

BA

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City of Peace

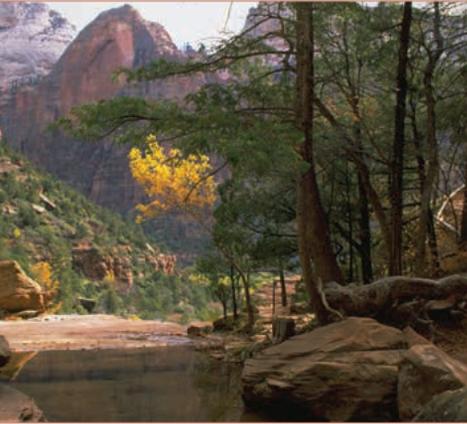
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2013: Year of the Spirit's Fruit

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If you like what you see in the print BA, then be sure to “like” us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/BibleAdvocate).



And don't forget the BA Online (www.baonline.org) for extras you can't find here. We look forward to seeing you online!

Our November 2012 BA cover provided the model for this lovely colored pencil replica drawn by Bob Walter Sr. of St. Joseph, MO.



Scripture quotations

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13 Thanks for 2013

One, celebration of 70 life-years in June and two, the 70+ cards that came in response to our daughters' surprise notice on Facebook. Three, our girls provided their parents with our first hot-air balloon ride. Four, a month later I joined three more CoG7 guys on an overnight climb to the top of 12,300-foot Mt. Adams in Washington state. What a month!

Add to these the completion of my sixteenth year at the BA editor's desk in September and the birth of our sixteenth grandchild in October. From this personal first six, let's turn to a broader, corporate view for the next seven thanks-blessings.

Recognition of this magazine's 150 years of publication with our 40-page July-August issue is #7, and the BA birthday bash attended by hundreds in Omaha, #8. Our CoG7 convention week in Nebraska was a winner in many respects, giving it place among a baker's dozen of this year's most memorable (#9).

On an unforgettable Friday afternoon (April 26) this spring, Josias Hernandez, Daniel Rodas, and I were spared from injury and possible death. En route to a men's retreat in Tranquility, New Jersey, the vehicle in which we rode was totaled in a four-car crash triggered by another car and driver in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Our testimonies to the men in Tranquility that evening were hot-off-the-grill fresh and heartfelt! That's ten.

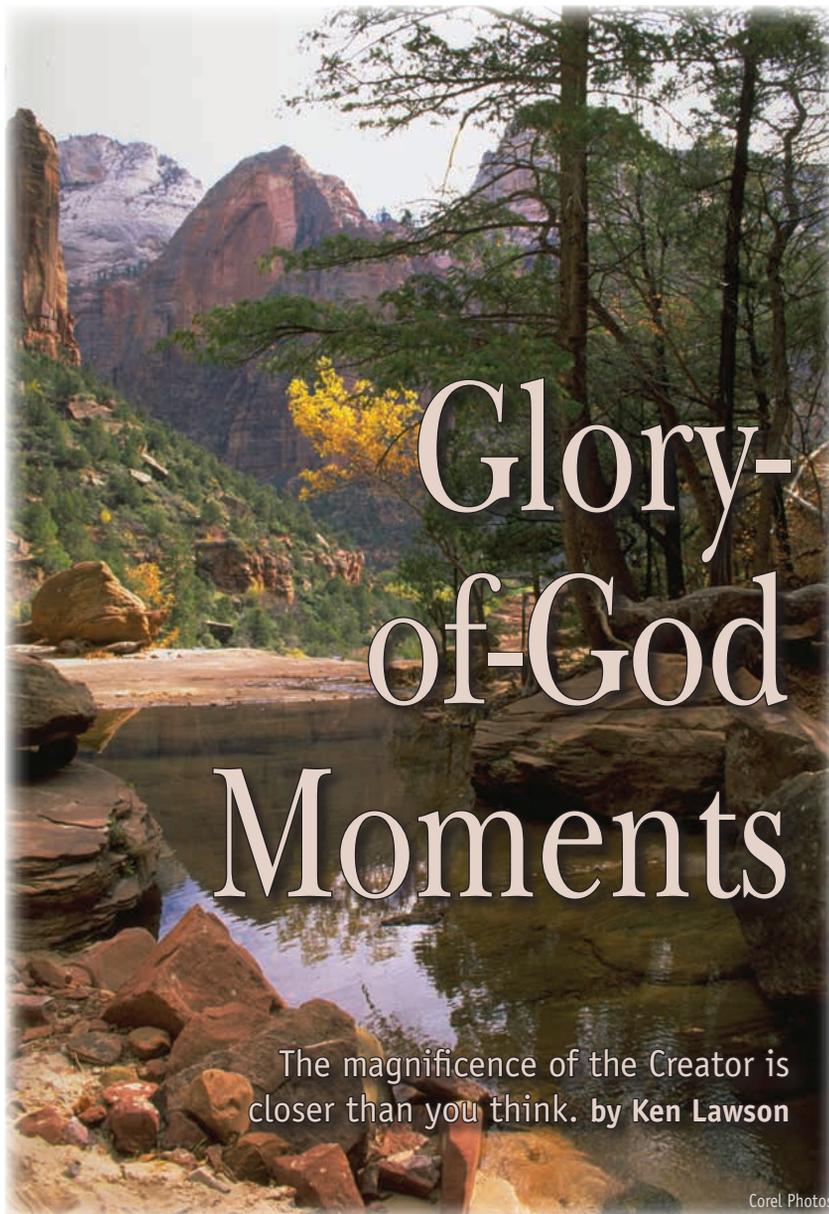
Eleven, thank God for Sherri, Keith, and all the BA staff (see left column of this page) who've served together the last sixteen years. The quality and longevity of their service encourage me! And thanks to all our readers!

Twelve, thank the Lord for the G. C. Missions staff (Santiago, Bryan, Michael, Ernesto, Brian, Monico, and others) and supporters who've come alongside this year to re-launch CoG7's gospel efforts around the world. May our missionary God grant us true perspective of His promise to bless all nations through Jesus and the children of faith (Genesis 12:1, 2; Galatians 3:8, 29).

Thirteen, God be thanked and praised in Christ for undiminished blessings that flow through the living and written Word via the Holy Spirit, abundantly above all we ask or think — even when we're idle or at rest — to the praise and glory of His rich grace. We are so blest in 2013!

— Calvin Burrell





Glory-of-God Moments

The magnificence of the Creator is closer than you think. by Ken Lawson

Many of God's people in Scripture experienced outstanding glory-of-God moments — personal moments that helped them become fully aware of a living God. Their testimonies help us know God more deeply: He is real, He cares, and He pays individual attention. His oft-specific interventions provide us with confidence that the Creator of the universe does go one-on-one with His people.

Three visions

Three spectacular visions of God's men gave them, and us, a small but intense glimpse of God's glory.

Jacob ran to get far away from his brother Esau, who wanted to kill him. Sleeping at a campsite, he had a dream: A stairway rose from earth into heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. The Lord appeared to him and repeated the promises given earlier to Isaac and Abraham.

When Jacob awoke, the thrill of the vision remained and he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it. . . . How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16, 17). Do you think Jacob ever forgot that glory-of-God moment?

Ezekiel was a captive slave under King Nebuchadnezzar. At the river Kebar he saw a huge storm in the sky. But this storm was different. It not only flashed lightning but also contained a huge fire. Living creatures moved within it, directed by the Spirit. Fast-spinning wheels moved beside each creature. Above the storm a throne appeared, and a man like a raging fire spoke to Ezekiel. Ezekiel's report and reaction:

Like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the radiance around him. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. When I saw it, I fell facedown, and I heard the voice of one speaking (Ezekiel 1:28).

Ezekiel received his calling to preach to Israel at that glory-of-God moment.

Isaiah saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted. His description is graphic and spectacular. Angels attended and sang, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). When Isaiah expressed panic for having seen "the King, the LORD Almighty," one of the angels flew to the temple altar, took a live coal, and touched Isaiah's lips.

At that moment Isaiah's sins were forgiven. The voice of the Lord called, "Whom shall I send?

And who will go for us?" Isaiah instantly answered, "Here am I. Send me!" (v. 8). God's response was "Go . . ." (v. 9).

God in the moment

Our highest experiences may not tip the scales as majestically as these three, but a glory-of-God moment is never unworthy of notice. If God is in a moment, it is to be respected and enjoyed. It should get our full attention.

Glory-of-God moments occurred in heaven before time began. Our Lord Jesus prayed that the glory He had with the Father before the world existed would be restored to Him (John 17:5). And such moments have occurred steadily since Creation, dominant in Old Testament times and multiplied even more in the New Testament. They still occur as a feature in the lives of believers today. These are moments in time when we're granted the thrill of seeing God's hand, His Spirit, His grace at work in the world.

Through the Hubble telescope and in films like Louie Giglio's *Indescribable*, we are privileged to know the truth of Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." The more magnificent vistas our cameras capture put us in awe of God's glory in the universe. This glory is not just in the heavens either. The angels in Isaiah's vision said, "The whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3).

Personal moments

When have you experienced a glory-of-God moment? If you have a good marriage, give God

glory. If you've been blessed with children and grandchildren, give God glory. If your doctor says, "It's not cancer," give God the glory. If he says, "It is cancer," give God glory anyway! Life is temporary at best, and cancer is not the end. We're heading for greater things in the Holy City!

If you enjoy three meals a day of delicious food, give God glory. If you ever have a full night of sweet sleep, give God glory. If you have been blessed by the mountain peaks and national parks in the US and Canada, give God the glory. If you've seen Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Banff and Lake Louise, Bryce, Zion, Glacier, Yellowstone, the Tetons, the California giant trees, the Oregon coast, and even Death Valley, give God glory.

If you've heard the redbird sing, watched the bald eagles soar, been close to a canary or indigo bunting, or heard the meadowlark sing, give God glory. If you've heard a bull elk bugle in the mist, give God glory. If you've seen grizzly bears or been licked by a puppy dog, give God the glory.

If you appreciate ice cream, you can thank the manufacturers. But if you appreciate the warmth of the sun on your back while walking through a mountain meadow filled with wild flowers, give God glory!

If God has given you gifts of service and you are using them to the best of your ability, give God glory.

If your faith in the Genesis Creation account is rock solid, give God the glory. If your mind and heart are open to God's Word and you have a teachable spirit, give God glory. If you

know the rich privilege of public worship on God's Sabbath, give God glory. If you hear a good sermon, tell your pastor thanks and give God glory for calling and filling him with the Holy Spirit.

If you know Jesus as your Savior and you have a joy-filled relationship with Jehovah, give Him all the glory. You are a participant in the greatest glory-of-God moment so far! You did not buy your salvation, earn it, or deserve it. God did that for you!

