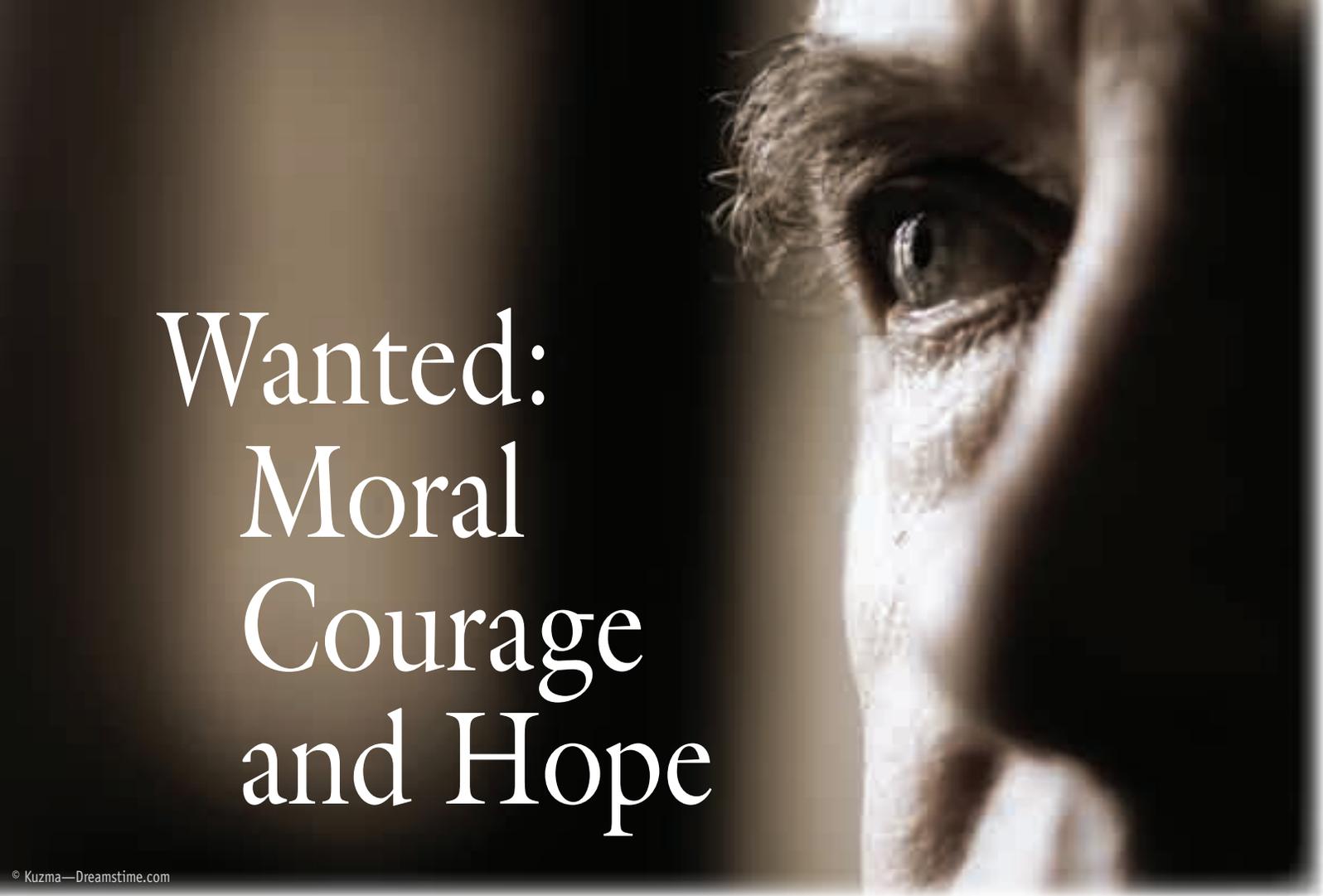
- Job, Noah, Daniel - righteous trio (Ezekiel 14:14, 20)
- Enoch - man on an intimate journey with God
- Joseph - type of Christ; no recorded sin
- Moses - meekest man; greatest leader
- Ruth - from alien widow to royal mother in Israel
- David - God-hearted shepherd, musician, writer, warrior, king
- Jeremiah - faithful spokesman, despite full rejection
- Esther - risk-taker for God's people

And my bottom four:

- Jacob - deceiver; deceived; winner with God
- David - head of dysfunctional family, post-Bathsheba
- Samson - man of strong body, but weak spirit
- Rahab - call-girl who called on God

Surprise: These last four are all named in the Hebrews 11 hall of faith. So BA editors and other strugglers have hope, too! Thank God for the grace fully seen and freely given in Jesus Christ.

— Calvin Burrell

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a horse's eye, looking directly at the viewer. The eye is dark and detailed, with visible eyelashes and the texture of the surrounding skin. The background is dark and out of focus.

Wanted: Moral Courage and Hope

We need them today. Meet sixteen men who preached both. **by Calvin Burrell**

Come join us for the last leg of our march through the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament by Christians. We've walked through several scenes of Genesis and Torah, surveyed highlights of Israel's history, and touched the wisdom of David and Solomon — all since January. Now we move on to the land of the Prophets. Are you ready for some tougher terrain?

Many readers will not find themselves at home in this slice of Scripture's landscape. In it are seventeen books named for sixteen mostly obscure preacher-men and full of strange language about events and situations we don't recognize. To some, the Prophets feel like the Bible's badlands. Many of their verses and chapters remain in the shadows of comprehension for most readers.

Mark Twain said, "It's not the parts of Scripture I don't understand that bother me; it's the parts I do understand." Today let's start a stroll through a few of the well-watered portions of these books — parts we easily comprehend and absorb. Here is enough beauty, enough assurance and morality, enough vision and hope to keep us trusting and obeying our Lord for today and a thousand tomorrows.

Who? When? Why?

The writing prophets of Scripture spoke for God to the Hebrew people during the times of Israel's kings. Mostly males (there were also prophetesses in Israel), these divine speakers stood in the secret counsel of God before declaring His Word. They completed the national triumvirate of prophets, priests, and kings that composed the backbone of ancient Israel's theocracy.

Though they appear at the end of the our Old Testament, the men who wrote the books from Isaiah through Malachi lived midway from Moses to Christ. They wrote several hundred years *after* the Red Sea parted, the old covenant was given at Mt. Sinai, and Canaan was conquered under Joshua. Still, these prophets are several hundred years *before* the new covenant was written in Jesus' blood on Calvary's cross. Men of the times between, we may call them.

Remarkably, the Hebrew prophets bridged that 1,500-year time from Moses to Jesus in a way that honored both ends of the bridge. Loyal to the old covenant, they also rebuked the tendency of that era to rely on ritual, and they anticipated a better covenant to come through the Messiah. They knew the value of the law but easily expressed confidence in God's grace — a truth that would be most fully revealed in Christ's gospel.

The prophets promoted individual morality, to be sure, but went beyond personal piety to stress ethical conduct demonstrating God's concern for justice

and equity across the full spectrum of national life: the poor, oppressed, disadvantaged, widows, and orphans. Faithful sons of Israel and Judah they were, but they also saw the reality of God's love and concern for all peoples of the earth. A multi-dimensional preview of the Great Commission can be found in the prophets, especially in Isaiah and Jonah.

These sixteen men from Isaiah to Malachi gave themselves to speak the words of God. They gave maximum human effort to raise the ethical, social, national, and spiritual levels in ancient Israel and Judah to the highest possible strata.

Joy for the journey

A familiar sermon illustration tells of a man who never enjoyed reading the Bible, nor got much out of it, until he met the Author! After he got acquainted with the One who wrote it, Scripture became a more meaningful book.

In the same vein, we may regard the prophets with more enthusiasm by remembering one or two basic facts about each writer and his book.

Hosea, for example, was married to a promiscuous woman named Gomer. Instead of permitting him to divorce the unfaithful Gomer, God required Hosea to keep her and continue loving her despite her infidelity, thus offering a vivid picture of God's con-

Isaiah's Great Commission

No other Hebrew prophet expressed God's care for all peoples of the earth — not just Israel — as Isaiah did:

- "The mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains . . . and all nations shall flow to it" (2:2).
- "My Servant whom I uphold . . . I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" (42:1ff).
- "I will also give you as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth" (49:6).
- "Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God" (55:5).
- "The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (60:3).
- "I was sought by those who did not ask for Me; I was found by those who did not seek Me. I said, 'Here I am' . . . to a nation that was not called by My name" (65:1).
- "Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth!" (45:22).

Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's New Covenant

More than others, these two prophets understood that the old was fading and that God would someday make all things new.

- “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. . . . And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me” (Jeremiah 31:31, 32; 32:40).
- “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26, 27).

Minor Texts, Major Meanings

Indictment for moral laxity and injustice: “There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint . . .” (Hosea 4:1, 2).

Calls to repentance: “Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up” (Hosea 6:1). “So rend your hearts, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; . . . Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him . . .” (Joel 2:13, 14).

What really matters: “I hate, I despise your feast days . . . your sacred assemblies. Though you offer me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream” (Amos 5:21-24). “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

tinued love for wayward Israel despite her sins. This becomes the memorable fact about Hosea that forms the foundation for all he wrote.

Let me introduce Habakkuk, the prophet who asked God why He would punish Jerusalem and Judah at the hands of a nation (Babylon) more wicked than they. In His reply, God didn't fully resolve Habakkuk's tension, but He did reassure him that the answer would come someday and that, until then, Habakkuk should live by faith. So, Habakkuk did! If you can recall just that much, a read through Habakkuk's book will hold more joy.

Another of God's spokesmen of this period was Haggai. He may be called the successful prophet because he urged those who had returned from captivity in Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem — and they did!

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Jonah are others whose books will hold more interest as we come to know who they were and how they served the Lord through His people Israel. Seeing and “hearing” them as thinking, feeling persons who faced real crises of public life, we may even develop the sense of companionship with them. As we walk our way through their writings, we will not walk alone.

■ ■ ■

Isaiah's Messiah: For prophecies of a suffering servant, read Isaiah 53. For prophecies of a conquering king, see Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; 32:1ff. For other Messianic prophecies, see Isaiah 7:14; 28:16; 42:1ff; 49:6,7; 61:1ff.

Questions & Answers

Q **Is it wrong to wear a cross? Some Christians believe it's not wrong, yet others say it is.**

A Various strands of thought on this question lead to the different conclusions you've heard. We outline the topic as follows:

1. The bigger issue is that of Christian symbols. Does the Bible exclude all figures, images, and visible tokens of our faith? No. The Israelites carved many such images into the Levitical tabernacle, at God's command. And Moses shaped a bronze serpent on a pole to remind them of God their healer (Num. 21:8, 9). Later that serpent was demolished when it became an object of worship (2 Kings 18:4). Thus, not mere making of images was prohibited in the Decalogue, but explicit worship of them was.

While the New Testament allows that physical objects may suggest spiritual realities, it rejects their use for worship. A dove, for example, reminds us of the Holy Spirit, while bread and a cup represent the Lord's body and blood.

2. With this background, we examine the unique case of the cross as a symbol of faith, and for evidence that Christ's followers may, or may not, use it.

a. The word *cross*: In Greek, *stauros* means a stake or post, standing upright to receive a human unto death, but its precise shape is not altogether certain. New Testament writers used the term for 1) the physical instrument on which Jesus died, 2) the message of His death, and 3) the self-denial Christ urged upon His disciples.

b. The physical instrument: Though first century Romans may have executed criminals by nailing them to a single upright stake, other torture stakes were also used by that time, shaped like the letters

T or X, for example. The + shape for Christ's cross may be implied by the facts that an inscription hung above His head (Luke 23:38) and that more than one nail was used for His hands (John 20:25).

