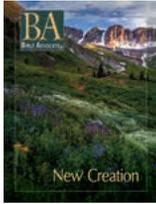


March - April 2020

BA
BIBLE ADVOCATE®

New Creation



2020: The Ministry of Reconciliation

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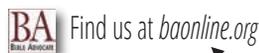
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The Center Holds

New creation! Is there a more timely topic? The old is fallen and fading away. We know that. But evidence mounts daily. The social fabric is as frayed as I've seen in my 53 years. In 1919, W. B. Yeats keenly observed of Western civilization, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." This famed line from his stinging poem "The Second Coming" tells of the chaos that threatens to overwhelm the forces of order. One hundred years later, we struggle to find a "center" at all. The ties that bind are shredded.

Things fall apart. Personal fragmentation is matched only by political polarization, moral confusion by environmental exhaustion. Material advancement is undeniable, but paced by spiritual apathy. Technology fuels progress with one hand and exacts a terrible toll with the other. These are real sources of anxiety, but only symptoms of a world groaning under the weight of sin. *The centre cannot hold.*

This is old creation getting older. It doesn't surprise us. But it should concern us when its shadow creeps into our homes and churches, casting despair and division that define old, not new. It concerned Paul. The church to whom he wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new," is the same he worried was more carnal than spiritual (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 3:3). The hope of the world isn't in the world itself, but in those who are new creation. And the *new* is only what is in Christ.

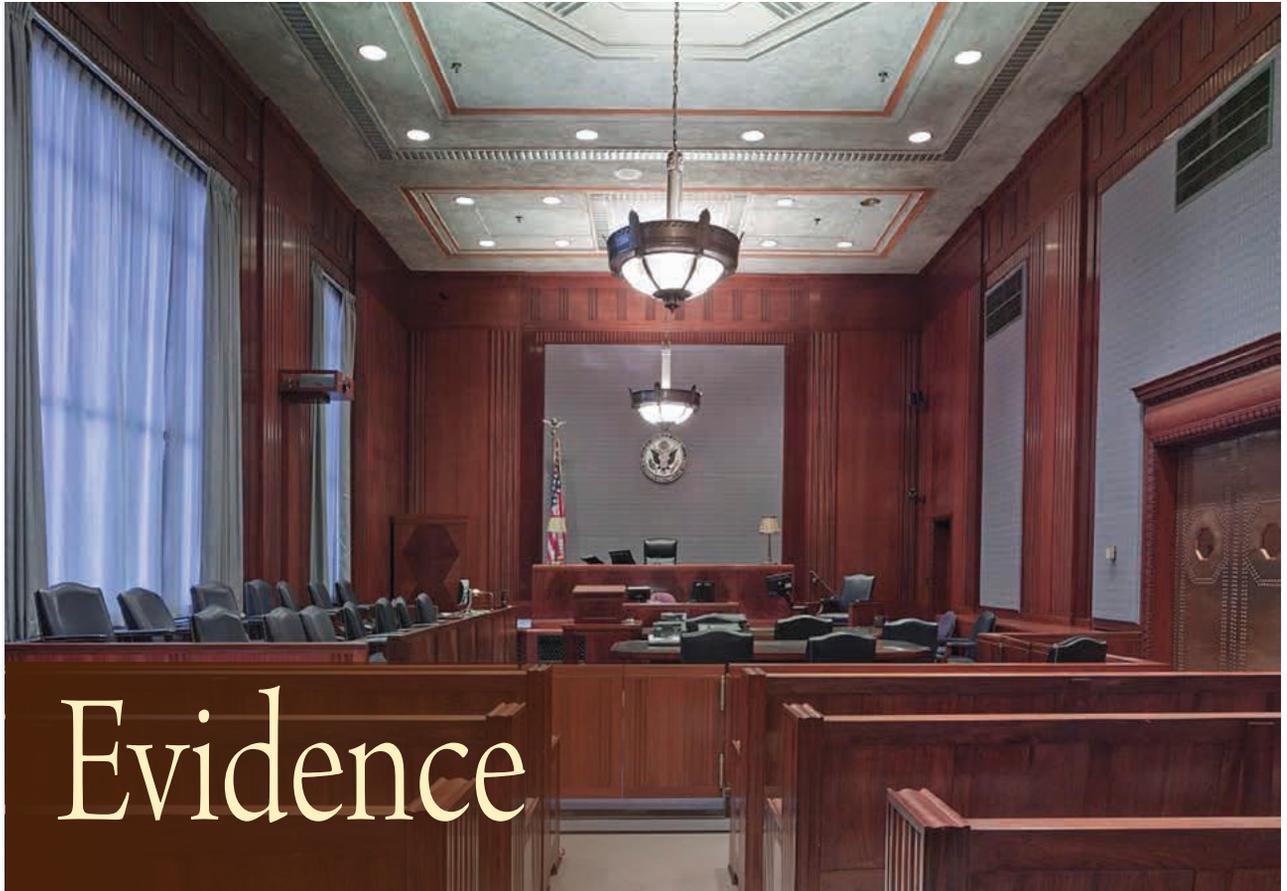
My parents recently celebrated their fiftieth anniversary. Yes, I'm 53; but it's not what you think. They married twice. The first marriage was short-lived, before my parents knew Christ. Being reconciled to Him later, they reconciled to each other and remarried in Christ. *New creation!* They count from there. What falls apart can be restored.

