

THE FIRST BOOK OF MOSES CALLED
GENESIS

**Journey through
the Bible**

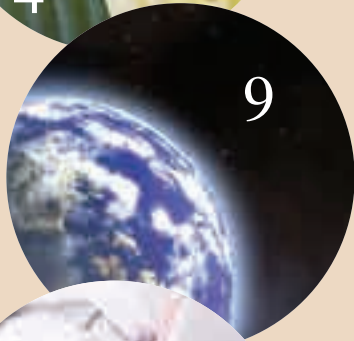
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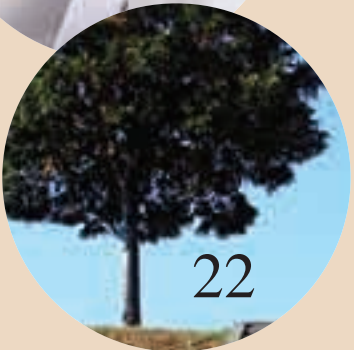
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On Route 66

Life is like a journey. It begins the day we
were born and reaches its end the day
we die. Our destination is determined
by the route we choose; our satisfaction, by
respecting the rules of the road and others on
it. We're headed somewhere every day we live on earth, so let's learn
to travel well.

The Bible is a book about the faith journeys of people like us. It reports the direction those early pilgrims took and their progress, or lack of it, toward the goal. It guides readers down the road of righteousness, leading to God's eternal kingdom. Because they contain sixty-six volumes in one, the Scriptures may be considered the classic Route 66. A true-to-life trip is mapped out for readers there.

To know what's needed for an over-the-top life journey and a happy ending, we should search the Scriptures. They point us in the right direction at the start, give us needed guidance and comfort along the way, and lead us to a place of peace and rest at the end. That's why we've chosen "Journey Through the Bible" for our magazine theme this year.

Route 66 begins in Genesis, where we learn Who built the world, how the human journey began, and other important items for a good start. Though God created all things and called them good, it didn't take long for people to make a wrong turn. Early in the book, we read of a tidal wave of violence and corruption that swept the world in Noah's day, leaving only a handful of folks who trusted and obeyed God.

Society is not much different today. Look at the tsunami of unbelief and immorality all around us, just like it was then. Not only is this culture apparently headed for God's judgment as well, but our children and grandchildren are being swept along with it.

Read pages 15-18 of this issue, and ask what you can do to stem the tide of evil in this generation. The BA can help point you and your family to the higher ground of Christ's grace and truth. Bring a child or youth with you as we journey through the Bible in 2007, and let us hear of your travel experiences. With God's grace, we can all enjoy the trip and arrive at a great journey's end!

— Calvin Burrell



Truth by Twos



Your choices determine which way you walk. **by Jason Overman**

Frosted Cupcake © Webking—Dreamstime.com

When I was a child, my Sabbath School teacher surprised our class with a clever object lesson. As we filed into our little room, we noticed a large tray of cupcakes on the table. All but one of them were cherry with pink icing and sprinkles on top. In the midst sat a lone, unadorned brown cupcake.

When the teacher passed the tray, we all chose the attractive cupcakes until the last of us grudgingly accepted the little cake no one else wanted. We dug in. Suddenly, the room filled with howls of disgust. Our pink tongues reacted to the bad taste, except for the little guy with the ugly cake. Looking rather befuddled, he was licking his lips and gobbling down the last delicious crumbs.

Our smiling teacher admitted she had baked the pretty cup-

cakes with salt instead of sugar to make a point: Life is about choices, so choose well. There will be consequences.

She then produced a second tray of cupcakes. This time, we weren't disappointed.

I still value that lesson some thirty years later. An imaginative Sabbath teacher ushered me into one of Scripture's most prolific principles before I began to stumble over it within its pages, long before I realized how often I would be faced with its truth in everyday life.

Themes of two

By way of simple metaphor, the Bible makes the same point our teacher did. There are two ways: One looks appealing but turns out bitter; the other seems unattractive but turns out sweet. Most choose the first way; only

a few opt for the latter. The two ways are God's way of asking, "How will you live? Which way will you walk?" The early chapters of Genesis reveal just how interested God is in this question and what is at stake.

The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:8, 9).

We begin with two trees, side by side but worlds apart — as far as life is from death (v. 17). Like my teacher, God sets food before Adam and Eve. Because food addresses our most fundamental needs and desires, it provides the

perfect test case. *Eating* is just another way of saying *living*. Each time the first family hungers, they face the questions “How will we eat? How will we live? Will our lives be directed and nourished by a loving Creator, or will they be self-determined and indulgent?”

The two trees in Eden demonstrate a truth built into the very fabric of Creation. In Genesis 1, God has already described His nature and the nature of things when He creates and orders the universe by dividing and distinguishing. From its first verses, when the formlessness of the darkness and the deep are contrasted with the light and the land of divine making (1:1-10), the message of the two ways is subtly narrated. There is order and disorder, full and empty, this kind and that, the word of life and the silence of nothingness. God would have a people capable of telling the difference.

This elemental truth is illustrated in the story of two brothers. Cain and Abel personify the choices available in the two trees. They embody the two ways we may walk. The younger is characterized by true worship, the sacrifice of one’s will to the will of God. The older is centered on self-interest, the sacrifice of a brother to satisfy one’s self. Abel is a keeper of sheep, but Cain will not be the keeper of another (4:1-9). Service or self, giving or taking, life or death. These are the two ways.

In the following chapters, the theme of two ways moves to the generations of two families. The first lineage, the genealogy of Cain, explains that “Cain went out from the presence of the LORD . . .” (v. 16). The second

lineage follows the more honorable Seth, noting that in his days “men began to call upon the name of the LORD” (v. 26). The line of Cain would give us the cruel Lamech, while the line of Seth would produce the great Enoch, who “walked with God” (5:24). With God or without: two ways!

The way of Cain gradually broadens and fills the whole earth, while the way of Seth narrows sharply until finally only Noah and his family remain. The days of Noah are days of violence and wickedness when the way of death finally swallows up even itself. But the days of Noah are also when the way of life encounters God, prepares a boat, and saves the world (6:5-22). The extraordinary figure of Noah, like Enoch, walks with God, though most of the world has taken the other path. Had we been there, which way would we have walked?

The walk

The metaphor of the two ways challenges any notion of faith that would deny the involvement of our whole selves. To speak in terms of a “way” or a “walk”

is to suggest that faith is not so much a matter of *thinking* as it is a commitment to *being*. A recent *Christianity Today* article expresses a view of faith that accounts for the message of our metaphor:

. . . faith does its proper work when it sets us on a journey, guides us along the way, and gives meaning to each step. . . . As we embark upon that journey, faith guides us by indicating paths to be taken and dark alleys to be avoided. . . . faith’s story gives meaning to all we do, from the smallest act to the weightiest (“The Church’s Great Malfunction,” by Miroslav Volf, p. 111, October 2006).

The nature of this journey and the “paths to be taken” become more specific as we leave the generalizations of Genesis and travel into the details of the law. The Scripture continues to speak in terms of the two ways, but now the metaphor of the walk encapsulates the commands of the Lord. Israel, freshly redeemed, now hears the voice of God and finds herself ordered and distinguished at Sinai. After forty years of wandering, a new generation is put to the test:

The extraordinary figure of Noah, like Enoch, walks with God, though most of the world has taken the other path. Had we been there, which way would we have walked?

In the midst of universal failure, God sent His Son to live the way, to be the life.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply . . . therefore choose life . . ." (Deuteronomy 30:15, 16, 19).

No surprise that the ancient rabbis of Israel chose the Hebrew word *halakah* to describe the commandments as a whole. *Halakah* means "to walk." To live consistent with the law of the Lord is "to walk in His ways." This is the question that Moses puts to Israel in this text. Israel is approaching the Promised Land and, like Noah, she will be outnumbered there. So will Israel choose the way of her covenant God and live, or will she go the other way and die? This is the perennial question.

The poets and prophets of Israel rehearse this theme often. The psalms of David, for instance, begin by contemplating the two ways: "For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (1:6). Proverbs talks about two women: wisdom and foolishness. Each has her own way and her own food (ch. 9); each calls us to follow. The imagery is plain enough: "As righteousness leads to life, so he who

pursues evil pursues it to his own death" (11:19).

In the prophets' writings, the question becomes urgent. It seems that Israel will not obey God but will do what she wants. In this climate of rebellion, Jeremiah seizes upon the theme of the two ways once more. Quoting Moses, he says, "Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death'" (Jeremiah 21:8). Though Israel will go into exile for her sins, Jeremiah, the prophet of the new covenant, foresees a time when Israel will walk the way and obey God's commands (31:33).

In story, in law, in poetry, and in prophecy, all the Old Testament asks us, "Which way will you walk?"


Jesus

The most familiar example of the two ways is articulated by our Lord himself. Concluding His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus employs our metaphor three times. There is a narrow gate and a wide gate leading to life or death (Matthew 7:13, 14). There are good fruit trees and bad fruit trees (vv. 15-20), wise and foolish people (vv. 24-27). In these few sentences, Jesus recalls and reclaims all the stories of Israel. In His words we hear echoes of Eden and Noah, of Sinai, Psalms,

and Proverbs. Like all these, the Sermon on the Mount is directed toward the life of discipleship — the life of listening, learning, and living. The narrow way, the good trees, the wise man: These are not merely those who talk about Jesus but are "whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them . . ." (v. 24).

Jesus is not just one more teacher in line with the Law and the Prophets. Jesus does not just espouse the way; He *is* the way. To realize this is to confess with Israel and with the whole world that we have failed to walk the way that God intended. In the midst of universal failure, God sent His Son to live the way, to be the life. In Him alone are both discovered anew.