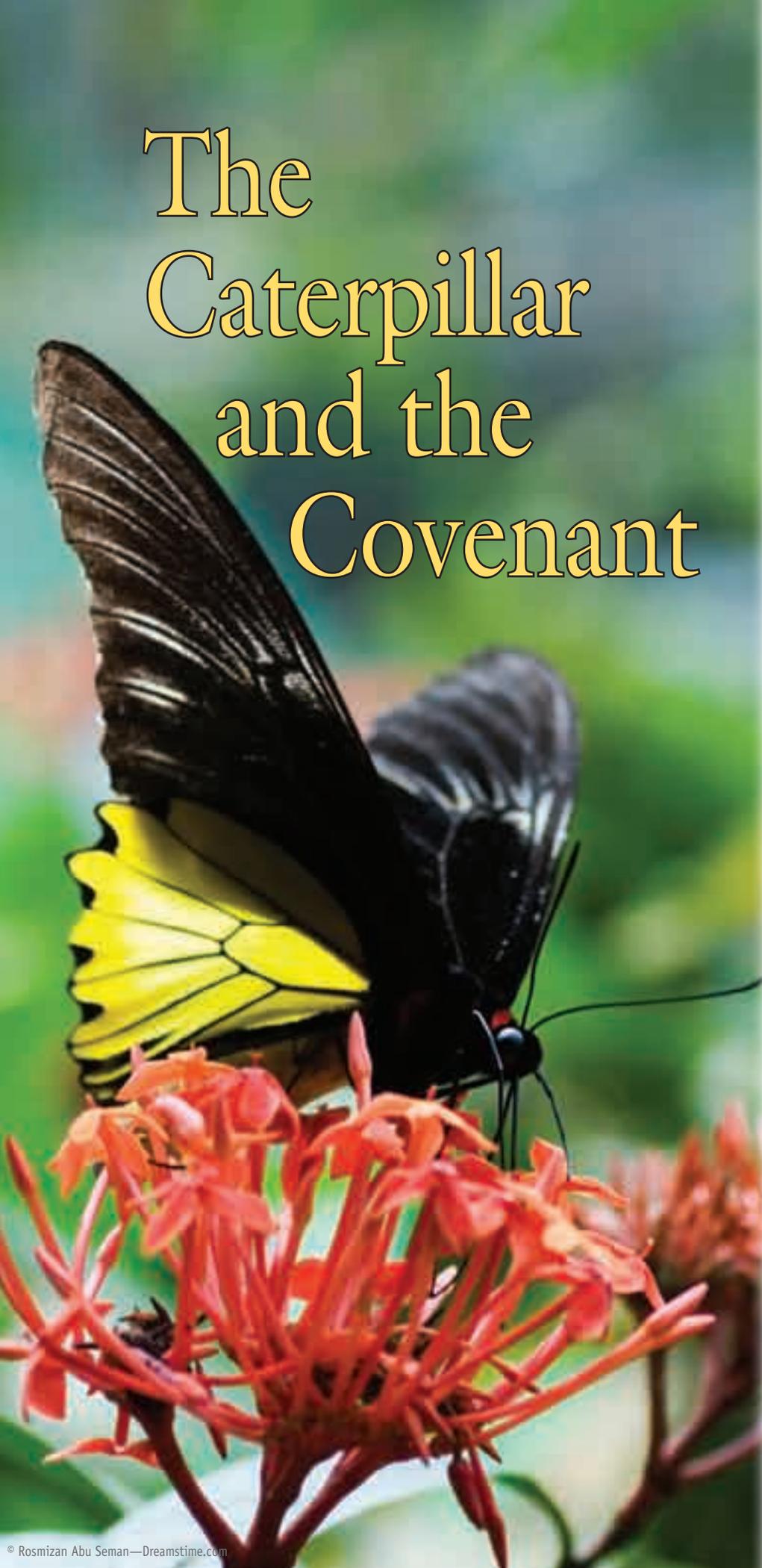
c. Pre-Christian crosses: Those who oppose the cross as a Christian symbol point to its use by worshippers of other gods in ancient Babylon. We should not conclude, however, that every practice in pagan religion is automatically banned for Christians, as candles, incense, washings, and other items illustrate. If others used the shape of a cross or stake as a symbol, it does not follow that Christians must not, since the only Savior and Lord died on one.

d. Cross in Christian devotion: It is true that *stake* and *tree* are more accurate words for the instrument of Christ's death than *cross*, and that the traditional two-beamed "cross" became prominent in Christian devotion in later centuries, not the first. It is further true that the Bible's homage of the cross (Gal. 6:14, for example) refers to the redemption accomplished there more than to the rugged instrument of torture and death. On the other hand, a symbol's role is precisely that — a visual reminder of an unseen reality.

Romans 14 teaches that, when opinions vary, we should show grace toward others in secondary matters of faith and practice. Wearing the cross is a case in point. The conviction here (v. 5b) is that nothing is wrong with the symbol when worn for the right reasons. We should never worship the cross but rather the Christ who died on a cross.

Regardless of its origin, the cross has become a precious symbol for Christians of the salvation Jesus won there. If you choose to wear one, let it signify — and your conduct confirm — that you trust and obey the One who died for us all.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



The Caterpillar and the Covenant

How a little bug helps us understand the law.

by Jason Overman

What exactly is the relation between the old covenant and the new? I have wondered this for years.

For many Christians, the old covenant is about law and the new is about grace; one is about works and the other, faith. For them, to claim the badge “new covenant Christian” indicates a clean break with the law. In this view, a radical discontinuity exists between the old and new covenants, and the law is abolished.

While Martin Luther championed this view, his Reformation counterpart, John Calvin, held another position. For Calvin, grace and law, faith and works, are important elements of covenant life. When properly understood, they are not contradictory but complimentary. The new covenant may transform the law in key respects, but law is still binding for Christians. In this view, there is an organic continuity between the covenants, and the law is established.

So which is it?

That our God is a covenant God is beyond question. From beginning to end, the Bible tells the story of a God who relentlessly pursues a people to call His own. *Covenant* names the gracious and faithful commitment that reciprocally binds God and His people as one. But in the middle of this long story of covenant, God introduces a *new* one. So what’s new about the new covenant, and what’s not?

We turn to the prophets to find out.

Prophets and promises

The great prophets of Israel — Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel — found their voice of lament and protest in the shadow of deep moral failure. From the edge and the midst of exile they bewailed Israel's disobedience to her covenant God and His law: "This . . . rebellious people . . . will not hear the law of the LORD . . . they have not heeded My words nor My law, but rejected it. . . [they] have violated my law . . ." (Isaiah 30:9; Jeremiah 6:19; Ezekiel 22:26). The prophets bore the burden of delivering the tragic news: "You have broken the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5; Jeremiah 11:10; Ezekiel 16:59).

It's not that Israel wasn't "religious"; she was. But the prophets blasted an outward piety that lacked the substance of obedience to the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy. Temple, sacrifice, praise, prayer, holy days — we might say "church as usual" — abounded. But in reality, "The whole head is sick, the whole heart faints . . . their evil hearts . . . went backward and not forward" (Isaiah 1:5; Jeremiah 7:24).

The covenant relationship was graciously initiated by God but, like marriage, required mutual love and faithfulness to be sustained. The law expressed the character of this faithfulness, but the selfishness of sin repeatedly debased God's lover into a whore (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:1; Ezekiel 6:9). Isaiah cried in despair, "See how the faithful city has become a harlot!" He saw clearer than the rest that "all our

righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 1:21; 64:6, NIV).

Over against this reality of unfaithfulness and the subsequent exile, the same prophets uttered a word of hope. The covenant God would not abandon His people; He would restore what they had shattered; He would renew the everlasting covenant; He would reverse the sin and rebellion that had wrecked it. A new covenant was coming.

The classic text for this is Jeremiah 31:31-34:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their

iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Taken with Isaiah 42:1-21 and Ezekiel 36:26-28, this passage reveals exciting new elements of God's covenant. What may be even more intriguing is these texts' statement of what is *not* new. In all these verses the common thread is how through extraordinary means, the same "covenant God" will enable the same covenant people to become faithful to the same covenant law. The very law that outlined the first is lived in the second. The everlasting covenant once broken is now the everlasting covenant reborn.

What is new about the new covenant, then, is not its content but its form. This revolutionary form is the means by which God realizes the purpose that the old covenant could not attain: faithfulness. The prophets detail the exciting shape this fresh work of God will take: The new covenant is embodied in the servant Messiah, empowered by the Spirit, extended to all nations (Gentiles), and experienced in the heart.

The New Testament tells the tale. In Romans 8 we have a terrific instance where all these great prophetic themes and goals of new covenant life — Messiah, Spirit, Gentiles, law, forgiveness, transformation — come together

The very law that outlined the first covenant is lived in the second. The everlasting covenant once broken is now the everlasting covenant reborn.

in one place as an answer to the problem of human failure:

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (vv. 2-4).

Notice how this passage identifies the law from the perspective of weakness in its old covenant form, “the law of sin and death,” *and* from strength in its new covenant form, “the law of the Spirit of life.” In Christ and Spirit the miraculous transition occurs: “the righteous requirement of the law” is fulfilled.

Car or caterpillar?

The relationship of continuity we describe here spells transformation rather than abrogation, and this does not deny change. That’s the wonderful thing about continuity: It assumes a living unity while also expecting real, and sometimes momentous, development. Perhaps an analogy can illustrate this best.

In terms of discontinuity, think of a new car. The old one is bro-

ken and beyond repair, so you trade it for a new one — a different and better one. This picture succeeds in explaining covenant changes but fails to account for the thread that links them. How does this car share in the story of the previous one?

What if we took the old car and restored it to mint condition so that it’s like new? Such a picture succeeds in explaining covenant similarities, but it fails to account for any progress. How is this car an improvement over the original?

The problem with these analogies is that they attempt to define by way of a man-made, inanimate object what is in essence a living and dynamic process — something God made.

The analogy that best suits the evidence is the change of the caterpillar into a butterfly. It captures all that the new covenant requires: It is old and new, the same but different, inferior and superior. Just as we are new creatures in Christ, just as we hope for a new heaven, we look not for something else but for something more. The covenant was a caterpillar, but a transforming rebirth causes the earthy to fly.

This helps account for the conflicting language about law in the New Testament. It is both abolished yet established (Ephesians 2:15; Romans 3:31);

vanishing away yet not passing away (Hebrews 8:13; Luke 16:17); not of faith yet of faith (Galatians 3:12; Romans 3:27); of death *and* life (2 Corinthians 3:7; Romans 8:2). Christians are not under the law yet keep it (Romans 6:14; 2:26); they don’t do it yet fulfill it (Galatians 5:3, 14). Since the law resides on both sides of covenant transformation, we need not say either/or to these verses, but *and/both*.

The unique thing about the caterpillar-butterfly analogy is that the same kinds of incompatible statements nevertheless hold true. This creature *is* abolished *and* established, dead *and* alive, ended *and* constant. This language is not self-contradicting if we know the nature of God’s work on this single organism over time.

‘New covenant Christian’

Long ago, on a cross and in a tomb, with the Messiah, covenant hung wrapped in a cocoon. But death could not hold them. Three days later, they emerged triumphant, ascending eternal.