The old fosters or expects division, not reconciliation. But the center holds, for whom Christ is the center, and new creation banishes old shadows. For Mom and Dad, *in Christ* made the difference. Let's expect it. Mending the social fabric begins with us. Transformed life is the only hope we have to offer a shredded culture.

Managing the darkness with lesser evils avails little compared to the miraculous witness of a new life in Christ. Think about yours as you read.

— Jason Overman





Looking for new creation
in the ministry of
reconciliation.

by Israel Steinmetz

In the last issue of the *Bible Advocate* I began a series of six articles exploring 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 with a question: “What motivates you?” That article discussed the power of Christ’s love that compels us, and concluded with a call for us to join God’s redemptive mission in the world.

Cosmic courtroom

However, Christ’s love that compels us is just one of three important components of our

Christian calling. To understand how these components work together to guide our lives, imagine a courtroom. Like most of you, I am no lawyer or legal expert. Much of my understanding of the legal system comes from watching television and reading news about high-profile trials. But I have a basic understanding of how the United States justice system works. In order to prove someone’s guilt, the prosecutor must establish three things: motive, evidence, and testimony.

Motive is a compelling reason for the person to commit the crime. Evidence is physical proof that they did the deed – something that convinces the senses of the jury. Testimony is the verbal affirmation of eyewitnesses to establish that the crime was committed. When the prosecutor

can provide motive, evidence, and testimony, they have a strong case. Of course, in this scenario we are working with a presumption of innocence, and the burden is on the prosecutor to prove a person’s guilt.

However, when we look at the plight of the world, the situation is reversed. We know from Scripture that every human being stands condemned before a righteous God. We do not presume innocence; rather, we know that all are guilty and deserving of just condemnation. No one is righteous, no not one. No one is exempt from God’s sentence of “guilty” and the righteous condemnation of eternal death. With a presumption of guilt, the burden is on the advocate to prove innocence.

But how can a guilty human

race be made innocent? Only through the gospel of Jesus Christ! Only through Jesus taking the blame and just punishment of humanity on His shoulders can the guilty be pronounced innocent. Only through Jesus' sacrifice can we pass from death to life and be spared of condemnation. The sacrifice has been made; God has reconciled Himself to the world. All that remains is for the world to be reconciled to God through faith, accepting Christ's sacrifice. This is the great mystery and promise of 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21:

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (NASB).

Advocating ambassadors

This is the good news! And as Paul says, we are "ambassadors for Christ," through whom God is "making an appeal"—speaking the good news. Christ is the great Advocate, the Mediator between God and man, who stands in a cosmic courtroom, making a case for mercy to triumph over justice by taking the punishment of sin on Himself. But Christ does not advocate alone; He appoints His followers to be His ambassadors, His voice, to advocate on behalf of the world. How do we do this?

The answer lies in verses 14-19 where Paul paints a picture of Christians advocating for the world. With a guilty party, the burden is upon us to make an

appeal, pleading for their pardon. We do this by overturning the case against the world. Like us, they had a sinful motive: a spirit of rebellion against God. Like us, there is plenty of evidence: their sins against God and each other. Like us, there was testimony: their own faithless rejection of Christ and the eyewitnesses to their sins. Like us, they have no case for innocence.