When we experience a glory-of-God moment, trust deepens, awareness of God blossoms, gifts are clarified, doubt and fear flee, faith spreads, and God's kingdom grows.

Beyond the moment

Several of those in the Word who experienced a glory-of-God moment simply fell on their faces in awe and respect. Most shared their testimony of God's glory with others.

How shall we react and express to our Father in heaven and to others our appreciation of all the revelations of His glory, both in heaven and on earth, that He provides daily in our lives? Find a way! **BA**

Ken Lawson chairs the Church's License and Credentials Committee. He lives in Cottage Grove, MN. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



Tidbits of Praise

Thanks in Advance

by **Lorraine Carr
Conroe, Texas**

Did you ever get one of those letters asking you to help or donate or attend something, and it ended by saying, “Thank you in advance for _____”? What are you supposed to do? You’ve already been thanked, without a chance to refuse. How can you say no now?

Some people figure thanks any time is better than none. Others call this approach “tacky,” even if it is effective solicitation. Most agree that appreciation is important. Saying thanks to God is even more important.

A man in the Bible once tried to run away from God – not a good idea. He soon found himself in grave danger, eaten alive by a giant mammal – never a good place to be! After churning around in that whale’s belly awhile, Jonah figured out what to do, and he prayed – always a good idea!

The book of Jonah records that prayer. In chapter 2, verse 9 we find a curious thing. In about

the worst possible situation Jonah prayed “with the voice of *thanksgiving*” to God. Then God heard his prayer and delivered Jonah. Do you suppose Jonah said something like “Thank You in advance,” knowing full well God was able to save and forgive him?

Jesus stood in front of Lazarus’ tomb. Surrounded by sorrow, He thanked God for always hearing Him *before*, not after, raising His friend from the dead (John 11:41, 42). Another great lesson of thanksgiving in advance.

We can never out-guess God. His ways are simply not our ways, but we can rest assured that His ways are always best.

When we bring our petitions to the Lord, it’s easy to forget that He already knows what we want and need. He still listens patiently. Thanking Him in advance, without telling Him what to do, acknowledges that we know He hears.

We could say, “Thank You for listening.” Sometimes wouldn’t it be nice to say, “Thank You in advance for whatever You have planned and for being here with me through whatever comes”?

Aren’t you eager to see the answer?

Emergency Call

by **Gualberto Duarte
Laval, Quebec**

On Wednesday, July 30, 2013, five people were working to remodel the church temple. Pastor Samuel was busy with his son. Isai was getting lunch. Jorge was plumbing the bathrooms, and I was doing the laser of the ground.

The fifth man, another Jorge, had slightly slipped two times in a watery patch of cement that was leveled the previous night. “The third time I’ll get myself killed,” he said. And that’s just how it nearly went.

Passing through the danger zone again, Jorge tried desperately to stay upright, but fell. His head bounced on the hard floor once, then again. He looked up with a “Help me!” look. I ran to him, put one hand behind his head and the other beside his heart. Pastor Samuel immediately joined me. The atmosphere belonged to another dimension.

God took control and gave me calm. “Jorge,” I said, “listen to

your heart. Jesus Christ is here!”

We started to lose Jorge. His color changed and he stopped breathing. Death wanted to take his place. “Jesus Christ is here!” I repeated. “Jesus, give him back to me!” Pastor Samuel yelled, “Jorge! Jorge! Jorge!”

Jorge came back! He started to react to us. I took off my shirt and put it on his head, then we moved him and sat him in a chair. A strong, strange feeling came over me — one of thanksgiving to my Lord Jesus Christ.

There were dimensions to this experience that an ordinary human being cannot understand. God is love, and He makes us know it with a strong feeling and with tears — since that moment and until now, as I write this chronicle.

If what happened were only an affair of men, we would have failed. But God is perfect. “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Power of Prayer

by **Veronica Gouldbourne**
Snellville, Georgia

The journey started in mid-2012 with my daughter Jessica’s severe cough and a foot so swollen, she couldn’t wear shoes. Once Jessica was admitted to the hospital, the medical team found a blood clot in her foot, a portion of which had broken off

and lodged in her left lung. She would spend two weeks in ICU, then one week in a regular room before ending up in ICU again.

More tests revealed that Jessica’s heart was badly damaged and surrounded by fluid. A hospital in New York City accepted Jessica for surgery on February 5, 2013. She eagerly petitioned the brethren for prayers on her behalf.

Her first day there, I left the hospital after 10:00 p.m. and found myself at a train station, alone and frightened. I swiped my metro card; it displayed a zero balance. I swiped it again. Same result. Twice I heard a Hispanic voice behind me say, “Mommy, mommy.” I didn’t look back because I didn’t know who was speaking.

A third time the voice said, “Mommy, you want a ride? I’ll swipe my card.” Still afraid, I turned and saw a mature man who then swiped his metro card and told me to go through the turnstile. I turned again to say a proper thanks, but he was no longer there. I had encountered an angel!

Something similar happened when I was introduced to the surgical team of physicians, anesthesiologists, and nurses. I looked at these normal people twice, and the third time I saw them with wings and halos!

The surgery, estimated at twelve hours, took only seven. The surgeon reported no need to jump-start Jessica’s heart: It went right back into rhythm as if nothing were wrong. The clots in her lungs were removed. No obstructions!

I had prayed for a miracle in my daughter’s life. She is alive today because God’s children

prayed as if she were their own. The parents and siblings of Jessica Gouldbourne would like to say thanks to Pastor Whaid G. Rose and all the Conference churches that prayed and fasted for Jessica — a blessed young lady.

Shielded

by **Martha Rohrbaugh**
Glen Rock, Pennsylvania

One morning the roads into the city were crowded as usual. With a tractor-trailer beside me in the left lane, I sensed that the truck wanted to be in my lane, the right lane. I sped up, but not fast enough. The truck hit the left rear of my car and pushed me against the curb, pinning me.

Surprised, I thought, *What do I do now?* but we weren’t done. The truck driver didn’t know she had hit me and continued to run her front bumper along the side of my car.

At that point my car swung around in front of the truck. Now my driver’s side door was directly in front of the truck’s grill, and I wondered if my life would end right there, crushed by this huge, moving force.

Then a calm, firm voice in my mind said, “Hold fast and see the mighty hand of God.” I obeyed immediately. Gripping the steering wheel, I sat very still, waiting to see what God would do. All the windows in my car burst and then the movement finally stopped. Amazingly, my car’s

continued on page 9

October 3, 1863

By the President of the United States

A Proclamation

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and even soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

Abraham Lincoln

Source: www.whitehouse.gov/

engine still worked and I could drive forward across the road to a stop, then open the door and get out.

People came running from everywhere, including a host of soldiers from a convoy behind us. They had seen the whole thing and expected to see the horror of blood and death, but there would be none of that today! I looked up at the truck cab to see a jack-o-lantern grinning down at me and about five cats walking around the dashboard. *That's why the truck driver hadn't seen me.*

I didn't have a scratch that day and not one piece of glass in my hair or clothes. Later I found broken car glass in my backpack and even in the pages of my books. I realized God's abundant protection and the shield that must have been around me to prevent the bursting glass from touching my person.

It's hard to explain how one can have such peace in scary circumstances. I praise God for His encompassing love.

Wise Investment

by Maria Flores-Garcia
York, Pennsylvania

Years ago, I knew about the Jesus who was never known at home in Mexico City, and was learning more about that new church with a different name: Seventh Day Church of God. The pastor where I congregated

made comments about Spring Vale Academy, a high school in Michigan. I only had a first grader, but I kept it in mind.

Years later God was so good to my family by letting us live in this land. My oldest got to go to Spring Vale, then the youngest. I am glad that those faithful people kept open this temple of knowledge, this refuge, like a nest where youth find the bonds of being Christian. I am thankful for the big heart of sponsors and for this country's freedom and respect to honor God our way. SVA is a basket of seeds that our nation needs to produce good fruit in this world.

I thank my Lord every day for this academy, for the people who help there, and for how my life is changed. Thank You, great God, for blessing our children as we try to invest in the best for them. If the ones I love are blessed, so am I!

For information on how your child can become involved at Spring Vale, visit springvale.us or call 989-725-2251.

Touched by God

by Loren Reynolds
LaCygne, Kansas

I was born in the midst of the Great Depression. At a few months old and again at six years, both my eardrums were ruptured by infection. In the sixth grade I came down with a high fever.

As I started high school, my parents became concerned and took me to a doctor. After an exam, he advised me to not run or walk: The x-ray revealed a severe curvature of the spine.

But I wanted to run, so I went to another doctor for the sports physical each year. One doctor sat me down and explained, "You have a resting pulse of 120; normal is 68. With a little exercise it jumps to 160. You're going to be an old man in a rocking chair by age 25." He advised my father to take me to a heart specialist.

In the meantime, an evangelist came to town, and I talked my parents into going. As I sat there listening, I thought, *I'm going to give those few years I have left to the Lord.* In seconds I could feel bones moving around in my back, and I sat up straight. My pulse rate dropped dramatically.

My father still took me to a specialist, who checked me thoroughly, including x-rays and an EKG. He found a resting pulse of 68. "What prompted you to bring this boy to me?" he asked my dad. "I can't find anything organically wrong with him."

Then Mom asked about the x-ray. "What about the curvature of the spine?" The doctor gave her a blank look. "What curvature?" As she tried to explain, he said, "It must have been slight. I didn't notice it. You can run. I'll sign the paper."

What about those ears? When Uncle Sam sent greetings, I went for my physical. One doctor looked in my ears and found much scar tissue. He was amazed I could hear.

Don't we have a wonderful God! **BA**

Triumph and Tragedy

A deadly day in Boston
and the goodness of God.
by **Brittney Udell**



On April 15, 2013, I completed the Boston Marathon. I finished in 3:44:58 and was one block away from the finish line when bombs exploded. The time clock was frozen at 4:09:43.

Four hours before the bombs went off, I stood at the starting line in Hopkinton and prayed, just as I do at every start line before every race. I asked God to help me finish strong and healthy, and to keep me safe. Then the starting gun rang out, and the race began.

Once I crossed the much-anticipated finish line, tears of joy filled my eyes. I had just completed another Boston Marathon! I thanked God for keeping His hand over me as emotions started to make their presence known in such an unforgettable moment.

Unfortunately, the day quickly

turned from a day of triumph to a day of heartache.

I gathered all my belongings from the buses and walked about a mile to where my parents were waiting. After I changed into my warm clothes, we picked up our stuff and headed to the subway station.

Then we heard a sound you would only hear in war. The windows on the buildings around us shook, and the ground rumbled beneath our feet. My eyes bulged out of my head, and my face turned pale. The sound echoed somewhere deep in my soul.

As my dad herded Mom and me toward the train, we heard the second bomb go off. Everything was in slow motion. I felt as though I were running, but I was only shuffling. Medical personnel rushed to the scene, but it felt so leisurely.