Like Jesus himself, in death and resurrection, the law *ends* and *becomes* (Romans 10:4). As we take up our crosses and follow Jesus, law *continues* transformed, and transforming, us.

This is what we mean by a “new covenant Christian.” 

The covenant was a caterpillar, but a transforming rebirth causes the earthy to fly.

Jason Overman serves the congregation in Jasper, AR.



Ever hear of the Rechabites? No? Their story is in Jeremiah 35. They said: "We will drink no wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, 'You shall drink no wine, you nor your sons, forever. You shall not build a house, sow seed, plant a vineyard, nor have any of these; but all your days you shall dwell in tents, that you may live many days in the land where you are sojourners'" (vv. 6, 7).

Can't you just imagine how the Rechabites' children might have complained? "Dad, I want to live in a house. This tent is cold; my friends live in houses. There's no privacy; everyone can hear what everyone else is doing. We need a permanent place to live. I'm sick of saying goodbye to friends. C'mon, it's a wedding! Can't we celebrate with a little wine?"

What's so amazing about the Rechabites? They actually did what they were told to do (vv. 8-10). Let's see why their obedience was so special.

First, even their children obeyed (v. 8)! The Rechabite parents passed their customs on to their children even though the children lived among those who had things they couldn't enjoy. These parents must have been great role models. No hypocrisy!

Second, the Rechabites obeyed even though they could never drink wine or live in a permanent place. They could never celebrate anything with an alcoholic drink and never have a place to call home.

Third, the Rechabites kept their father's command even

Remembering the Rechabites

by David Kidd

when God gave them permission not to. The Lord told Jeremiah to take them into the house of the Lord and give them wine to drink (vv. 1-6). So Jeremiah set out bowls and cups full of wine and told them to drink. God invited them to His house for a drink, and they said, "No, God. We will honor our father." Can you imagine having the strength to honor your father like that?

God honored their obedience by using their good example against disobedient Judah: "Surely the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them, but this people has not obeyed Me" (v. 16).

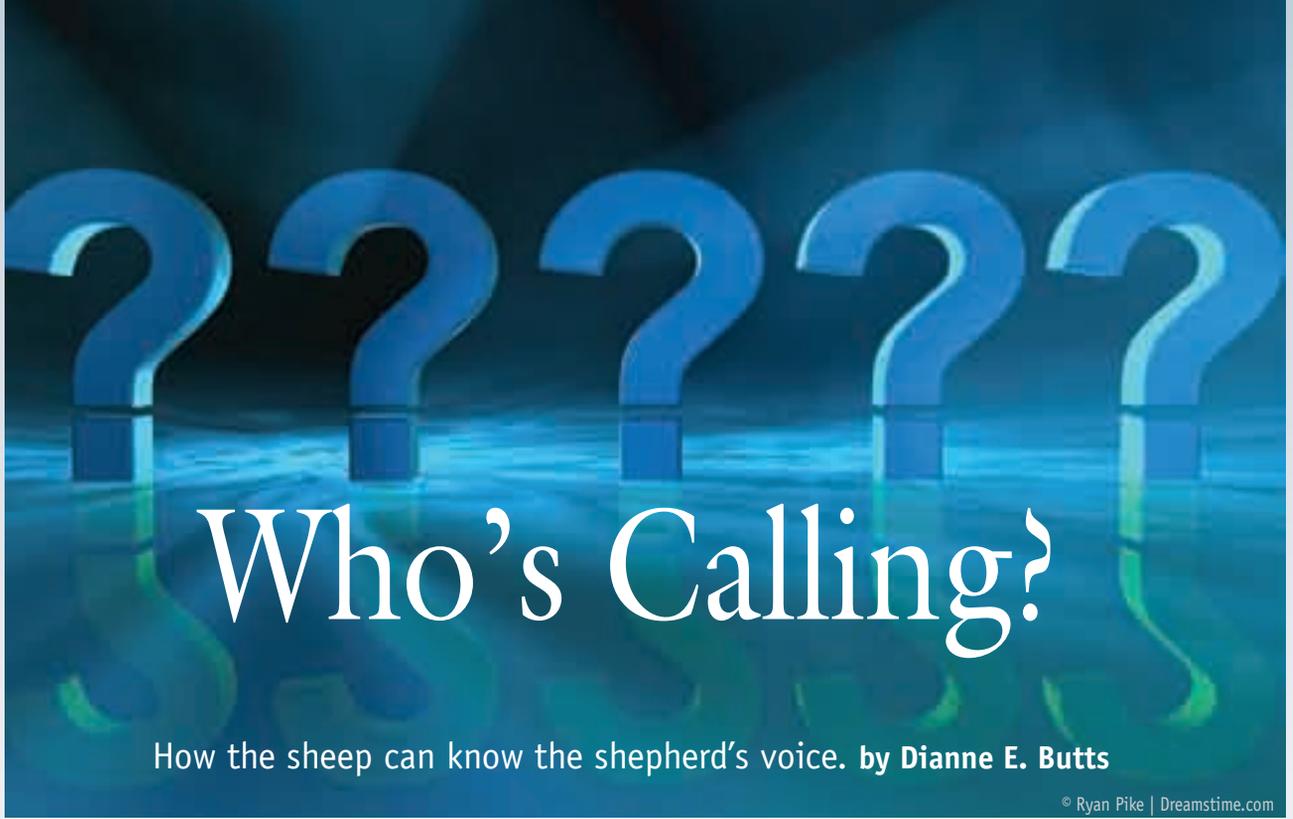
What can we learn from the Rechabites? That we can be holy and obedient. If they could make sacrifices to obey their earthly father, how much more should we to obey our heavenly Father? If they paid attention to the word sent by one man, how much more should we pay attention to the Word sent from

God through His prophets and ultimately through His Son who died for us? And if the Rechabites obeyed their father without the Holy Spirit in them, how much more should we who enjoy the permanent divine presence obey our heavenly Father?

People have done awesome things based on their human strength alone. But God's strength given to us by the Holy Spirit is much more incredible. The apostle Paul said that he could do all things through Christ who strengthened him (Philippians 4:13).

May our belief that we can live holy increase more and more. In the light of the Rechabites, may our determination to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God be greatly strengthened. May we ever be diligent to observe all that God has commanded us to do. ■■

David and Angela Kidd attend and serve in the Adelaide church in South Australia.



Who's Calling?

How the sheep can know the shepherd's voice. by **Dianne E. Butts**

© Ryan Pike | Dreamstime.com

Go visit Archie. The thought nagged me again. Since my friend Archie's cancer advanced, I wanted to visit him. But I had a full schedule.

"Lord, if this is from You, I'll go," I prayed. "But didn't You want me to do this job?" *If I take time to visit Archie*, I wondered, *am I listening to the right voice?*

For me, it's a common dilemma. I hear a spiritual "voice" — a quiet whisper in my mind, a heartfelt impression — and I wonder if it's God. Could it be merely my own thoughts, or maybe Satan trying to deceive me? I hear these spiritual voices often and struggle to determine their source.

I am learning that just as audible voices have unique qualities that help me recognize the speaker, so does God's voice.

Constant

When I first felt the inkling to write for publication, I ignored it. *What could I write that anyone would want to read?* But the inkling persisted.

"How can I tell if this is my idea or God's?" I asked my friend Linda.

"Our own desires come and go," she told me, "but God's desires for us persist."

God persistently called the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 3), but Samuel didn't recognize God's voice either. When Samuel the young lad awakened to Someone calling his name, he ran to his mentor, Eli.

Twice more the Lord called Samuel before Eli discerned its source and instructed him to respond to the Lord. When God called the fourth time, He really got Samuel's attention.

God's persistent calling didn't let Samuel rest. Likewise, God persistently called me. When I turned on my radio and heard

about an upcoming Christian writer's conference, I responded. That persistent inkling sparked a desire to write for God that, years later, continues to burn.

Calm

"Have you ever felt a nudge to call or visit someone?" asked Midge, a speaker at our ladies brunch. "Listen to the nudges. That's God."

I've felt those nudges from God, but I've also acted on impulses only to discover they were not from God.

Most impulses appear as good things God might want me to do. They often come in the form of "shoulds" and "oughts": "You should teach a Bible class. . . . You ought to help at the pregnancy center. . . . You should volunteer for Vacation Bible School."

Jesus and the disciples certainly felt the pressure of such impulses. One day as Jesus taught beyond the Jordan, a message

arrived from Mary and Martha: “Jesus, come quickly! Lazarus is sick!”

“Yet . . . [Jesus] stayed where he was two more days” (John 11:6). By the time He left for Bethany, Lazarus was dead (v. 14).

Had Jesus jumped to save Lazarus, whose voice would He have been listening to? Instead, Jesus calmly continued the work God had sent Him across the Jordan to accomplish. Then He went to Lazarus.

Is that how our enemy takes advantage of notions — by pulling us away from God’s work? As I learn to distinguish between God’s nudges and other impulses, I do less fruitless busywork. As I prayerfully respond to God’s impressions, my efforts bear eternal fruit, and my life is calm.

Convicting

God constantly calls us, but Satan speaks too and often deceives the untaught. I can distinguish between the enemy’s voice and God’s by considering how the voice makes me feel and where it will lead me.

Satan heaps disapproval, guilt, and accusations on us until we feel fearful or want to run away from Christ. That might have been how the adulterous woman felt when the religious leaders brought her to Jesus. He ended up sending her away, free of condemnation (8:10, 11).

Satan’s voice condemns: “You’re guilty!” But as believers, we no longer stand before God condemned (Romans 8:1). When we listen to God’s voice, He convicts us of our sin and leads us to Christ for forgiveness.

Character-revealing

My friend Sandy grew up in a home filled with shouting and anger. “For a long time it was hard for me to differentiate God’s voice from familiar voices echoing from my past,” she said. “Whenever I had a disagreement or was criticized, those negative voices would bombard me and linger in my head. I associated these angry ‘voices’ with the voice of God.

“Now I know God better,” she continued. “When I hear a negative voice, I’m learning to ask, ‘Is this voice characteristic of the God I’ve come to know and love through Scripture?’”

God’s voice reveals His character. While He is holy (Leviticus 11:44), righteous (Psalm 11:7), and just (9:16), He is also merciful and forgiving (Daniel 9:9). He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (Psalm 86:15).

When the voice within me sounds unloving, impatient, or angry, when I feel no mercy or compassion, when it causes me to mistrust God or believe He will not forgive me, then the voice I am hearing is not God’s.

Clear

Author and speaker Tricia Rhodes waited six years to hear God’s voice. “After our first child, my husband and I really wanted another,” she said at a conference. But the years passed without a second child.

“I went to God every morning and I heard nothing. Then one morning as I filled in the blanks of a Bible study, a still, familiar voice spoke: ‘Tricia, your pain is not caused by your failure to have another child, but by what

you’ve come to believe about Me: that I’m not good or fair, that I don’t love you or have your best interests at heart.’

“I didn’t miss His answer,” Tricia said, “because after six years of waiting, I was still listening.”

If we are not listening, we can miss God’s message or misunderstand it. Many people could have heard God’s voice when Jesus prayed, “Father, glorify your name!” (John 12:28).

From heaven, a voice answered, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

The apostle John heard and understood the words. But he also tells us that some in the crowd thought it had thundered and that others thought an angel had spoken (v. 29). The people did not recognize the voice of God.

God speaks clearly. But to hear Him and to recognize His voice, we must be listening.