But we are not actually speaking on the world's behalf, but on God's. God has chosen to provide a way for sinners to win the appeal — not based on their motive, evidence, and testimony, but on Christ's motive, evidence, and

have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

“How can a guilty human race be made innocent? Only through the gospel of Jesus Christ!”

testimony. Look closely at verses 14-19 and see how this works:

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we

Look — new creation!

Here we are entrusted with Christ's motive, evidence, and testimony on behalf of the world. The motive is His love, compelling us to live our lives for the one who gave His life for everyone. Now look at the other elements. The evidence we present on behalf of the world is our renewed and re-created lives. If anyone is in Christ, behold — new creation! The testimony is

the “word of reconciliation” that God has committed to us. It is the testimony that God has made a way for humanity to be reborn and re-created — the good news of Jesus Christ!

We are eyewitnesses because we’ve experienced rebirth ourselves. Humanity stands condemned, guilty before God. But God has provided a means of appeal by which all humanity can be saved. Those who accept this salvation join Jesus as advocates for the lost. The lost find abun-

are evidence — indeed, proof — that God is at work re-creating the heavens and the earth. God has not abandoned His creation to sin and death; rather, He is at work redeeming and restoring all that is lost.

How do we know this? Because each person rescued from sin and death and given abundant and eternal life is evidence of God’s gracious work. God’s redemptive plan is at work and evident in the world through our lives. This is the power of a life

world. The Christian’s call to a lifetime of repentance, holiness, righteousness, and loving obedience to God is a call to shine the light of God into the world as evidence that Christ is real and that His life, death, and resurrection are powerful enough to change humanity.

Christians’ call to be a set-apart people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, the body of Christ, the family of God, citizens of a new kingdom, is proof the world needs to be convinced that they can be reconciled to God and join His new creation. Those who are in Christ are evidence to the world that God is real and that they have hope!

This is our purpose as Christians in this world. We live together in loving, righteous obedience to God so that the world will be drawn to Christ by the evidence of our participation in the new creation. As we increasingly live into the reality of new creation, our evidence will become overwhelming to the world around us, making the gospel attractive in every way (Titus 2:10).

May we live in such a way that whenever someone sees us, they proclaim, “Look — new creation!”

BA

“God’s redemptive plan is at work and evident in the world through our lives.”

dant and eternal life in Christ, not because of their motives, evidence, or testimony but because of Christ’s motive, evidence, and testimony at work in them.

The wording of 2 Corinthians 5:17 is typically smoothed out in English translations by providing a few words that do not appear in the Greek. The result is wording that sounds rather individualistic: “If anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature.” A more literal rendering of the passage would be, “If anyone is in Christ, look — new creation!” Yes, the individual is a new creature, but more important, they are part of the new creation. They

changed by God. This is what Jesus was talking about when He described His followers as light to the world: “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Shine bright

We know that Jesus is the Light of the world. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, so we reflect the light of the Son. In doing so, we demonstrate the continuing success of God’s great mission and the ongoing expansion of His kingdom in the

Israel Steinmetz is dean of Academic Affairs for Artios Christian College, and he pastors New Hope United congregation. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Dying to Live



by Sheryl H. Boldt

Of all the ladies I cared for as a private caregiver, Bee was one of my favorites. I loved so many things about her, including her melodramatic manner. When Bee experienced a troubling symptom (that may or may not have indicated something serious), she'd let out a heavy sigh and say, "Well, if I die, I die."

Bee wasn't afraid of dying, but she dreaded the process. She, like most of us, hoped that when her time came, she'd die peacefully in her sleep. At 97 years of age, with her great sense of humor and classy never-ending zest for life, Bee didn't want to suffer a long, lingering death.

I've often thought about how much I relate to Bee's attitude about dying – but in a spiritual sense.

Sin can take such control over our lives. Besides the consequences we ourselves face due to our sinful choices, how many people do we hurt along the way? When we finally decide to forsake sin or an unremitting temptation, we undergo a season of suffering until we finally die to that desire or behavior. But once we die to behavior that isn't God-honoring (like addictions), sexual immorality, or "lesser" sins (like gossip), we can rise to a different way of living – a much more satisfying way of living. A new life that resembles Christ's.

Apostle Paul reminds us that when we trust in Jesus' death and die to sin, we experience new life and the power of a "resurrection like his":

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death

like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Romans 6:4, 5, ESV).