Today's church ought to be known as she first was. In Acts we were named "the Way" (9:2; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22). This is not an abstraction, nor a list of rules, nor an intellectual proposition to be affirmed. The way is a Person who calls us to follow, trust, and obey. The decision we face today — and every day — is whether or not we will walk in, through, and with that Person who is capable of making us the persons we ought to be.

As the apostles of our Lord have taught us, to accept Jesus — to go His way — is to "follow His steps," "walk just as He walked," and "walk in Him" (1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6; Colossians 2:6). Which way will we walk? 

Jason Overman
serves the congregation in Jasper, AR.



Questions & Answers

Q What is your understanding of Genesis 5:24: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”? Hebrews 11:5 adds, “By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

A We may never know some answers until Jesus returns. However, please note what the Bible says and doesn’t say on the whereabouts of Enoch.

Genesis 5:24 doesn’t say where God took Enoch and doesn’t mention death. Hebrews 11:5 gives more detail: God took Enoch away that he should not see death. Still, we are not told explicitly where God took him. The wording simply says Enoch was changed from one state, or place, to another (“translated,” KJV), “that he should not see death.”

After listing several persons of faith (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah), the author of Hebrews then says, “These all died in faith” (v. 13). Presumably, he refers to all those previously mentioned, including Enoch (see also vv. 39, 40).

Could Enoch have been taken to heaven and be there today? Jesus said, “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (John 3:13).

With this much evidence to question the popular theory of Enoch in heaven, we look for other explanations of the puzzle. A clue to it may rest in the words “so that he did not see death.” There is a difference between the state of death and the way we die: by violence, fire, painful illness, and so on. Could it be that God translated Enoch from among the living to the place of the dead in such a way that he was spared the horror of dying? If so, the scriptural accounts enjoy greater harmony, and the myth surrounding this saint of God becomes earthy and more credible.

— Elder Carl Palmer

Q I’m a member in the Caribbean. I want to know if you accept divorce and remarriage even if the person’s wife or husband is still living.

A If you mean, does the Church accept divorce and remarriage as a reflection of the righteous will of God for His people, the answer is no. The Church teaches the permanence of marriage according to Genesis 2:18-25 and the words of Jesus: “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6, KJV). Failure to achieve the standards of monogamy, permanence, and harmony in marriage must always be admitted as failure against God and His Word. The ease with which professing Christians divorce and remarry in our day is an admission of personal failure and an embarrassment to God’s church.

Not every divorce, however, means equal fault for both partners. If the divorce was caused primarily by the immorality of one marriage partner, Jesus offers freedom for the other to remarry (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:9). Some Bible students find a similar freedom for those who are deserted by an unbelieving spouse (1 Cor. 7:15).

On the other hand, if you’re asking whether the Church accepts divorced and remarried persons as a reflection of God’s desire to forgive and redeem us from all our failure and brokenness, then the answer is yes. Though it is sin, divorce is not unforgivable. Those who have divorced and remarried come to Christian fellowship in the same way as all other sinners: through repentance, confession, and grace (Mark 3:28; 1 John 1:9). Christians, we believe, should be no less forgiving than Jesus.

The question of remarried persons serving as Church deacon or elder may be less clear, but the question of forgiveness in Christ for all penitent hearts that turn toward Him should not be in doubt. Such grace is not the Church’s shame, but its glory!

— Elder Calvin Burrell

Stopping the Cycle of Sin

by Israel Steinmetz

Did you know that in learning how humans sin, you may also understand how to overcome sin?

In Genesis 3 we read of Eve's temptation by the serpent:

When the woman **saw** that the tree was good for food . . . and that the tree was **desirable** to make one wise, she **took** from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. . . . and the man and his wife **hid** themselves . . . (vv. 6, 8).

Here is the four-step cycle of sin. Eve saw the tree; she was exposed to temptation. Then she *desired* it, or was "carried away and enticed" (James 1:14) by it. She then *took* it; she committed the sin. Finally, in shame she and Adam *hid* from God's presence.

Stop and think about your own sins. They probably progress along this path, unless the cycle is broken. First, you are exposed to temptation, then you begin to covet or desire it, then you take it or commit the sin, and then you try to hide it. What a vicious cycle!

But it doesn't have to stay this way. Here's how you can overcome.

To stop sinning, determine what stage your sin has progressed to, then reverse the cycle. If the sin has completed the cycle, reverse it by first uncovering, or confessing, the sin. This reverses the step of hiding it. The Bible instructs us to confess our sins to one another so that we can find healing (James 5:16). So share your burden and be accountable to others. Find someone who is mature, godly, and able to counsel when you uncover your sin.

The next stage to reverse is *taking*. To simply stop committing a sin may not be enough, since each sin harms God or people and the damage must be repaired. Because we know that sins are completely forgiven by the power of Jesus' blood, we often lose sight of the principle of restitution, which means "repair." We do not make restitution to gain forgiveness but to repair the damage caused by our forgiven

sin. Consider the example of Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10), who gladly offered to make restitution for his dishonesty. Ask the Lord to show you creative ways to do good in those areas you have done wrong.

Next, reverse your desires. God makes us new creatures by giving us a new heart, a new nature. But we still live with our carnal nature battling against the new spiritual one. This battle is most often decided by our choices about what we allow ourselves to be exposed to. Ask yourself, "Am I feeding my carnal self or my spiritual self?" The battle between the two is literally life and death, and the outcome is determined by your choices. So starve the carnal and feed the spiritual!

The final step is seeing or being exposed to temptation. In the course of our day we encounter countless temptations we have no control over. However, you can avoid numerous others. Ask the Spirit to guide you through an inventory of your daily temptations, then eliminate the ones you can.

I encourage you to reverse the cycle of sin in your life by following these steps. God's Spirit will give you the strength you need to overcome! **✠**

Israel Steinmetz, his wife, Anna, and two children live in Kansas City, MO, where Israel pastors the Church of God (Seventh Day). Scripture quotations were taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.



For some Christians, Genesis 1 is a main battlefield in the debate over the age of the earth and the theory of evolution. For others, it is mostly the stuff of church school lessons, not the topic of profound sermons or even daily devotions.

In contrast to our ideas about the Bible's first chapter stand the traditions of the culture in which it was first penned and read. In that world, the Genesis 1 Creation account was nothing short of revolutionary — a literary shot against the prevailing worldview of the ancient Near East.

The pagan peoples of ancient Mesopotamia (modern Iraq, roughly), Canaan, and Egypt had their own ideas about how the earth came into being. Some of these ideas have been preserved to this day, giving us a glimpse into their beliefs. These dominated the world in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived, the world in which the children of Israel served as slaves in Egypt, the world they encountered when they conquered the land of Canaan. This was the world in which Genesis was written.

Pagan Creation accounts

The religious ideas of the ancient Near East peoples included multiple gods and goddesses — fallible, sexual, and capricious — fighting one another for supremacy and associated with the elements of nature (sun, moon, water, and so on) over which they had control.

For humanity, this world was a dangerous place where the favor of the gods could never be taken for granted. People had to play their religious cards correctly to earn favor from the appropriate

gods, using the proper offerings and rituals to secure reproduction for themselves and for their livestock, good weather for their crops, protection from storms, and safety in travel. To this end, sexual fertility rites, religious prostitution, and child sacrifice were not uncommon. And unknown monsters of the deep lurked in seas and oceans as an ever-present threat to people.

Into this world came the children of Israel, led by the patriarchs and the great prophet, Moses. Moses may not have been the original author of all Genesis, but he certainly had much to do with it and with its inclusion in the first five books of the Bible. Educated as an Egyptian prince, Moses would have been familiar with the pagan ideas of his day. It is against those ideas that he

Creation's Roots and Realities

Genesis 1 came as a literary lightning bolt to a dark world. **by Richard A. Wiedenheft**

Earth in the Space © Indiansummer—Dreamstime.Com

offers Genesis 1, a dramatically different message, an account of Creation that takes humans into the very throne room of God and describes who is responsible for the world and why it came into existence.

Genesis vs. a pagan world

Genesis 1 opens with one omnipotent and omniscient (and asexual) God, whose existence is not explained or argued but accepted as fact. He simply *is*. The first sentence of Genesis states that this God “created the heavens and earth” — no battle among gods, no opposition. He was before all and created all (Psalm 90:1, 2; 102:25-28; Isaiah 40:21, 22). Contrary to then-popular beliefs, matter did not exist from eternity past in a chaotic, primeval state but was spoken into existence from nothing by this one creator God (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 148:5; Proverbs 8:22-27).

In this account, there is no struggle between gods of light and darkness, between forces of chaos and order. God simply said, “Let there be light,” and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). He didn’t have to kill the goddess of the deep to make sky and earth; He simply said, “Let there

be an expanse . . . ,” and the waters were separated above and below the sky (vv. 6, 7). He said, “Let the dry ground appear.” And it was so” (v. 9).

To the pagans, sea monsters were considered the ultimate threat, symbolizing danger and chaos. But Genesis proclaims them as merely one more thing God created (v. 21). In fact, while Israel continued to use sea monsters (leviathan, rahab) as symbols for dangerous, wicked nations (Job 3:8; Psalm 74:13-17; Isaiah 27:1; 51:9, 10), Scripture always proclaims God’s complete control over them (Psalm 104).

The sun and moon aren’t gods to be feared and worshiped but physical objects, not even dignified with names but called merely the greater and lesser lights (Genesis 1:16). In the same verse, the stars, considered by pagans as influencing human affairs, are mentioned almost as an afterthought. The purpose for these created luminaries is spelled out:

“Let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth. . . . to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness” (vv. 14, 15, 18).