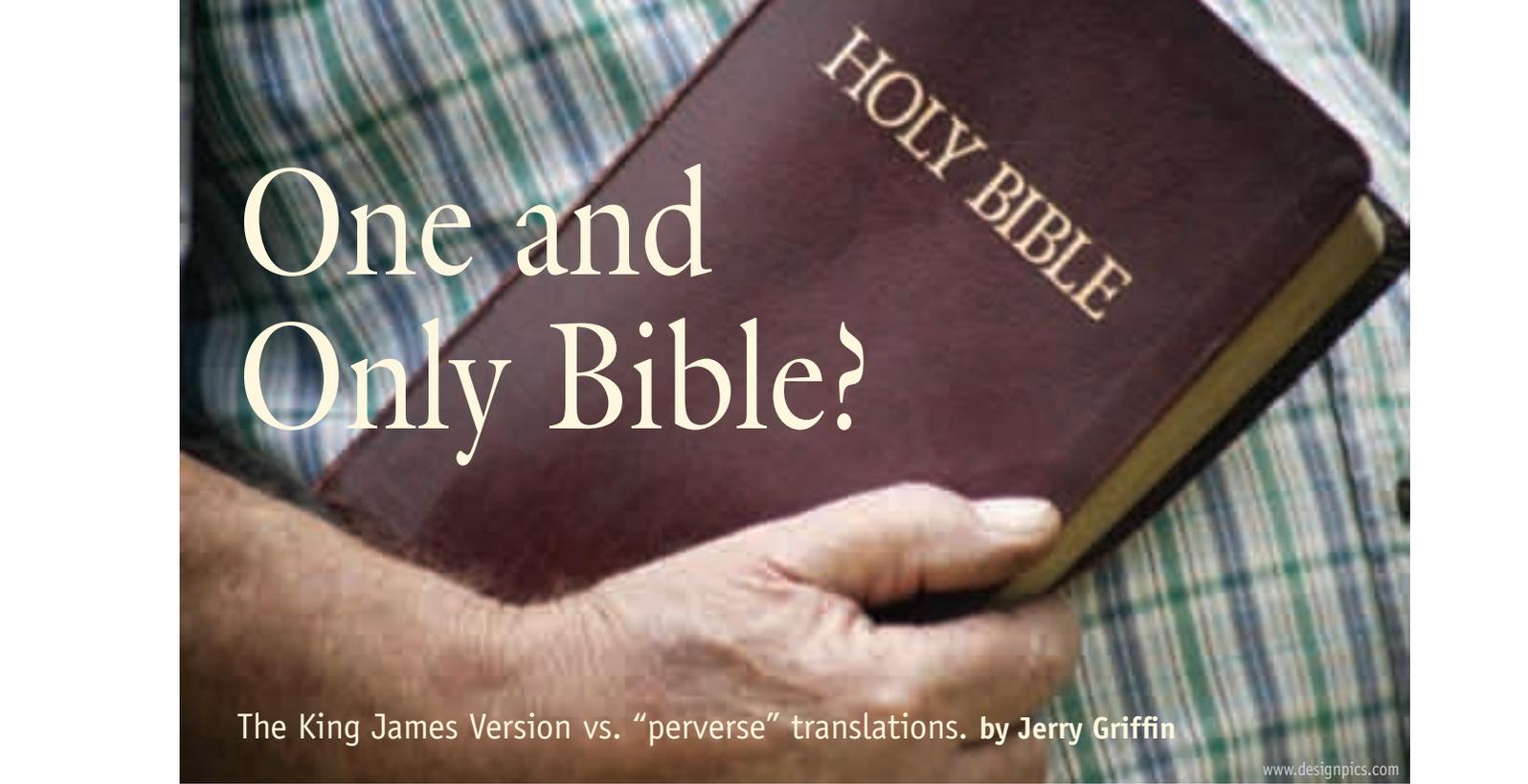
Learning to listen

Go visit Archie, that persistent voice urged again. So that afternoon, I headed over to his house. We had a wonderful visit, and I still accomplished all my work.

I’m convinced the urge to visit was from the Lord. I’m so glad I listened! Step by step, the Lord is teaching me to be more like Samuel in recognizing and responding to His voice. ■

Dianne E. Butts writes from Pueblo, CO. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.





One and Only Bible?

The King James Version vs. “perverse” translations. by Jerry Griffin

www.designpics.com

Some English-speaking Christians feel that only the King James Version (KJV) is the original and pure Word of God and that all other modern versions are simply perversions. These folks desire to protect the Bible from corruption, so their hearts may be in the right place, but they are badly misinformed regarding the facts of the KJV and modern versions. As a result, their feelings about modern versions are based on prejudicial assumptions, stemming primarily from their emotional loyalty to the KJV. (Loyalty to the one need not be contempt for the others.)

Blind loyalty

Of itself, love for the KJV is not bad. For over three hundred years the KJV was the premier version of the Bible in English. For many American Christians it was the version they read and memorized as children. Its words became familiar, and this familiarity produced loyalty. So in their

minds, the King James Version was the one and only Bible.

But loyalty can sometimes be blind. That’s why some Christians won’t hear of talk that newer versions can also be God’s Word. They just don’t have that familiar Bible sound. So they are dismissed as perversions, not because of any objective information but because of emotional attachment to the KJV.

Many people in England had the same reaction when the KJV was first published in 1611. It did not have the familiar sound of the older versions they had grown up with. They believed this new version — the KJV — was changing the Word of God.

Questions and facts

Now history is repeating itself, and some people are rejecting other versions for the same reasons that people first rejected the King James. To make matters worse, some have put forward “quasi-scholarly” arguments to

defend the KJV. These arguments are like scrambled eggs: the raw ingredients are good, but the facts are so mixed up that it is almost impossible to straighten them out.

So instead of trying to unravel others’ false claims, here are a few basic questions and facts to consider.

- The King James Version was first published in 1611. If it is God’s only Bible, does this mean that God’s Word did not exist before 1611? What Bible did people read before then?

Fact: The first English translation of the whole Bible was the Wycliffe Bible of 1384. Other English translations followed, such as Tyndale’s Bible, Coverdale’s Bible, Matthew’s Bible, the Great Bible, the Geneva Bible, and the Bishops’ Bible. All these versions were in use before the KJV came on the scene. The KJV was an attempt to produce a compromise version that would be acceptable to the factions in

the Church of England then.

Essentially, it was not a new translation but a revision of the previously existing versions. About 60 percent of the KJV wording came from these other versions.

- If the King James Version is the only Bible, does this mean that God's Word exists only in English? What about people in Europe or Asia who don't speak English? Has God left them without a Bible?

Fact: Long before the KJV, the Bible was translated into other languages: Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, Ethiopic, Latin, and others. These translations were as much the Word of God for the people of those languages as the KJV is for those who speak only English. That's also why all these Bibles are appropriately called "versions": They are renderings of Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that contain copies of the Bible's original books. If anything is the "one and only Bible," it is these ancient manuscripts. Because most people can't read ancient Hebrew and Greek, translations are necessary. Therefore, all the Bibles we have today, including the KJV, are simply translated versions of the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. Those who insist on using the "one and only Bible" must return to those manuscripts.

- Why are newer versions even necessary? If the KJV has served English readers so well for so long, why tamper with a good thing?

Fact: All languages change over time. Words take on different shades of meaning, change meanings entirely, or even drop from the vocabulary. Many English words no longer communicate the same ideas they did in

1611. Therefore, if a Bible version is to convey its original message to succeeding generations, it must be updated periodically. This is exactly what the KJV did in its own day. It essentially revised, updated, and consolidated the previous English translations.

Take for example, this Old English translation of the Lord's Prayer:

Foeder ure, thu the eart
on heofonum, si thin nama
gehalgod. Tobecume thin rice
gewurpe jin willa on eorjan
swa swa on heofonum.

What an improvement the KJV offers over this older version! Yet the Elizabethan English of the KJV has many archaic words and expressions that are just as foreign to readers today. For example, Acts 21:15 says, "And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem." To the modern reader, the word *carriage* sounds like a horse-drawn buggy. But in 1611 *carriage* referred to one's luggage or baggage. So to clearly communicate what was originally intended, modern versions must update the KJV language.

Another reason for revisions is that translators today have access to Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that are closer to the originals than those used in the KJV. For example, KJV translators had access to only about twenty-five manuscripts, all of which

were no older than AD 900-1500. Today, due to archaeological discoveries such as the Dead Scrolls and others, translators have at their disposal over five thousand manuscripts, dating from as early as 200 BC. This greatly increases knowledge about the original wording of the ancient texts and how to best understand and translate them.

In Job 39:9, 10, for example, the KJV translates the Hebrew word *re'em* as "unicorn." Translators now know that the word refers to an extinct species of ox, so most modern versions more correctly read "wild ox."

One of many

The KJV translators certainly had a way with words. The beauty and familiarity of their expressions are among the reasons the KJV has remained popular for almost four hundred years. It is the Bible, but it is not the "one and only Bible." It is just one of many in a long line of versions (human translations) of the original words first written long ago in Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. ■■■

Former BA editor **Jerry Griffin** and his wife, Donna, reside in Brighton, CO. His 60-page booklet on this topic, *How We Got the Bible*, is available through Bible Advocate Press.



**The KJV essentially revised,
updated, and consolidated the
previous English translations.**

Recognize Your Leaders

Elder Whaid Rose was appointed G. C. President in 1997. To mark his tenth anniversary in this position, the BA editor dropped by his office for a visit.

BA: What impact has your service in this position had upon you and your family?

Stress comes with any job, and its potential is increased by multiple concerns, frequent travel, demands upon time, and the sense that my work is never done. The positives? I love ministering to people. I was a pastor when this assignment came, and as I see it now, I gained a larger pastorate instead of losing one. Administratively, I've been stretched beyond my comfort, but I've learned much about boardsmanship, leadership, accountability, etc., for which I am grateful.

I am grateful for my family's willingness to share me with the Church in this way. My wife, Marjolene, works as a school nurse, is very active in the Denver church, and blesses me with freedom to travel. Our daughter, Arvella, has completed her second year at Colorado Christian University, and our son, Nathan, has completed his junior year in high school.

BA: What are the frustrations of this assignment and the gains?

I was called to be a change-agent, and the change process is slow. It requires patience, causes suspicion and misunderstanding, and brings many painful moments. Ministry also requires resources, and I am often frustrated by the lack thereof, both human and financial.



The greatest gain of the past ten years is our increased focus on Jesus Christ and the gospel, reinforced by the Ministerial Councils of Tulsa, Oklahoma ('04), and Overland Park, Kansas ('06). Emphasis on the gospel, grace, salvation, missions, evangelism, and worship reflects what I consider to be the greatest gain any church can experience.

BA: Tell us about the Wake-Up Call for youth.

We have been warned that, due to the assault by secular culture, only 4 percent of teenagers will make lasting commitments to Christ and the authority of the Word. Whether or not this is accurate, the assault on our youth is real, and we cannot sit by and wait for this to take its course. Youth and adults alike must be awakened and motivated to action. We are collaborating with the NFYC to ensure that the harvest of youth in CoG7 is much greater than 4 percent.

BA: Should your tenure continue for several more years, what is your vision for the Church?

We will continue to cultivate greater focus on Christ and the gospel, while implementing the long-term plans outlined in our vision document. Our Operational Plan of Action focuses primarily on improving district administration. Also, we will develop resources and launch "Sabbath Experience," a new tool that offers the gift of Sabbath to a tired world, guides others to rest in Christ, and helps our own members appreciate and practice Sabbath rest.