Would we consider confessing to God, who powerfully loves us, a specific area we're struggling with and ask Him to help us die to it? To help us separate our sinful passions from our hearts that passionately desire to be like Christ? To give us a glimpse of what a resurrection life looks like?

Dying to bad habits or sinful behavior (that, if we were honest, we love) is painful. Thankfully, it doesn't have to be a long process, especially when we share our struggle with an accountability partner or small group. These people will help us keep our eyes on our Savior, even when things get worse. A marvelous bond forms when you partner with others who also want to live strong for Christ.

What sin will we finally put to death with the power of the living Christ who dwells within us? What destructive habit will we overcome in Jesus' name so that we can experience the newness of life we've read about in the Bible or heard testimonies about at church? Surely these areas of our lives aren't worth even a fraction of the joy we will experience once we do.

If we die, we die. But once we're truly dead to sin, we are truly alive. **BA**

Sheryl H. Boldt writes from Tallahassee, FL.





New creation begins by listening.
by Barry Mauldin

When I was a child, my family would visit my grandparents on Sundays at their home. As we departed in the evening, my grandfather would give me a bear hug and instruct me to “be a good listener” in school. I heard this admonition hundreds of times over the years. The importance of listening and obedience was greatly impressed upon me.

The same principles apply to discipleship. The purpose of a disciple is to learn and obey — to grow, a quality referred to as being teachable. Listening is the gateway to it. The Bible tells us that much is taught through the ears. We must be swift to hear, James says (1:19), and Paul

writes that faith is built by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). God speaks words of life to us through His holy Book.

It is important to hear in order to increase learning (Proverbs 1:5), be wise (8:33), dwell safely (1:33), and be blessed (8:32). By contrast, the Bible warns about refusing to listen to the voice of instruction. Ruin and destruction await the foolish who despise such wisdom (5:12, 13). Therefore, being humble and teachable are valuable assets for a disciple.

Rebellion

The enemy of discipleship is a rebellious attitude, and it’s nothing new. Adam and Eve listened to the Enemy, questioned the commands of God, and then disobeyed. Looking back to Moses’ time, the writer of Hebrews describes the Israelites’ experience in the wilderness as “the rebel-

lion” (Hebrews 3:8). Within forty days of receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites broke the first command and built a golden calf. They hardened their hearts through unbelief (Hebrews 3:12).

What is the source of this rebellion? Why do many people today shake a fist at authority and close their ears to instruction? Because of a rebellious heart. Proverbs says an evil man seeks only rebellion (17:11). Jesus Christ stated, “Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12). Behavior once considered rebellious in public schools, for example, is now tame compared to the bullying and violence seen today. The culture is growing colder.

Jethro and Moses

That is why a teachable spirit is so important — something we

see in Moses. His father-in-law Jethro met him at their encampment in the wilderness (Exodus 18). Jethro had mentored Moses in Midian, teaching him shepherding, and, undoubtedly, leadership as well. Moses had great respect for Jethro, seen by his affectionate greeting and willingness to share God's work of deliverance with his people (vv. 7, 8).

During his visit, Jethro observed Moses judging the people's legal matters. Despite his servant attitude toward his followers, Moses performed this burdensome task alone. Jethro noticed the inefficiency of the arrangement, and so confronted Moses and offered his counsel.

Jethro first instructed Moses, "Listen now to my voice" (v. 19). Jethro warned him about overdoing his kindness, which would eventually lead to burnout and ineffectiveness. Jethro advised Moses to instruct capable men in the ways of the laws so that they could share responsibility of judging disputes.

Here was a teachable moment. Moses could have rejected Jethro's counsel. He could have said, "Be quiet, old man! I know more than you." Instead, Moses listened to the voice of Jethro and accepted his counsel (v. 24).

Paul and Timothy

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul describes the end times. These days will show people to be unthankful, proud, despising good, and disobedient to parents (3:2). All of these involve a spirit of rebellion. Paul writes that many will reject sound doctrine and turn to their own desires (4:3, 4). Such people have "itch-

ing ears" — only listening to what pleases them, not what edifies.

Paul's warning to Timothy includes the note that such rebellious people "will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all . . ." (3:9). The apostle offers this young man a teachable moment, observing that Timothy has "followed my . . . manner of life" (v. 10). He wants Timothy to notice his conduct. Paul knows that because of rebellion in the heart, human beings need a change of heart. He experienced that in the abundant grace of the Lord. The self-described chief of sinners underwent a heart change by the patient mercy of Christ. Once an insolent man, Paul became an example to all who will believe in Christ.