We finally made it to the train station and jumped on the first train that pulled in. We didn't even buy tickets. We found out that we had grabbed the last train out of the area before authorities shut it down.

On the way to the hotel, I was in shock. It didn't register with me what had really happened until I got into the shower. I let the tears roll down my face and let the sound of the water cover up my sobs. My heart ached for the people injured and deceased, for the families of those injured, for the runners, for the spectators, and for this ungodly world. I was overwhelmed that God chose to save me from the direct effects of the bombs.

I am still very shaken and filled with so much emotion since the bombings. Sometimes, I can still hear the explosions go off in my head, and I get nervous in big crowds of people. The event had a traumatic effect on me, but it was even more traumatizing for those involved directly. I pray for those people every day.

Experiences like this make you live every day to the fullest, count your blessings, and hug your loved ones a little tighter. I praise God for answering my prayer by keeping my family and me safe and for protecting me throughout every step of the race — and its tragic aftermath. I'm thankful to be a Boston Marathon 2013 finisher — and a survivor. **BA**

Brittney Udell is a Speech Language Pathology graduate student and lives in Carrollton, TX. A two-time Boston Marathon runner, she attended CoG7 back home in Conroe, TX.



Just wondering what CoG7 teaches about the soul. When man dies, his breath is taken away and that's it. Is this how we should understand it?

Questions about the constitutional nature of humans, especially our inward component(s) like soul and spirit, are scripturally complex — easier to ask than to answer. Do we have two basic parts (body and spirit) or three (body, soul, and spirit)? Or should we view ourselves as indivisible and call the whole being a "soul," as Scripture often does?

You ask about soul and say that man's "breath is taken away" when he dies. More accurately, it is the spirit of man, not the soul, that's breathed into man at birth and returns to God at death (Gen. 2:7; Eccl. 12:7; Acts 7:59).

The "spirit" of man includes breath that makes a body alive, the vital essence of life, and the conscious principle by which we know our own humanity and God's reality. The spirit is that invisible part that is reborn in us by God's Spirit at conversion (Job 32:8; Prov. 20:27; 1 Cor. 2:11a; John 3:6).

In the Bible *soul* can either mean the whole person (body and spirit) or refer to our inner person — the mind, will, and emotion (Gen. 2:7; 1 Thess. 5:23).

What happens when man dies? The body returns to dust. The spirit, or breath, returns to God — as in "give up the ghost."

And the soul? Mind, will, and emotion no longer function apart from a living body, so the whole "dead" person is in a state of suspended animation that the Bible often calls "sleep." When the righteous dead are resurrected, we understand that our souls (minds, wills, emotions) will be awakened, perfected, and united with a new spiritual, immortal body fit for God's eternity (1 Cor. 15).

— Elder Calvin Burrell

My wife and I are looking for a Sabbath-keeping church that teaches reverence and discipline, without unruly children and [with] properly dressed women. We haven't found it.

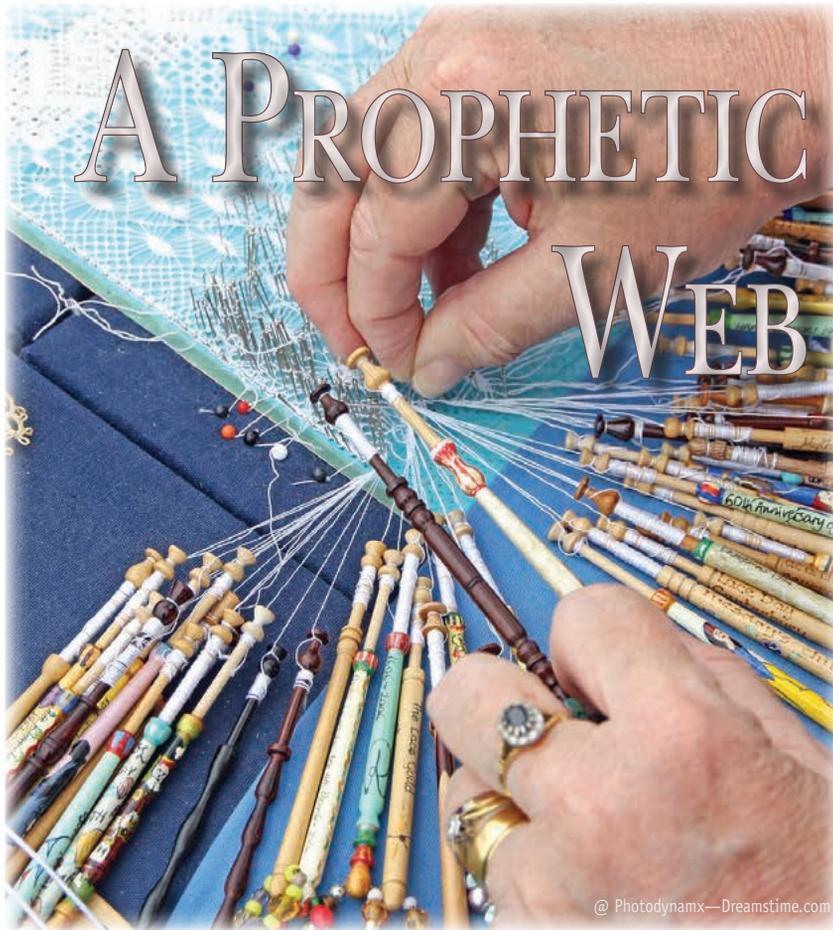
You and your wife sound like people with high standards for yourselves and your family. No one should ask you to give any of that up. In any church, however, not every member and not every family will have come to the same understanding and practice as yours. Others there will be on their own faith-journey with the Lord and may need just what you can bring to that local mix now.

The problem we face is how to keep church standards high (so people can see and know the difference in us), but not be so fussy about external details that only a pious few will ever feel welcome there. To put it another way, how can Christians best reflect God's holiness and truth while also showing His love and grace to those who, like us, consistently fall short of His best and highest?

Can a "high standard" church also be a welcoming, open congregation? We can. To be so, our expectations need to be realistic. Let's recognize the maturity level of other families, not be blind to cultural reality, and take care to not exclude or offend earnest believers. By opening our doors and hearts to those who often fail, our churches will reflect God's grace, and struggling, growing, trusting people will come in.

My advice is to find a Sabbath church that consistently teaches God's Word and make a long-term commitment to love and serve with it. By sticking with one faith-family through thick and thin, you will experience more growth for yourselves than if you keep looking for a group without problems like the ones you mention.

— Elder Calvin Burrell



Explaining prophecy is no simple matter. **by Phil Huber**

We tend to think of prophecy as a tidy formula with prediction followed by fulfillment, a straight line drawn between the two. It is plainly spoken and clearly fulfilled. This linear view of prophecy is the proof of our convictions, the evidence that demands a verdict, the case for faith.

The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), and indeed He is, despite its redneck reputation. He will be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12), and we marvel at the pinpoint accuracy — even down to the detail of the betrayal price, the prophet unfazed by complications of inflation and

the market for precious metals. The soldiers will cast lots for His clothing (Psalm 22:18), and they do so, unaware that their wagering was predicted fifteen hundred years earlier.

But if we read through the prophets, rather than just airlifting isolated predictions with obvious fulfillment, we find that their writings are — dare we say — not so black and white. The tidy charts are replaced with a jumble of prophetic pronouncements mingled with declarations of judgment, weary expressions of exasperation, lyric poetry, object lessons, and a smattering of historical narrative. The prophets are more poets than mathemati-

cians. Prophecies are expressed not as formulas but as passionate and somewhat ambiguous warnings and encouragements regarding the future. Concrete details are embedded in vague interpretive uncertainty. Foresight can prove a bit blurry.

Case in point: The religious scholars of the first century largely missed the Messiah because of their misunderstanding of messianic prophecy. We may attribute this to hard-heartedness, but even sympathetic audiences often needed help in making the connection from the prophet to the Messiah. Our detailed depictions of what the end times will look like demonstrate our failure to learn from the mistakes of others. The line between prophecy and fulfillment is more tangled than we like to consider.

Finding flaws

The Gospels hint at the inadequacy of this linear approach. Two examples will suffice.

When Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt to escape Herod's order to kill the children, Matthew says, "And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (Matthew 2:15). He is quoting Hosea, but on the surface this is not a prophetic declaration. In its context, it is hard to read this as anything but historical, a reference to the Exodus that marked the infancy of this nation Israel. Hosea is looking back at the Jews' release from Egyptian slavery, not forward (at least, not knowingly) to the flight of the Messiah to Egypt. And yet Matthew pegs this as prophetic.

Luke introduces Jesus' public ministry with an episode in the

synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus reads from a portion of Isaiah 61:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18, 19).

In fact, Jesus breaks off His reading of the prophecy, oddly enough, in mid-sentence. In Isaiah the thought continues, balancing the year of the Lord’s favor with “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isaiah 61:2). But Jesus, in His first advent, cannot read this last phrase and still proclaim with authority, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:20). This day of judgment awaits His second advent. One prophetic sentence is split into two distinct phases of fulfillment, separated by two thousand years and counting.

Web model

Most Old Testament prophecies are entangled in these types of issues. It is notoriously difficult to determine what is prophetic and how fulfillment is realized. Certain slivers of the prophecy may appear to find fulfillment in the generation surrounding the prophet. Other slivers may fit the first advent of Jesus. Still others may anticipate His second coming. All three of these may be braided together into a single strand of prophecy. Levels of fulfillment may be exposed with different levels of correspondence to the details recorded.

Instead of a linear model, a spiral may be more apt. Prophecy is more like a web than a line.

The world is built on patterns, or paradigms. The way God worked in the past is mirrored by the way He works in the present and future. The hostile reaction of the world to God’s involvement is a pattern repeated over and over. The exodus of Israel out of bondage from Egypt parallels the experience of Jesus leading people out of their slavery to sin. This is how God saves people, then and now. So Isaiah applies the Exodus to the deliverance of the Israelites from Assyria (Isaiah 11:16). And Matthew 2:15 can do the same for the ultimate deliverance that comes through the Messiah. The text is not exhausted by a single event.

This is not to suggest that prophecy doesn’t have a literal fulfillment. But leading up to fulfillment there may be levels of “microfillment” – not an exact copy but a rough sketch. Some elements of the prophecy may fit this loop around the spiral, while others may await a later loop.

Divine control

We may question what constitutes fulfillment. Are details to be taken with hardened literalism, or should we accept approximations of fulfillment as close enough and chalk up details to poetic license? Is fulfillment that has already transpired the ulti-

mate fulfillment, or do we await a more complete fulfillment? These are questions not easily answered.

