

November-December 2011

BA
BIBLE ADVOCATE®

World in Turmoil

- Tribulation talk (p. 4)
- Winning words (p. 16)
- Grief and gratitude (p. 18)

2011: Year of the Bible

ARTICLES



- 4** **The Great Tribulation** | Survey of CoG7 ministers
- 8** **Growling Bears** | Ken Lawson
- 10** **What About British Israelism?** | David Kidd
- 15** **Happy Birthday, KJV!** | Whaid Rose
- 16** **What the Bible Means to Me** | George Farrow, Manasseh Mark Bombeo, Steven M. Zuraff
- 18** **The Big Thanksgiving Question** | Brian Franks
- 20** **Good Seed, Bad Seed, Bumper Crops** | Calvin Burrell
- 23** **Be Still** | James Tilton



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 When you see this symbol, visit www.BAonline.org for additional material.

DEPARTMENTS

- 3** **First Word** — Wrapping Up
- 7** **Questions & Answers**
- 22** **Mail Bag**
- 30** **International Tour** — Europe and Middle East
- 31** **Last Word** — The End of Ourselves

COG7 IN ACTION

- 26** **Missions, Ghana, and more**

Scripture quotations

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Wrapping Up

It's that time again — time to wrap up the old year and unwrap a new one. Job's portrayal of human experience — "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (14:1) — rang true in 2011, for sure.

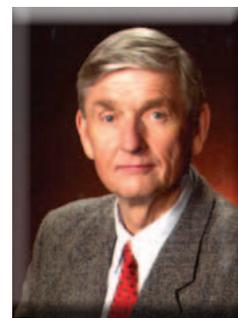
Listening back this year, bears growled (falling stocks, p. 8) and lions roared (world trouble, p. 20). The consternation all this commotion wasn't enough to call off Thanksgiving, or the turkeys would be singin' for sure. If you need a *grr*-attitude adjustment before the holiday, read pages 18-21. And don't miss Whaid Rose's tribute to the King James Bible on page 15. In a BA Facebook poll earlier this year, 51 of 98 folks said they read mostly KJV. That revered translation hit print four hundred years ago, prompting the choice of Year of the Bible as our 2011 theme.

Celebrating that theme, seventeen readers took up our challenge to write on "What the Bible Means to Me." Entries came from Ernie Klassek, an Australian who told what the Bible means to him in one word: "Everything," then added, "That's only in the last 52 years"; from a 92-year-old Ohio girl, Ora Muzik ("I am active in gardening, yard-work, shopping for my neighbors. I haven't been to a doctor in decades and don't take medicines. The Bible is all you need . . ."); and from 42-year-old Ramiro Palacios, reflecting on a "read the Bible" message he saw on a hillside above Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, his murder-plagued hometown.

Read the top three contest entries (pp. 16-17, 24), please, and the others at www.baonline.org. All who submitted their writing received copies of BAP's *How We Got the Bible*. The grand prize — a handsome 96-page hardcover, *The Story of the Bible* — went to George Farrow of Trenton, Florida. Congratulations to all entrants!

Birds sang this year, too — the doves more than the turkeys — for those with ears to hear. Next year, pages in every BA will help attune our hearing to more of God's good news frequency, the gentle cooing of the Holy Spirit. You can join in our "Spirit-formed" theme for 2012 by e-mailing your questions or comments, submitting an article or Viewpoint, visiting us on Facebook, or pledging financial support through Editor's Circle. A modest monthly amount from 300 readers goes a long way to keep the magazine free to all who ask for it.

— Calvin Burrell



[Prophecy]

The Great Tribulation

“For then there
will be great
tribulation,
such as has not
been since the
beginning of the
world until this
time, no, nor
ever shall be”

(Matthew 24:21).

Persecution of God's people is found in several other texts, but it is Jesus Christ who introduces the term *great tribulation* in His most extensive prophetic teaching, the Olivet Discourse. This time of human convulsion, says the Lord, exceeds all the troubles of any other age.

The BA asked Church of God (Seventh Day) ministers their views on the tribulation period prophesied in Matthew 24:21 (see also Mark 13:19 and Luke 21:20-26), whether its fulfillment is in the past, in the present, or in the future. This is an issue on which the Church has no firm position.

Compilation of the thirty-five responses received, plus comments from individual ministers, follows.

BA Question: Which of these best summarizes your understanding of this prophecy's fulfillment?

BA answers/options — with percentage of respondents who selected each:

- Destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies in AD 70: 85 percent
- Persecution of Christians by pagan Rome before Constantine: 15 percent
- Persecution of Christians by papal Rome after Constantine: 15 percent
- Persecution of Christians by other faiths in the modern world: 12 percent
- Persecution of Christians by secular governments in the modern world: 15 percent
- Future terrible time for the whole world, just prior to Christ's return: 50 percent

Note: Respondents could select more than one option, resulting in a total over 100 percent.

Individual comments on Christ's teaching of Great Tribulation

Note: "Historical" views appear first in this arrangement, then move to "futurist." Those in the middle see both past and future fulfillments of the prophecy.

Responding to His disciples' questions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the sign of His return, Jesus foretells a time of unparalleled "tribulation" (Matthew 24:21; Mark 13:19) or "distress" (Luke 21:23) upon Jerusalem. His answers begin with an overview of the future leading up to the end: the appearance of false christs, persecution and tribulation (affecting the twelve disciples), and preaching of the gospel throughout the world before His return (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:5-13; Luke 21:8-19).

Jesus focuses next on the first event He was asked about: Jerusalem's fall in AD 70 at Roman hands. He predicts the unparalleled trouble that Jews would then face (Matthew 24:15-22;

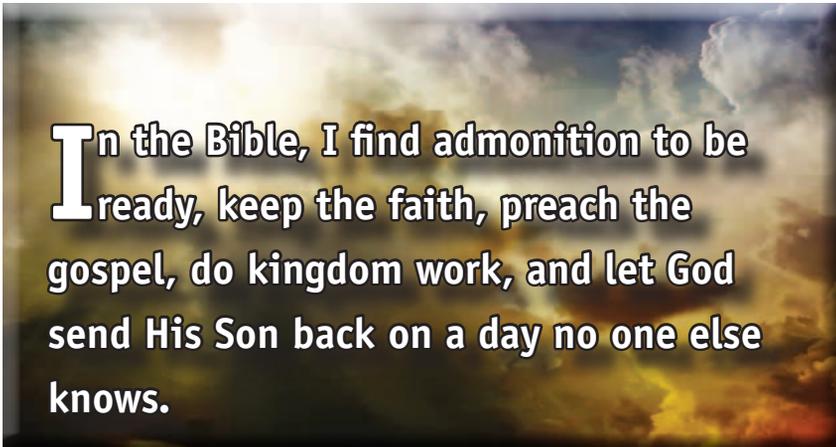
Mark 13:14-20; Luke 21:20-24). Matthew terms this the "great tribulation."

Then Jesus switches to the second event in question: His personal return and the climax of this age. He again warns about false christs, predicts awesome signs, and declares that He will return on the clouds for all to see (Matthew 24:23-31; Mark 13:21-27; Luke 21:25-28). This is followed by parables and teachings that admonish His followers to be faithful watchers until the predicted end (Matthew 24:32-25:36; Mark 13:28-37; Luke 21:29-36).

A difficulty with this interpretation is that the word *immediately* (Matthew 24:29) describes the nexus between the Great Tribulation (AD 70) and the cosmic signs at Christ's return (yet future). An explanation is that the Greek word for *immediately* is flexible enough to suggest a *causal* relationship, rather than a *temporal* one. The other Gospels indicate that Christ's return follows the tribulation, without saying that it does so "immediately." Thus we can say with some confidence that Jesus' prediction of



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In the Bible, I find admonition to be ready, keep the faith, preach the gospel, do kingdom work, and let God send His Son back on a day no one else knows.

the destruction of Jerusalem as a “Great Tribulation” refers to the events of AD 70 and that His return to earth will occur sometime later in history.

— Israel Steinmetz

The Olivet Discourse in all three Gospels sets this “tribulation” within the context of the Jewish revolt against Rome (AD 66-70), ending in the utter destruction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. The discourse in all three begins, “Not one stone [of the temple] shall be left upon another.” Matthew and Mark tell their first century readers, “When you see the ‘abomination of desolation’ . . . standing in the *holy place* . . . let those who are in *Judea* flee to the mountains.” If there were any doubt that this “abomination” referred to anything but the Roman legions, Luke tells his readers plainly, “When you see *Jerusalem* surrounded by armies, then know that *its* desolation is near.” The horrific events surrounding the demolition of Jerusalem, the temple, and the Jewish state are the “tribulation” that the Gospel writers had in mind — a time of “great distress in the land and wrath upon this [Jewish] people” (Luke 21:23).

They also saw this AD 70 destruction as prelude to the coming of the Christ, an event they expected to occur within their lifetime. Matthew expected the Son of Man to appear “immediately after the tribulation” of Jerusalem’s fall (24:29). Mark looked for it “in those days, after that tribulation” (13:24). And Luke attached the Second Coming to Jerusalem’s trampling by the Gentiles (Romans) “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:20-28). In spite of their immediate expectations (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32), all three Gospels close their Olivet Discourse accounts by confessing that no one knows the exact day or hour of the Lord’s coming, and by advising their readers to watch and be ready (Matthew 24:36-44; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:34-36).

— Jerry Griffin

In the history of humanity there has not been a massacre so horrendous and serious to a city as the one that desecrated Jerusalem in AD 70, according to historian Josephus. Jerusalem suffered the worst hunger; mothers had to eat their own newborns. Besides the crucifixion

of hundreds of thousands of Jews, others were burned and killed by knives. Not even Hiroshima suffered as much with the atomic bomb. Thanks to God’s love toward the chosen, a remnant of Jews were able to survive.

— Noe Reyes

The Great Tribulation in these passages refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Roman armies in AD 70. This is not to say that God’s people won’t suffer tribulation. They will, as Jesus reminds us in John 16:1-3, 33.