Wise man

My grandfather passed away in 2017. In a message he wrote to me for my birthday the previous year, he reminded me to "be a good listener" — his parting sentiment. I have tried to follow his manner of life in childhood and adulthood.

Grandpa's desire was that I would grow into a wise man, and I take the opportunity to share this wisdom with the children in my life. I pray that Christ will soften their hearts and provide teachable moments so they can grow in their faith. **BA**

Barry Mauldin pastors the Claremore, OK church.



Online Extra

Want a little more to read? The March-April Online Extra explains the power of God's Word to restore lives. Visit baonline.org to learn more.



Lord's Supper Tuesday, April 7

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me"

(1 Corinthians 11:25, NKJV).

2020 LeRoy Dais



Young Writers Challenge

Attention young writers! The submission deadline for our first writing contest is fast approaching. Do you have an idea? Have you started writing your rough draft yet? Be sure to email your article to bibleadvocate@cog7.org by April 30.

Remember, the goal of the contest is to cultivate a new generation of BA writers, so don't miss out on this opportunity. Here are the details one more time:

Age categories: 14-17 years (boys); 14-17 years (girls); 18-21 years (boys); 18-21 years (girls). First place and runners-up articles will be awarded in each category.

First place recognition includes publication of the articles in the November-December 2020 BA print magazine and BA Online; award announcement and presentation by GC President Loren Stacy and BA editor Jason Overman at the 2021 convention; and \$250 awarded to

the youth/SWORD group of the winners' congregations.* Runners-up in each category will be announced in the BA magazine and at convention, and will be published in the BA Online.

Participation and submission rules

- Writers must live in the US or Canada, be baptized believers of Jesus, and fit the age categories outlined above.
- Articles may be on the subject of their choosing, but should be Bible based and include personal experience or cultural observation that inspires and informs. A key verse must be included (note the Bible translation used). No fiction or poetry.
- Submissions must be original and unpublished, with quotes and sources properly identified.
- Articles must be 500-600 words in length and written in English. They should include the author's name, age, parents' names, and congregation they attend.
- Articles must be submitted in a Word document attached to email and addressed to bibleadvocate@cog7.org. Please include WRITING CONTEST in the subject line.
- Submission deadline: **April 30, 2020.**
- Immediate family members of the BAP staff may not participate.

For more information, contact Sherri Langton at sherri@cog7.org or Jason Overman at jason.overman@cog7.org.

* Prize money is graciously given by an anonymous donor.

Questions & Answers



Are there prophets today?

Many Christians would say no — outright. Cessationism is the view that the spiritual roles and gifts of prophet and prophecy, among others, were unique to and reserved for the New Testament era. With the Christian church established and the canon of Scripture completed in the first century, these operations of the Holy Spirit were no longer necessary and had passed away.

The sixteenth-century Swiss reformer John Calvin is a good example of this point of view. Of Apostle Paul's original fivefold ministry of the church (Ephesians 4:11), he relegated apostles, prophets, and even evangelists to the early era. Only the roles of pastor and teacher remained in a less dynamic and more institutionalized church.

This is a safe approach. But does the Bible prepare us for this cessation? Certainly, Scripture needs no supplement, as some denominations have erred in creating. That special revelation of the Spirit through the prophets is fixed and finished. The Spirit is always at work, however, and we find throughout God's Word that the prophet is a fixture of God's people since reading that Abraham was a prophet (Genesis 20:7).

From Miriam to Huldah, to Anna, to the four virgin daughters of Philip, prophets have nourished and corrected the family of God, by the word of God, from the start (Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9). So central to Israel's life in God, Moses desired that "all the Lord's people were prophets" (Numbers 11:29). Joel foresaw this democratizing of the prophetic office in his prophecy: "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy" (2:28; Acts 2:17, 18). There seems to be no expiration date on this new covenant reality.

Perhaps our everyday experience belies it, but from a biblical perspective, it is hard to imagine a Spirit-formed people not exhibiting the prophetic gift and office so fundamental to the church in Corinth, where prophecy was not just a spiritual gift but greatest among them (1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:1). Should that cease to be what "speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men" (14:3)? No! Rather, Paul's admonition "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies" still rings true to us today (1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20).