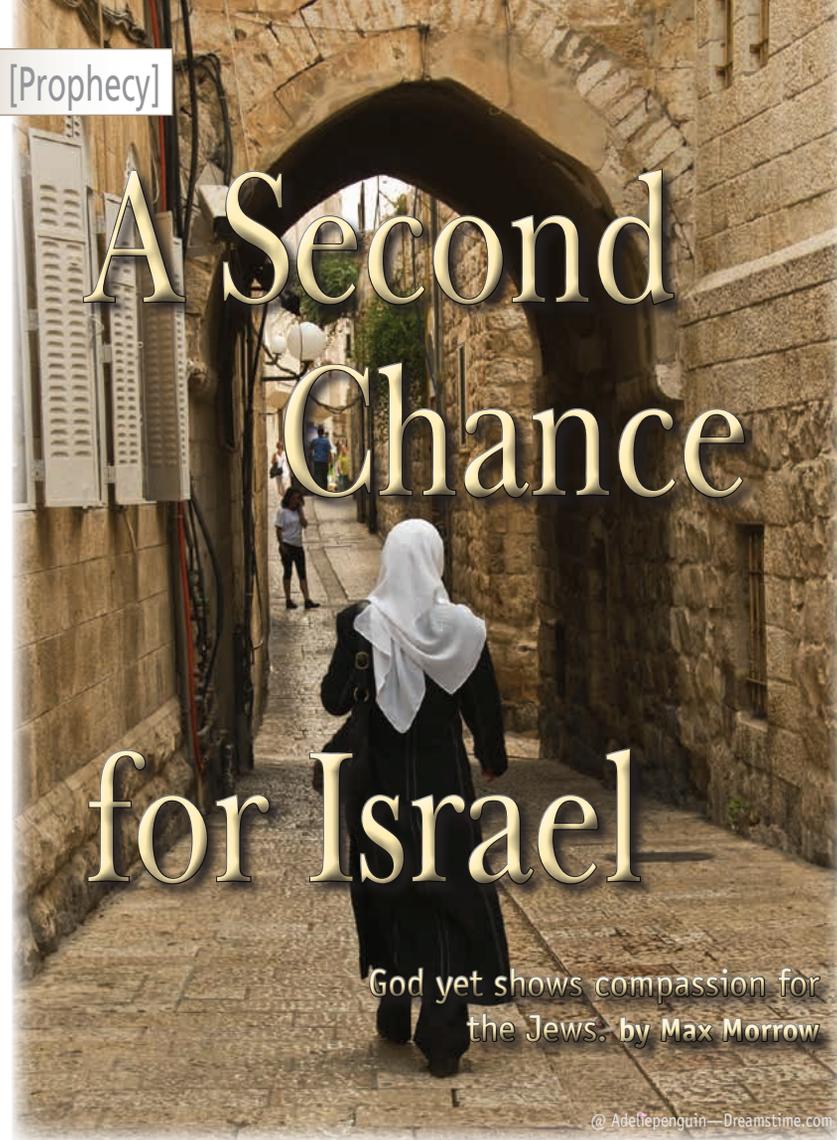
This makes prophecy more difficult to interpret but more wondrous to behold. All this anticipation of the future is not intended to fill charts of future events. This is a tapestry with repeated patterns, a musical composition with a repeated theme. We wonder at the complexity of how these themes resurface again and again. While we may relinquish confident assertions of what fulfillment looks like, we can have full confidence in the intent.

Prophecy displays that God is in control. He is working out His plan. In response, we bow our knee to His sovereignty and are moved to repentance and devotion in the present, not speculation for the future. This tangling is like a beautiful web, rather than a knotty snare. God’s sovereign control is even more wondrous in the echoing fulfillment of prophecy. **BA**

Phil Huber writes from Baldwinsville, NY. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



The world is built on patterns, or paradigms. The way God worked in the past is mirrored by the way He works in the present and future.



When a middle-aged adult returns to the Lord and renews a godly life, having fallen away after being saved in his teens, someone will say, “God is a God of the second chance.” The person wasted decades of life, giving no heed to many invitations to serve God. Finally, something struck a sensitive spot in his heart, and he responded. He was given a second chance.

The Bible points out that time and time again Israel provoked God. Yet out of compassion and because of His promise to the fathers, God overlooked her offenses and blessed her. He gave the Jews not just a second chance but many, many more.

Deaf and blind

God sent His prophets to Israel, but their messages were rejected. Israel killed numerous prophets, in fact, and continued her rebellious ways. Even the invitation of Jesus, God’s own Son, was rejected. The apostles continued Jesus’ work, preaching the gospel to Israel.

For the most part, Jews turned a deaf ear until finally Paul said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, *we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46). From that point on, the focus of evangelism was on Gentiles.

In his letter to the Romans

Paul wrote, “Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (11:25). He recognized the Israelites’ callous condition. Their ears were stopped and their hearts hardened to the message of God. However, Paul implied a time to come when conditions would change. “*Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*” sets a time limit on this blindness. It will be lifted when “the fullness of the Gentiles” comes.

Fullness of the Gentiles

A common understanding among Bible students is that the “fullness of the Gentiles” may have been reached when Israel again blossomed as a country and gained national independence (1948). It took some time for the Jewish people to throw off Gentile domination and for modern Israel to regain full control of the ancient city where the governing throne was in Old Testament times. In that sense “the fullness of the Gentiles” was reached.

Now in light of what Paul wrote about the partial blindness being lifted when “the fullness of the Gentiles” arrived, the door is open for Israel to give favorable response to God’s message. Regrettably we don’t see that yet to the extent it could be. However, a promise is sure to be kept when the nations “come against Jerusalem.”

And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one

grieves for a firstborn (Zechariah 12:10).

Verse 9 sets the time as being the day when God will “destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” That’s when Armageddon occurs (see Zechariah 14:1-4 and Revelation 16:12-16).

Change of heart

A “Spirit of grace and supplication” is to be poured out on the Jews, causing them to mourn for the Messiah they crucified. What a change of heart! He whom they once rejected and crucified will be the reason for their heart-wrenching sorrow. Just when this Spirit of grace and supplication will be poured out — before, during, or after the battle — is not stated. That it is to be a “Spirit of grace” suggests God’s grace that brings salvation (Titus 2:11) will be poured out. The house of David and the residents of Jerusalem will benefit from it. That it is a “Spirit of . . . supplication” implies that they will plead for God’s favor — presumably for salvation. Thus the Jews will recognize Jesus as Messiah and claim Him to the saving of their souls.

Breaking the blindness

In the Romans 11 reference where Paul says that “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (v. 25), the next verse makes a striking statement: “And so all Israel will be saved . . .” (v. 26). Can this breaking of the blindness be the means of *all* Israel being saved?

Well, yes, with the combination of the Spirit of grace and supplication to be poured out on the Jews, a spiritual awakening will result for the children

of Israel. The Spirit of grace and supplication looks to be what breaks through Israel’s blindness today (as in Paul’s day), working so effectively that “*all* Israel” will come to know Jesus as Messiah by accepting His blood as atonement for their sins.

What a glorious day that will be! Blindness lifted and Jesus

exonerated, all in one sweeping act! That’ll be the best second chance anybody ever had! **BA**

Max Morrow pastors at Spring Vale Academy and lives with his wife, Shirley, live near Owosso, MI.



Mourning Christ’s Return

A passage of Scripture spells out how humanity will be affected by the most earth-shaking event yet to occur: the return of Jesus Christ to this planet.

It is a summary of several scriptures (Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 24:30) and a prophecy that concerns all of us: “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him” (Revelation 1:7).

The term variously translated “will wail” or “will mourn” also has the more descriptive meaning “will beat their chests as an act of mourning.”

A wide range of peoples and cultures express their emotions in various ways, all the way from a “stiff upper lip” and “poker face” to vigorous physical demonstrations. Revelation 1:7 tells us that at the time of Christ’s return we will all “beat our chests as an act of mourning”— a strong indication of how the most terrifying event in earth’s history will affect everybody on this planet.

A few verses later, we read that John saw Jesus Christ in a vision. He had been a close friend of Jesus’ during His first coming. Yet when John saw Jesus as He will appear at His second coming, he was moved to write:

And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death (vv. 17, 18).

We may all beat our chests in mourning and fall down as dead at the sight of Jesus Christ coming to earth again. But if we are His friends, He may well place His right hand on us and tell us not to be afraid.

After all, Jesus promised that those who overcome will eat from the tree of life and not be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:7, 11). Ultimately, we have nothing to fear. It’s all good news!

— Ernie Klassek

One Thousand Years With Jesus

by Ken Lawson

Why should we embrace the marvelous prophecy and truth of the Millennium? Because the Word of the Lord tells it. Look up and read the listed texts.

Millennium? Revelation 20:1-7 mentions a thousand years six times. Satan is chained, and the resurrected saints reign with Jesus. These six are the Bible's only mention of Christ's millennial kingdom, but other texts confirm the big idea.

Who and where? Those in the first resurrection will reign as priests of God and Christ for a thousand years. Over them, the second death has no power (vv. 4b, 6). These are the faithful ones from every tribe, language, people, and nation who were redeemed to God by Christ's blood. They will reign with Christ; His kingdom will be on the earth (5:9, 10). Millions of angels will surround Jesus' throne, and all living creatures will sing praises and honor to the King!