— Raul C. Romo

The bulk of this takes place in AD 70, when the city of Jerusalem and parts of Judea were defeated and destroyed by the Romans under Titus. Tribulation also came upon Christian Sabbathkeepers centuries after Constantine, when the Catholic Church held firm secular and religious control in much of the world.

— Dave Gartner

Too much emphasis has been given to a supposed Great Tribulation in the end times. Misapplication of Matthew 24 and Luke 21, combined with some fulfilled Old Testament texts, and you have a popular seven-year and secret rapture fallacy in prophetic teaching. Rather than finding this in the Bible, I find admonition to be ready, keep the faith, preach the gospel, do kingdom work, and let God send His Son back on a day no one else knows.

— Ken Lawson

continued on page 12

What about the secret rapture? We're hearing a lot but aren't sure what the Bible says on the subject.

As commonly heard, the secret rapture doctrine has enough truth about it to attract many earnest believers, yet enough error to merit some firm skepticism.

The main truth of the usual rapture teaching is this. The apostle speaks of a snatching away, or rapture (Greek: *arpazo*; Latin: *rapiemur*), of Christians who are alive at Jesus' second coming. These faithful saints will be "caught up" together with those righteous dead who've just been raised from their graves as Christ's return is loudly announced around the earth. Those two groups, who together compose the Church triumphant, will meet the Lord in the air as He comes with clouds from heaven to the earth (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

We believe this will happen, as Paul said. From this one key text we learn the essence of the Bible's teaching on rapture. Based on it, we join all those who sing with gusto "I'll Fly Away," although some other words of that old gospel song may be less than fully accurate.

We take care, however, not to go beyond this truth by affirming what the Bible does not. Some errors in common rapture teaching, as we see them, are these:

Rapture error #1. Christ will return twice in the future: once *for* the church, then, after some years and the tribulation is complete, again *with* the church. The Bible hardly supports this. Hebrews 9:28 tells the total of Christ's comings to earth: two, not three.

Rapture error #2. Christians will be spared from this age's final testing. With few exceptions (Rev. 3:10, for example), the Bible does not teach that God removes the faithful from the presence of trouble. The version of final escapism, known as the Rapture, is mostly a first-world and Western doctrine. Much of Christ's

church elsewhere exists in a state of near or severe tribulation, from which they have not received the same deliverance that American Christians are taught to expect when persecution comes to these shores. God's saints may expect to go through the fire and the flood, not to always be snatched from them.

Rapture error #3. It will be a *secret* rapture. But the same text that speaks of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:15-17) also associates it with a loud noise: a shout, an archangel's voice, and God's trumpet. Surely the ears of all living creatures must hear this crescendo, just as every eye will see the Lord when He comes (Rev. 1:7). No secrets there.

Rapture error #4. It will take the righteous from the earth all the way to heaven. The Bible doesn't teach this either. Scarcely does Scripture suggest that the saints' destiny — either as temporary refuge or eternal home — is in another place. Earth was created and pronounced very good for human abode (Gen. 1:31; Isa. 45:18). It was to earth that Jesus came with a message of redemption for both man and the created order (Rom. 8:20-23). And it is here that He will return a second time to consummate all He has promised — the new earth and heavens.

Let us prepare for any future tribulation (which *may* occur) and the Second Coming (which *will* occur) by a loving, active faith in God through Jesus Christ, confession of sin, and true repentance. If we read/see the *Left Behind* books/movie and receive them as the fiction they are, we can thank God that He brings good even from the errors of men, as the mistake of 1844 demonstrated so well.

Yes, the church, both living and dead, will be raptured to meet the Lord in the air when He comes. But it probably won't happen in the way that is commonly taught.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



Growling Bears

Those who mock and laugh at faith today should take another look at this Bible story. **by Ken Lawson**

The prophet Elisha had just replaced the prophet Elijah. As effective as Elijah had been, Elisha received a double portion of the faith and Holy Spirit of God that had so filled his predecessor.

After becoming the lead prophet in Israel, Elisha performed several miracles. He picked up Elijah's outer garment that had fallen from him and struck the water of the river Jordan. The water parted, and Elisha walked across on dry ground. At Jericho, Elisha healed the springs of foul water, turn-

ing them into sweet water that would make the city a joyful place and cause the land to produce good crops.

Yet with all the power of heaven evident in the work of Elijah, and now Elisha, those with true faith in the reality and work of God were mocked by many in the land, including the majority of Israelites. The people of God's nation had turned from faith in God and His Word to the more popular teachings of Baal, a religion honoring many gods.

As Elisha walked up to the city of Bethel, some children of the

mockers spotted him. Let's read what happened.

As [Elisha] was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. "Go on up, you baldhead!" they said. "Go on up, you baldhead!" He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths (2 Kings 2:23, 24).

Can you hear the bears growling? Those today who align with the multitudes that mock faith

and the truth of God's Word would perhaps deny that this story ever took place. In mocking faith and the existence of God, they hate the miracle stories of Scripture. To justify their own loss of faith, they, like the youth in Elisha's day, must ridicule the Scriptures and those who still experience the power of faith at work.

Mocking miracles

From cover to cover, the miracles of Scripture are being torn apart today. They start with God's supernatural creation of the heavens and earth and all that exists in them. Tearing that down justifies their loss of faith in all things sacred, and huge multitudes easily gravitate from Christian faith toward faith in Darwin's theory and the teachings of science that endorse only natural creation. These ideas offer supposed justification for rejection of God and faith.

The miracles reported while the Israelites traveled from Egypt to Canaan are mocked, as are those performed by God's prophets. The story of Jesus' divine conception in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit is laughed at. But the loudest mocking that reaches the ears of our heavenly Father regards the miracle of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God's Son. Can you hear the bears growling?

Despite the popularity of modern Baal theories that attempt to justify turning from faith and God, ample proof exists that faith in the creation story of Genesis is right and that firm faith in the creative works of God is the only safe and sane path.

(I recommend that the Creation DVD's offered by the Bible Advocate Press be in our homes for viewing and discussion, as well as other resources from Christian bookstores that expose errors in evolutionary theories. Hatred and rejection of God is the motivation behind these false theories.)

Encouragement

When your expressions of love for our all-powerful God and Creator are mocked and people laugh at your claim to faith, be encouraged. They tried to kill Elijah. They mocked Elisha. They rejected God's Son Jesus and killed Him.

When your expressions of love for our Savior and Lord Jesus are mocked and people laugh at your faith in His resurrection, be encouraged. It is by God's grace that we are saved, through faith. Through our faith in the reality of His work at the cross, we are justified. This faith will result in our eternal salvation.

The Scripture says that those who love false things and promote them will not be granted entrance into God's eternal kingdom (Revelation 22:15b). No matter how much people attempt to justify their loss of faith, rejection of God and His Word,

and mocking people of faith, those attempts become just a cover-up for sin.

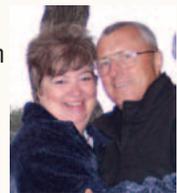
Jesus will return just as He promised, to give out His rewards (v. 12). The faithful, whose names are written in the Book of Life, He will welcome to a home in His kingdom for eternity! Because of their faith in God through Jesus and their trust in His grace, He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

Yes, Jesus will return!

Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" (Revelation 6:15-17).

Can you hear the bears growling? **BA**

Elder **Kenneth Lawson** writes from his new home in Cottage Grove, MN. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



When people laugh at your claim to faith, be encouraged. They tried to kill Elijah. They mocked Elisha. They rejected God's Son Jesus and killed Him.

[Prophecy]

What About British Israelism?



Were the nations of Europe and North America, South Africa and Australia, composed mostly of literal Israelites? **by David Kidd**

In a nutshell, the British Israel theory teaches that descendants of the northern tribes of Israel recovered from their Assyrian captivity and later became great nations — most prominently, the United Kingdom (Great Britain) and America. The theory describes white, English-speaking nations of the earth as Ephraim and Manasseh, with other European countries included among the “lost ten tribes of Israel.”

The theory also postulates that God’s promise of a king forever on David’s throne ruling over Israelites (2 Samuel 7:13, 16) was unconditional and continues to be fulfilled in today’s British monarchy.

So where did the title “the lost tribes of Israel” originate? *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (rev. 2003) states:

Exiles from the Northern Kingdom were scattered through the Assyrian holdings

(2 Kings 17:6). Apparently, their small communities, isolated from other Jews, did not allow them to maintain much national identity. We do not know what happened to these people, thus the popular title: the lost tribes of Israel. Some may have eventually returned to their original homeland. Others may have established the basis of Jewish communities that appear in later historical records (p. 523).

Lost sheep vs. lost tribes

Several factors must be weighed before we embrace these claims. Factors operating against this theory’s validity are outlined here for further study.

First, no such expression as “the lost tribes of Israel” or “the lost house of Israel” is found in the Bible. Rather, Jesus refers to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:6; 15:24). In the context of this phrase, the

reader may note that Jesus is simply referring to a spiritual state of lostness, for no question is raised in these texts as to the location of the lost sheep.

The people of Israel had strayed spiritually and were referred to as lost sheep — figuratively. Jesus and His disciples fully knew their whereabouts. He was on mission to them, and He sent the Twelve to them as well, as the two texts in Matthew confirm. Therefore the land of Israel (Galilee and Judea) in which Jesus and His disciples primarily ministered was right where Israel’s lost sheep were.

It is unsafe to take Jesus’ “lost sheep of the house of Israel” as a reference to Israeli tribes living in Britain or Europe. No record exists that the twelve disciples made missionary journeys to such faraway regions, certainly not during Jesus’ short lifetime.

Conditional promise

Second, the theory fails to pay due regard to the conditionality of the promises to King David in 2 Samuel 7. The following scripture shows that the obedience of Israel was linked to the fulfillment of the promise:

Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, "You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, *only if your sons take heed to their way . . .*" (1 Kings 8:25).

Other scriptures, such as 1 Kings 9:4-9; 1 Chronicles 28:7-10; and 2 Chronicles 6:16; 7:17-22, similarly show the conditionality of God's throne promise. Jeremiah 22:1-9; 39:1-15; and 52:1-11 report the consequences to the royal lineage for Israel's failure to keep the conditions of that promise.