The next verse ("Test all things; hold fast what is good") speaks to the flipside of this prophetic reality. Where there are true prophets, there will also be false. The oft-repeated warning of false prophets assumes the existence of the true (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Ezekiel 22:28; Matthew 24:11; 1 John 4:1-3). We do not deny the prophetic word, but we must test what is said by the standard of Christ and His Word.

While the formal office of prophet may not exist among us, that ministry still stirs where the Holy Spirit is operative in the church. How do we rightly define and identify it? The prophet gave a simple answer: "Haggai, the LORD's messenger, spoke the LORD's message to the people . . ." (1:13). The prophet delivers the message "Thus says the Lord" that safeguards the community of faith. The prophet foresees trial, judgment, deliverance, yes, but first calls us to faithfulness and repentance, rebuking apathy, injustice, and false alliances.

Is this ministry needed today? Yes! Are there prophets who are up to the task? I hope. More important, do we recognize the message of the Lord when we hear it, even when it makes us uncomfortable? Because that's the role of the prophet: challenging the comfortable and comforting the challenged.

— Elder Jason Overman

Understanding the
fundamentals of a church
building.

by Dr. David Downey

I have seen many kinds of church buildings in my journey. I can remember something about all of them, except the first (my first year of life).

Several churches from my childhood stand out in memory. In one of them, we were building a sanctuary while we were there. It was enormous and in the round. I have a photograph of my brother and me standing in front of it as it was being constructed, my brother pointing out something with his arm around me. It seemed like a stadium, it was so huge. It is gone now, the building and the church.

I remember the deep burgundy carpet in the second church. Around the organist, there was a railing with short matching burgundy curtains, which I stared at through many long services.

The third church is where I spent formative years in my early teens, so I remember a great deal about it. When my wife and I were on vacation recently, we drove by, and I saw some things I recognized. But mostly, everything had changed. I knew that what had changed inside was greater than what had changed outside. Familiar people would be gone. The staff would be entirely new. The worship would be different. If I went inside, there would likely be almost nothing familiar.

Nevertheless, I also knew that no matter how much had



Master Builder

changed inside, the church was still essentially the same. There would be new methods, a new feel, new people, but they would be following the same purpose that drove us when we attended there in the early seventies.

God's people are similar to church buildings. We have existence only insofar as we are led, shaped, and built by God. He is never finished with us. He is always working on us, and we cannot wait for completion before we are functional.

Careful plan

The church is not the result of a divine whim or passing fancy.

Paul wrote of Christ to the Colossians, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created . . . He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (1:15, 16, 18).

Like much of Paul's writings,

this is a mouthful! Paul lined up superlatives. He said that beginning as far back as the creation, God has extended His effective work forward through the cross and redemption. When we identify with Christ's work, we are part of what is much larger than what we are as individuals.

In thirty years, if we were to come back to our present church, it would not be recognizable. Nevertheless, it would be *spiritually* recognizable, since the same eternal purposes would drive her. God save us from our churches ever leaving our first love, for only then do we become unrecognizable (Revelation 2:4, 5). The church in Ephesus, which the angel spoke of, is now gone, as are the other six churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3. All of them were in what is today Islamic Turkey. Are they truly gone?

Sure foundation

Paul had previously said to the Ephesians:



Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (2:19-22).

The foundation of every church that God is building is Jesus Christ himself. That may be a hard concept to fully understand, but we might see it this way.

If we were to stretch a timeline from the foundation of the church through Jesus to today, we would see the original persecutions mixed with the organization of the infant church; the beginnings of self-awareness in theology just after the first

century; the schisms and infighting, councils and creeds that declared each other anathema through the next five centuries; the decay of the Catholic Church; the breakout of the Protestant Church and the ensuing division of denominations in determining what the Bible rightly teaches; the founding of our denomination; the founding of our local church; and the history of our church to date.

Through all those events, haphazard as they might seem, Jesus is the timeline. We may see everything as a spotty and even broken history, but Jesus sees all this as part of the plan. His vision goes beyond today to what He has in store for us in the next day. He *knows* — while we just look forward with excitement and anticipation.