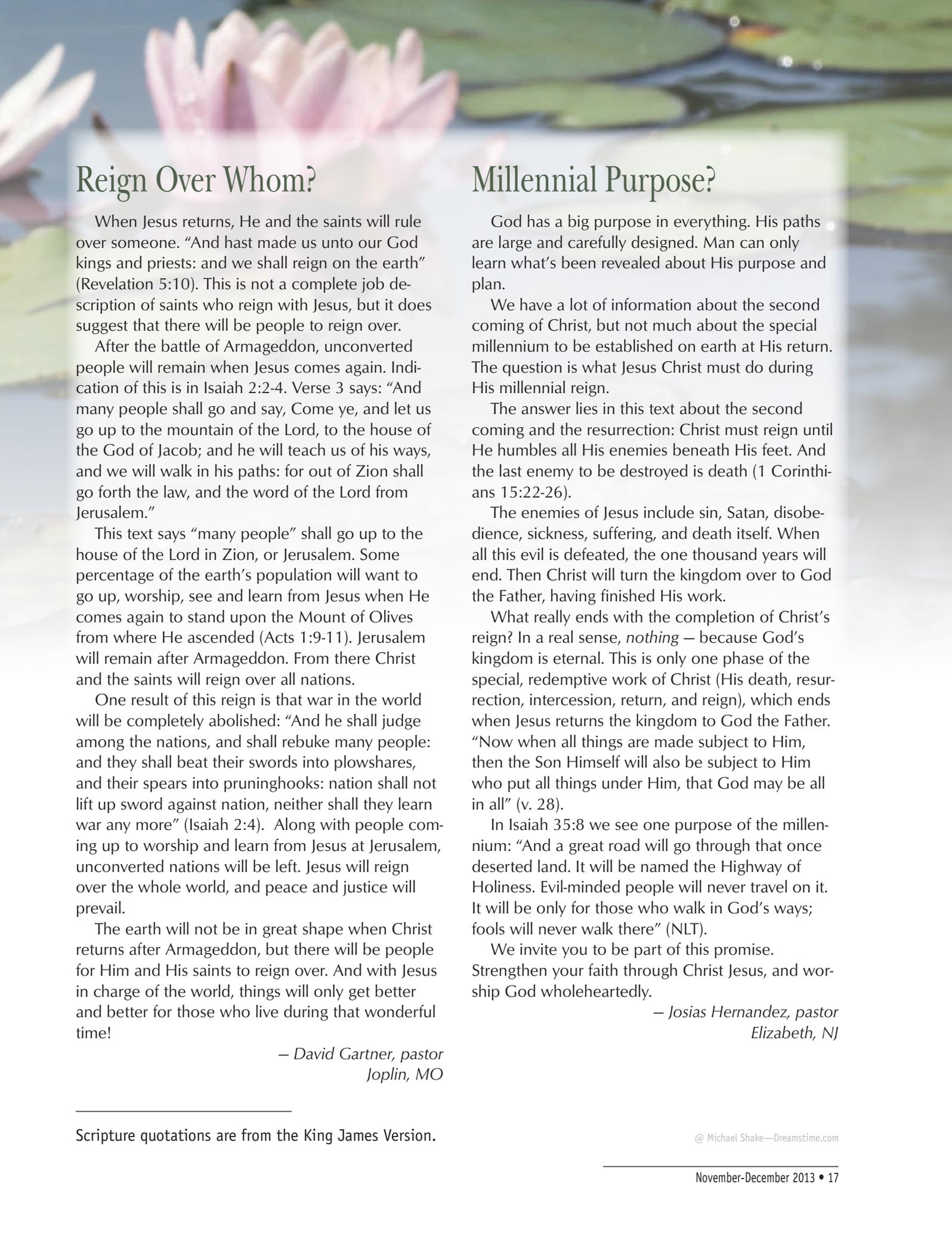
What's the big idea? It's simple. Read the marvelous truths in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:6-10; 65:17-25; Acts 3:21; and Matthew 19:28. The purposes of Jesus' thousand-year reign on earth are that people will learn not to make war ever again; that Jesus will rule until all His Father's enemies have been destroyed, including the curse that claims all — death; that He will rule from Jerusalem with pure truth and justice; that the nature of all creation will return to the peaceful status of the Garden of Eden before man sinned; that Christ will remove painful memories and life will be at its joyful best forever. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," says the Lord (Isaiah 11:9a).

Restitution, restoration, regeneration, and renewal describe the purpose of Jesus' thousand-year kingdom of peace. All things polluted and pollution-causing will be removed. Neither crime nor injustice will be tolerated. Not a single abortion will ever occur again. There will be no abuse of children, no spousal abuse. All weapons of war and all things harmful will be removed. Guns and bombs will be destroyed. Hollywood will be out of a job — filthy speech never heard! Dirty water, air, soil will be cleaned up and bars torn down. Racial prejudice will be a thing of the past. Pure teachings and pure justice from the throne in Jerusalem will clean up our minds and hearts. Those who survive Jesus' coming and the battle of Armageddon will be taught to live righteously. Satan will be absent. Hallelujah!

Most important questions: Will you be there? Are you ready to stand before the Son of Man when He comes in a cloud with power and great glory (Luke 21:27)? How do you get ready?

If you are a believer in the salvation work of Jesus Christ, you are ready! If you have repented and received forgiveness for your sins, you are ready! If you have been baptized in the name of Jesus and are living under God's grace, you are ready! If you love to worship the Lord and express your faith through obedience to His Word and will, you are ready!

Now that you are ready to live and reign with Jesus on earth, do not fear the tough times ahead. Keep trusting and obeying Christ the Lord on the path to His kingdom glory! **BA**



Reign Over Whom?

When Jesus returns, He and the saints will rule over someone. “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). This is not a complete job description of saints who reign with Jesus, but it does suggest that there will be people to reign over.

After the battle of Armageddon, unconverted people will remain when Jesus comes again. Indication of this is in Isaiah 2:2-4. Verse 3 says: “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

This text says “many people” shall go up to the house of the Lord in Zion, or Jerusalem. Some percentage of the earth’s population will want to go up, worship, see and learn from Jesus when He comes again to stand upon the Mount of Olives from where He ascended (Acts 1:9-11). Jerusalem will remain after Armageddon. From there Christ and the saints will reign over all nations.

One result of this reign is that war in the world will be completely abolished: “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4). Along with people coming up to worship and learn from Jesus at Jerusalem, unconverted nations will be left. Jesus will reign over the whole world, and peace and justice will prevail.

The earth will not be in great shape when Christ returns after Armageddon, but there will be people for Him and His saints to reign over. And with Jesus in charge of the world, things will only get better and better for those who live during that wonderful time!

— David Gartner, pastor
Joplin, MO

Millennial Purpose?

God has a big purpose in everything. His paths are large and carefully designed. Man can only learn what’s been revealed about His purpose and plan.

We have a lot of information about the second coming of Christ, but not much about the special millennium to be established on earth at His return. The question is what Jesus Christ must do during His millennial reign.

The answer lies in this text about the second coming and the resurrection: Christ must reign until He humbles all His enemies beneath His feet. And the last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:22-26).

The enemies of Jesus include sin, Satan, disobedience, sickness, suffering, and death itself. When all this evil is defeated, the one thousand years will end. Then Christ will turn the kingdom over to God the Father, having finished His work.

What really ends with the completion of Christ’s reign? In a real sense, *nothing* — because God’s kingdom is eternal. This is only one phase of the special, redemptive work of Christ (His death, resurrection, intercession, return, and reign), which ends when Jesus returns the kingdom to God the Father. “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (v. 28).

In Isaiah 35:8 we see one purpose of the millennium: “And a great road will go through that once deserted land. It will be named the Highway of Holiness. Evil-minded people will never travel on it. It will be only for those who walk in God’s ways; fools will never walk there” (NLT).

We invite you to be part of this promise. Strengthen your faith through Christ Jesus, and worship God wholeheartedly.

— Josias Hernandez, pastor
Elizabeth, NJ

Bright Blazes from Lower Lights

One sector of God's Word is mostly eclipsed. Why?
by Calvin Burrell

Question: What do these familiar sentences have in common?

Will a man rob God?

- He who earns wages puts it into a bag with holes.
- My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
- Can two walk together unless they are agreed?
- Not by might, not by power, but by My Spirit.
- I will gather all nations against Jerusalem.

The just shall live by faith.

Answer: All of these intriguing insights beam brightly from the same lightly travelled corner of Scripture: the Minor Prophets. Let's see how they shine.

Blaze 1

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

In my memories, this verse was often quoted in the context of Church doctrine. We felt that people who wouldn't receive the Sabbath truth and other unpopular teachings were in danger of eternal loss.

Reading this verse in its own context, however, the "knowledge" Hosea references is that of knowing God by personal faith and obedience (2:19-20; 5:4b; 6:1-3; 10:12; 14:1, 2, 4). The lack of this knowledge is what threatens people with destruction. It's not *what* we never knew but *Who* we never truly trusted and obeyed that puts our souls in danger.

Hosea, then, should be seen as the call of a Hebrew prophet to repentance, to return to the Lord who loved Israel, who

betrothed them and drew them from Egypt to Himself in covenant at Sinai. He is their Father, their beloved spouse.

Hebrews 8:11 confirms the importance of knowledge, stating that for Christians under the new covenant, "all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."

Blaze 2

"He who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6).

In Haggai's day, this word was aimed at those who had funds for their own wants, but nothing for God's house. Does this insight speak to us?

We make more than before and have more than ever, but our hearts are empty. We earn and spend, buy and sell, but we're seldom satisfied. It's never enough.

Another minor prophet points up the same failure of God's people to honor Him with their first fruits: "You have robbed Me! . . . In tithes and offerings" (Malachi 3:8).

Jesus taught the essential truth of Haggai and Malachi when He spoke of "the deceitfulness of riches" and urged the Pharisees to not leave generous giving undone (Matthew 13:22; 23:23).

Blaze 3

"I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:2).

In the first fifteen verses of Zechariah 14 we find the clearest Old Testament description of an Armageddon to come, at Christ's return. What are we to make of this gripping yet enigmatic text, one that combines our fondest

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hopes for final salvation with a description of sorrow and suffering for those upon whom the fires of destruction fall?

In our study we should compare and contrast this text with others that foretell climactic battles at the great day of the Lord: Ezekiel 38 and 39; Revelation 16 and 19. The angels at Jesus' ascension also suggested that He will descend to Mount Olivet (Acts 1:11, 12, compared with Zechariah 14:4), and Christ confirms that those who trustingly watch and pray for His return need not greatly fear (Luke 21:25-36).

Blaze 4

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

No two people who ever walked together – in church, in marriage, or anywhere – have always agreed on everything. One thing, yes, must be settled before people can walk in harmony: They must agree to walk together! (See Romans 14, especially verse 19.)

Blaze 5

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit . . ." (Zechariah 4:6).

What little the Minor Prophets say about the Holy Spirit is positively major. Joel's prophecy of the Spirit's coming (2:28ff) is a harbinger of the great and awesome day of the Lord. We live in the reality of that promise, fulfilled in the New Testament church at Pentecost (Acts 2ff). Without the Spirit's presence, we can do nothing.

Three times the Minor Prophets whet our appetite for a possible "latter rain" of God's Spirit

The Old Testament's last books are not called minor Major Prophets but because they fill far fewer pages. The twelve books from Hosea through Malachi are about the same length as Ezekiel or Genesis.

(Hosea 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1). Farmers quickly grasp the prophets' allusions: To raise a crop, water is a must – rain! Two rains, really: one early, around the time of planting, and then again as plants mature, a latter rain to produce fruit for the harvest.

So it is in the Christian life and church. One baptism by the Spirit at conversion plants us in the body of Christ, but we'll need to be filled with the Spirit constantly, again and again, by latter rains. The church too, empowered early by the Spirit at Pentecost for mighty and fruitful acts of service, may well hope and trust for a latter day move of God's Spirit among us, one that would result in greater fruit for Christ's kingdom than any of us have yet seen in our lifetimes.

Is such an event promised in the Minor Prophets? Not promised, perhaps, but the occurrence of early and "latter rain" three times in this section gives us cause for hope and prayer.

These are the days of Hosea:

Sowing righteousness, reaping in mercy, for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes and rains righteousness upon us (10:12).