The Israelites were notoriously disobedient. While their disobedience caused them to miss out on the full benefit of God's temporal promise to David, God was still faithful to David in fulfilling the greater implications of that promise. Under the Holy Spirit's power at Pentecost, Peter gave new meaning to the promise of David's throne, showing its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, the Son of David, ascending to the Father's right hand:

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David....being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in

Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:29-33).

Promised blessing

Third, proponents of British Israelism make much of early scriptures in which Abraham and his descendants are promised several things, including being a blessing to all nations (Genesis 26:4), becoming as numerous as the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea (22:16-18), and becoming a nation and a company of nations (35:11). They generally see a fulfillment of these promises in the benefits Great Britain and the United States have brought to the world, in the vast population of the British Commonwealth and USA, and in the company of nations known as the Commonwealth.

Holy Scripture provides its own rather different interpretation. Galatians 3:6-16 and Romans 4:9-22 put a whole new slant on these prophecies, contrary to that taught by the British Israel theory. These verses say that the blessing to all nations

promised to Abraham and his descendants comes through Christ. Abraham is a father of many nations because through his seed (Christ) people from all nations are (or will become) his children.

In the same sense, several Old Testament texts confirm that Abraham's physical descendants did become great in number, even "as the sand of the sea" and "the stars of heaven." Examples are Deuteronomy 10:22; 1 Kings 4:20; 2 Chronicles 1:9; Nehemiah 9:23; and Isaiah 10:22.

Doubt and praise

Given these obstacles to the validity of the British Israel theory, and given the reestablishment of Israel as one nation in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 6:15-22), as prophesied (Jeremiah 50:4, 5, 18-20), we have good cause to doubt the teachings of British Israelism. King Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:13) and the king of Assyria (6:22) in the time of Nehemiah certainly gave the remnant of Israel in their vast territories a bright green light to follow their natural yearning for their homeland.

We also have good cause to praise the Lord Jesus Christ for His wonderful works among men and His triumphant fulfillment of pivotal Bible prophecies. **BA**

It is unsafe to take Jesus' "lost sheep of the house of Israel" as a reference to Israeli tribes living in Britain or Europe.

David Kidd is a regular BA contributor and local church elder in Adelaide, South Australia.



The Great Tribulation

continued from page 6

Understand Matthew 24, the Olivet Discourse, to be a compilation of Jesus' sayings, not always in sequence. Consider dividing it like this: Verses 1, 2, 15-22, 28, 32-35 address the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the anguish experienced by those who failed to take Jesus' advice to flee from the city as the Romans approached. Verse 29 symbolically foresees the end of the Levitical priesthood resulting from the temple's destruction (see Isaiah 13:9, 10; 14:12; Ezekiel 32:7, 8).

In verses 4-13 and 23-26, Jesus advises His disciples to avoid false teachers and not be intimidated by threats from their oppressors. The peaceful period of Christ's earthly ministry ended shortly after He ascended, with conflicts in the civil, economic, and religious worlds, accompanied with natural disasters.

In verses 14, 27, 30, 31, and

36-44 Jesus addresses His second advent. He advises His followers, and us, to be prepared always for the *parousia* because no one knows when it will occur, and nothing He says elsewhere in this chapter can assist us in predicting the time of His return.

— Robert Coulter

Great Tribulation: Understanding which of the disciples' questions (destruction of the temple, His second coming) Jesus is answering is key to rightly dividing Matthew 24. Mark 13:18 says, "Pray that your flight may not be in winter." Winter is not a simultaneous worldwide event, so this prophecy is obviously for a certain location, not the whole world. As the passage progresses, Jesus speaks to the signs of His return (vv. 23-51). Could there be some overlap in His response? Is this a dual prophecy?

— Tim Steinhauser

Luke 21:20-26 provides insight into a time that is less clear in Matthew 24. The great tribulation for Israel was fulfilled when

Titus laid siege to Jerusalem during the first Jewish-Roman war of AD 70, finally defeating the Zealots with the enraged Roman army butchering the inhabitants and burning the temple to the ground. Jesus warned that on seeing the signs of war approaching, His followers should flee and not go into the city.

Titus began the final siege as Jewish pilgrims came to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. Then he prevented them from leaving the city (reported by Josephus). Finally breaching the walls, the Romans plundered the city, burnt the temple, and killed many of the inhabitants.

The fulfillment is twofold, as was the question asked of Christ. A repeat is expected toward the time of the end.

— Worrell Largie

I am as uncomfortable with the common Dispensationalist interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27, which attributes the Great Tribulation to a future seven-year period, as I am with their conclusion that the Ten Commandments have been abolished, and with their pre-tribulation rapture doctrine as well.

After close examination of Scripture and the historical events surrounding the AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, described by Josephus, I found it too much of a stretch to ignore the amazing accuracy of those events as fulfillment of Jesus' words.

I'm not saying that a final period of worldwide trouble and persecution for God's people won't happen just before Jesus' return, but I am saying that any tribulation will not be new. Today, and for two thousand years,



many brethren around the world have endured it. The most important issue is, will we be ready for great tribulation if it comes our way?

— *Larry Alan Rice Jr.*

Most prophecies of the Bible have multiple fulfillments. The Olivet Discourse includes several events that were fulfilled in the first century siege of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus as reported by Josephus. However, many things in that speech have simply not come to pass yet. Jesus talks of His coming several times, and there is little indication He came again in AD 70.

— *Brian Franks*

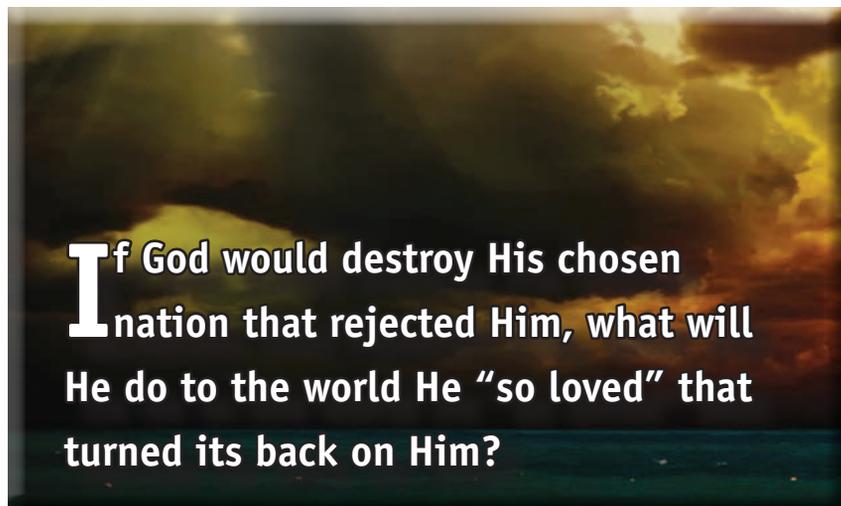
The destruction of the temple in AD 70 was but one tribulation. There would be an ongoing persecution from both pagan and papal Rome. But there will also be a culmination of persecution at the end of the age.

— *Stephen J. Kyner*

Two questions were asked, and Matthew 24 is divided in two parts: the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70) and the Great Tribulation that is yet to come — at the door. Christians have experienced persecution in all ages, but there is a great persecution announced in the Bible just before the second coming of Christ.

— *Abiel Martinez*

Every generation is covered here in degrees. The final persecution will be by the image of the beast, papal Rome — the same system that persecuted Christians for 1,260 years (Revelation 12). New power will be given to the beast for one hour (an undetermined length of time,



17:12-16). Jesus states that the same fate would befall Israel (AD 68-70-131, Matthew 24:21). None like it was ever experienced (Luke 21:20-26).

— *Nick Nimchuk*

The details about the abomination of desolation pertained to the AD 70 destruction, but a later part of the prophecy (Matthew 24:29, 30) fits just before Jesus returns. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days . . . the sign of the Son of Man will appear. . . ."

— *Max Morrow*

The prior verses warn "those who are in Judea" (v. 16). But Matthew 24:29, 30 and Mark 13:24-27 describe this tribulation as followed by Jesus' second coming. Would two millennia occur between its beginning and end? Luke's mention of "times of the Gentiles" (21:24) between what he calls "great distress" (v. 23) and Jesus' return (v. 27) might explain this gap. I recall the excitement of 1967 when the old city of Jerusalem was taken by Israel. Its time of being "trampled by Gentiles" was over. But that was over forty years ago now,

and we are still waiting for Jesus. Because Israel has returned, I do not expect her to be scattered again in the future (Amos 9:14, 15). I would not be surprised if this present worsening of moral, economic, spiritual, and social factors results in the final Great Tribulation, which will culminate in Christ's return.

— *John Lemley*

The Great Tribulation as identified in the Olivet prophecy characterizes that time from the Cross to the coming of Jesus Christ. Notice that the Olivet Discourse identifies climactic upheavals in society and on the earth. This tribulation began at the Cross. It continues with intensification until Jesus returns and establishes His kingdom and reigns with the saints over the entire earth.

Often this time is called the time of the end, the Great Tribulation, and the Day of the Lord. These are monumental events that have impacted, and continue to impact, humanity.

— *Troy Gedack*

The Luke account sounds more like AD 70, but the last part of

that account says, “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” That hasn’t happened yet.

— Roy A. Marrs

The tribulation mentioned refers to a time of affliction for Israel: Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed, and the Jews would be taken captive to all the nations (Luke 21:24). Nonetheless, the Christians of that time would also be involved in Israel’s affliction (Matthew 24:22 and Mark 13:20 confirm). Therefore, there will not be another tribulation such as that of what the Jews lived through. But what about the church?

After the year AD 70 and until the coming of Jesus, the church will suffer trials and tribulation, collective and personal (John 16:33). The apostle Paul warned us, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12; see also Acts 14:22; Revelation 1:9; 7:14).

The last difficult times for the world will be wrath from God (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:1-3, 9; Revelation 3:10). From this wrath, the church will be excluded.

— Gustavo Guerrero

Bad times are ahead for many. Some nations have already had about as much tribulation as could be imagined.