The dry land is created to support vegetation of all kinds, which sprang forth on Day 3 at God’s command (v. 11). When the sea is filled with fish and the air with birds (Day 5) and the land with animals (Day 6), God blesses each with the ability to reproduce and fill the earth. No gods need to be placated to secure fertility and harvest. On the contrary, God designed all life to “Be fruitful and increase” (vv. 22, 28).

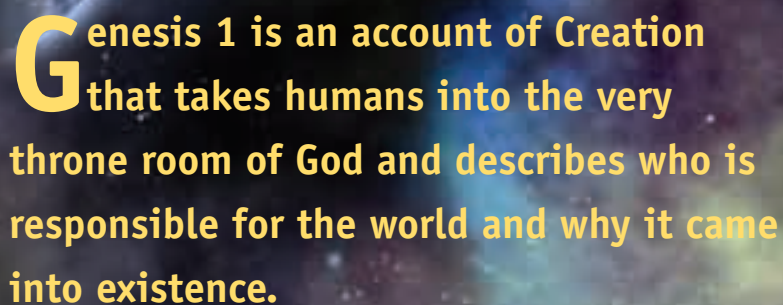
This great creative work is leading up to a climax: the creation of humanity.

Creation of man

All of God’s previous creative acts are brought about by a simple statement: “God said . . . and it was so.” But when it came time for the creation of man, the reader hears a conversation from God’s throne room: “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule . . .” (v. 26). So He creates man, male and female, and blesses them. Fertility is not something they must placate the gods to obtain; it is theirs by God’s design. Rulership over the earth is not just implied but stated explicitly (v. 28).

Far from having to fear the monsters of the deep or the animals of the earth, man is given dominion over them. Furthermore, man isn’t created to provide food for the gods; earth’s bounty is fully given to him by God (v. 29). The true God provides food for man, not the other way around!

The phrase “image and likeness of God” (vv. 26, 27) has always been the subject of much discussion among students. Some see it in anthropomorphic



Genesis 1 is an account of Creation that takes humans into the very throne room of God and describes who is responsible for the world and why it came into existence.

terms — that man was created to look like God. Others see it in terms of mental and spiritual capability, like self-awareness, reason, love, and other qualities. However, the primary focus of “image and likeness” seems to be that man is placed on the earth for rulership, for regency in the place of God.

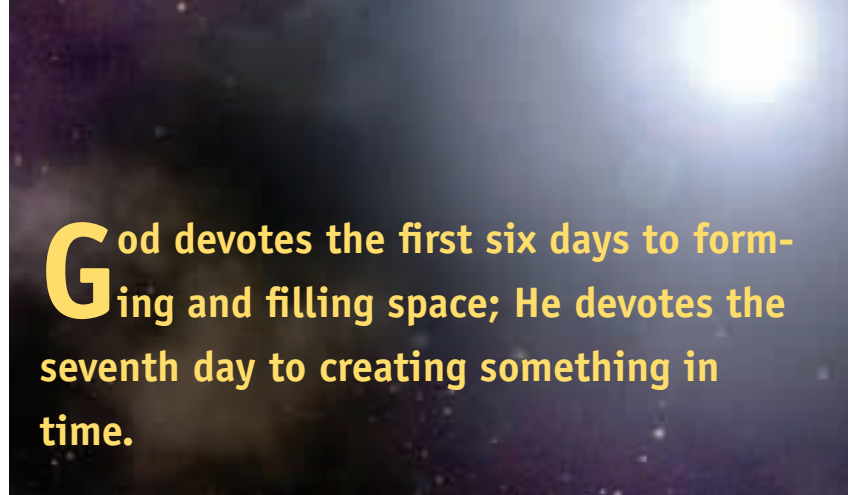
The pagan idea was that only the kings were made in the image of the gods. Common men were made subservient to the kings, and women didn’t rate at all. Genesis 1, on the other hand, proclaims that all humans — both men and women — bear the image of the divine and are placed on the earth as regents of God.

Creation of time

The Creation account begins with a world described as “without form and void,” or in chaos and emptiness, without explanation as to how it got that way. It ends with a world that is highly ordered and full of beauty and good, a safe place for humanity.

We often view Genesis 1 as a story of God’s creation of things. But God is also creating time as we know it. To do this, He lays down patterns that regulate creation: cycles of day and night, lunar phases, seasons of the year, and the seven-day week regulated, not by astral bodies, but only by His creative word in Genesis 2:2, 3.

God devotes the first six days to forming and filling space; He devotes the seventh day to creating something in time. He creates a holy day, the first thing He made holy. To celebrate His creation triumph, God does not make a holy place or temple in space but creates something holy




in time — a temple in time. It is a temple all may enter by following His example of ceasing from their labors and having fellowship with Him. This holy temple in time can be considered the final and ultimate of all the blessings God created for man when He created him and placed him on the earth as His image-bearer and regent.

Profound declaration

Far more than a memory project for children, Genesis 1 is a profound declaration that Yahweh is not just one god among many who vies for power. Instead, He is the creator God of the entire cosmos, the one and only sovereign of the universe. Chaos and emptiness mean nothing to Him. By His work, He brings order to chaos and fills the void. His creation is precisely ordered as a beautiful habitation for man and woman, the epitome of His creative work, His image-bearers who are to serve as His regents and representatives on the earth.

Then comes the rest of the story: Adam and Eve’s rejection of God’s authority and their role as His regents, thus bringing chaos and conflict into this perfectly ordered world. Then come the Flood, the patriarchs, the children of Israel, and all that fol-

lows. So humanity has to wait for the coming of the second Adam — the Son of God and Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ — to bring redemption and open the way for man to fulfill his original destiny. How privileged we are to be partakers of that destiny through the Savior and to serve as God’s regents, as ambassadors for Christ, bringing to this world of spiritual chaos and void the spiritual light of the gospel and the spiritual order of the teachings of Jesus. 

Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



Resources

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The Eerdmans Bible Commentary, D. Guthrie, J. A. Moyer, A. M. Stibbs, D. J. Wiseman, editors (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970)
 Internet Sacred Text Archive (www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm)
 Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enuma_Elish; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atra-Hasis>)

Noah: Faith of a ‘Fool’

Would we remain radically obedient if society ridiculed us for it? **by Wayne Bartelt**

God afternoon, this is Hercule Mamides with the 5 p.m. newscast reporting from station UROC, the voice of Ur of the Chaldees.

Local residents are poking fun at a farmer in the region named Noah, who is building what he calls an ark in his corn field. The builder predicts completion in six weeks, on the 120th anniversary of its inception. Pundits wonder what he is going to do with the boat-like structure, since the nearest river hasn't enough water to float a contraption half that size. Also, numerous sightings of lions, tigers, elephants, giraffes, and other non-indigenous animals have been reported. . . .

Of course, there was no radio station in Noah's day and no announcer. But had there been, you might expect the kind of tongue-in-cheek treatment you just read. Those who listen to God and permit Him to challenge their faith are ridiculed, sometimes viciously, by folk who have no intention of listening to God on any subject.

I respect Noah. When God revealed His plans to him about destroying the world by water, Noah listened. Once God instructed him to build an ark so he and his family might be saved and continue the human race, he obeyed.

Who in their right mind would

build a huge boat on dry land, miles from a large body of water? What kind of people say yes to God when everyone else is saying no? What church would plan a double-sized building to accommodate strangers who are invited to come and hear its message? What man would encourage others to give up their life of partying and fun to live a righteous life in obedience to God — and keep at it for 120 years — without a single convert? It's laughable.

Divine anger

But God wasn't laughing in Noah's day. The world was on a fast track toward moral and ethical corruption. Humans didn't just reject God; they were racing toward destruction. It wasn't that worship attendance was down; there was no worship at all. Partying and immorality were the order of the day. People were living the kind of life they most enjoyed: a life without God, without morals, and without a care in the world.

As a loving father is provoked by the disobedience of a rebellious child, so God is angered by sinners who reject His kindness, dishonor His name, and corrupt His world. His justice cries out against them.

The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth

had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. . . . So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth . . . But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD (Genesis 6:5, 7, 8).

Despite His anger, God offered a time for repentance and a promise of forgiveness. As the ark took shape, humanity had a symbol to remind it of impending doom. For twelve decades, Noah shouted to the world that God was deeply concerned about His rebellious children, yet merciful and forgiving toward those who trust and worship Him. When all hope for repentance was lost, God shut Noah in the ark and destroyed the past. When dry land appeared, Noah opened the door and welcomed a new beginning of God's grace.

Obedient faith

I respect Noah because he was the exception. It isn't that he refused the eat-drink-and-be-merry philosophy of his day or that he looked so good because the world around him was so bad, but that Noah's righteousness came to him through a God-given faith. He was close to God. He gave his whole being to God. He obeyed when God called. Such faith ignores obstacles and says, "Yes, Lord. Whatever You



want." No practical questions or excuses.

Though our options may not be earth-shaking, we may be called upon to make some faith-flustering decisions: take a new job, serve on the church board, teach Bible class, learn new things, develop new skills. Weakness says, "I'm too busy I don't know how. . . . What will people say?" Faith says, "Yes, Lord. Whatever You say." No squabbling. No grumbling. No argument. Just one word: yes!

Looking foolish

Don't feel slighted if God's plan for you includes more heart-shaking than world-shaking. He may want you to live where you've always lived, work at the career you prepared for in college, associate with Christians, and worship at the church where your parents were married. God

might have some less obvious challenges in mind for you:

Be more vocal in your faith.

Head up the new building committee at church.

Show more love and compassion toward others.

Stop using His name in vain.

The person who takes God at His word will always look like a fool to the rest of the world — some-

times to those most dear.