Sturdy materials

God does not use brick, mortar, wood, or steel to build His church. He uses sturdier and more resilient materials: living

stones (1 Peter 2:5). The pyramids in Egypt may be some of the oldest buildings on earth and Stonehenge one of the oldest structures, but given enough time, they will crumble to dust. Most buildings do not last a hundred years.

If God gave the world another billion years, the real church building will still exist, with all of the changes to its original substance. Living stones just keep going. Think of that member sitting next to you: They keep going to eternity. Their existence, their spiritual *force*, never ends (Hebrews 12:1).

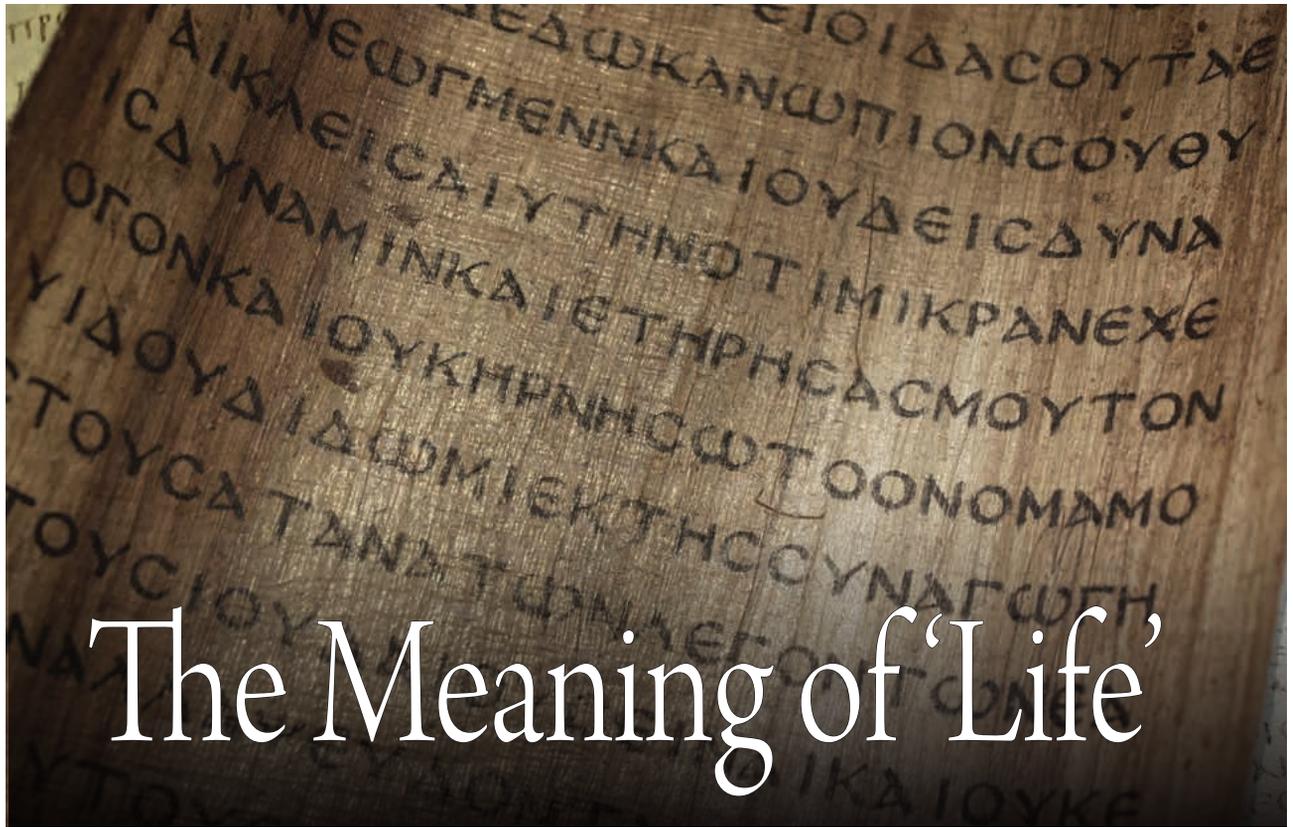
Spiritual structures

We are committed to the cause of Christ — growing, loving, serving, and being dependable, faithful, and flexible. God is building spiritual structures. We choose to be part of His building. We do not fret, for it is His structure, and if we allow God to build His structure His way, it will be a wonderful expression of His handiwork.