These are the days of Joel: On my manservants and My maidservants, I will pour out my Spirit in those days (2:28, 29).

These are the days of Amos: Let justice run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream (5:24).

These are the days of Micah: Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (6:8).

These are the days of Habakkuk: The vision is for an appointed time; though it tarries, wait for it. But the just shall walk by his faith (2:3, 4).

These are the days of Haggai: Once more I will shake heaven and earth and all nations; they shall come to the Desire of the nations (2:6, 7).

These are the days of Zechariah: I will pour on them the Spirit of grace and supplication; they will look on Me whom they pierced (12:10).

Shine, Jesus, shine! **BA**

The Old Testament, including the Minor Prophets, is God's Word, but not His final Word. We can learn from all the Bible's books, and we should. The mind of Christ and His apostles, however, is the Christian's ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice.



The Covet Commandment

by Charla Collins

I sat stunned, listening to a dear friend's testimony. It spoke to my heart. It was as if God were speaking directly to me, though I know it touched others in our small congregation as well.

"Thou shalt not covet" was the sin that God revealed to her, a sin she didn't think she was guilty of until the words "guilty of coveting others' relationships" came to her mind. My friend recalled a childhood of abuse and her wishes that she had been born to a different family. She further regretted her mistakes in adult relationships.

God revealed to her that by coveting others' relationships, she was sinning. Further, wishing she had been born into a different family was like accusing God of making a mistake by placing her where she was. Now she had come to know that God does not make mistakes, and she had asked forgiveness for her sins.

Confrontation

As my friend spoke, tears ran down my face. Not for her; she was completely at peace. But for me. I felt I had been confronted by my own sin. I recalled instances of my own envious thoughts of friends who had grown up in homes where both parents went to church. Friends whose parents were not divorced and who didn't, it seemed, suffer the same childhood traumas I had suffered.

My friend's testimony ended with a statement of God's grace and goodness in delivering her from this sin and removing a huge weight of sadness from her. I left church with much to consider.

Pondering the past

Later at home, I couldn't shake the conviction. I decided to write down my thoughts to help me think more clearly about them.

When facing this sin, I first tried to deny and rationalize it away. I briefly considered my family and my childhood. My parents had divorced when I

was six. My father immediately remarried and began another family (five children) that did not include my brother, sister, and me. Between the ages of six and eighteen I was in touch with my dad only three or four times, and even then, briefly. This abandonment left a deep scar — a constant reminder that, in my mind, my dad did not love me.

My mother married a widower when I was nine. She and my stepfather tried their best to blend their families together. My mother, brother, sister, and I went to church on Sabbath. My stepsister and stepbrother went to church on Sunday (their mother was Methodist), and my stepfather didn't attend church at all. There were several compromises made for the benefit of all, such as celebrating Christmas as a secular holiday and not as a religious one. This became confusing later in life.

Other events flashed through my mind, most of which I felt I had dealt with and didn't need or want to consider.

I then told myself I was just

caught up in the emotion of a friend and that God wasn't really speaking to me. After all, I loved my family. I didn't wish for a different one, only that my family circumstances had been different. Sure, some of my family relationships were not ideal, and as an adult I've struggled with relationships. But I wasn't really coveting others' families, was I? I just wanted what they had.

Admitting sin

The nagging in my spirit continued as I struggled with my thoughts. Finally, I admitted I was guilty of coveting. This was not a sin that consumed me, but it was a sin all the same. I realized that if I didn't deal with this correctly, I would throw away a gift from God. He was speaking to me, and I needed to listen.

Before this, I had been praying for some emotional healing. God had answered those prayers in the most unexpected ways. He has led me in directions I did not anticipate and has opened doors I thought were permanently shut. My own sin, however, was not something I had considered as part of the process. I thought I was dealing with events that had happened in my life through the fault of others. Now here I was, with my own sin staring me in the face, and I knew that I needed to deal with it.

Insights

Because I'm stubborn, my next reaction led me to an old

belief: "It wasn't fair." Then God patiently reminded me of people who endured trials much worse than mine. Maybe it wasn't fair, but it wasn't God's fault. Unfair circumstances in life occur because of the fall and failures of man, not God. Many examples of this are in the Bible. God has used bad circumstances in the lives of His people to His honor and glory.

I learned that what we suffer can bring positive benefit, because "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). That doesn't mean everything in this life will be fair or good. But when we go through situations God has called us to endure, He will give us the strength to grow through it.

What I have gone through is only sad if I don't give it to God and let Him use me to help others. Now I realized I had the second piece of this puzzle. I needed to let go of my envy or covetousness and quit wishing things of the past were different.

Moving forward

I had to admit my sin if I wanted to move forward, so I asked God to forgive me for coveting others' relationships and



for blaming Him for the negative things in my life that were out of my control.

I am who I am today because of the life I've lived — both good and bad — and especially because of God, who hasn't given up on me. He lovingly directs my paths.

Charla Collins attends the East Valley CoG7 in Mesa, AZ, where she serves as secretary of the local church board, church librarian, and a member of the worship team. Her grandfather, W. T. McMickin — a minister of the Church for more than 60 years — was a great influence in her life.



Alive in the Spirit

by James McBride

The apostle Paul sums up the human condition like this: “May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless . . .” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) — that is, our human spirit, our life force, and our physical body with its organized groups of cells.

Little understood is the role of the human spirit. Scripture tells us that “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32:8) associated with the breath of God and enters man with his first breath (Genesis 2:7).

Humans differ from lower animate creatures in that our spirit returns to God who gave it, while the animal spirit dissipates at death (Ecclesiastes 3:21; 12:7).

The spirit of any earthly being is active (probably through the nervous system) only in the presence of an animate body. In the lower creation the spirit provides instinctive behavior, varying in degree as God has appointed each kind. In humankind the spirit imparts higher intelligence, reasoning ability, an aesthetic

sense, and a God-consciousness.

That spirit, probably entering with our first breath, enlivens body and soul (Genesis 2:7; Job 33:4). The human spirit, at death, is somehow transported back to God. The process of disengagement from the natural body may account for reports of near-death experiences. If the patient is resuscitated, the spirit may indeed have “recorded” environmental events that can be recalled.

Both Christ and Paul emphasize that when we die, we are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:18) — spirit sleep. Having returned to God, every human spirit is preserved (God knows how!) until the resurrection — for believers, at the return of Jesus and for all others, for later judgment.

This sheds light on the resurrection from the dead. How can someone dead and buried thousands of years be resurrected? Hasn't he returned to dust? During our life-span the human spirit, similar to the programmed hard

drive of a computer, “records” all there is to know about us: our DNA (body form, coloring, etc.), our successes and failures, our moral code, our choices, our memories: “The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Proverbs 20:27, KJV).

That spirit entity returns to the One who imparted life and is preserved in His care. When the appropriate moment arrives, it is clothed with a body. For believers that will be a spirit body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

A real body, that is — but subject to different operating laws than the natural body. It has, like the resurrected Jesus (Luke 24:39), flesh and bones and shares the spiritual powers of its “elder brother” (1 John 3:2).

That spirit body will not die but will with Christ serve the Father through the millennium and for eternity. The reason the Christian's spirit puts on immortality lies in the fact it has been — through a changed heart, baptism, and conversion — united with God's Spirit. A true new birth as a spirit being (John 3:1-8), yet retaining the spiritual character built during our lifetime.

We too will be resurrected but in a restructured physical body, the blueprint for which is in our spirit, preserved by God. Quite an incentive for us to nourish that precious spirit within! **BA**

James McBride
 edits *New Horizon*
 magazine (Churches of God Outreach Ministries, Tulsa,



OK). He and his wife, Sarah, live in Lincolnshire, England.

From my time in medical school, I cannot forget the wonder that came to me about the human body.

Even a single cell is extraordinary! Observed under a microscope, its seething alone proves that something more than matter exists.

Tiny molecules of matter are organized functionally, actively, logically. Cells by the millions gather in groups called tissue, and tissues form organs, varied but essential to the life and function of our bodies.

Inexplicable? Only if we ignore the Source, the Creator of heaven and earth. God exists; He is the source of life.

Mathematics discovered God when it defined infinity. Statistics tell us that life is impossible without supernatural interference. It cannot be the work of chance. Health professions know this.

God goes further. He wants to give us life and give it abundantly, joyously, eternally!

When we limit our existence to physical and psychological dimensions, our future happiness can never be guaranteed. What makes humans differ from other creatures is a spiritual dimension. Here we experience God and relate with Him. To bring us close forever, He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from the punishment our sin deserves.

As a medical professional, my main concern is human health — the fight against disease and suffering. Despite recent medical successes, a total victory over sickness and death is far away. New challenges develop, and old diseases reappear.

Recent writings in the field of medicine call for clinical practice to expand beyond the

Life: Amazing!

by Paulo Jorge Coelho, MD

@ Norma Cornes—Dreamstime.com

dimensions of mind and body. Their authors ask us to explore and promote all that our higher dimension — the spiritual — can offer in maintaining our health and fighting disease.

I've found the highest truth at our disposal: God exists, He loves us, and a day will come when sickness, suffering, and death exist no more. God's Word makes this extraordinary promise to all who accept salvation through Jesus Christ:

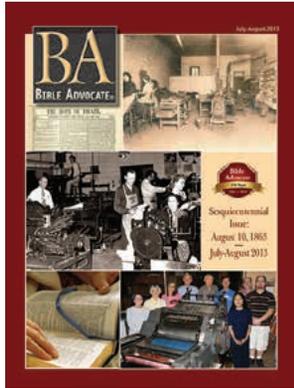
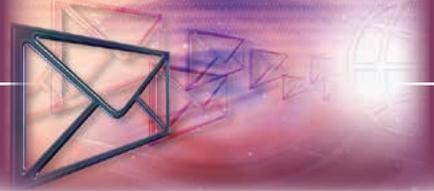
Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes;

there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:1-7).

In the fullness of God's kingdom, doctors will not be needed. Supreme happiness and joy will be experienced in God's abiding presence. Life indeed! **BA**

Paulo Jorge Coelho is a medical doctor serving the Church in Lisbon, Portugal.





Feast days

The July-August BA was filled with edifying articles, but it also announced a “Christian” Feast of Tabernacles (p. 35). Are CoG7 ministers and members encouraged to attend these “celebrations”? I for one would not advocate putting on again the yoke of old covenant observances that I let go of when better instructed. The Day of Atonement, in particular, is comprehensively dealt with in Hebrews.

Those who have been introduced to keeping feast days may not know what a can of worms they’re opening . . . endless arguments over correct calendars, where these days begin (Jerusalem, or the international date line), the varying plans of salvation and prophecies “seen” in the feast days, etc.

Everyone should be free to worship as they wish, but other magazines are available to advertise for groups that observe annual holy days. Excerpts from your booklet on the feast days could be published in BA to remind readers of the new covenant’s superiority and the completeness of Christ’s once-and-for-all sacrifice.