That happened to Jesus. Early in His ministry, Jesus' family felt He went over the edge, chasing from village to village teaching and healing. Constantly surrounded by crowds, working from morning to night, a bite of bread here, a scrap of fish there. What kind of life is that? Once, the family came to get Jesus and haul Him back home so He could reconnect with the guidance and good sense of the family. He didn't go.

Right-thinking people will always ridicule the person who takes God at His word. Imagine what people might say about a man who gives up a promising law career or a high-paying engineer's job to enter seminary. Who has he been talking to? What about the young nurse who leaves her secure job to serve disease-ridden natives

in the bush of Australia? In six months she'll be begging for her old job back. What kind of reception will the wild young man get when he announces that he has come to faith in Christ and will no longer join his friends in drinking, drugs, and dirty stories? What will he do on weekends? Right-thinking people call such dreamers fools.

Right choice

I admire Noah, fool or not. Not because he was chosen by God to save the human race or because he spent 120 years building an ark that would be used only once. I admire Noah because he walked with God and became the man God wanted him to be. He didn't play it cautious. He didn't make excuses. He didn't plead ignorance.

So if the 5 p.m. newscast ridicules you as a person bent on world-saving through Christ with no degree in public relations, as a dreamer who trusts the Lord when everyone is laughing, as a person who is honest and trustworthy in a world steeped in hypocrisy and deceit, do what Noah did: Ignore it.

God's choices may not seem like pure gold; high style and glitter do not attract Him. Rough edges or not, when God chooses someone for a job, He always chooses the right person.

Keep that in mind the next time He chooses you. **W.B.**

Wayne Bartelt
writes from Milwaukee, WI.



WWJZ



What did Jesus say about the early history of the world, recorded in Genesis 1-11? What would He do against the kind of temptation Adam and Eve faced: lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life?

What would Jesus say about our culture's decadence and violence, as at the time of Noah's flood? What would He do to rescue a generation that seems hell-bent on destroying itself in a hundred ways?

Jesus Christ affirmed the Genesis account of special creation. "But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' . . . Have you not read . . . ?" (Mark 10:6; Matt. 19:4). Evolution was unknown in Jesus' day, but He would surely not honor any naturalistic teaching of origins that left His Father out.

Jesus gave repeated teachings designed to restore the twin ordinances of creation: Sabbath and marriage (Gen. 2:1-3, 18-25). He rejected the encrustations by which the Judaism of that day burdened people regarding Sabbath observance, and instead called for resumption of the simple and restful memorial of creation (Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:27, 28).

Regarding marriage, Jesus pointed His inquisitors back to the same beginning, where the joining together of Adam and Eve set the pattern for marital unions that are heterosexual, monogamous, and permanent (Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-9).

Basing the heart of His ethical teachings on this early portion of Scripture, Jesus obviously con-

sidered the Bible's first chapters to report actual history, not just poetry or mere myth. He took seriously the historicity of Adam and Eve, the report of Abel's murder (Matt. 23:35), and the reality of burgeoning sin that triggered an ancient flood upon the earth.

Jesus was a teacher of apocalyptic truth. He accepted the Torah testimony that the world had been judged once during Noah's time, and He taught that it would be judged again when He returns from heaven with all His holy angels. The last days of this earth's history, Jesus said, will be like those recorded in Genesis 5—8. "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37f; Luke 17:26f).

For personal reflection

Faced with personal temptations that matched those failed by Adam and Eve in the garden, Jesus resisted the Devil by recalling His Father's will in every matter. He sent Satan away with a rebuke and the words of Scripture ringing in his ears (Matt. 4:1-11). **Think:**

How can we use Christ's strategy to defeat the Devil in our own times of temptation?

Faced with prevalent violence and continual corruption in His day, Jesus befriended those whose lives were wearied with sin, inviting them to come to Him and rest. He offered them a tree of Life, not merely the tree of knowing good and evil, by which Adam and Eve were deceived. **Think:** Why would Jesus spend more time inviting people to Himself than in denouncing the corrupt social and political structures of His day? Do today's sinners need more knowledge of right and wrong, or new life?

Faced with the false worldviews of that day, Jesus exposed the lies that take young people captive to fads, fancies, and philosophies in any day. "The way to victory is surrender and to excitement is service," He said. "So follow Me, and the truth will set you free." **Think:** How can we present Christ's grace and truth to post-modern persons who accept no truth and feel they need no grace? How would Jesus do it?

YOUTH REACH

It's Who You Know

by Israel Steinmetz

Who's the oldest person in recorded history? Methuselah. But who was Methuselah's father? Genesis 5:21 says he was Enoch. He didn't live to be nearly as old as his son, but Enoch's claim to fame was much greater. Verses 22 and 24 say that Enoch walked with God 300 years and that "he was not, for God took him" (NASB).

A few generations down the line came another man who walked with God: Noah (6:9). Because of this, Noah and his family were the only people on earth spared from death in the Flood.

The great men and women of faith in Scripture weren't always the smartest, strongest, most obedient, most dedicated, or most important, but they valued knowing God. No wonder that when Jesus came to earth, He called for people to come be with Him and follow Him — to be His disciples.

A few years ago, the big craze was to live according to "What would Jesus do?" But we're actually called to live according to the question "What is Jesus doing?" Jesus died, but He didn't stay dead. He lives and acts and moves today. As His disciples, we're called to know Him personally so that we can walk with Him.

Knowing God is eternal life (John 17:3). What else could be more important? No wonder the apostle Paul looked at all his earthly and religious accomplishments and said: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8, NASB).

Rubbish is used in English translations to soften what Paul actually said. The word Paul used literally means excrement that is thrown to the dogs. That's what Paul thought of his life compared to knowing Christ: It was all just sewage.

So I guess the old saying is true: It's all about who you know. Do you know Jesus? Is knowing Him more the singular focus of your life? I encourage you to pray that knowing and following Him will be your greatest passion. [.org](http://cog7.org)



Coming Up . . .

° **National Youth Week/
Hunger Lock-In**

**Suggested dates:
April 18-21, 2007**

**Contact 541-517-1079
or nfyc@cog7.org** [.org](http://cog7.org)

What's This?

This year we'll print two or more youth pages in every BA. Our aim is biblical: to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:6). We move that adults take up this **Youth Reach** material and that young folks explore what's in the "adult section" of the magazine. Second the motion, anyone?

— Calvin Burrell

STOP! Read This Now:
“All Enemy Guns Turned
Against Youth.”
Will the Church Survive?

In a survey of mostly Christian teens in America . . .

The good:

- 80 percent said religious beliefs are very important to them
- 80 percent believe that God created the universe
- 84 percent believe God is personally involved in our lives
- 87 percent believe Jesus was a real person who came to earth

The bad . . .

- 63 percent believe Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all others pray to the same god and only use different names for him
- 46 percent believe Jesus committed sins while on earth
- 51 percent say Jesus died but did not rise from the dead
- 58 percent believe that all religious faiths teach equally valid truths
- 65 percent say there is no way to tell which religion is true
- 81 percent believe truth is relative

The Bible says that Jesus is the way to God, while American culture says that Jesus is only one of many ways.

Source: Josh McDowell, *Beyond Belief to Convictions*, pp. 7-9

Wake Ca

You (teenagers) live in a time unlike any other for its attack against Christianity, the Bible, and the way of Jesus. Blatant persecution? Maybe not. But Satan invades our belief system and culture with his lies. That's obvious from the facts scattered on these center pages.

We (adults) hear about this crisis and see how it impacts you daily. But you live it. And in the end, only you can decide how you will respond to this attack on our faith. What will you do to counter the culture?

As you decide in 2007, don't think you'll be all alone. Your church will

One great way to counter the culture is to stick together as God's community. The articles on recent youth rallies (p. 18) are excellent examples of what you can do in your local youth group. Rally the troops!

Wake-Up Call

stand by you through the General Conference, youth ministry, and the new Youth Reach. We'll help you survive attacks from the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Realize that you're in a spiritual battle. Don't be like 65 percent of teens who don't believe Satan is real or the 81 percent who don't believe they can know anything for sure.

You can overcome the Devil, who wants to destroy everything good in your life. Are you living in God's power or struggling on your own? Ready to put on the power of Jesus and wage the war? Good. Gear up!

— Kurt Lang
NFYC Director

Today's Teen Culture (typical in America)

This year, the media will expose an average teen to 14,000 sexual images (6.7 images per hour viewed)

1 in 3 teens has been drunk in the last month

1 in 4 use illegal drugs

8,000 contract an STD every day

1 million are pregnant

340,000 get abortions each year

1 in 10 have been raped

9 of 10 have seen porn online

½ are no longer virgins

40 percent have inflicted self-injury

1 in 5 have contemplated suicide

1,400 will kill themselves this year

Source: Teen Mania, Wake Up Call DVD, "Casualties of War"

A Greater Harvest

It has been said that the church is only one generation away from extinction. One generation fails to pass on the baton; one generation drops it. It has also been said that the greatest legacy we can leave to the next generation is our faith in Christ and in His written Word.

This came to mind when I first read the prediction and warning that only 4 percent of the current crop of young people in this culture will make lasting commitments to Jesus and to His authoritative Word. I am saddened by the grim reality this suggests, yet determined to reap a much greater harvest than that — by the grace of God.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President



Fall Frenzy

The weekend of October 27-29, approximately 55 youth gathered in Harrisburg, Oregon, for their annual Fall Frenzy Youth Rally. Our theme for the weekend was missions.

Saturday morning in Sabbath school class we watched **The Limb**, a video about how the church body has to work together. Following class time, we participated in praise and worship, led by the Harrisburg youth praise band. After the music and specials, youth pastor Kurt Lang preached on answering the cry of our heart to serve and know God through the mission/purpose we were created for.