BA: What is the status of your health?

I am in fairly good health, with the exception of eyesight. I have experienced significant vision loss recently, making reading and driving difficult. There is no known cause of the deterioration, so I continue to rely on prayers for healing (thanks to my church family for praying), while also pursuing viable treatments. So far, this has not hindered my capacity to carry out the duties of my office. God's strength is being made perfect through my weakness, and I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve.

... esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"
(1 Thessalonians 5:13).

Minister Ramon Ruiz Garza has been president of the International Ministerial Congress (IMC) since 1998. We asked a few questions about his work.

BA: What changes has IMC experienced since the last congress (2002 in Houston, Texas)?

The most significant administrative change was the '06 death of Lynn Taylor, IMC secretary. Lynn worked hard on the executive committee and was a blessing from God to the congress.

On the other hand, the congress has grown. We have exchanged teachers and preachers between countries. We have helped those who suffer because of floods, poverty, and even persecution for their faith. The Emmanuel Kayitare case in Rwanda (see p. 27) is a good example that we can do things working together that otherwise we could not.

BA: What countries have you visited since '02?

I have visited Africa - Ghana and Nigeria; Europe - England, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain (twice); Asia - India; Central and South America - Argentina (twice), Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador (twice), Nicaragua, Cuba, and Jamaica. And the U.S.! Sometimes I was accompanied by Bill Hicks of Missions Abroad, or by Wilson Correa do Nascimento, IMC vice president. Sometimes I traveled alone – but always with our Lord.

BA: How many countries will be represented in Overland Park this summer?

We are expecting about 35 or 40 countries in this congress, including these for the first time, if God wills: Bahamas, Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Nepal, Malawi, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, Cuba, St. Lucia, and Venezuela. Some of these will apply for IMC membership. I want to recognize the General Conference (U.S. and Canada) because they are helping several delegates from countries in extreme poverty to come to the IMC in Kansas.

BA: What is most important for this congress?

The reform of our bylaws, without doubt. The IMC needs administrative structure that allows eq-

uitable participation by all its members. We need greater awareness of the global Church, with presence and participation in every country. We need the capacity and the will to respond to human needs, to be engaged in saving the world through the gospel. We need unity in essential things and liberty in non-essentials – unity, not uniformity. We need a congress faithful, loyal, and accurate to God – one that includes (not excludes) all churches that obey God's commandments and stay faithful to Jesus. Please join us in praying for this meeting.

BA: In addition to IMC, what other gospel ministries are you involved with?

I am the director of Cristo Viene, or "Jesus is coming." This ministry raises funds for 70+ missionaries in 15 countries (see p. 31).

I also serve as pastor in San Pedro church, in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. I salute this church of about 100 people because they are united in supporting my work with IMC. And I work with the evangelistic department of the Mexican church, with Pastor Rolando Lopez, director.

BA: Tell us about your family.

My wife, Rebeca, and I have a son Gersom (28) and two daughters, Priscila (23) and Rebeca (21). Gersom is married to Haydee, and they have a three-year-old, Camila, our first grandbaby. As our people in Africa say, "God is good . . . all the time."



Rag Doll Religion

by **Jonathan Alexander Ijames**

A rag doll can be bent into almost any shape. It is made of rags; it has no spine and can be bent backward as well as forward.

Many people are like rag dolls when it comes to religion. The Devil can bend and twist them into any shape to accomplish his purpose. They have no spiritual spine. If the Devil wants them to sin, he just puts a little pressure on, and they yield. If he wants them to run with the ungodly, he sends the pleasure-mad crowd along, and they fall in line. If he wants them to drink or dress in the worldly way while professing Christianity, he shows them some foolish fads.

Spineless Christians are worthless in the Lord's work. Like poor rag dolls, they fall about limber and flabby, with no strength to stand up for God.

A professing Christian who supports the Devil's program with time, talent, money, and influence is in a deplorable condition. He will lose his own soul and lead others to hell unless he repents and is born again.

Rag doll Christians should come to God and let Him save

and sanctify them through His Word. That would put spiritual backbone in them to stand against the wiles of the Devil (Ephesians 6:11). It is time for us to realize that we can be controlled by pure religion, not like church members void of God's saving grace, righteousness, and power. We need to reach for more than a flabby and feeble faith. The world should not have any reason to wonder if our religion is different from the Devil's mess.

The undefiled religion of Jesus Christ offers His servants a backbone the demons cannot bend for an evil mission. It offers godly power that will not let us run with the Devil's crowd, chew his fodder, drink his broth, and be lost with his servants.

We need the pure religion that goes beyond having our names in the church books. Shame is on us if our religion doesn't display godly conduct and invoke righteous blessings on our families and friends. Our religion is worthless if we neglect godly missions and worship services provided to teach us about the heavenly Father's plan for our

lives. Rag doll religion is too vain for humanity to live with and far too vain for anyone to die with.

The religion of Jesus Christ is the most valuable thing the world will ever know. It cleanses us inside and out and transforms us. It gives us the spiritual backbone of steel and places it so the Devil can't break it. Pure religion adds value to human life beyond anything the world can offer.

Imagine what would happen if all the soft, flabby professors of Christianity would repent with godly sorrow and get converted to the pure religion of Jesus Christ. With the Holy Ghost leading them, they would go forth to shine for God, fighting sin and the Devil on every battlefield. Millions of people would notice our genuine religion and accept the invitation to follow Jesus.

Come to Christ today and let Him fill your soul with pure religion that will take you through life and give you a glorious admittance into God's kingdom. Get your sanctification through His Word (John 17:17), and start an experience that will convince others that you are walking with Jesus.

The terms for His divine reward are recorded in Revelation 22:14: "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city." ■

John Alexander Ijames was a school teacher and state overseer for the Church of God Body of Christ, Mocksville, NC, before his death in 1955. He was grandfather to Calvin Ijames, father-in-law to Conference President Whaid Rose.

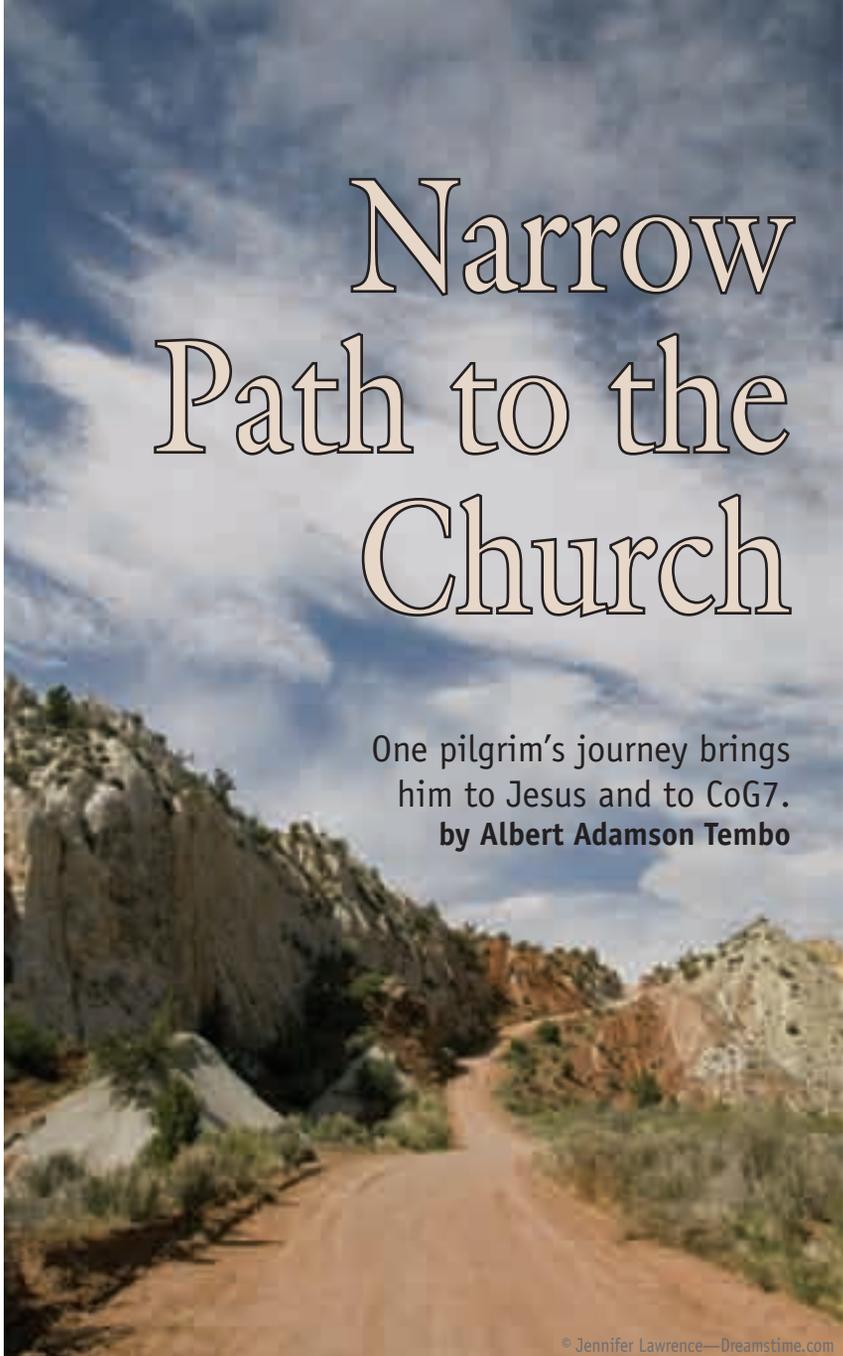
My parents belonged to the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa, established by Scottish missionaries. One of its core teachings is infant baptism, but my ardent parents did not have me sprinkled in infancy. Neither as a young adult did I choose baptism, despite the necessary preparation. Finally, I was baptized by sprinkling in the Presbyterian church in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1974 at age 24.

From that time, I rendered service in the church, although I did not fully appreciate the essential tenets of the Christian faith. I held positions such as choir leader, youth leader, church elder, and session clerk. During this time, I did not critically evaluate my beliefs and practices in the light of Bible teaching. Our church did not directly encourage independent study of Scripture, and I lacked enough personal zeal to equip myself and pursue spiritual growth. I remained largely unaware of the vast depths of Scripture and of the alternative teachings from other denominations.

Gradually, I became aware of Seventh-day Baptist and Seventh-day Adventist churches that held services on Saturdays and administered baptism by immersion. Due to my complacency, that slight awareness could not provoke me to read the Bible seriously and prove or disprove the validity of such practices and teachings. Friends, acquaintances, and neighbors could not convince me either, as I had been instructed to dismiss all such as vestiges of legalism and Judaism.