*T. T. (member)
Australia*

Editor’s reply: No, we don’t encourage ministers or members to observe these celebrations. We published the announcement to make public the Church’s goodwill toward and partnership with affiliated congregations (two or three in North America) that maintain a non-legalistic, non-exclusive, non-salvific, non-combative, and refreshing form of feast observance. They avoid the divisive issues of calendar and private prophetic interpretations, focusing rather on ways that Christ fulfills Mosaic traditions.

All of us are growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. We hope to encourage Christians in that process, not reject them because they haven’t yet reached what we think is a more mature form of gospel freedom. Then too we may have something to learn from them about the many types and tokens of Jesus and His gospel that may be discerned among Moses’ laws, including the Hebrew “holy days.”

Note: *The Church’s tract addressing Feast Observance by Christians is currently being updated and will be available by December 31. To read the North American Ministerial Council’s 2010 resolution on this issue, visit baonline.org.*

Paganism?

Today we received the latest issue [September-October ‘13] with the pagan symbols prominently displayed on the front. It went immediately into the trash. We are not interested in receiving pagan material. We do not read it and do not support. We thought you had stopped this pagan practice, and were enjoying reading the BA.

*L. and T. P.
Chattanooga, TN*

Editor’s reply: Is it the church steeple or the obscure cross (weathervane?) on top that you have in mind by “pagan symbols prominently displayed”? In either case, CoG7 has no official teaching against these common signs of Christian art and architecture. I regret that your disappointment with our cover kept you from any redeeming value you might have found inside.

In deference to those who see paganism here, we limit our use of these symbols in the Church’s publications. Most of us, however, do not find the arguments for total rejection of religious art like this to be compelling. We’ll e-mail you a previously published BA answer to this question, at your request.

From African readers

Congratulations on 150 years of impact CoG7 is making across the globe through your literature and local churches. I am happy you have a real presence in Nigeria.

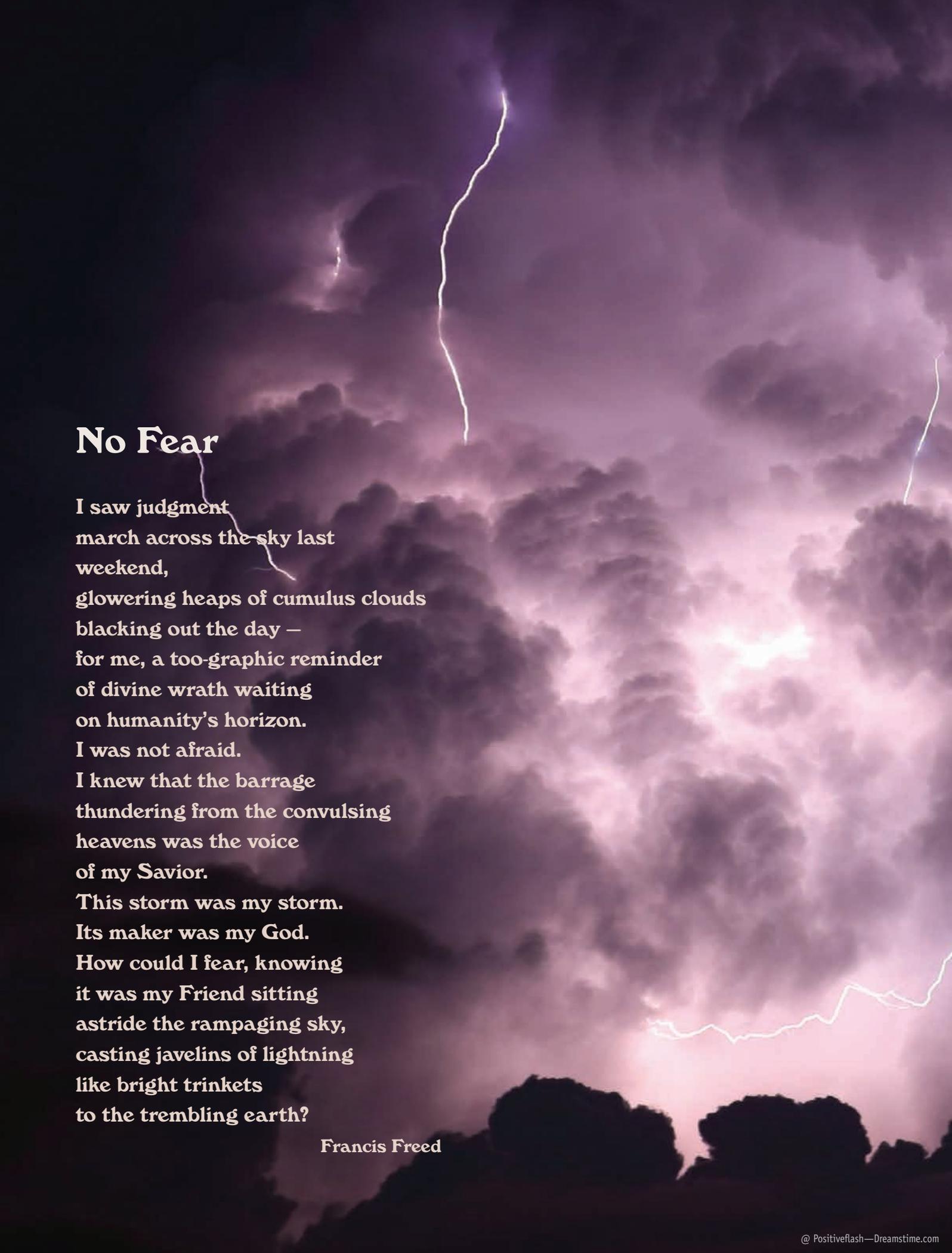
*T. T.
Nigeria*

Congratulations for being one of the long-serving BA editors, from 1997 until now. May God continue to bless you and your family.

*K. M.
Zambia*

BA has helped in expansion of the Church, I suggest you launch worldwide cable TV as another means of spreading the gospel. You remind me of that great event of December 18-22 of which we are the host. I’ll anticipate your presence in Omoku.

*O. P.
Nigeria*



No Fear

I saw judgment
march across the sky last
weekend,
glowering heaps of cumulus clouds
blacking out the day —
for me, a too-graphic reminder
of divine wrath waiting
on humanity's horizon.

I was not afraid.

I knew that the barrage
thundering from the convulsing
heavens was the voice
of my Savior.

This storm was my storm.

Its maker was my God.

How could I fear, knowing
it was my Friend sitting
astride the rampaging sky,
casting javelins of lightning
like bright trinkets
to the trembling earth?

Francis Freed



Online Update

See what's new on *BA Online* (baonline.org):

- Media4U. Discover the latest in movie and DVD releases, TV programs, and music that promote biblical values.
- Tracts and booklets. View all the BAP's literature for personal growth and outreach.
- Search engine. Type in a word and find what you want on the site. Plans are to make the BA archives searchable, but for now, you can search tracts and booklets.

Our thanks to Kyle Michalak for his work in updating this site!

Resting in Jesus

David Merwyn Kauer was born January 9, 1935 in Junction City, Oregon, and died August 26, 2013, in Sacramento, California, a few hours after returning home from senior adult retreat in Oregon.

One of two sons born to Elder Stanley and Edna Kauer, David grew up in Missouri, California, Oregon, and Michigan, where his father worked to open Spring Vale Academy in 1948. David graduated from SVA ('52), attended college in Michigan and California, married Betty Jarwin ('56), and served with his dad at Spring Vale 1959-61.

David accepted the Church's invitation to serve as General Conference secretary and treasurer, a position he held from 1964 through 1980. Elder Robert Coulter's tribute to his long-time co-worker in the Denver offices can be read online (baonline.org).

In 1980 David and Betty moved to Washington, where they pastored the Tacoma church for six years. This was followed by a nine-year pastoral stint with the Stony Plain congregation near Edmonton, Alberta. From there they returned to Sacramento, California, where David served as pastor of the Las Cruces CoG7 from 2003 until the time of his death.

He is survived by his brother Gilbert (Barbara) Kauer; his wife Betty; their four children Ivarta (Tony) Richards, Laurie (John) Roina, Jonathan (Kathie) Kauer, and Kevin (Dena) Kauer; and ten grandchildren.



David and Betty Kauer

*Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of His saints (Psalm 116:15).*



Paul and Virginia Heavilin

Senior Adult Retreat 2013

Nearly 50 senior adults gathered at Sis-Q Meadows, Oregon, August 21-25 to enjoy God's peaceful presence and the fellowship of friends. "Peace That Guards Your Heart" was the theme developed in each session, with plenty of time to renew old friendships and build new ones. Several people celebrated birthdays. Paul and Virginia Heavilin celebrated their 65th anniversary!

The last day of retreat is always bittersweet as we say goodbye for another year.



Unknowingly, this year we were saying our final earthly goodbye to Elder David Kauer as he and Betty pulled out of the driveway on Sunday morning.

— Martha Ling

Family Retreat

"Perfect Man, Sovereign Savior, Reigning Lord" is the theme for the Southeast District Family Retreat, Camp Tekoa near Hen-

dersonville, North Carolina, December 23-28. Food and lodging cost: \$15 per person, per day.

"In God We Trust" is imprinted on the U.S. currency, but it's nearly meaningless if Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Shirley MacLaine can lay claim to it with equal vigor. The "God" in reference by each of these is not, cannot be, the same God.

For Christians, the God of our trust has revealed Himself most completely in the historic person Jesus of Nazareth. As believers our faith stipulates that Jesus reveals our God and Father and is Himself God and worthy of the same worship and obedience as the Father. All who call themselves Christians should study the person and work of Jesus the Christ, for without accurate knowledge of Him, we shall be in danger of superstition. Contact: Jeff Endecott (252-414-9191; jlend60@gmail.com) or Jim Camero (jcamero74@gmail.com).



Fifty leaders from the Southeast District met in Jacksonville, FL, August 23-25, to attend courses on ethics, interpretation, and polity taught by Israel Steinmetz. The Jacksonville church furnished a great venue for services, food, and fellowship for over 100 people on Sabbath, when Whaid Rose gave the message on "Leadership Taking Aim."



Whaid Rose and Calvin Burrell recently hosted a two-hour meeting with leaders of the United Church of God, an International Association, at the General Conference offices near Denver. They were Scott and Connie Ashley (left and front: Scott is managing editor of The Good News magazine) and Victor and Beverly Kubik (center: Victor is U.C.G. president). Joys and challenges of service and oversight among Sabbath-observing brethren in Christ were shared. The meeting continued a friendship that began more than 20 years ago with the Kubiks (then with the Worldwide Church of God).