We went on a scavenger hunt around Harrisburg after our potluck lunch. After we returned, Dan Bellows of the Eugene congregation talked about his foreign mission experiences. He shared pictures and stories from his trips to Panama and Thailand and gave us good insights into what a missions trip is like.

That night we made music videos. Groups chose a song on the topic of missions, performed it, and later watched the video on our big screen.

What's .org?

This symbol **.org** means you can visit the NFYC Web site for more on a story, more pics of events, and more upcoming events.

What do you think of the new **Youth Reach**? What would you like to see in each issue? Send your ideas and feedback to Kurt Lang (nfyc@cog7.org).

<http://nfyc.cog7.org>

The next morning we enjoyed a breakfast of pancakes, then started packing our things up and saying our dreaded goodbyes. We had a great turnout of youth from Harrisburg, Eugene, Marion, and Portland, as well as Spokane, Washington. We can't wait for next year!

— Brianne Feigum
Harrisburg FYC President

.org

Rally in Lodi

On Sabbath, October 28, youth from Northern California churches gathered in Lodi for activities and worship. They remembered the life of Noah during



video clips and four short messages delivered by Scott Fischer, Lodi's youth pastor. He explained that God brought judgment to an evil world through the Flood. Pastor Fischer said Noah demonstrated great faith and obedience to God by weathering the storms to receive salvation by way of the ark.

During the afternoon service, many participated in specials and skits that made a wonderful day of worship and praise to God. Tony Acosta (San Jose) led a team of worshipers and musicians in praise songs throughout the afternoon. We also enjoyed icebreakers and mixers prepared by Ruth Tivald to help the churches interact with one another. The afternoon service also included a trivia contest detailing some facts from God's Word about Noah and the Flood. One of the highlights was a skit presented by the Visalia youth that reminded us to be diligent about our mission of sharing God's love with the world.

Following the afternoon rally, many enjoyed watching the Christian movie **Timechangers** on the sanctuary big screen, and the evening was capped off with games. With more than 200 attending the morning service and more than 100 staying for the afternoon rally, it was a day of activity memorable for all.

— Scott Fischer

.org

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for
which the first was made.*

So wrote Robert Browning in 1864, long before the age of computers, e-tickets, cell phones, and all those electronic inventions that add extra gray hairs to the heads of many of us senior citizens. I'll admit some seniors take to this new technology like know-it-all teenagers.

But not me. "Help!" has been my password since I began using a computer. Sometimes it tells me, "An illegal action has been performed." Or it locks up, and nothing I try unlocks it. And when it coldly states, "Read Only," I want to throw the unfeeling thing out the window and go back to my electric Smith Corona typewriter. (It ate one ribbon after another, but at least it did my bidding.)

Instead of following through on this act of desperation, I holler for my grandson.

Does David come quietly to help? No. He comes, but it is with a frown and words of condemnation. "What'd you break now, Gran'ma?"

With a sour grin, I sweetly say, "I didn't break a thing. This stupid machine is acting up again."

David sits in front of the monster. I grab a pen and a piece of paper. "Let me write down what you do so I'll know how to get it working again next time," I say.

I'm two seconds too late. With a flick of the wrist, David says, "It's OK now" and stands up.

I glare at my traitorous computer. Behind my typed material I'm sure I see a smirky grin on the screen.

*Taken from Bartleby.com.

Changes



An octogenarian faces present reality and her own future — and finds a way. **by Elizabeth Van Liere**

A Pair of Shoes © Emily2k—Dreamstime.Com

Strange land

Changes. That's what it's all about. We slide into a new world without noticing until we suddenly find ourselves in a strange new land.

And it's not just the mechanical things. It's growing older, hitting eighty. And one day, when the windows need washing, my daughter says, "Don't you dare climb that ladder! I don't want you falling and breaking your hip." Sure, my injuries would cause problems for her as well as

for me, but now I'm even scared to use my small step-stool.

Sometimes it seems there's a conspiracy surrounding me. For at least ten years I've been driving the two hundred fifty miles to Denver a couple of times a year. Suddenly, on a bright sunny day during a visit there, my son in that city clouds up the sky. He decides it would be nice if a granddaughter drove part way home with me. "Four of the kids were planning to go into the mountains anyway," he says. "The other three can follow and

pick Jennifer up halfway back to your home."

I grab for my independence. "I don't need someone to drive me! I can do it myself." Hmm. *Kinda sounds like my three-year-old great-grandson talking. I ignore my inner voice.*

"Mom," my daughter-in-law says, "we know you can. But we care about you. And if you had an accident, we would think, 'We should have gone with her.'"

Lesson in humility

All day I struggled with wanting to go alone or letting someone drive with me. Finally, as I got ready for bed, I remembered the story another son had told me about a friend, deep into sports. This person said, "I wear lots of shoes for different sports. At various times, I see I need to hang up the pair I've been wearing. It's time to put on new ones — ones that fit better."


I realized then it wasn't just losing my independence that bothered me. It was pride standing in the way. "Who me? Put on new shoes that fit better?" I resented having to change. It's like Louie Giglio says in his book *I Am Not But I Know I AM*: "Whenever an opportunity presents itself, the voice of pride will rise up with a roar, urging us to take control" (p. 129).

Some things do need help — the computer, broken mechanical things, even washing windows and letting someone drive me. It all meant humbling myself. God says it in 1 Peter 5:5: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (NIV).

So the next morning, reaching for the promised grace, I said, "OK. I'm packed. Ready when you are."

Changing shoes

Robert Browning continued his little verse with the words "Our times are in His hands." God has sent others into my life to help, whether I think I need it or not. It is time for me to humble myself and quit thinking I can do it all. It is time to accept the help others offer in love. It is time to hang up those worn "shoes" and put on new ones.

Don't tell anyone I said so, but actually, they really do feel a bit more comfortable than my old ones. 

Elizabeth Van Liere writes from Montrose, CO.



*I watched a candle glow:
Its slender, tapered flame
Stretched toward heaven to touch and tame
The stars, the moon, and lo!
To master art and truth;
To conquer space and time; to light
A thousand torches for the night.
I watched, for it was Youth.*

*I watched this candle glow
Again in a frosty, ghost-webbed room:
Old shadows cursed the gloom;
The candle's life burned low,
It sputtered, humped . . .*

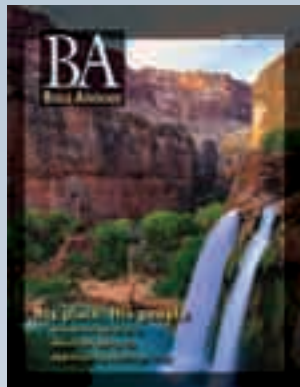
*was gone.
Brief candle: dead our tallow'd
schemes,
And Age, I found, would alter
dreams,
And yet . . . a little warmth
lives on.*

Ruth Deaton Kimball



www.comstock.com

Mail Bag



Concerns for creation

As a loyal reader, active member, and full-time farmer engaged in food production, I felt it incumbent upon me to present an opposite view of "Caring for Creation" [October-November '06, p. 8]. The writer [Michael Flores] seems to impugn the harvest of earth's resources for profit, as if there is another way to provide the requirements of a modern, urban society. Only by utilizing the earth's bounty can anyone continue to live in a large city bereft of all means to support itself. I'm sure no windmills (for electricity) or wood furnaces (for heat) or grist mills (for grinding) exist in his neighborhood to replace that which "exploiters of the earth's resources" provide economically, safely, and conveniently. I've been to San Antonio and know the joys of air conditioning, provided by these companies. If we intend to return to simpler times, air conditioning is indefensible.

R. G.
Acme, Alberta

Reply from Michael Flores: Consuming is an economic choice, but also a moral one. Consumerism isolates us from the labor that produces the goods, including food. Consumers

buy goods without knowing who, what, or how the goods came to market. This detachment fosters wasteful consumption and over-production.

One purpose of the earth is to provide for the needs of human society. With a relational view of environmental stewardship, the purpose of humanity toward the earth is equally emphasized. God's original intention is for us to promote His glory in the earth. A ravished earth, an unnaturally changed biophysical order, a relentless carelessness toward nature — these steal glory from God.

My position does not exclude the necessity of the earth as resource but encourages a perspective of the earth as also part of God's redemptive plan. The article never mentions a return to simpler times. Technology is beneficial to humanity and a potential benefit to the earth.

Tribute to ministers

Thank you for the tribute to the Church's oldest ministers [October-November '06, pp. 16, 17]. My birthday is Nov. 12, not Dec. 12.

Elder L. L. C.
Independence, MO

Musings on December

You are very right that we should be more concerned with the "tidal waves of deception and immorality that threaten to drown our children in seas of unbelief" [December '06, p. 3] than with trying to determine the when's of Bible prophecy. Some prophecy is conditioned on repentance, so it can change. No man knows when Christ will return, period! The greater issue is to live Christ-like in the here and now. . . .

I'd also like to comment on "Q & A" (p. 8). I have heard statements like "A child who dies without ac-

cepting Christ will burn in the lake of fire." That kind of statement reveals a failure to read the Bible's big print. God will be merciful and just, and all will be given opportunity to accept or deny. That doesn't mean they all will have opportunity at the same time.