Narrow Path to the Church

One pilgrim's journey brings him to Jesus and to CoG7.
by **Albert Adamson Tembo**

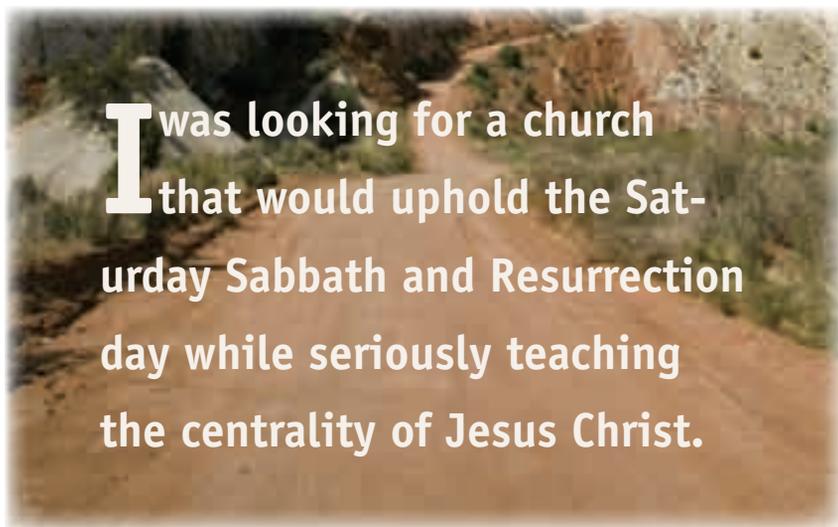


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Denominational differences

A look at denominations showed disunity in the teachings and practices of Christendom, and this became a source of surprise and concern. I wondered how this was possible considering that we all had one Book of instruction. I sought to understand the cause of the differences. This search led me from one church to another and exposed me to different liturgies and creeds that were mind-boggling to me.

Soon I discovered that the differences among denominations were not necessarily Bible-centered but man-centered. From then on, I sought to marshal Scriptures that taught against a Saturday Sabbath and baptism by immersion, although such were hard to come by. At the height of this crusade against any teaching that opposed my beliefs, I came upon a pile of magazines in a bookstore. I read and enjoyed most of the articles except the one on the Sabbath. It offended



I was looking for a church that would uphold the Saturday Sabbath and Resurrection day while seriously teaching the centrality of Jesus Christ.

me because as far as I was concerned, Sunday was the only Sabbath, as I had been taught, and the day on which Christ rose from the dead. The person of Jesus Christ and His centrality to Christian faith and life were not yet the driving forces behind my search. Rather, I was looking for God's truth to defend my truth.

Change of heart

One day in 1987 I listened to a Billy Graham sermon on Zimbabwe television about the centrality of Jesus Christ in all matters of worship and faith. Reading John 3:16, Dr. Graham emphasized the point "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

At the end of that sermon, I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and was fully convinced that there was nothing I could do without Him. I became a new creation, and my old things passed away. I had peace of mind, and my strife-filled crusade against people with different scriptural interpretations was gone. I wondered why and how this sudden change of heart took place in me. People who

knew me well noticed the great change.

Sabbath and Sunday

After coming to know Jesus Christ in this way, I was still confronted with the issues of Sabbath and Sunday. I decided to be as open-minded as possible and started reading and studying to reconcile three days and three nights as the period Christ spent in the grave (Matthew 12:38-40) with His Sunday morning resurrection. It was a challenge indeed, since my Sunday Sabbath belief was hinged upon this subject: "Sunday Morning Christ Resurrection."

Armed with pro-Sunday Sabbath and pro-Saturday Sabbath books and booklets, I spent a whole day studying the two controversial subjects.

At the end of the study, I was fully convinced that 1) our Lord Jesus Christ spent three days and three nights in the grave and rose from the dead on Saturday, not Sunday, and that 2) the Saturday Sabbath is indeed the original Sabbath and was not changed. This was made known to my fellow Presbyterians who

had not yet studied these subjects, and, therefore, I could not impose it on them. I remained in the Presbyterian church as an elder session clerk and youth leader while looking for the church that upheld my new-found truth.

Church search

My search for the church had started in earnest. Since the books and booklets I used for my study were mostly from the Worldwide Church of God, I sent my first letter of inquiry to them. After an initial visit with the pastor, I thought my search had come to an end. Then I discovered that Mr. Herbert Armstrong was being over-exalted and that the church's messages were mainly centered on it as compared to other organizations. I continued my search.

I then decided to visit the Seventh-day Adventist Church because they openly welcomed people to their meetings. I was greatly blessed with some good Christ-centered messages. When church leaders noticed I was a regular visitor, they started coming to teach me more and lend me books, which I read with enthusiasm. I learned that Ellen G. White was at the center of their belief system, so my search for the church continued.

After these disappointments, I decided to visit Sunday churches also, to widen my understanding. So I visited the various Pentecostal churches; the Baptist, Methodist, and Apostolic Faith churches; Church of Christ; Jehovah's Witnesses; African Apostolic Church; and many others. I indeed widened my knowledge. But I was looking for a church that would uphold the

Saturday Sabbath and Resurrection day while seriously teaching the centrality of Jesus Christ. I could not find one among the Sabbathkeeping churches I had so far visited, so I was still in the Presbyterian Church.

Hearing from CoG7

Then I recalled a passage I had read in the autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong about his experience with the Church of God (Seventh Day), whose offices were in Stanberry, Missouri. It published the *Bible Advocate* magazine and was, according to Armstrong, “poorly organized.” I wrote a letter to inquire of them and prayed that God might direct it to its destination. I waited for a long time without receiving a reply and, consequently, lost hope.

One evening after work, I found a parcel from the Church of God (Seventh Day) had been delivered by the postman. I was extremely happy to see it and was certain I had been offered a golden opportunity to learn more. Enclosed in the parcel were a letter from Brother LeRoy Dais and several tracts about God’s love, salvation in Christ, and the Sabbath. In his letter, Brother Dais expressed gratitude that God made it possible for the letter to reach them in Denver, considering the incomplete address I used and the fact that the Church’s offices had moved from Stanberry to Denver some eighteen years earlier.

The first tract I read was the doctrinal beliefs of the Church of God (Seventh Day). After reading, I was in position to compare teachings of the churches I had investigated. My comparison revealed similarities and remark-

able differences between the church organizations. I discovered that this church did not have a prophet or prophetess at the center of its worship except Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. I also learned that it recognizes men and women of other church organizations as fellow Christians.

Baptism

After reading all the tracts that were sent to me, I then wrote a letter to Brother Dais notifying him that my search for the church to which I should belong had come to an end and that I was ready for baptism. Since the Church of God (Seventh Day) did not yet exist in Southern Africa, I was advised to look for a man of God from any church who could baptize me by immersion — not into the Church, but into the body of Christ.

I contacted a number of church leaders, but all were unwilling to baptize me unless I became one of their members. The Apostolic Church pastor was the last one I contacted, and he agreed to baptize me unconditionally so long as I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I explained to him that I was going to be the first member

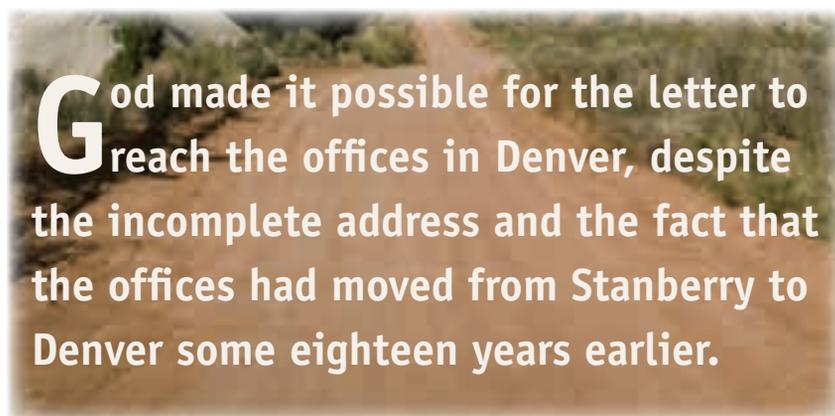
of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Zimbabwe and that I was going to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God. I was accordingly baptized and had hands laid on me by the elders of that church.

A grateful heart

That was in 1992, and I am now happily serving the Lord in the Church of God (Seventh Day) as a pastor. The one-year pastoral course I did at Theological College of Zimbabwe is now paying dividends.

This is a true story about my narrow path to the Church. I am, however, very grateful to the Lord for my Presbyterian background, literature that was made available from the various church organizations, and the heart-touching messages from Dr. Billy Graham and others. In a special way, I thank the Lord for making it possible for the Apostolic Church pastor to baptize me unconditionally, save for accepting Christ as my personal Savior. 

Pastor Albert A. Tembo has raised up three congregations and a school in his native Malawi, Africa, since returning there with his family from Zimbabwe in 1995.





JULY - AUGUST 2007

YOUTH REACH

NFYC & BA

Contest!!

For youth only
(ages 13-22)

Send us your photos,
poetry, or prose!

Do you like to write?
Take pictures? Then
now's your chance to
show us your stuff.
First-place winners
will be published in the
December BA and . . .

receive cash prizes!

First place: \$100
Second place: \$50
Third place: \$15

Go to BA Online or NFYC
Web site for contest
rules.

Entries due by
August 31.

Philippine CoG7 youth

Time Travel

by Roger Palms

Welcome to today — twenty-six centuries ago.

Retro? Time warp? What's happened? How did we get flipped backward from the twenty-first century A.D. to the sixth century B.C.? What are we doing way back there?

We're back in an earlier time with people we've read about living around us. Now we understand them better. And we understand ourselves better, too. Look at your friends, your schoolmates, your neighbors. Most of them don't even know they are retro. But you know where you are and why.

Get your Bible and start turning pages — backward! A ways before the New Testament . . . OK, you're there: the book of Daniel.

Now choose a name for yourself. No, not the name you have now. Your name has to change to something with words like **open-minded** or **accepting** in it. So now you are Richard Open-Minded or you are Megan Accepting-of-Everything.

Weird, you say. That's what happened to God's people back then. Instead of names with God's name attached to show who they belonged to, people were given new names with the name of a pagan god attached. That's why we know we have gone back there. Things that happened back then are happening now to us. People would love to change our identity so we aren't connected to the true God anymore.

Here is something else from back then that's happening now. Religion is OK. Spirituality is OK. Sex gods and goddesses are OK. Even "I am the center of the universe, and I make my own rules" is OK. So what is not OK in our retro world? Jesus, unless we decide for ourselves about who He is and what He teaches. That's OK. If anyone says, "This is the way, walk in it," that's not OK. Or if one of us quotes Jesus, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me," that's definitely not OK.

In our sixth century B.C. retro-culture, we may be exactly where the young

men we read about in Daniel were. They wouldn't accept their new names with pagan gods tacked on, and they wouldn't accept the handouts of the pagan king's lifestyle either. They were different. Because they wouldn't go along with the culture, they made people angry. Read Daniel, chapters 1, 3, and 6. You'll see for yourself.

"Too narrow," they were told. They were challenged with the words we hear, too: "You must be hateful people because you don't agree with us." "You think you have the whole truth; you think you alone are right."

That's exactly what Daniel and his three friends did think, and they were right. Change the wording a little: "You think Jesus is the only way to God? How narrow can you get?" "You are following only Jesus and what He taught? You are really limited in brain power, aren't you?"

Those four young men didn't have it easy when they said no to that culture. Being thrown into a blast furnace wasn't comfortable. Put down for lion food wasn't what they would have chosen for a fun day.

But they stayed steady. And God honored their steadiness. He still honors faithful young men and women. Just because the culture around us is way back to yesterday and the arguments of open-minded people still make us look silly, God has not changed. He still asks us to be faithful.

If you haven't yet experienced this sixth century B.C. criticism, try following Jesus. If you prefer to just go along and get along, then don't follow Jesus. Just talk about Him as your ideal. People will be OK with that.



'Where You At?'

It happened on Sabbath, May 19, at the church named for crosses like the one Christ died on. A hundred of His California young people came together in our capital city for a rally. It was a God-blessed day at the Las Cruces Church in Sacramento!