— Richard G. Cress

These passages seem to have a dual time frame, using Jerusalem’s destruction as an example to the world. *If God would do this to His chosen nation that rejected Him, what will He do*

to the world He “so loved” that turned its back on Him?

— Les DeSouza

When the teachings of Christ and Paul are studied alongside the book of Revelation, I believe the Great Tribulation is a yet-future event.

— Tom Robinson

In summary, Jesus talks here about the tribulation that would occur in the time of the primitive church and in the last days when He comes with power and glory (vv. 29-30). Events of destruction and anguish from the first years of the church until today have been many, as Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 2:14 and 3:4. The church suffered great tribulation in the beginning, according to Revelation 7:14. The next tribulation we will see or suffer calls for faith and patience in spite of persecution, but also the one that will occur when Christ will return.

— Javier Ramirez

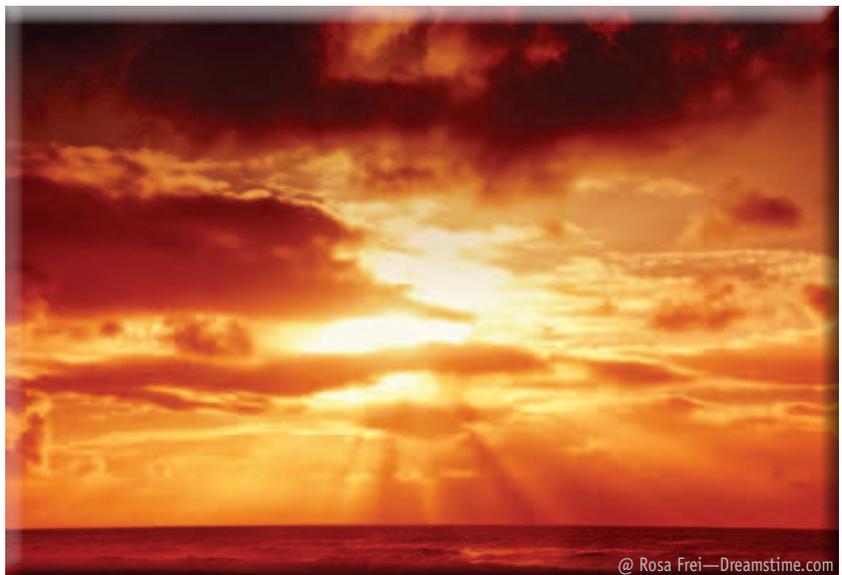
The Great Tribulation to come will be against Bible-believing

Christians not persuaded to accept anti-biblical teachings. In some countries, Christians are being tried in civil courts for preaching that homosexuality is a sin. That forcing of immorality will eventually spread and make for more stringent persecution of Christians here also.

— John Schott

I see the Great Tribulation as a specific future period of difficulty and persecution particularly directed against believers in Christ and orchestrated by the Adversary himself incarnate. The perpetrating system could be from any of the many false religious systems within Babylon, this world’s present religious and governmental system. While the papacy may have been a type or shadow of that evil, the reality will be far worse and more openly anti-Christ. Islam could well be the breeding ground for such a malignant and demonic fulfillment, but we cannot be sure until the Great Tribulation actually occurs. And it will.

— William C. Hicks **BA**



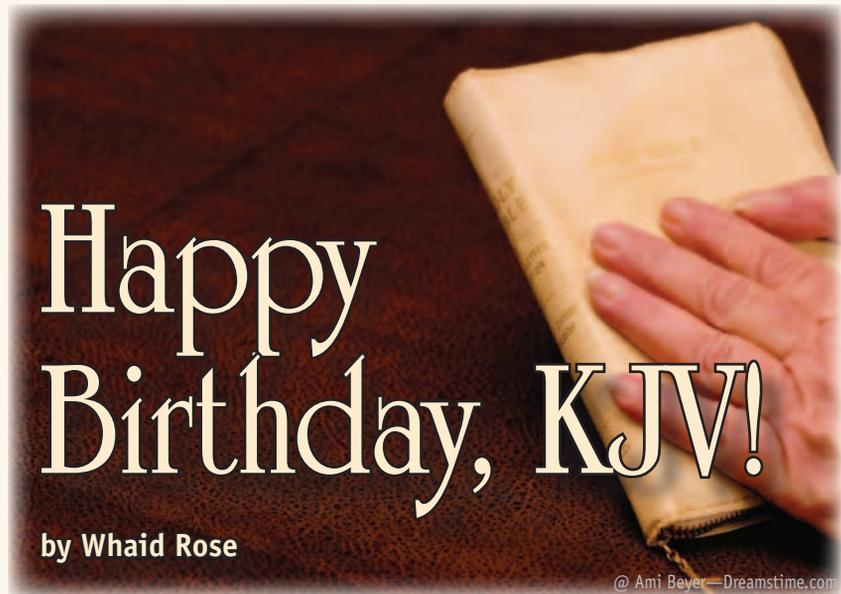
@ Rosa Frei—Dreamstime.com

The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, first published May 2, 1611, is the most widely read English translation of all time. This four-hundredth birthday celebration provides opportunity to reflect on the power of God's Word written and to consider the impact KJV has had on the world.

In a recent *Christianity Today* article, Mark Noll probes, "Where would we be without the KJV?" He asserts that at that time, it provided a cultural and literary standard for the English-speaking world, made corporate worship less awkward, and enhanced public reading and recitation of Scripture — otherwise made difficult by using several English translations in existence.

To my chagrin, it's been years since I've given this translation much, if any, attention. Language changes over time, making contemporary translations necessary. But devotional reading from the KJV this year has reawakened my appreciation for this treasured translation. I've been reminded that my first introduction to the Bible and my early preaching and memorizing were oriented to the KJV. Reciting certain favorite passages, nothing else will do. We may have grown beyond *thee*, *thou*, *hitherto*, and *wherewithal*, but such words still convey the richness and beauty of the King's English. And God's Spirit still uses them to change lives.

Some have abandoned the KJV — due not so much to its language but to their resistance to the "King James only" attitude: *It's the only pure Bible; all others are "per-versions."* Such claims imply that God's pure Word did not exist prior to 1611, and they miss the fact that many loyal ad-



vocates of translations existing four hundred years ago reacted to the new KJV with the same skepticism, dismissing it as "per-version." They also fail to realize that God is doing His work in non-English cultures without the KJV.

Not all translations should be embraced. The KJV is by no means a perfect version, though among English translations, it is unrivaled.

It is estimated that 7.5 billion Bibles have been distributed worldwide since the fifteenth century. That figure increases by a staggering 100 million annually, making the Bible the all-time bestseller among books. This doesn't include those versions being accessed digitally via computer, Blackberry, iPhone, iPad, etc. Amid this plethora of translations and avenues of electronic access, the king's translation remains the most widely read, the most influential.

Why God has blessed this translation in this way, we cannot fully know. What we do know is that God honors His Word and

blesses the efforts of those who take it seriously, regardless of the translation. As the KJV grows older, opportunities to defend the Bible against skepticism and compromise increase.

King James ascended the throne of England (1603) amid a theological controversy between Anglicans and Puritans. He sided with his fellow Anglicans and threw out an olive branch to the opposition. What the king most wanted was harmony in his kingdom. The Puritans most wanted a translation that took the Greek and Hebrew texts seriously. The compromise that followed seemed good to the king; the translation was commissioned.

What resulted was the King James, or "Authorized" Version, the official Bible of England's state church. It didn't do what the king had hoped for — create harmony in his realm. But it achieved far more. It made an incredible impact on Christianity, on English literature, and on the world for four centuries, thank God. Happy birthday, KJV! **BA**

What the

First Place Winner

A Book for All Seasons

by George Farrow

As I come up out of the waters of baptism, my joy is full. My soul thrills with my newfound faith. Realizing what my Savior has accomplished for me overwhelms me with gratitude. "My cup runneth over." I reach for my Bible, and my soul feels complete peace as I read Romans 8.

My angry heart seethes. How unfair life can be! Why have they so maligned my character and misrepresented my motives? Surely there must be some justice. I bow my head in shame and defeat and reach for my Bible. My distraught soul finds solace as I read in John 18 how they treated my Lord.

This has to be the best day of my life. With this new love to walk beside me, I feel totally complete. What a gift from God! I reach for my Bible, and my joy finds full expression in the Song of Solomon 4.

How could I have sunk so low? Knowing all that He has done for me, I turned and charged headlong into such depths. Having such an opportunity to stand up for my God and king, yet so anxious to impress others and receive their praise, I remained silent when I should have spoken. In despair, I reach for my Bible and turn to Luke 23 and read of Peter's denial and Christ's forgiveness. My soul finds hope.

Sleep evades my troubled mind. At 4:00 a.m. I arise, tired of tossing and turning. Sometimes the cares of this world, concerns for loved ones struggling with so much, almost overwhelm me. I reach for my Bible. John 14 calms my troubled soul.

Here I am at the bedside of this one that I love so deeply — this precious individual who has blessed my life for so long. The labored shallow breathing: I know it is time to say goodbye. My heart is aching and torn. I reach for my Bible and read softly Psalm 23. My grieving soul finds a gentle comfort.

Through all of life's many seasons (Ecclesiastes 3), the Spirit has taught me that I can find the

help I need in His unchanging Word that has passed the test of time (Psalm 119:105).

George Farrow

and his wife, Tina, live near Chiefland, FL. Both are semi-retired, lifelong educators with four living children and four grandchildren.



First Runner-Up

Magnificent Journey

by Manasseh Mark Bombeo

At a young age, I didn't much indulge in the Word but was limited to simple conversation about the Book. Even with this attitude, I never could deny my curiosity: *Why are people so budged by the Bible?* Reading a book this thick would've seemed to take forever. I often re-thought my intentions of getting involved.

Bible Means to Me

By God's plan, the Holy Spirit introduced me to my Lord through this Bible. This brought an experience I'd never known, something unique that may never be repeated. Everything changed for me.

The Bible served as my counselor, guiding and encouraging me to keep strong in every emotional downfall. In God's love, I found His promise of a rainbow after the storm. I learned of a Savior who wept as I wept. He became not only my God but also my Friend.