T. P.
e-mail

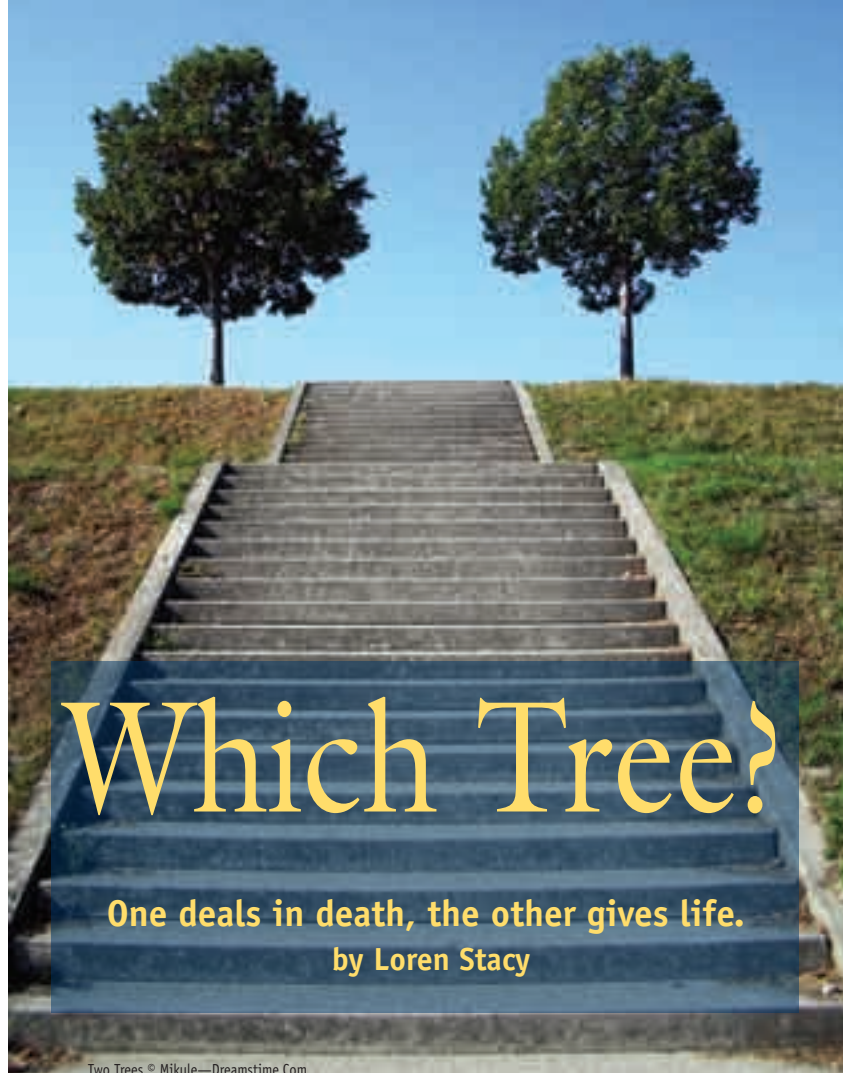
Editor's reply: Thank you for your encouraging words. Also, thanks for giving us the opportunity to refer readers to pp. 15-18 of this issue (re: your first sentence) and to remind them of "We Ask" on p. 9 of the previous issue (re: your second paragraph). We invite further response.

Your "How Much Time?" [December] issue may be the best ever. Talk about a Spirit-led series of messages. Each article seemed to flow into the next and the next. Questions were asked; answers were given. To top it off, you tackled the toughest question of all: "Who gets to go to heaven?" Jesus said, "If you do the will of God My Father, you will enter the kingdom of heaven." That's good enough for me.

R. C. M.
e-mail

Regarding J. L.'s Sabbath commitments ["Mail Bag," p. 21], Jesus said it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days, and it's interesting to note that Christ did most of His recorded healings then. If God has gifted you and called you to care for "the least of these my brethren," who has the right to condemn? Go in the peace and joy of our Lord!

R. S.
Hopewell, VA



Which Tree?

One deals in death, the other gives life.

by Loren Stacy

Two Trees © Mikule—Dreamstime.Com

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . . And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:8, 9, 16, 17).

All of human history is wrapped up in this clear-cut choice between two trees, presented to our first parents. Remember what happened next? The serpent tempted Eve with the promise of becoming like God; Adam and Eve chose knowledge of good and evil over life; and the rest of the story is the mixed history of humanity.

This pivotal decision offered to Eve by the serpent in the garden is repeated for all of us again today. We have the choice of living according to the knowledge of good and evil in the attempt to maintain a certain form of godliness. Or we can choose to eat from the Tree of Life — a link with the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He naturally produces.

As we consider whether to

settle our lives in the Tree of Life or in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, we’re really talking about a choice of attitudes, a choice between two very different ways of approaching our own existence and the people in our lives.

The best example of the Tree of Life mentality, of course, is Christ. The huge contrast between His Tree of Life thinking and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thinking of some people is in Luke 13. Here’s the Tree of Life part:

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” Then He put His hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God (vv. 10-13).

Now the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil part:

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath” (v. 14).

Imagine that! An incredible life-giving miracle had just been performed for a woman who had been miserable for the past eighteen years. The power of God had just been demonstrated in her release. But all this syna-

gogue ruler could see from his perch in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was that his idea of how to obey God's Sabbath command had been violated. "Stop that!" he scolded the people. "Stop being miraculously healed on the Sabbath day!"

"You hypocrites!" Jesus responded to him and his kind (v. 15).

Think about the difference between Jesus and His very religious adversaries.

Jesus went about His life and ministry in total innocence, without guile. His enemies could not correctly accuse Him of any sinful act or attitude. A friend to sinners yet absolutely opposed to their sins, Christ was a life-saver and life-giver for all without sugarcoating the horrible consequences for those who would reject Him. "I have come that you might have life, and have it to the full," He said (John 10:10).

Now think about the Pharisees: full of rules and regulations; full of contempt and condemnation for anyone who did not agree with or live up to their rules and regulations; trying to earn their way into God's favor; unable to recognize the One they claimed to serve when He came to them (see Romans 10:2, 3).

Although both are concerned with God and committed to truth and obedience, a vitally important difference exists between living from the Tree of Life and from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The vitality of the Tree of Life is dependent on Christ — who He is and what He has done — and is rooted in relationship with Him. Spiritual life flows naturally from the root to all branches of the tree, produc-

ing all the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge of good and evil mentality, on the other hand, is usually experienced as self-centered religion. In a nutshell, it is works-oriented, judgmental of those who are different, often prideful and condemning. It can be zealous for God but never truly represents Him. In contrast, the Tree of Life mentality is absolutely zealous for God but it is grace-oriented and Christ-centered. It grieves over sin but reaches out with patient love to the one who needs to learn the way of Christ more perfectly.

The Bible begins with a picture of an idyllic garden in which grew a Tree of Life and a Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It ends with a picture of another idyllic garden.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit

every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1, 2).

In this ultimate garden, we will enjoy a river of life and a Tree of Life, but no Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This causes us to ask, If the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil led to death in the first garden, and if it won't even exist in the eternal garden, why would we want to live in that tree now? **104**

Elder Loren Stacy pastors the Lodi, CA, church and chairs the General Conference board of directors. Scripture quotations were taken from the *New International Version*.



The concepts in this article were based on a speech by Dr. Wes Gabel and on *The Life Giving Church*, by Ted Haggard.



Castle Bridge in the Mist © Photowitch—Dreamstime.com

Blood and Image

by Jerry Morgan

The first mention of blood in the Bible is in the creation of humanity. “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness . . .’” (Genesis 1:26a). The Hebrew word for *blood* is *dam* (pronounced “dawm”), and it is used twice in this verse. Any word that incorporates *dam* is related to that word and to *blood*.

The word for *man* in verse 26 is *a’dam* (pronounced “aw-dawm”). The *a* is the first Hebrew letter (aleph) in the alphabet and in the word *El*, meaning God. It may be used as an abbreviation for the name of God. Thus, the name of the first man *a’dam* is closely related to “God’s blood.”

Also in v. 26 the Hebrew word for *likeness* is *d’muwth*. Again, the root word is *dam*, signifying that humans have blood — or family — likeness to their Creator. For example, the children of God have the right to cry, “Abba, Father,” an Aramaic phrase meaning “Father, Ancestor.” We have a natural blood link to our Creator from the beginning!

The word *image* (Hebrew *tzelem*) in Genesis 1:26 can also help us know what it means to be a child of God. Does it refer to a form or shape, suggesting God has a body like ours?

God is a spirit, an invisible be-

ing, and has never been seen by any human. Christ said:

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . . The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:6, 8).

Just as wind has no shape of its own but takes the shape of its container (like a fluid), so it is with the Spirit. God cannot be contained; He is ever-present, not only in His universe but also in eternity. He may, however, allow Himself to be contained if He chooses. This Spirit-being in all His unlimited vastness can also be contained in the temple of human bodies, and He has chosen to do this very thing in His children.