"Where You At?" was our theme, taken from Matthew 6:21. That's where Jesus asks about our hearts. Brothers Jesus Manso, Enoch Flores, and Thomas Davila from San Jose spoke or led music on the theme, with others from nine congregations participating in various ways.

Following the afternoon rally, over 50 people participated in gym nite that featured a basketball tournament. Thanks to the sisters who volunteered to serve meals and for the brothers who stayed for the cleanup!

— George Perez
West Coast District Youth Coordinator

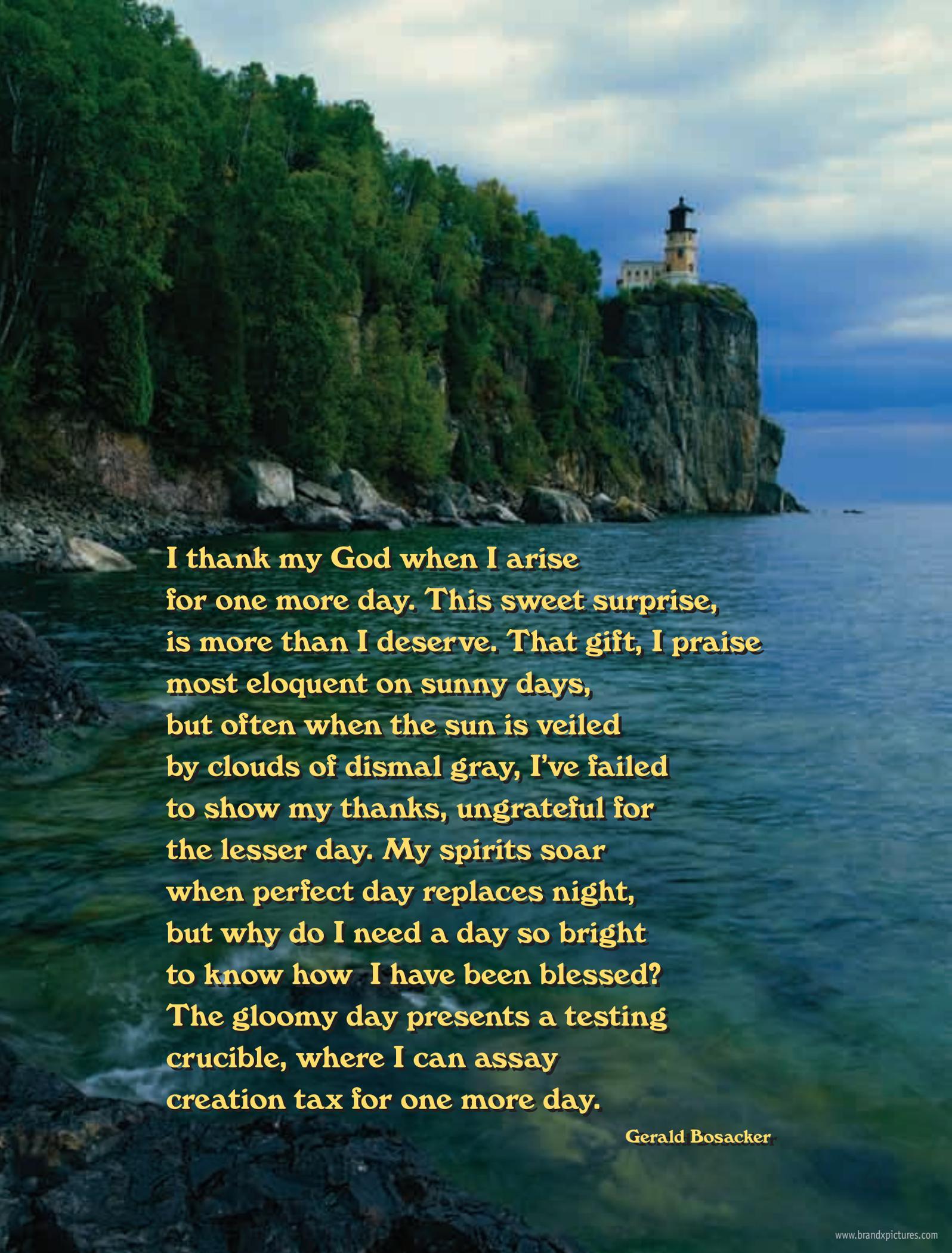
"You have your ideals and I have mine," they will say.

But if you start doing what Jesus says and refuse to go along with the open-minded "Everything is OK if I think it's OK" crowd, get ready for the furnace and the lions.

Welcome to the sixth century B.C. Welcome to a time when people are so open-minded that their brains are falling out. Welcome to a life where taking a strong stand for God can hurt. But welcome to a place where the followers of Jesus will hear a special message, just for them: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Roger Palms is former editor of *Decision* magazine and lives in Fort Myers, FL. [.org](http://www.decision.org)

The Harrisburg, OR, FYC participated in the National Youth Week/Hunger Lock-In program on the weekend of May 19. Focusing on others was a great highlight for our group. Our church gave over \$900 to support the foreign missions project to the Philippines.

A scenic view of a lighthouse perched on a rocky cliff overlooking a body of water under a cloudy sky. The lighthouse is a small, white, cylindrical structure with a black top, situated on a high, rocky outcrop. The cliff is covered in dense green trees and shrubs. The water is a deep blue-green color, and the sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

**I thank my God when I arise
for one more day. This sweet surprise,
is more than I deserve. That gift, I praise
most eloquent on sunny days,
but often when the sun is veiled
by clouds of dismal gray, I've failed
to show my thanks, ungrateful for
the lesser day. My spirits soar
when perfect day replaces night,
but why do I need a day so bright
to know how I have been blessed?
The gloomy day presents a testing
crucible, where I can assay
creation tax for one more day.**

Gerald Bosacker



What's new with . . .

Spring Vale Academy

- Fall enrollment August 19-20

SWORD

- Camp at Sis-Q Meadows, OR, July 18-22;
stirnfam@netzero.com

Missions Ministries

- Change for Your World offering in July

NAWM

- National Hispanic Women's Retreat
August 31 -
September 3, El Paso, TX

National FYC

- Youth camps in Oregon, Michigan, and Texas;
<http://nyfc.cog7.org>



SVA smiles: Barb and Gil Kauer (front, center), graduates from the fifties, enjoy seeing all their children and grandchildren attend the Michigan academy. Gil's dad, Elder S. J. Kauer, was the school's first principal, 1948-1962.

Spring Vale Academy

Mark Caswell, Director

Students attending Spring Vale Academy receive high quality, Christian values-based instruction. Our graduates are prepared for acceptance to the nation's top colleges and universities, but with a significant difference. Through positive role models, in words and deeds, the Spring Vale experience prepares students to stay true to their values and embrace Christ for life.

SVA faculty and staff dedicate their lives preparing young people to be rooted in Christian faith. They begin every day in prayer, remembering each student by name. Students join the staff for chapel, framing their day with an uplifting message, giving them tools to face the challenges in today's world.

On campus, students grow more confident in their beliefs. After graduation, they return for alumni reunions and to enroll their children and grandchildren, ensuring that the next generation benefits from Christian education as they did. Academy life has helped to shape many lives in service to God and the Church. That's the Spring Vale difference!

For fall semester, dormitories open August 19, and classes begin August 20. Early registrations are due July 15. Contact the academy at 989-725-2391 or <http://sva.cog7.org/>.

Spring Vale Academy
4150 S. M-52
Owosso, MI 48867



Pastor Chip Hinds cuts ribbon for the new 300-seat chapel for the Wister, OK, congregation. Nearly 150 persons, including former pastors and Church leaders (pictured here), attended the dedication ceremonies June 2.

Congratulations to These CoG7 Couples

Married 70 years (1937-2007):

Bill and Ivole Wallen, Milton-Freewater, OR
Ralph and Earline Ijames, Newton, NC

Married 65 years (1942-2007):

Beecher and Betty Adams, Claremore, OK
Lavern and Wilma Ling, Meridian, ID
DeRoy and Mattie Lou McGill, Marion, OR
Dale and Eula Hastey, Morris, OK
Forest and Helen Pruitt, Oklahoma City, OK

Married 60 years (1947-2007):

Florencio and Tomasa Barraza, El Paso, TX
Andy and Donna Carpenter, West Covina, CA
Calvin and Louella Dais, Eureka, SD
J. C. and Margaret Donaho, Wister, OK
Gene and Louise Moore, Redmond, OR
Hubert and Alice Parsons, Port Royal, PA
Clarence and Jean Raver, Wakeman, OH
Ruben and Monica Zaragoza, Yucaipa, CA

Ministerial Council

NAMC President Robert Coulter reports appointment of these brethren to the New Covenant Study Committee: Jeff Endecott, Bill Hicks, Dale Lawson, Whaid Rose, and Loren Stacy. Their report will be presented to the 2008 council.

Elder Coulter also reports that Elders John Lemley and Israel Steinmetz have been added to the committee charged with developing and writing, in book form, biblical evidence for the Church's statement of faith, adopted in October 2006.

Central States Seniors Retreat

Senior adults from the mid-continent area retreat at Oklahoma's Dover Campgrounds each fall. The dates this year are September 18-22, and the study theme is "Today's Events in Biblical Perspective." The committee consists of Ken and Karen Riggs, Bob and Mary Barthel, and Lawrence and Sue Eddy.

To aid planning and save you dollars, prepayment is requested. Contact Vernon or Diana Dickinson: P. O. Box 213; Oklahoma City, OK, 73101; 405-273-5439; 405-570-6977; or e-mail vr dickinson@hughes.net.

Church and SVA

Spring Vale Academy was founded by the Church of God (Seventh Day) in Michigan and has operated under its own board for nearly sixty years. In a recent meeting, the G. C. board reaffirmed that the term *parachurch* best describes Spring Vale's ministry alongside the General Conference. The Church continues to be the primary base from which SVA recruits its students. The Conference provides many benefits to the school, including use of its mailing lists, promotion in its publications and meetings, semi-annual G. C. offerings, and annual G. C. awards to graduating seniors. It commends the academy as a viable option for the education and spiritual development of our youth.



Medical mission to Guatemala: Nearly 20 medical, dental, and support personnel from the U.S. went to Guatemala for service April 1-10. According to Dr. Eduardo S. Bermudez of Sacramento, CA, "We saw over 1,830 patients, preaching and treating them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Several doctors and dentists from Mexico also joined the team. This is the third medical missions trip sponsored by G. C. Missions and North American Women's Ministries.



Fifty in the Philippines: Pastors and workers pose during the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Church there, held in Cagayan de Oro on the island of Mindinao, April 23-28. Pastor Phil Kordahi of Australia (front row, fifth from left) represented the international CoG7 at the celebration, and he visited the Church in Manila. Pastor Baltazar Wooton, president of the Philippine church, reports about 4,000 members in 84 congregations, with 135 baptisms in the past year.