In triumphs and frustrations, my connection was to my Best Friend. Like walking up a staircase, I learned step by step the important aspects of life and what it takes to overcome in the race. I soon realized that the Bible also teaches the ancients of philosophy. It served me well as I was being molded to maturity in spirit and mind.

The Bible served as my watchtower. Around my usual neighborhood hangouts, I was always aware that danger could jump at me when I least expected it. The wisdom I learned kept this danger at bay; the Lord guarded me well. Human that I am, I often become overwhelmed; but the

Bible says that I am always at the advantage – with Him.

Not everything was simple in the Bible. Adultery was no longer the act of taking another woman while married, but is committed simply by the way we think and look at another. The Word was clear: I was to train and discipline my thoughts.

The Bible served as my disciplinarian. During high school and early college years, I was a bit mischievous at the peak of life changes and explorations. This led to easy recognition and quick acceptance by others. The Word of God knocked some sense into my young, silly head. I was reprimanded, I admit it now, with little divine spankings. It's for my spiritual growth, according to God's perfect plan.

The Bible served as my big-screen Hollywood – a unique relationship. As I meditated on it, biblical stories I once considered boring became full of life. It had sword-clashing action, compelling dramas, suspense, warm romance, and funny antics. It was worth the time.

The Bible I now own once belonged to my grandmother. I took it as mine after she died on my twenty-fourth birthday.

The Bible was her last present, and there began a magnificent journey.

Ever since my mind was opened to this Book and my spirit welcomed its wisdom, the Bible has never failed to amaze me. In every chapter of my life it has provided more than I expected.

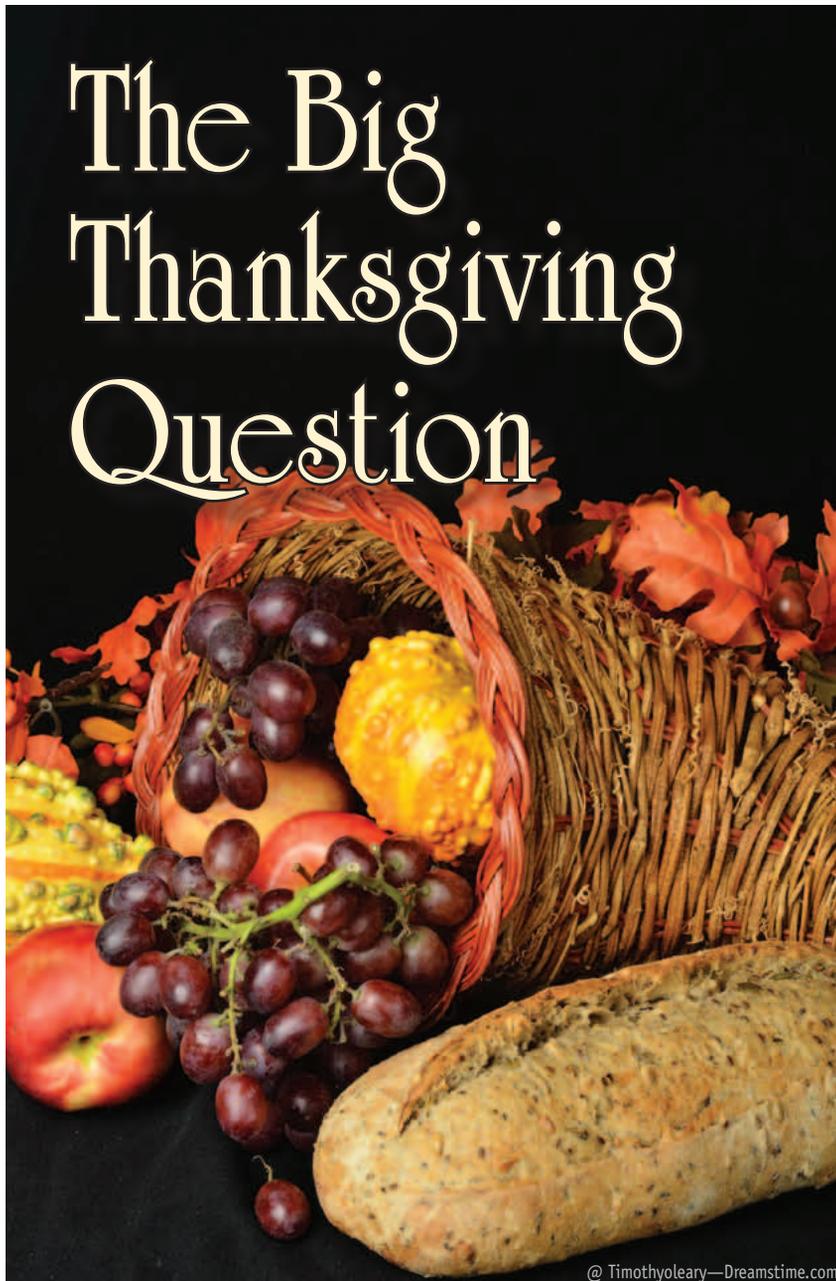
Manasseh Mark Bombeo lives in Cagayan de Oro City, Philippines, where he occasionally lectures to youth about leadership and spiritual maturity and handling problems. He enjoys playing drums, singing, and drawing.



continued on page 24

The BA thanks all who submitted essays to this contest. Readers can view them online at www.baonline.org.

The Big Thanksgiving Question



@ Timothyoleary—Dreamstime.com

Should the big meal of the year be accompanied by only small talk? **by Brian Franks**

The big thanksgiving question is just as important to the holiday as the turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, yams, and pumpkin pie. Before we begin to stuff ourselves silly, the question we should all ask and answer is this: What are we thankful for?

The answers may be as predictable as the home teams for

Thanksgiving football — Dallas and Detroit. Everyone is thankful for family and friends, for health and a job, and as Americans, for the blessings of living in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

But when was the last time you went around the Thanksgiving table and someone

said, “I am thankful for all the challenges that came my way this year”? Or “I’m thankful for the trials I’ve faced from following Christ”? Or “I’m thankful for God who allowed my world to crash down around my head this year”?

Maybe you’ve known someone with this perspective, but I’ve never heard it before the Thanksgiving feast or at any other occasion.

A problem facing Christian Americans, Canadians, and many Europeans is that we live in the most prosperous regions of the world. This prosperity often means that we end up relying on our wealth instead of on God. If we need food, we buy it. We don’t have to tend flocks or water crops. We just go to the store, and the food is there — most anything we want. We extend this desire for comfort to every part of our lives, including religion. We think if we just follow the convenient rules of God, then we won’t face any difficulties. Somehow our religion should be easy. We can just go through the motions and be OK.

But that is not Christianity, and we should know it.

Value of struggles

Consider that the most-loved Bible stories are ones of trial, difficulty, and challenge. What would Jacob be without wrestling all night with an angel? Or Joseph without his wrongful imprisonment in Egypt? Or Moses without shepherding in the desert? Or David without his flight from Saul? Or Elijah without the ravens in the wilderness? Or Job without losing everything? Or Jeremiah without weeping? Or

Daniel and his friends without lions and a fiery furnace? Or Paul without his many struggles?

Biggest of all, how horrible would this world be without Christ and His bloody cross?

Minus all the struggles, we would have a lot less Bible, a lot less prayer and godly character, and a lot more reliance on ourselves. Without that bloody cross, there would be no salvation!

Somehow when Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must *deny himself and take up his cross daily* and follow me" (Luke 9:23), we hear, "Whoever wants to be My disciple should go to church once a week, or maybe three times a month."

When Christ says, "In me you may have peace. *In this world you will have trouble*. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33), we remove the middle phrase to make it say, "In me you may have peace . . . I have overcome the world." We take the struggle out of Christianity, trying to make it easy.

Purified by pain

But Christianity simply is not "easy." Sometimes we will suffer for belonging to Christ. Consider the advice Peter gives his audience in his first epistle:

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on

you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name (1 Peter 4:12-16).

Now examine Peter's conclusion: "So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good" (v. 19).

When God takes us in, we are dirty and scarred by sin. He needs to wash us in the blood of Christ and make us pure as snow. Like silver ore (see Malachi 3:3), we have precious metal within, but it's mixed with much impurity from the Fall. Some surface dirt will wash off, but some is so intertwined with the silver that the whole conglomerate must be melted down by intense heat to be refined. This purification process over the fire of trials is never comfortable, but it is necessary so we can become the unblemished bride of Christ.

It may be an odd thought to cherish a trial or difficulty, but what good company we share by suffering for His name. A trial may be the only way to let go of the world and move forward in the things of God.

Spiritual growth

As I reflect on my own spiritual development and that of others, the challenges we've faced have yielded far more spiritual growth than the good times when nothing was wrong. We would not be as close to God without our time in the fire, our wandering in the desert, our persecution at the hands of man, our grieving over losses. These times in the Father's arms solidify our character, forcing us to prove with action whose side we're on, and breaking us down to a child-like trust in our incredibly merciful God.