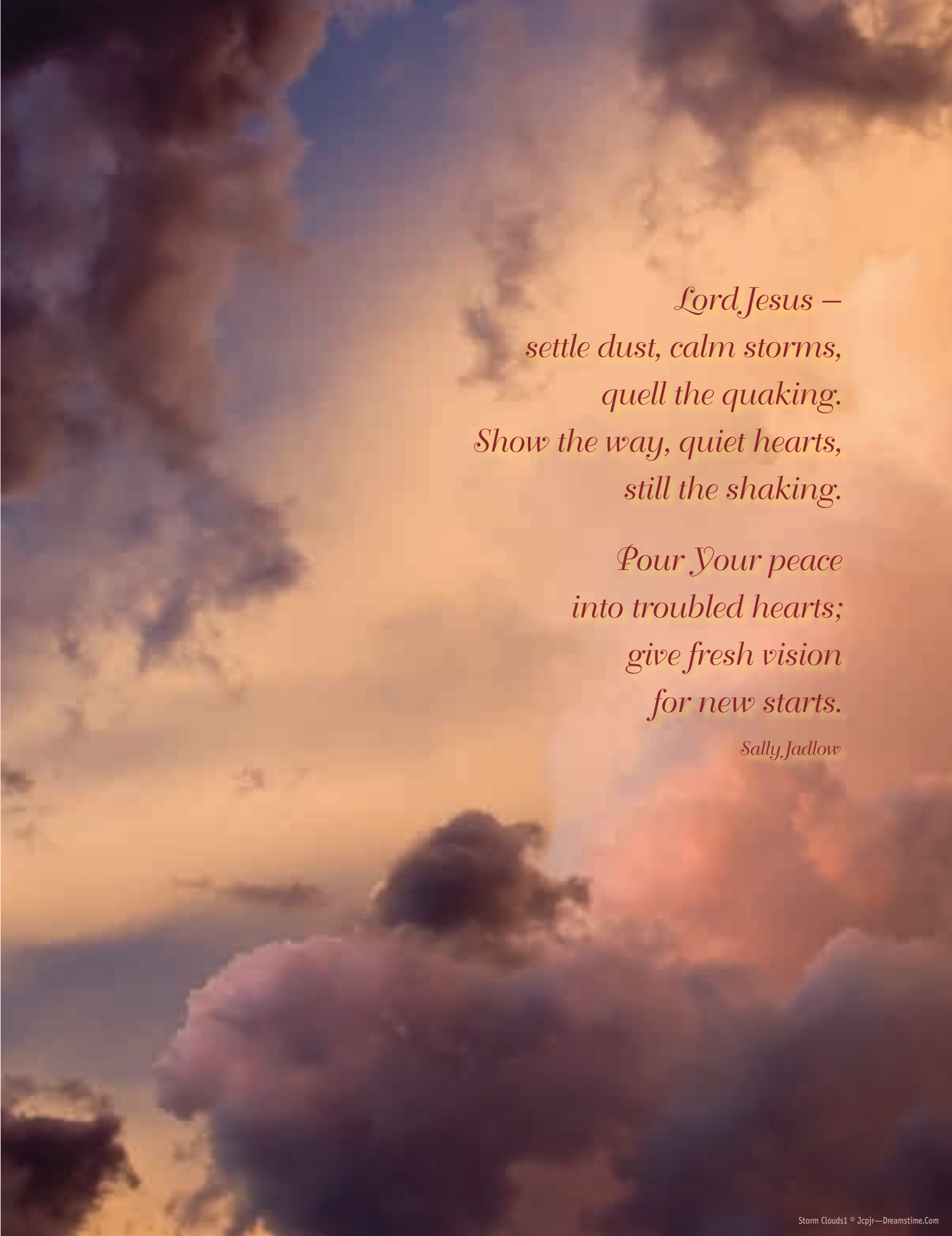
So what does *image* signify in relation to the creator God who is Spirit? The Hebrew word *tzelem* factors down to His nature, not His shape. Man was created in the nature of God and was intended to reflect on earth what his creator is in heaven. What God built into humanity can be first found in Himself, including the power to reason, to choose, to rule, and even to create. Given enough time, there

aren’t many things man cannot do, except create life itself.

Even man’s natural capacity to do well reflects the holy nature of God. Though marred by sin, we still retain enough of God’s image that we feel guilt when we violate our better nature. That built-in warning system cautions us that we’ve acted contrary to the image of God. A true child of God will reflect the image (nature) of God in whatever he does. This does not mean we are flawless but that the acts of remorse, repentance, and restitution for our errors testify to the gospel we believe and offers more evidence of God’s image being recreated in us.

Our goal is to inherit eternal life, and the life is in the blood. By the blood of Christ, we can be heirs to the crown of life and joint-heirs with the Son of God in an eternal abode with the One who created us in His image and likeness. The purpose of our creation is that “God’s blood” will purify us and make us fit to live in the presence of the most holy God, our Creator, forever. **RA**

Pastor Jerry Morgan and his wife, Shari, have recently moved from Tulsa, OK, to Eureka, SD.



*Lord Jesus –
settle dust, calm storms,
quell the quaking.
Show the way, quiet hearts,
still the shaking.*

*Pour Your peace
into troubled hearts;
give fresh vision
for new starts.*

Sally Jadow



What's new with . . .

Publications

- Revised Statement of Faith booklets available; contact Bible Advocate Press to order

Ministries Training System

- Regional classrooms resume in 2007; visit www.mts.cog7.org

Spring Vale Academy

- Second semester openings; call 989-725-2391

G. C. Board and Ministries Leaders

- Annual meeting in Denver, CO, January 14-16

National FYC

- *Youth Reach* now in the *Bible Advocate* (see pp. 15-18)

SWORD Sharing the Word and Offering a Real Difference

Christy Lang, Director

Are you a young adult, 18-35 years old, single or married? Then there's a place for you in the Church: SWORD.

You don't have to look far to find young adults serving — in local congregations, in districts, and nationwide. Most Pioneer Missionary Training participants are from SWORD, as are LITES teams and CoG7 Web team members. Donations support them by providing SWORD retreats, General Conference programs, and service projects.

Visit our Web site (<http://sword.cog7.org>) for more information about how you can be involved in SWORD or how you can help young adults remain faithful and active.



SWORD e-Newsletter

Keep informed of SWORD events by signing up for the e-newsletter. It's easy. Just go to www.cog7.org, select the Discussion menu, select "Mailing Lists" from the submenu, then choose the "SwordALL" list.

Got an event you'd like to see published in the e-newsletter? That's easy too. E-mail the information to sword-news@cog7.org.

District Representative

Join us in welcoming Asaf Menjivar as the SWORD district representative for Western Canada.

If you live in Eastern Canada or the Northeastern (U.S.) District and are interested in serving as a district rep for SWORD, contact your district superintendent or board member.

2007 Convention

Be sure to visit the SWORD Web site in the next few months. That's where you'll find information about the SWORD program at the 2007 convention in Overland Park, Kansas, as it becomes available. Any ideas for what you'd like to see in the program? Send them to sword@cog7.org.



Greetings from the LITES team in Stanberry, MO! Our winter term begins January 8. Applications for the spring-summer term are due by March 1. For info, more news, pictures, or applications, call us at 660-783-9544 or visit <http://lites.cog7.org>.

NYC Super Sabbath: "Living at Ground Zero"

Some five hundred brethren braved the wind and rain to travel from as far as Boston and Philadelphia to attend the second annual NYC Super Sabbath, October 28. Sister Leila Henry, area representative, welcomed everyone and later presided over an appreciation time for ministers. With Philippians as a text, Elder Whaid Rose spoke about how people were changed during the 9-11 attacks. He then called on the Church to be changed – to emulate Paul in having a new view of death and dying, a new focus on others, a new passion that is Christ above all, and a renewed faith that doesn't fear anything. In the afternoon service Elder Bill Hicks shared slides and a video about the missionary work of the Church around the world.



Worship was led by the Corona and Morris Avenue church teams. Ray Bobcombe moderated a panel discussion about living in a world where terrorism is reality. The panel consisted of Pastors Greg Crayton (Morris Avenue), Nauldy Henry (Philadelphia), Allen Crawford (Boston), and Victor Mendez (Passaic). Thanks to the planning committee, to all who assisted in any way, and to all who attended to make the day a worthwhile time of worship, fellowship, and learning.

Nine Baptized

Angels rejoiced with Brooklyn Community Church on September 30 when nine souls were baptized by Pastor Stanford Lewis, assisted by Deacon Dean Vassell. The one adult was Novlene Johnson, who was determined, against all odds, to follow the Lord in baptism. She asked the brethren to pick her up and put her in the water, even if she fainted en route!

One teenager committed herself to the Lord, despite discouragement from family and friends. The others were pre-teens. Pastor Lewis remarked that while some say children are too young to be baptized, the Devil is recruiting them to sell drugs, kill, and steal, so we are recruiting them for the kingdom of God. Sister Marcia Payton commented, "On hearing testimonies from most of the young ones, there was no doubt in my mind about their age. They have the knowledge of right and wrong, and they know that Christ is the only way."





Springfield, MO, Dedication

Brethren from Arkansas, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri came to help the Springfield church dedicate new facilities on Sabbath, November 4. BA Editor Calvin Burrell gave the dedication sermon. Pastors James Taylor and Andy Hassen and many others shared with songs, skits, and testimonies of God's blessings in this two-year project, now mostly paid for. The previous chapel at the building's front (left, in photo) will be used for a fellowship hall and classrooms. The Springfield church enjoys attendance from a wide section of southern Missouri.

'Let's Talk About God'

For the first quarter of '07, Sabbath study lessons produced by the Bible Advocate Press will focus on the nature and attributes of God. Join this weekly study and discussion group in a CoG7 near you.

Annual Prayer Initiative

The dates January 20 to February 19 have been designated for united prayer on the theme "Prayer: Making the Most of the Journey." Prayer guides for this month will be distributed through local churches.

Correction

April 2 was erroneously listed as the Lord's Supper date in recent tracts from the Bible Advocate Press. The correct date for 2007 should be Sunday evening, April 1.