Calendar of Events

Michigan youth camp, near Middleville, MI, July 15-22; 616-534-7564 or kingmerex@aol.com

SWORD camp at Sis-Q Meadows, OR, July 18-22; 541-923-0487 or stirfam@netzero.com

Sis-Q Meadows youth camp, near Cave Junction, OR, July 22-29; 541-689-1387 or hogren@msn.com

Juniors youth camp at Sis-Q Meadows, OR, July 29-August 5; seekerscampers@yahoo.com

Iowa family camp near Cedar Rapids, August 17-19; 319-668-9663 or jharvey@idtna.com

Senior adult retreat at Sis-Q Meadows, OR, August 24-29; 503-769-6636 or KRSNLAWSON@aol.com

LITES fall term begins September 10 in Stanberry, MO (application due August 1); lites@cog7.org

Colorado men's retreat near Castle Rock, September 14-16; 303-428-6000

Central states seniors retreat, Dover, OK; September 18-22; 405-570-6977 or vr dickinson@hughes.net

Missouri women's retreat, near Amsterdam, MO; September 21-23; ruthmusic@yahoo.com

Rwandan Pastor Freed



Emmanuel Kayitare, lead pastor of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the African nation of Rwanda, was freed late Friday, May 11, after nearly four months of imprisonment on unsubstantiated charges. Sabbath, May 12, was his first full day of freedom. He is shown here with his wife, prior to their ordeal. [.org](http://www.cog7.org)



IMC leaders in Europe (L to R): Pastor and Mrs. Vilson Nascimento of Florida, Pastor and Mrs. Roberto Torre of Italy, Pastor and Mrs. Ramon Ruiz of Mexico, and Dr. and Mrs. Paulo Coelho of Portugal. President Ruiz and Second Vice President Nascimento of the International Ministerial Congress visited the Church in Spain, Portugal, and Italy April 6-15 to advance the gospel witness there and to strengthen ties across Europe.

CoG7 Chronicles

Born in the American Midwest 150 years ago, today's CoG7 serves in many nations. Review these notable dates:

1844: On October 22, Gilbert Cranmer experiences Great Disappointment of the William Miller movement



1852: Cranmer begins observing Sabbath

1858: Cranmer leads "eight churches of Christ" in Michigan, 150 years ago now

1860: Marion, Iowa, church founded by M. E. Cornell, splits over Mrs. White's visions

1863: *Hope of Israel* first published; eventually becomes *Bible Advocate* in 1972



1875: Missouri churches take "Church of God" name

1884: General Conference formed in Michigan; A. C. Long, first president

1899: G. C. is incorporated in Missouri

1905-06: *Bible Advocate* furor causes loss

1914: Church pioneer Jacob Brinkerhoff dies; Elder A. N. Dugger becomes BA editor and G. C. president

1917: Elder Dugger publishes 40 points of doctrine

1921: Over 1,000 members added to the Church

1923: "Seventh Day" added to the Church name

1931: Elder Dugger visits Jerusalem to investigate establishing headquarters there

1933: Salem, West Virginia, publishing house opens in opposition to Stanberry, Missouri

1934: Oregon minister Herbert Armstrong begins *Radio Church of God and Plain Truth*

1942: Attempt to reunite Stanberry and Salem fails

1946: Michigan churches purchase farm near Owosso; Spring Vale Academy begins in '48

1947: Unity panel (E. A. Straub, K. H. Freeman, W. W. McMicken, S. J. Kauer, L. I. Rodgers, and A. E. Ildell, moderator) begins work

1948: Fairview, Oklahoma, ministers meeting hammers out merger plans

1949: Merger approved in Stanberry campmeeting; new publishing house completed there

1950: General Conference opens new office in Denver, Colorado



1951: Midwest Theological Seminary opens in Stanberry, Missouri

1953: Searchlight Bible Course, *Faith for Our Time* radio, and EMGAM (Every Member Get a Member) illustrate home missions efforts

1955: Faithful Servant Memorial Fund established to assist ministerial students after death of Elder Carl Stacy in California

1958: Layman's Research Committee distributes materials that disturb Church for two years

- 1961: First CoG7 youth camp operated by Oregon State Conference; G. C. buys 33 acres for development north of Denver
- 1963: Elder Robert Coulter elected G. C. chairman, a post he will hold 24 years; BA celebrates 100 years of publication



- 1964: District boundaries revised; seven departments supported by United Fund; Conference adopts first budget
- 1965-66: National Youth Team takes inspirational program to churches across U.S., Canada
- 1967: *Worship in Song* hymnal published by Bible Advocate Press
- 1968: Ministerial Council in Monterrey, Mexico, is first outside the United States
- 1970: Free *Bible Advocate* policy begins; *Harvest Field Messenger* went free to members in '69
- 1972: General Conference offices, Bible Advocate Press move to new facilities north of Denver
- 1973: *Bible Advocate* mailing list computerized
- 1976: Summit School of Theology opens in Denver, replacing Midwest Bible College in Stanberry
- 1978: First International Ministerial Congress meets in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico
- 1979: Glorieta, New Mexico, conference reaches peak in attendance, interest, guest activity (Samuele Bacchiocchi, Garner Ted Armstrong)
- 1980: G. C. adopts double-in-a-decade goal; unification panel appointed to dialogue with General Council of Meridian, Idaho
- 1983: Centennial Celebration of General Conference in Manhattan, Kansas

- 1987: G. C. adopts unity bylaws with General Council, but vote in Meridian falls short
- 1990: New York City Pastor Whaid Rose founds Church Renewal Ministries, challenging the Church to spiritual renewal and evangelism
- 1991: Little Rock, Arkansas, conference approves major financial option for local churches
- 1994: Ministerial Council in Colorado Springs approves reworded doctrinal beliefs
- 1996: Council in Beaver Creek, Colorado, responds to '94 IMC study on landmark decision regarding deity of Christ



- 1997: Elder Whaid Rose selected as G. C. president in Knoxville, Tennessee, replacing Elder Calvin Burrell, who becomes BA editor
- 1998: Response to Hurricane Mitch (Honduras) leads to Disaster Relief Fund that gives \$250,000 in three years; BA goes full color
- 1999: National Leadership Conference in Glorieta, New Mexico; first Pioneer Missionary Training conducted in Monterrey, Mexico
- 2000: Missions Abroad expands with Home Missions, Church Planting; Bill Hicks, director
- 2001: After 25 years of service, Summit School of Theology closes, replaced by Ministries Training System ('02)
- 2002: First G. C. Medical Missions Project conducted in Mexico City
- 2004: National Leadership Conference at Camp Berachah near Tacoma, Washington
- 2005: Issachar Forum launched; also Local Church Impact, with aid for congregational vision planning, Building Brothers, etc.
- 2006: Restyled Statement of Faith adopted by NAMC in Overland Park, Kansas
- 2007: Sesquicentennial CoG7 event and International Congress come to Kansas!**



International Tour



International Ministerial Congress

The congress (IMC) unites the national conferences of the Church of God (Seventh Day) around the world. It was conceived and birthed in the 1970's, with Elder Robert Coulter its visionary, architect, and first president ('78-'86). Under current president, Minister Ramon Ruiz of Mexico, membership has expanded to nearly thirty national churches representing a total of more than two hundred thousand persons.

Principal objectives of the congress are to promote doctrinal unity around the IMC statement of faith and to coordinate evangelistic efforts in all the nations.

To achieve this, quadrennial meetings are held for fellowship and business. After postponement of the '06 IMC meeting originally scheduled for Brazil, the congress will now meet in Overland Park, Kansas, July 7-11, 2007.

IMC member nations: Argentina, Australia, Belize, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Portugal, Trinidad/Tobago, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay

IMC officers (2002-07): Ramon Ruiz, president; Calvin Burrell, first vice president; Wilson do Nascimento, second vice president; Lynn Taylor (deceased), secretary; Carlos Ceron, treasurer

IMC delegates from U.S. and Canada: Robert Coulter, Bill Hicks, Chip Hinds, Kenneth Knoll, John Lemley, Raul Lopez, Carl Palmer, Whaid Rose, Loren Stacy, Antonio Vega, Heber Vega, Melvin Sweet

IMC Sabbath: On July 7 at the Overland Park, Kansas, convention center, delegates to the International Ministerial Congress will assemble with the General Conference convention, featuring a parade of nations, messages by Ramon Ruiz and Robert Coulter, and other worship festivities. All are invited; no admission charge.

The IMC has experienced remarkable growth in recent years – a true community of believers in Jesus Christ around the corner and around the world. Thank you for your prayers for IMC leaders and for gospel workers in every country.

Cristo Viene

Missions, long a bright spot in the Church, has become brighter in recent years. Expanding from Missions Abroad to include Home Missions and Church Planting, this ministry needed a leader with high energy, vision, and passion to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Such a person was found in Pastor Bill Hicks, who often describes the G. C. Missions department as “Working for you around the corner and around the world.” As a result, mission-mindedness at home and our global presence are on the rise. Opportunities to touch the world in the name of Christ are provided through managed projects like Pioneer Missionary Training, Medical Missions, and Disaster Relief.

Another managed project is Cristo Viene, Spanish for “Christ is coming.” This missionary fund now provides maintenance salary for indigenous evangelists in fifteen countries: Cuba, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, Uruguay, Ecuador, Argentina, India, Kenya, United Kingdom, Philippines, Indonesia, and Italy. It solicits members in the U.S. and Canada to give twenty dollars per month toward this effort, with the goal of supporting five hundred missionaries through contributions from five thousand members.

This is an ambitious goal, but I’m not surprised, knowing the men behind the project. Immigrant leaders of our Haines City, Florida, congregation, Mario Mora (Costa Rica) and Rafael Parra (Colombia), conceived the idea and remain the human force behind it. Initially, they drove from church to church, personally soliciting funds. Motivated by a love for the whole world, they want to see the Church increase its commitment to missions. I spent time with these two brothers earlier this year and was refreshed to hear their hearts and observe their passion.

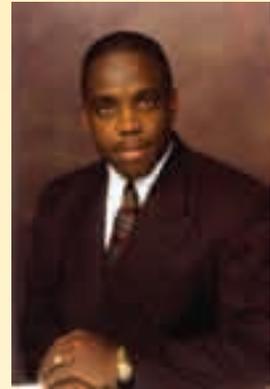
Historically, the U.S.-Canadian Church has not seen itself as a global administration but as one

among many conferences of the Church of God (Seventh Day) around the world. It was only in 1978 that the International Ministerial Congress was formed to foster doctrinal harmony and to coordinate the evangelistic efforts of its members. But through G. C. Missions, the General Conference is becoming more and more a church with global vision and more at ease with the term “world church.” Therefore, Cristo Viene is apropos because it calls the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.

The gathering of the congress in Overland Park this summer is a good opportunity to observe the increasing global presence of our church and the role of G. C. Missions in this growth. Whether or not you attend the congress, please renew your commitment to world missions and, if you haven’t already, become a contributor to Cristo Viene. Since the fund became a managed project of G. C. Missions, measures to ensure its financial integrity have been taken. Contributions are sent directly to the Denver office, placing the fund under the Conference’s auditing standards. Gifts are tax deductible. And appropriately, IMC President Ramon Ruiz Garza serves as chair of our Missions Advisory Board that oversees this fund.

Recently, a letter came from the Church in Costa Rica expressing appreciation for the financial support we provide its workers. Reading it, I reflected on Cristo Viene and prayed for God to give us more men like Hicks, Mora, and Parra. I thank God that, through their efforts and yours, the Church of God (Seventh Day) is becoming a world-class church.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference President



**Welcome delegates to the
International Ministerial Congress
in Overland Park, Kansas, July 7-11!
We pray with you that this
congress will mean . . .**

Change for Our World



© Melody Mulligan—Dreamstime.com

In the United States and Canada, this slogan reminds us of the annual offering when we give pocket change for a year, or a generous check, to support IMC and our growing global church. Join us in this offering this month. Remember, through your G. C. Missions Ministries and the IMC . . .

*We're working for you around the corner and around the world,
sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.*

G. C. Missions Ministries
Bill Hicks, Director

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