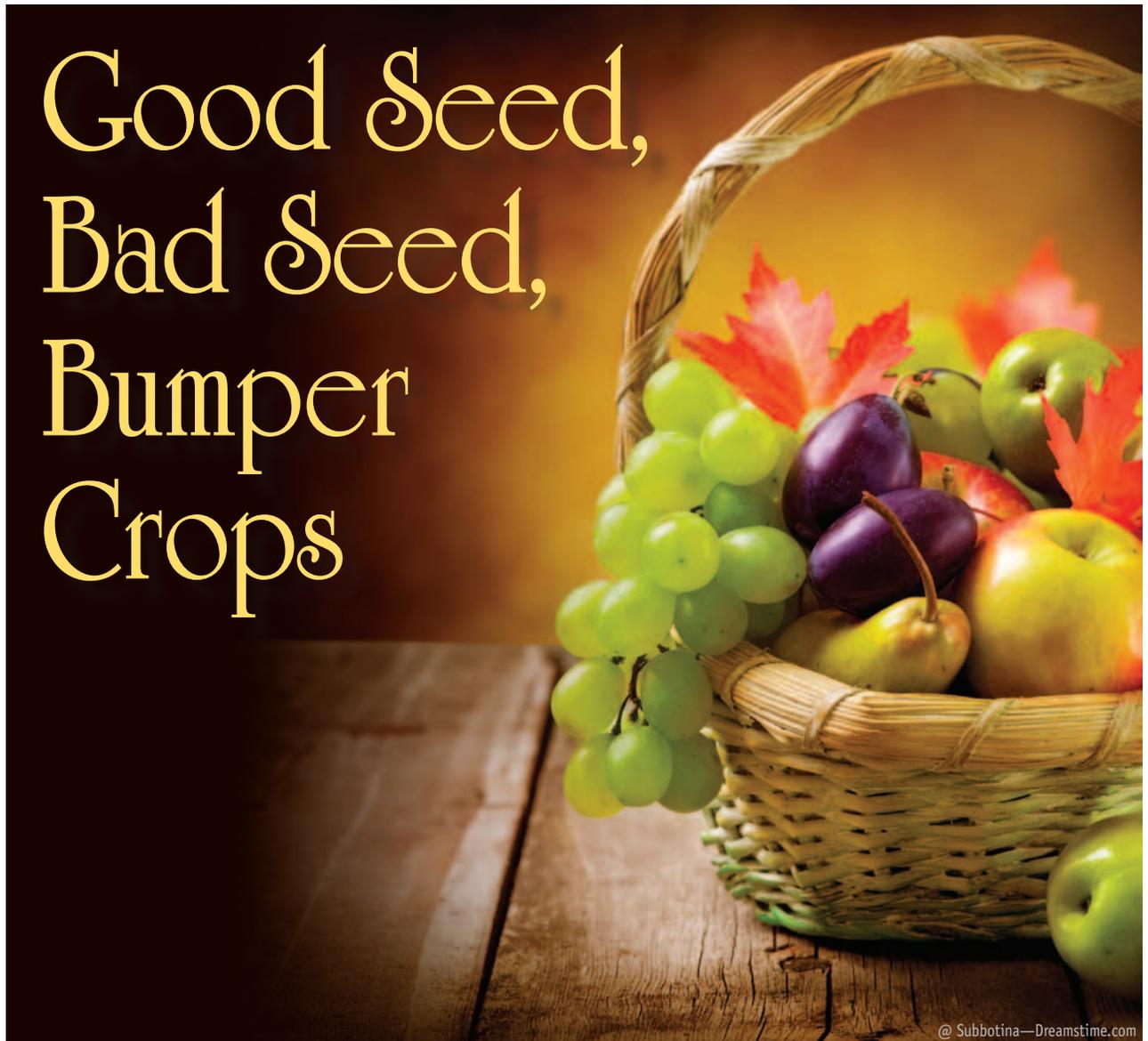
If God is our heavenly Father who loves us so much that He withheld nothing to save us — not even His only begotten Son; if He's the one who allows the trials, controls the fire, disciplines us as His own sons and daughters out of love, preserves us when we suffer for His name, then why aren't we more thankful for those challenges when they come? **BA**

Pastor **Brian Franks** serves the congregation in Walla Walla, WA. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



This purification process over the fire of trials is never comfortable, but it is necessary so we can become the unblemished bride of Christ.

Good Seed, Bad Seed, Bumper Crops



Why the “worse and worse” lament of many Christians is only half true. **by Calvin Burrell**

In these difficult and dangerous times, few things are more certain than hearing church folks speak about how bad things are in the world — and getting worse.

Such talk is not just ubiquitous; it is also safe. Those who speak in negative, glass-is-half-empty terms face little risk of being opposed by those cloistered saints who listen, nodding their grim approval. Their monochrome assessment of the modern condition is a cardinal point of faith among many conservative churches.

No need to stop this rainy day parade of the faithful. Heaven knows we need the rain. It may be necessary to say such dismal things about life in the twenty-first century, but it is not enough to say them and stop. The whole truth demands that more good news be told than bad. We need some sunshine too.

Weeds

The “nay” that people say nowadays may be accurate, or some version of it, at least. Much

of it appears in broadcast and print news, in the daily blah, in e-mail forwards and other gossip halls, not to mention a few ominous Scripture texts (see sidebar).

It is true enough that many weeds have grown up in our world. One can even agree that we hear or read about a bumper crop of tares today. The miracles of modern newsgathering and newscasting make this more obvious than it otherwise would be.

Where did all these weeds come from?

“An enemy has done this” is Jesus’ response to that question in His story about wheat and weeds (Matthew 13:24-30). That enemy, He said, is the Devil (v. 39), who displays a green thumb, turning wild oats into rotten crops. We can hardly miss being aware of his crafty success in 2011 earth-fields.

Let’s resist the temptation to start listing the many sins and setbacks, trials and tribulations, weeds and woes that plague our nation, our world, and even our church. Readers who think they’re missing something here may visit most any gathering of “worse and worse” believers to hear the latest.

Wheat

Our unhappy “nays,” however, are not the whole truth! Other less-heard news and less-read texts offer a different perspective. To that more cheerful view we now turn.

An equal and opposite truth getting much less press among God’s people is that another bumper crop of a different variety is also growing up in God’s world-field. For those

There is a lot more going on in the world today, both good and bad, than most people realize.

— *Whaid Rose*
General Conference
President

with illuminated eyes, hopeful minds, and sunny hearts, this harvest matches the tares in its abundance. Here’s a summary list, which could be expanded or subdivided into a dozen or a hundred more.

- Improvement in standards of living. Most obvious in the Western world, lesser versions of

human progress are being seen among many of the world’s less-affluent peoples, providing basic life-needs that others have long taken for granted.

- Increased knowledge, opportunities to learn, and literacy rates. These advances allow more people to read and learn about the natural earth and the universe, with all their marvelous wonders.

- Improved transportation and communication. Coupled with increased economic resources, these facilitate personal convenience, life enhancement, and more rapid spread of the gospel of Christ.

- Advances in medicine, healthcare, nutrition, and life expectancy. These have been

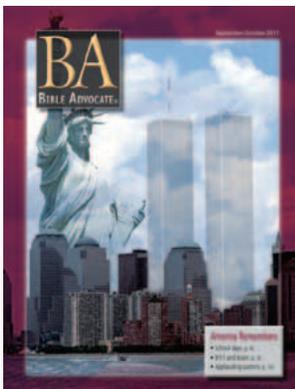
Bad news in the world may increase . . .

- Matthew 24, especially v. 12, “because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” and vv. 37ff, where the days of Noah are compared to the coming of the Son of Man (see also Luke 21:25-36);
- Second Thessalonians 2, especially vv. 3 and 7-9, which predicts great apostasy prior to Jesus’ return;
- Second Timothy 3, especially v. 13: “evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse . . .” in the last days;
- Book of Revelation, chapters 13-19.

. . . but so will the good news:

- “The path of the just . . . shines ever brighter unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18; see also Job 17:9);
- “[My Word] shall not return to Me void . . . it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-13; see also 59:19);
- Kingdom seed on good ground yields plants that grow surely, steadily, productively (Matthew 13:23; Mark 4:26-29);
- The gospel will go into all the world and bring forth fruit wherever it goes (Colossians 1:6).

Mail Bag



Struggle to forgive

It's 9/11. I'm trying to be Jesus to everyone I meet. I'm trying to see Jesus in everyone I meet. Then anger came into my being. How could I see Jesus in those people who did what they did? How could I love them unconditionally? The only way was to practice forgiveness and say these words to God: *Please forgive them, for they know not what they do. Please help me to forgive them because I do not want to forgive them. Please forgive me if I did anything to cause the problem. Please help me to forgive myself for not loving each and everyone you created. Please take away my anger and unforgiveness. Please restore my joy so I can be Jesus to everyone and see Jesus in everyone. Thank You, God. Amen.*

Thanks for the wonderful words in the September-October BA.

B. M.
Liberty Center, OH

Note: To help the BA with a wider cross-section of views regarding 9/11 and Islam, readers may revisit pp. 9-11 in the September-October issue and submit the simple survey on page 12. Results will be published in the January-February 2012 BA.

Advice for Thanksgiving and other days:

Brethren, whatever things are **true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, or praiseworthy**, meditate on these! (adapted from Philippians 4:8).

accompanied by corresponding declines in cigarette smoking, AIDS and HIV rates, and the near eradication of some deadly diseases (polio and smallpox, for example).

- Increased food production, reducing the percentage of world population affected by chronic hunger, malnutrition, and starvation.

- Greater racial, ethnic, and gender equality. The status of women, children, the elderly, and minority peoples has seen notable progress in the last one hundred years.

- Greater concern and provision for the disabled and disadvantaged in many societies.

- Growth of democratic states and free societies. In our lifetime, many nations have gained much in personal freedoms and political self-determination, replacing the autocratic rulers of other days.

- Growth of the Christian church — the body of Christ — around the world. With economic progress, many advances in Bible translation, Christian publishing and counseling, and other outreaches are also taking place.

Where did all this wheat come from?

All of life's genuine benefits — every good and perfect gift — come to earth's family by heaven's generosity (Acts 14:17;

1 Timothy 6:17b; James 1:17). Many of these blessings have been mediated to humanity in increasing volume, we believe, through the Christian peoples of the world. Beyond this general providence, the expansive spiritual and domestic advantages of real believers stem from the seeds of grace and truth sown by Jesus Christ and His followers, as recorded in the written Word. Seeds that fall on good ground never really die but keep on producing their bumper crop in succeeding generations.

Weedy, still blest

Thus is this a thanksgiving message of tension and balance. On the one hand, the enemy has sown his seeds. The world often appears to be full of weeds and bad fruit.

On the other hand, this old world is increasingly blest as the message of God's Word and Jesus' doing, dying, and rising again works slowly and silently to bear good fruit among the children of men. The greatest blessings we have known this year and throughout our lives are ours because someone sowed the good seed of the gospel — God's love for all people and His provision for sinners — in Christ.

Let's keep sowing good seeds of grace and truth! **BA**

Be Still

by James Tilton

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Note: In this holiday season of thankfulness and celebration with family and friends, not everyone feels like rejoicing. Those who suffer from depression, for example, find little or no joy in life, for various reasons. A study posted recently on CBS.com stated that about one in ten adults in the US are depressed. Many of those are Christians.