The Southwest District Young Adult Ministries hosted their first annual Summer Escape weekend near Austin, TX, September 14-15. Around 100 young adult staff and students enjoyed worship and workshops on the theme "Exposed" (James 5:16). Israel Steinmetz and Ruben Marquez Jr. answered questions on accountability in the Christian walk.



A happy crowd, including the BA editor, line up on Sabbath, August 3, to cut the ribbon in dedication services of the Laval (Montreal), Quebec church's new facilities. Local pastors for this group are Samuel Santos and Isai Urizar. A related story (by Gualberto Duarte) is on page 6.

Raul Gonzalez of Calgary, Alberta, quietly assists Sylvia Corral in translating the BA into Spanish each issue. Thanks, Raul!



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 bimonthly at Broomfield, Colorado for September 30, 2013.

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How Can I Contribute Financially?



Some folks ask how they can support the work of the Church. Listed here are various CoG7 ministries that depend on donations from members and friends.

The G. C. General Fund supports the General Conference offices near Denver, Colorado, and the many operations and functions of the Conference. Fifteen percent of tithe from each affiliated congregation provides the basic financial infrastructure, but not enough for a fully developed program in each area of ministry and need.

Beyond the General Fund, G. C. Ministries is a central fund that supports these individual ministries:

- G. C. Missions champions the Church's gospel work to the world, giving leadership, counsel, literature, training, and subsidy to our brethren in more than 50 nations.
- Publications supports the *Bible Advocate*, Bible lessons, books, booklets, literature, and other functions of the Bible Advocate Press.
- LifeSpring School of Ministry provides formal training programs for pastors and other workers.
- North American Women's Ministries offers retreats and a newsletter for seniors.
- SWORD (young adult ministries) engages the Church's young adults in service and fellowship.
- National Youth Ministries ministers to youth directly and through local youth groups.
- Spring Vale Academy provides a high school education with a Bible emphasis and training for Christian service.

Other funds with specific designations also depend on support:

- Editor's Circle members offer a specific amount of support per year for the BA magazine.
- Cristo Viene (Christ is Coming) provides subsistence salaries for more than 80 missionary pastors in other countries.
- Widows and Orphans donors provide for specific children or widows in other countries.

Further information about any of these funds will be provided upon request. Contributions may be given by check or money order (mail to P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233); by credit card (preferably by phone, 303-452-7973); by donating via the G. C. website (cog7.org/giving) or monthly via electronic funds transfer. Thank you for giving to the Lord!

"He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6b, 7).



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International Congress

South America Visited and Blest!

IMC Zone 3 representative Jorge Gillig of Argentina and IMC President Ramón Ruiz of Mexico visited Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile August 7-27, 2013, to encourage the brethren and deal with needs faced by congregations there.

Colombia: We did general training. In agreement with national leadership, Elder Jorge Forero's full-time service, with support from Cristo Viene and the El Sociego congregation, was approved.

Venezuela: We visited families, held a round table discussion with youth, and celebrated worship in El Vigía. Support from Cristo Viene was granted to Elder José Caballero. The Venezuelan church seeks support for their first building project.

Ecuador: We did training with pastors and leaders. Elder Gillig met with the La Libertad congregation and others near the Cotopaxi volcano. Elder Ruiz met with the church in Pujilí. Ecuador became the eighth country to partner with Cristo Viene.

Peru: We visited families to support the work of Cristo Viene missionary Rubén Cruz. We gave counsel for church development in a city with great need, and celebrated two evening services.

Chile: We celebrated worship with a new congregation in Arica and visited homes with Pastor John Pérez. In the Iquique church on Sabbath, Pastor Jorge Olmos reported the congregation's effort to plant a church in Bolivia. Both Arica and Santa Cruz, Bolivia, will have baptisms before year's end, the first fruits of these efforts. Enrique Vega and John Pérez are sponsored by Cristo Viene.

We bless our God for the momentum Pastor Jorge Gillig's work has brought to this region. Venezuela, Chile, and Paraguay received full membership in the IMC in 2012. God willing, the same will happen with churches in Peru and Bolivia in 2016.

— Ramón Ruiz Garza
IMC President

For a fuller report of this trip, visit baonline.org.



Leaders and pastors meeting in Quito, Ecuador.



L to R: Ramón Ruiz, IMC president; Jorge Gillig, IMC Zone 3 representative; Jorge Olmos, missionary in Santa Cruz, Bolivia; John Pérez, missionary in Arica, Chile. Back: Enrique Vega, evangelist and pastor of the church in Iquique, Chile.

Don't forget: Africa's Convention-on-the-Continent

December 18-22, 2013

**Omoku District, Rivers State, Nigeria
(use Port Harcourt airport)**

**To learn more, contact Robert Crawford,
IMC's Zone 5 representative for Africa:
robertashcrawford@hotmail.com or phone
1452-529-410 or 7402-484-716**



Two Presidents and a Preacher

This commander-in-chief led our nation with extraordinary courage during the bloody Civil War, preserved the Union, and signed the Emancipation Proclamation one hundred fifty years ago. Historians rate Abraham Lincoln this country's greatest president.

Like Lincoln, he became president during turbulent times: cold war between democracy and communism, nuclear arms race between the US and USSR, and growing racial tensions at home. We needed the fresh air of John F. Kennedy's optimism about the future of our nation and world. His gifted leadership inspired a sense of security, launched the Peace Corps, and sent men to the moon. His assassination fifty years ago was a watershed in American history.

Unlike Lincoln and Kennedy, he wasn't a US president. Like them, he made an indelible mark on our history. One hundred years after Lincoln's Proclamation, racial tensions were at breaking point. America needed someone to speak to its collective consciousness about justice and equality. That need was met in Martin Luther King Jr., a dynamic black preacher from the South. He is best known for his landmark "I Have a Dream" speech, which drew from Scripture and the vision of our founding fathers and was delivered during the historic March on Washington.

Lincoln, Kennedy, King: three men who helped shape America, all killed by assassins' bullets, all remembered this year.

Their efforts are joined by many ordinary but courageous men and women who stood with them, some paying the ultimate price. I was too young to be aware of and appreciate the March on Washington, so the recent celebration was informative: Integrated. Many whites marched that day, taking their stand for truth and justice. Orderly. Soldiers of freedom marched in non-vio-

lent protest; predicted mayhem never happened. Impacting. According to *Reston Times*, the March scored by combining the force of numbers, the melodies of church and theater, and by invoking the founding fathers' principles to rebuke the inequalities and hypocrisies of American life.

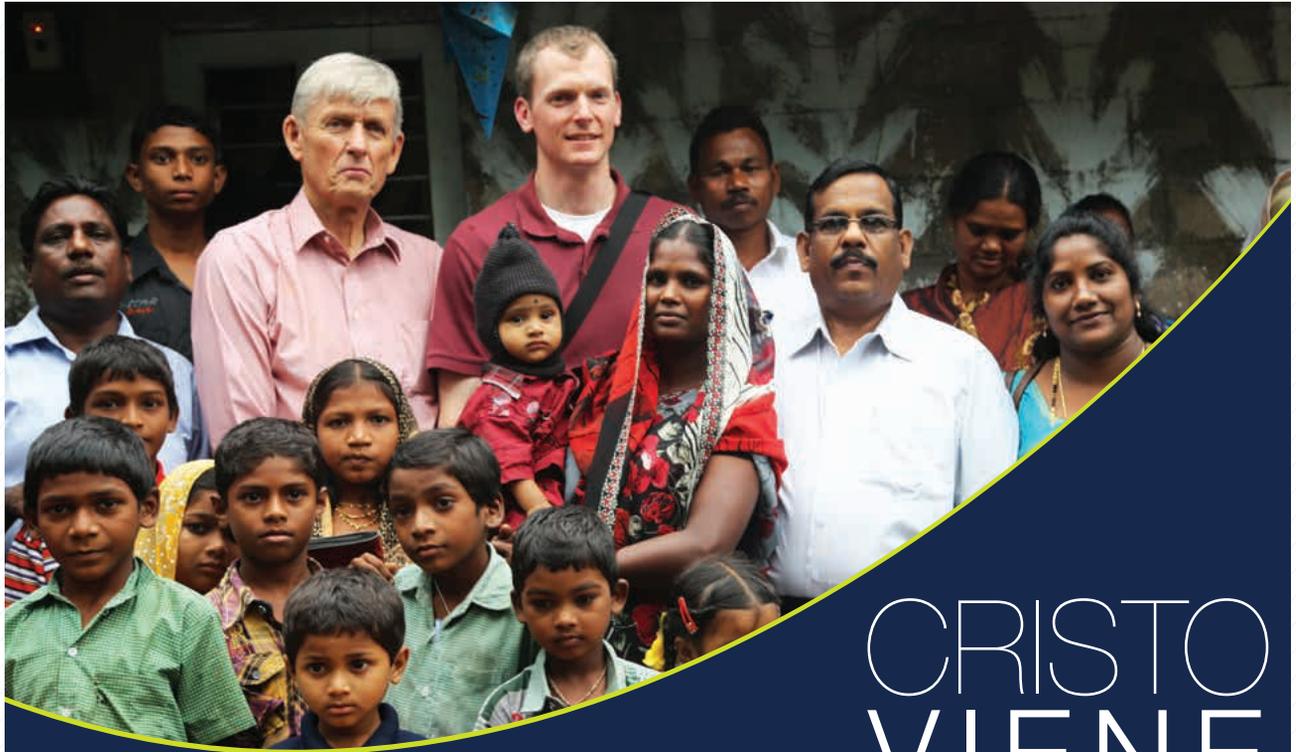
The march also reminded us of how far we've come in the decades since. Fifty years ago blacks headed to the nation's capital planned their route to avoid "white's only" places. Today people of color have risen to positions of prominence in business, sports, the arts, science, medicine, media, and even the White House.

But the march was also a reminder that we haven't come far enough. The recent Zimmerman trial showed that we remain a nation divided along racial lines. Al Mohler wisely notes that the real divide is between those who must have "the talk" with their son about how to act when pulled over by the police (if he's a young black male) and those who do not. More important than our opinion of the verdict is the central tragedy that remains: A young teenager is dead, a family grieves, and a nation is further divided.

But all is not lost. Truth marches on. King noted that the march wasn't an end but a beginning. Lincoln's passion was to expand the founding fathers' dream to include everyone, regardless of race. Convinced that the bank of justice wasn't bankrupt, King sought to cash the check in 1963. Our task is to transform the dream into reality — one step at a time.

— *Whaid Guscott Rose*
General Conference
President





CRISTO VIENE

Cristo Viene provides support to scores of CoG7 missionaries, pastors, and evangelists worldwide.

Our five-year goal is to send 500 Cristo Viene workers to grow centers of faith from which new leaders are effectively prepared for service.

Please mark your offering "Cristo Viene" and pray that more workers be called into the harvest!



Find out more at gcmissions.cog7.org

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