Calendar

- January 8 - SVA second semester begins; 989-725-2391
- January 8 - LITES second term begins; 660-783-9544
- January 14-16 - Annual G. C. planning meeting in Denver
- February 18-19 - NAMC License and Credentials Committee meets
- February 25 - Leadership Conference in Lanham, MD; contact Richard.Wiedenheft@cog7.org or call 570-378-2786; Spanish speakers, call Antonio Vega at 301-429-5100 or 350-5754
- March 9-11 - Southeastern Men's Retreat in Alva, FL; 252-753-5898; jeff.endecott@cog7.org
- March 17 - Pacific Northwest Super Sabbath, Jefferson, OR; 503-769-6636
- March 23-25 - Alumni Weekend at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI; 989-725-2391
- March 31 - Southeastern Super Sabbath in Central North Carolina; Elder Bill Hicks, preaching; 252-753-5898; jeff.endecott@cog7.org
- April 1 - Annual Lord's Supper Service in every church
- April 15 - Leadership Conference in New York City; contact Richard.Wiedenheft@cog7.org or call 570-378-2786 or Leila Henry at 516-546-2224; Spanish speakers, call Victor Mendez at 203-449-7419
- April 7-8 - Southwest District Youth Convocation in Conroe, TX; jrande@houston.rr.com
- April 18-21 (suggested) - National Youth Week/Hunger Lock-In; 541-995-8678; nfyc@cog7.org
- May 6 - Leadership Conference in Owosso, MI; contact Richard.Wiedenheft@cog7.org or call 570-378-2786, or Max Morrow at 989-725-2251
- May 25-27 - Graduation weekend at Spring Vale Academy, Owosso, MI
- June 6-10 - MTS East Coast Summer Session, Wernersville, PA; contact Richard.Wiedenheft@cog7.org or call 570-378-2786
- June 10-16 - Dover Family Camp near Kingfisher, OK
- July 2-7 - General Conference Convention, Overland Park, KS
- July 7-11 - International Ministerial Congress, Overland Park, KS

North American Women's Ministries

Mary Ling, Director

The 170+ women who attended the first-ever national retreat in Springfield, Missouri, last April had a wonderful time sharing fellowship, fun, and faith. Our representatives would like to hear your suggestions for future retreats.

The NAWM board, consisting of representatives from each district, met in Niagara Falls, Ontario, October 26-29, for planning. Grace Sanchez, who had served the Central District for years, resigned and was replaced by Cleta Endecott of Marion, Iowa.

March 3 (or any Sabbath in March) has been designated as Ladies Day. Women are asked to plan and participate in the service of each congregation on the theme "The Spirit-Empowered Woman." Offerings may be designated for NAWM and a report of activities sent for possible publication.

The theme for the ladies' luncheon at the G. C. convention in Overland Park, Kansas, will be "Sharing the Journey." Women are invited to donate items or volunteer time for the convention bazaar.

The Women's Ministries Guidebook is for sale — both English and Spanish — at \$12 (includes shipping). Requests should be sent to the G. C. offices in Denver.



Left to right: Cleta Endecott (Central), Pam Brown (Southeast), Sylvia Corral (West Coast), Mary Ling (Northeast), Romula Bergmann (Southwest), and Marjorie McLaughlin (Eastern Canada). Not present: Sandra Shapitka (Western Canada).

Medical Missions Needs Help

On the next Medical Missions trip, we intend to send a team of health care professionals (doctors, nurses, technicians, and others) to Guatemala April 2-10. This requires planning and finance. Right now, funds are low.

The first two missions were successful, and we want to continue the good work. Many women have asked how they can help in missions. Now is the time to answer this desperate call with your money and your prayers. Send your contributions earmarked for Medical Missions to

North American Women's Ministries
Church of God (Seventh Day)
P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233

We also need volunteer health professionals for this trip. Request your application from the address above or from

Mary Ling, Director
P.O. Box 301, Amherst, OH 44001
maryling@comcast.net

Recap of NAWM ministries

Seekers, a program for youngsters ages 9-12

Afterglow, a monthly paper of interest to seniors

Missions, helping ministries in other countries, including Medical Missions (see box above)

Faithful Servant Memorial Fund, providing scholarships for men studying for the pastorate; request an application

Retreats: Contact your district representative for help

Contact your NAWM representative by e-mail

Cleta Endecott fwebdecitt@wmconnect.com
Pam Brown sbrown4234@bellsouth.net
Sylvia Corral Sylral869@aol.com
Mary Ling maryling@comcast.net
Romula Bergmann prayerandpraisecog7@hotmail.com
Marjorie McLaughlin Precious25@sympatico.ca
Sandra Shapitka Sandra@safewebhost.net



International Tour

North America

The work in North America is correctly designated Zone 1 because this continent is the birthplace of the modern Sabbathkeeping Church of God movement. It began in the mid-1800s with a handful of brethren in Michigan and has since grown to a conference of about 215 congregations and missions.

Our church mission? To proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, introduce others to the Lord, teach them to obey His Word, and nurture spiritual growth in all believers. Our conference's purpose? To provide training, services, resources, and materials to help congregations and members accomplish the mission.

To support its administrative and ministry needs, the General Conference maintains modest offices in Broomfield, Colorado. The work is divided into districts: five in the United States and two in Canada. Six official ministries are sponsored: missions, youth, young adults, women, ministries training, and publications. Districts are led by superintendents who oversee and coordinate congregations. Led by directors, the ministries seek to equip the Church for greater and more effective service in our communities and for outreach to the world through Missions Abroad.

At biennial conventions, members have the privilege of participating in Church business,



including election of the board of directors — twelve men who serve as the Church's governing body when the Conference is not in session. The board appoints a president, who is responsible for daily management of the work and for long-term leadership. Doctrine, ministerial documentation, and ethics are handled by the North American Ministerial Council, composed of licensed and credentialed ministers.

The expansion of our missions work to include Home Missions and Church Planting departments, the success of Pioneer Missionary Training and Medical Missions, and the benevolence of our people through their support of Disaster Relief are blessings we are grateful for. The number of Hispanic congregations has increased. Ministries Training System is taking training to the people through its more than twenty classrooms. Publications touches the world through

free literature. *Youth Reach* in this magazine (pp. 15-18) highlights a commitment to our young people. And through SWORD and Women's Association, our people are being developed into devoted followers of Christ.

Other efforts sponsored by the Conference include ministries for men; discovering, communicating, and implementing God's vision for local congregations; and the Issachar Forum, through which our vision of a vibrant twenty-first century church continues to take shape. The Media and Christian Education forums that met in Denver last fall are good examples of the vision in progress. You may visit the G. C. Web site (www.cog7.org) for more information.

The theme of our next convention is "Celebrate the Journey" (see back cover). That journey includes the growth of this movement that began with a handful of faithful folks 150 years ago and has grown to a global church of more than 200,000 members. So from our Colorado home offices, the General Conference of the U.S. and Canada sends warm greetings to our sister conferences and mission churches around the world. With joy, we welcome delegates from all world zones to the International Ministerial Congress in Overland Park, Kansas, July 7-11. And we gladly extend greetings of peace and love in Jesus Christ to all our brethren in every country where this magazine is read.

Celebrate the Journey

Many of you have been around long enough to remember the Conference's news magazine of an earlier era, *The Harvest Field Messenger*. I recently came across a special informative edition published in 1959.

The front cover featured a picture of the headquarters building on Cook Street near downtown Denver. The departments, later known as agencies and more recently as ministries, consisted of Christian Education, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Publishing, Ministerial, Sabbath School, and Young People. There was news about vision, faith, and action highlighted by the executive board during its meeting that year. At the request of the Laymen's Research Group, a committee was appointed to explore ways that the organizational structure of the Church could be improved.

The big news item in this issue of the *Messenger* was carried under the heading: "Off Go the Price Tags! The Church of God (Seventh Day) is Launching into the Future by Faith." It explained that after more than one hundred years of operation, the Church was leaving the tract-selling business to make its literature available free of charge to all who need it — worldwide. And, by the way, first-class postage was three cents!

Browsing this magazine gave me not only a glimpse of an earlier era in our church's history but also a timely reminder of the long journey of this movement. It was in 1858 that Gilbert Cranmer began his independent work in Michigan, giving birth to what is now known as the Church of God (Seventh Day). Since that time, it has been a church on a journey through history, organizational change, and doctrinal and theological development. As we look toward the one hundred and fiftieth year (2008), it is fitting that we celebrate the journey.

A celebration is scheduled for July 2-7, 2007 at the Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center in Overland Park, Kansas, and you are cordially invited. The occasion is our church's biennial convention, ap-

propriately themed "Celebrate the Journey." We will celebrate the journey of our church, our individual journeys, and the journey of salvation, along with the journeys of our nation and our world. Family day, plenary sessions, seminars, special events and activities for all ages, morning and evening services featuring a few of our best speakers, and fellowship (family style) are some features of this convention you will not want to miss.

Our Sabbath morning service will highlight the journey of our work around the world as we welcome the delegates of the International Ministerial Congress with a parade of nations, flag ceremony, and message from IMC President Ramon Ruíz Garza. Originally scheduled for Brazil and later for Mexico, the congress is now slated for Overland Park and will continue a few days after the convention. Welcoming foreign delegates is a standard feature of biennial conventions. However, we anticipate a larger contingent of delegates this time, due to plans to host the IMC. Come meet and share this time with leaders of our church around the world.

Reviewing our history makes us grateful for God's faithfulness. It helps us value the sacrifice and commitment of earlier generations, without which this movement might not exist today. Our history gives us a sense of identity and calling. But it is the present, not the past, that gives us ministry. So rest assured that more will be included in this convention than mere nostalgic reflection. We will celebrate not only the accomplishments and blessings of the past but also our present opportunities. We will even celebrate future possibilities as we move forward by faith. I look forward to seeing you there.

— Whaid Guscott Rose
General Conference President





Celebrate the Journey



**General Conference Convention
Sheraton Hotel and Convention Center
Overland Park, Kansas
July 2-7, 2007**

Centrally located, the Kansas City area offers attractions for both Church member and tourist. On Sabbath, July 7, we'll welcome brethren from around the world in a Parade of Nations and the International Ministerial Congress, celebrating the growth of CoG7 in this generation.

To register for convention online, visit <http://home.cog7.org/>
To reserve a hotel room, call 800-262-7275 (ask for Heather Gambrell)