How can this be? Aren't we to "rejoice in the Lord always," to "count it all joy" when we face trials — even emotional ones? As many depressed believers know, the passages of joy in the Bible often contradict the darkness they endure each day. The author of this article expresses the tangled emotions of depression and the God who offers companionship through them. — Sherri Langton, Associate Editor

I am sometimes scared of quiet solitude. I would guess most people who struggle with depression are. I am scared of quiet time, the silent struggles. I am scared to examine my heart, for I know that there is a dark side to it, much like there is to the moon — a majority that remains unseen to the world. I am scared of the fears and insecurities and instabilities and doubts I find there.

And yet I long for that time of quiet solitude. I need it. I need that rest found only in His presence. I need the peace that surpasses understanding. I need the hope that contradicts the hopelessness of my situation.

But in this moment, I don't feel it.

And as I wonder why, I remember that such infinite peace is only promised when I cast my cares on Him. This total release of my worries, fears, doubts, and insecurities onto the only One large enough to handle them is a prerequisite for the peace I so desire. I must let go of my own human failings if I am ever to grasp the constancy that is God.

I must replace the tendency to examine my feelings with the habit of clinging to God's promises.

"Be still and know that I am God."

He is God.

God the comforter. God the healer. God the powerful. God the all-knowing. God the faithful. God the sympathetic Father. God the competent warrior. God, who experienced the suffering of the cross and the glory of the resurrection. God, who understands. God, who sympathizes with my weakness.

My doubts, my emotions, my fears — they are valid, but not true.

I cling instead to the truth that God is worth trusting. He who has been faithful in the calm is faithful in the storm. **BA**

James Tilton
writes from Palm-
dale, CA.



What the Bible Means to Me

continued from page 17

Second Runner-Up

Guided by the Word

by Steven M. Zuraff

The Bible is the Word of God copied from the original manuscripts, inspired by Him through those He commissioned to write. It is infallible and inerrant as my heavenly Father and Lord and Savior. Its wisdom and truths are deeper than the earth's oceans and higher than the heavens. It is complete and represents the living Word, Christ, and has been given to us to know the true God and eternal life, and what He expects of us in all matters of faith and practice.

In other words, all my thoughts, words, and actions are to be measured and guided by God's Word. I am to implant it in my heart through diligent study and application to my life. By the leading of the Holy Spirit,

I have been taught by the Bible who God is, my need for Jesus as my Lord and Savior, what my relationship with them and those in this world is to be, and what it means to live for Him according to His Word throughout my Christian life. The Bible and the Christian are inseparable if we are to truly know God and how to live for Him.

The above belief has not always been the case throughout my Christian life. I was baptized and given my first Bible when I was nine years old. I remember sitting outside my house with neighborhood friends and with the Bible opened to Genesis 1. I made the comment to them that I wanted to read through the whole Bible.

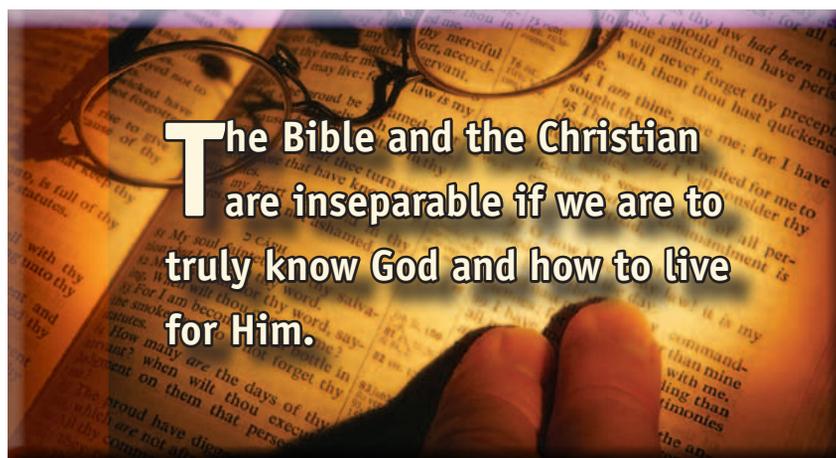
I have done that a number of times. But even though I believed the Bible to be God's Word, I discounted it and didn't really seek to live by it. I can remember when I believed the Bible wasn't all there was for faith and practice, that there were things we could look to outside God's Word for His answers to this life. What a dangerous place that was for me to be. Looking back, I see, from God's Word, God's mercy to me during those times of spiritual darkness and ignorance

and God's leading me along to where I am today in respect to His Word.

These days I ask God to give me a hunger and thirst for His Word, to implant it in my heart because I want to know Him and His Son as deeply and intimately in this life as I can. I want to be the best ambassador and soldier for Christ that I can be. I want to be as wise as a serpent but as harmless as a dove. I want to fight the good fight, as Paul says to do. God's Word enables me to do these things and more, guided by His Holy Spirit.

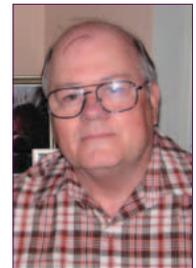
I encourage my wife, children, brethren, and friends to be into the Bible and to follow its truths. In counseling I will usually ask, "Have you considered what the Bible says on the matter? What does God say?" I encourage them to follow the wisdom of God's Word and that it will never lead them astray if they truly follow it.

This is the conclusion of the matter for me today. God's Word will never lead me or anyone else astray, but will always keep us on the right path. In fact, the path points us to God and His precious Son, who died and rose from the dead. May God guide us into all His truth. **BA**



Retired, **Steven M. Zuraff** lives in Newalla, OK (God's country), with his wife, Rebecca, and they attend Shawnee

CoG7. They have three sons, two daughters-in-law, and four grandchildren.





Transitions

When the rubberband
expands
to near breaking
at loss and change
we stretch to understand,
then try returning back
to flaccid times of ease.

But when we strain,
we see You, Lord,
stretched taut on wood
with heaven's band
unsnapped.

Or did it snap, then
fuse through death, till
drawing You back home
You sit relaxed
at God's right hand
to wait till we're
brought back to rest?

Arie Staal

November Emphasis:

G. C. Missions



Bill Hicks, Director

Cristo Viene

About ten years ago, near 9/11 time, two brothers dared to dream what could happen if thousands of us – not just dozens or hundreds – would support CoG7 missions. With that dream and a prayer, they began to visit churches across North America, asking members like you and me to make faith pledges of \$10, \$25, or \$50 per month for missionaries in places where a few dollars can take the gospel a long way.

To reflect CoG7 teaching and a major motivation for evangelism, this project was given the name *Christ is Coming*. Because the two faithful brothers were Hispanics, that name and rallying cry soon became known by its Spanish equivalent – *Cristo Viene*.

In the ten years since, over a million dollars has been given to support more than forty native pastors and gospel workers in more than twenty countries. It is no accident, no surprise, that this decade has seen significant growth in the Church of God (Seventh Day) around the world!

Cristo Viene is now supported, not just in the United States and Canada, but also by growing numbers of members and congregations in the large Mexican Church and elsewhere in Latin America. The program is under the supervision of Minister Ramon Ruiz, president of our International Ministerial Congress.

On these pages in 2012, we'll meet several of the ministers and workers abroad who devote much or all of their time to gospel effort through CoG7, thanks to Cristo Viene. Meanwhile, you can join the hundreds of persons who include an offering labeled for Cristo Viene as you drop your monthly check for tithes and offerings in the offering box or basket. On behalf of souls being saved through this effort, thank you!

Imagine a place where you can invest
in God's kingdom now . . .

- in support of Disaster Relief in places like Haiti and Kenya.
- in support of Pioneer Missionary Training 1, headed to Mexico in December, and PMT 2 planned for Kenya next year.
- in support of Medical and Dental missions through SHINE, headed to El Salvador in the spring of 2012.



December Emphasis:

G. C. Ministries

Publications

LifeSpring

NAWM

National Youth

SWORD

Spring Vale

Missions

Your support is
appreciated!

- in support of Orphans and Widows Fund abroad; also rescuing those caught in the modern slave trade through Daughters of the King projects.
- in support of your growing global church through our International Ministerial Congress.

G. C. Missions: a great investment in God's kingdom! Working for you around the corner and around the world!

For continuous updates and information, please visit us at www.cog7missions.org.

2011 Becoming History

As the last days of this year rush by, it's a good time to review our charitable giving for 2011.

- Have we supported the poor and needy, as we had intended?
- Have we supported reputable organizations that fight for the unborn and life?
- Have we supported gospel work through the local church, missions, publications, and the Church in general?

Contributions given by De-

Harold Carlson Dies at 93

Elder Carlson, born April 14, 1918, in Macomb, Illinois, died September 17, 2011, in Springfield, Missouri. At age 17, he married Kathleen Brandon, age 16; she led him to the Lord. They were married 71 years and had two children, Larry and Christine; four grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. His quest for Bible truth led him to CoG7 and into its ministry in 1968. He served churches in Macomb, Illinois; New Auburn, Wisconsin; Marion, Iowa; Joplin, Buffalo, Mt. Grove, and Springfield, Missouri.



A man of personal warmth, humor, and spiritual zeal, Brother Carlson was loved and respected by many. In the front of his Bible, this notation was found: "Read this every day — Psalm 51."

ember 31 qualify as tax deductions when income taxes are filed next year.

This is also a good time to review and update your will. For a gospel gift that keeps on giving, please include the Bible Advocate Press and the Church of God (Seventh Day) in your will. For information, write P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233; or e-mail plannedgiving@cog7.org.

Announcing for 2012 . . .

April 5 - Annual observance of the Lord's Supper Service, after sunset.

August 25-29 - International Ministerial Congress in the United Kingdom, just outside London at Kent's Hill business park in Milton-Keynes. Attendance is limited to delegates, plus 50-75 observers. E-mail imc@cog7.org.

Congratulations to Andrew Fernandez, who serves the LITES program in Stanberry, MO, as director, and his wife Melissa on his completion of the Diploma of Pastoral Ministries from LifeSpring School of Ministry. Way to go, Andrew! Visit LITES at lites.cog7.org and LifeSpring at lifespringschool.org.





Women After God's Heart

The Mile-High City of Denver played host to the 24th annual Hispanic Women's Retreat, September 2-5, with a big assist from the church led by Eddie and Socorro Villalba in Aurora, Colorado.

Over 325 women attended part or all of the

retreat, using "A Woman After God's Own Heart" as their theme. Presentations were made by Sisters Eva Delgado (Chicago, Illinois); Esther Aleman (San Jose, California); and Minerva Lopez (El Paso, Texas). A welcome prayer was offered by G. C. President Whaid Rose, accompanied by his wife, Marjolene.

A new feature in the retreat schedule was Sunday morning prayer at 6:30 a.m. Nearly 100 women rose before dawn to share the burdens of others and offer prayers of thanksgiving to our wonderful Lord!

Women are encouraged to attend these retreats each Labor Day weekend. Hosts for the next four years will be Los Angeles in 2012, Las Vegas in 2013, Dallas in 2014, and Connecticut in 2015. See you there!

October 30 – November 4, 2012 - North American Ministerial Council in Portland, OR, at Red Lion Inn on the Columbia River. Attendees at a National Men's Retreat will meet with the ministers at the same location, Friday noon through Saturday night. E-mail namc@cog7.org.

STATEMENT

Of the ownership, management, and circulation (required by the Act of Congress of August 12, 1970; Section 3685, Title 39, United States Code) of the BIBLE ADVOCATE, published eight times per year at Broomfield, Colorado for September 30, 2011.

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The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed through the mail and otherwise, to paid subscriptions during the 12 months preceding the date shown above is 11,471.



New faculty-staff at Spring Vale. Standing (L to R): George Boyles, business manager, and Bruce Noble, maintenance manager ('77); sitting (L to R): Manny Molinar III, assistant cook ('86); Jill Arend, office manager; and Kelen Caswell, assistant boys dean ('09). These are among the ones who teach or otherwise serve the 47 first-semester students on their mid-Michigan campus. Second semester begins January 9 (see back cover).

Ghana Mission

My wife's motivation to teach in a school for the underprivileged, established by Pastor James Dugger and his wife, led us to spend most of a month in late 2010 with our brethren in Akumadan, Ghana.

During our stay, we became well acquainted with the Church of God there and visited six of Ghana's nine or ten congregations, with an average size of around 100 persons, including children. The brethren were warm and hospitable, ensuring our comfort and safety.

The church's committed leaders meet regularly to plan for church health and growth. Outdoor crusade preaching is an effective form of evangelism there, and radio ministry has been a successful and cost-effective way of sharing the gospel. Currently the church has no radio program but hopes for the resources to start one again soon.

Church life is busy for our brethren in Ghana. Apart from Sabbath meetings, which can stretch from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., there are Monday and Friday night praise and preaching services, Wednesday morning prayers for three hours, and youth and women's meetings. It is normal for different denominations to use public school facilities for meetings.

Ghana has been a stable democracy since gaining independence from Britain over 50 years back. Its official language is English, and Christianity is the main religion, though each town seems to have a mosque or two. The two religions peacefully coexist.

People in the rural area of Offinso, where we stayed, were very friendly. It was wonderful to greet them on the street or on public transport, talk with them generally, and then share the gospel with them. On our first visit in 2008, we occasionally heard a passenger on public transport give a short sermon address, but we did not encounter such this time.

Regarding the Dreamland school, we were pleased to see that recent financial support from Missions Abroad and other sources has been

valuable in building a kitchen complex and helping 200 children benefit from its basic education and meals. With about 300 total children, the school is progressing nicely toward twelve quality classrooms and boarding facilities.

My wife, Angella, a Jamaican, was excited to discover that the Ashanti/Asante tribe in Ghana shared the same Anansi stories she knew from Jamaica. For anyone whose forefathers came from Africa as slaves, visiting Ghana is a moving cultural experience. We toured two old castles where the Portuguese, Dutch, and English held slaves in horrible dungeons, waiting to be shipped to Britain, America, or the Caribbean.

As chairman of the Ghana Church Conference, Pastor Dugger is keen for volunteer teachers and workers to visit the school and the Church as we did. To read the full report of our trip, or learn about volunteering opportunities in Ghana, check out our Australian Web site (www.cog7aus.com) or contact me at kiddlrs@optusnet.com.au.

— David Kidd
Adelaide, South Australia

David and Angella Kidd proudly display the colorful traditional dress given them by Ghanaian brethren.





@ Katina Vova—Dreamstime.com

Europe and Middle East

Zone 7 of the International Ministerial Congress (Europe and the Middle East, including Russia and Pakistan) is characterized by large geography and extreme heterogeneity of cultures and languages, making it a complex field for spreading the gospel and the biblical message.

Comprising mostly small communities in several countries, the Church is oppressed by growing secularism in the society or by the predominant religious traditions – Catholicism in south and central Europe, entrenched Protestantism in northern Europe, Orthodox Christianity in Eastern Europe, and Islam in the Middle East. A large community of immigrants in several European countries further increases this cultural and religious diversity, but also provides new opportunities.

Romania. In July, my wife, Luisa Matos, and I visited the Christian Apostolic Church of God 7th Day in the town of Cluj-Napoca. With more than 80 congregations, this church keeps the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. I explained the history and current reality of the Church of Portugal and of the IMC. Brother Petru Glodean is the senior pastor in Romania and in Cluj-Napoca.

Portugal. In June, we realized several baptisms in a countrywide meeting. The new members are Portuguese and Romanian, and the worship included people from Romania, Cape Vert (Africa), Mozambique, Brazil, and Portugal. A special edition (1,500 copies) of the church magazine *Comprender* (Portuguese only) was produced, with the importance of Sabbath to the people of God as the main topic.

UK. I travelled to London to visit the Croydon Church and meet with Pastor Hendricks,

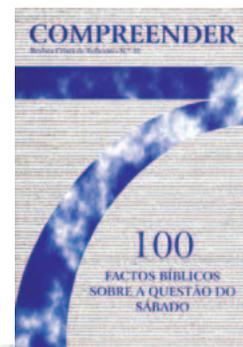
president of the UK Conference. Violent disturbances in the area gave some concern, but the UK brothers report no major problems from those events.

Italy. Conference president and pastor Roberto Torre requests our prayers for his complete recovery; for the serious illness of his wife, Mimma; and for the Church in Italy.

Appeal. We need to promote a joint ministry within Zone 7, improving the exchange of information and cooperation among our churches. Each church is autonomous in its national activity, yet everyone should be aware of our dependence on a universal God, our need of all the brothers in all countries, and our role in the ministry of salvation, which can never be confined to geographic or organizational boundaries. When we realize our collective identity (Revelation 7:9, 10; 14:12) as sons of a God without boundaries and limits, then Satan is defeated and the Spirit of God will flow to prepare His people for the final meeting with King Jesus.

My personal e-mail is available for your contact and Church news:
jccoel@gmail.com.

– Paulo Coelho
Zone 7 Representative
Lisbon, Portugal



The End of Ourselves

Sleeping beneath the stars one night, Jacob had a life-changing experience. One thing was on his mind as he fell asleep: his imminent encounter with the man he'd hurt and run from — his brother, Esau. Finding himself in a wrestling match in the dark of night, Jacob resisted, thinking his enemy had caught up with him. But often we discover that the enemy is us, that we wrestle with God not to overcome His reluctance but to come to the end of ourselves, finding Him to be the real blessing for which we strive.

We also discover that God's desire to bless us is greater than our desire for blessing. He will do whatever it takes to fulfill His purpose in our lives: "When the man saw that he would not win the match, he touched Jacob's hip and wrenched it out of its socket" (Genesis 32:25, NLT throughout). He gave Jacob the gift nobody wants: pain. "It is doubtful that God can greatly use a man until He has greatly hurt him," one person observed.

Hip out of joint, Jacob discerned he wasn't wrestling with mere man, confessing, "I have seen God face to face . . ." (v. 30). What the church needs most is an encounter with God. It will change us, as it changed Jacob. The resister is transformed into the pursuer: "I will not let you go unless you bless me," Jacob insisted (v. 26).

Dusting himself off at sunrise, Jacob was at the end of himself, the end of striving. His wrestling partner had disappeared, and Esau's shadow loomed large on the horizon. Jacob now knew that conflict is natural to human relationships, that their quality is often in proportion to the conflicts we've worked through. And he knew we're never more prepared to deal with our conflicts than when we're at the end of ourselves, having encountered God face to face.

So Jacob faced his past, fessed up to his fail-

ures, and discovered they weren't final. God's grace is greater: "love will cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). His disaffected brother now sought him, not to kill him (as Esau once vowed) nor to retrieve the blessing Jacob had stolen, but just to be with him. Esau too had come to the end of himself. Genesis 33 paints a beautiful picture of reconciliation. Their tender embrace and warm tears affirm "We need each other."

Conflict within our conference this year is no secret. Disagreement over the Church's direction, polity, and structure is at its core. It should come as no surprise that, as president, I'm part of the controversy. But if conflict is natural to human relationships and if the quality of our relationships is in proportion to the conflict we've worked through, I have great hope for our church's future.

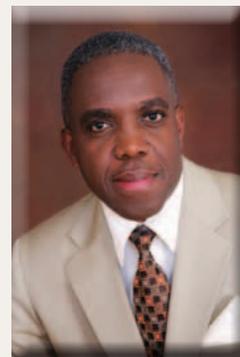
As key players meet in the months ahead, my commitment and prayer is that, like Jacob, I will come to the end of myself and face my conflict with others by first dealing with the enemy in me. I want to cover a multitude of sins with love and perhaps discover that my failures aren't final. I want to see the issues from another's point of view and to find pardon, as I pardon others.

These do not come naturally. My human heart still clings to its idols, still wants its pound of flesh. But the God of Jacob — the God of regeneration and reconciliation — is our refuge.

We trust Him for the journey ahead. He is the blessing for which we strive.

Through Him, triumphantly, the church will rise.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference
President



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