At first, we have momentary sadness when we think of the churches that are nothing like they used to be — now unfamiliar. Then when we reflect on their permanence in Christ, we can rejoice that only what is best in them has been preserved, forever. **BA**

Dr. David Downey
writes from Fort
Worth, TX.





The Meaning of 'Life'

A deeper look into a common New Testament term.

by R. Herbert

In the English language we get by with a single word for *life*, but the ancient Greeks realized that the concept can include very different things. As a result, the New Testament uses not one but three words for *life*, each with a distinct meaning. An awareness of the varied “meanings of *life*” can help us better understand many important biblical verses.

Bios-life

The most basic word for *life* in ancient Greek, and in the New Testament, is *bios*, from which we take our *bio*-rooted words, like *biology*, of course. *Bios* was commonly used for life in that simple sense, for the period of one’s lifetime and for those things that sustain physical life, such as physical resources and even wealth. It has this meaning in scriptures such as Luke 21:4: “All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

Psuche-life

The next word for *life* is *psuche*, from which we take our *psych*-rooted words relating to the mind, such as *psychology*. However, in ancient Greek the word had a broader meaning,

including the breath of life, the vital physical force that animates the body, the physical life or “soul.” We find this word most often in the New Testament with the simple meaning of our physical life, as in Matthew 10:39: “Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.”

Zoe-life

The final word for *life*, and the most important, is *zoe*. We take our *zoo*-rooted terms like *zoology* from this word. *Zoe* signifies not only the animate aspect of life, as opposed to non-life, but also life in the absolute and fullest sense. The word is used repeatedly in the New Testament in statements regarding the kind of eternal life God has (John 5:26) and wishes to give us — life that is both qualitatively and quantitatively greater

than the life we have now.

Zoe is in verses like 1 John 5:11, 12: “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

‘Life’ examples

Keeping the different meanings of these three words in mind can often give us greater understanding of passages in the New Testament. An example is 1 John 2:16: “For everything in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – comes not from the Father but from the world.” Here, knowing that the word *life* in “the pride of life” is a translation of the word *bios* helps us see that the pride being spoken of is not arrogance, but pride of physical possessions, which fits better with the context.

In Matthew 6:25, we read “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink . . . Is not life more than food . . . ?” Here, the word *life* is actually not *bios*, and the stress is not on the things that sustain life, but *psuche* – our very existence (just as Jesus said, “Is not life more than food . . . ?”).

As a final example, notice John 10:10b: “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Here, knowing the word for *life* is *zoe*, we see that Jesus’ goal was not that we just have a better or more abundant physical life, but that we get true life and come to have *that* life abundantly.

Signs of ‘life’

By simply checking which word for *life* is used in a given scripture, where it might make a difference, we can often come to a much fuller understanding of what is being said. To do that, all you need to do is check the verse in a *Strong’s* concordance or an online Greek-English interlinear New Testament.

It’s simple enough to know the true meaning of *life*. **BA**

R. Herbert (a pen name), Ph.D., was trained in biblical studies and Ancient Near Eastern languages and archaeology. He writes for a number of Christian venues. All scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



It’s All Greek to Me!

The meaning of *life* in Jesus’ words

Bios (*Strong’s* #979): “Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of *life* [*bios*], and bring no fruit to maturity” (Luke 8:14, emphasis added).

Psuche (*Strong’s* #5590): “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His *life* [*psuche*] a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, emphasis added).

Zoe (*Strong’s* #2222): “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting *life* [*zoe*]” (John 3:16, emphasis added).

The meaning of *life* in Paul’s words

Bios (*Strong’s* #979): “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this *life* [*bios*], that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4, emphasis added).

Psuche (*Strong’s* #5590): “Because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his *life* [*psuche*], to supply what was lacking in your service toward me” (Philippians 2:30, emphasis added).

Zoe (*Strong’s* #2222): “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting *life* [*zoe*]. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal *life* [*zoe*] in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:22, 23, emphasis added).

– Jason Overman



"Ooh, look at that ugly worm!" cried Brian. "I'm sure I can get a great scream out of Ariana with it." He grabbed it and crept up behind her. "Look, Ariana," he said as he opened his fist in front of her face.

To his surprise, Ariana squealed with delight. "Oh, it's absolutely beautiful!"

"Beautiful? How can you call this fat worm beautiful?" asked Brian.

"This is not a fat worm," explained Ariana. "It's a caterpillar. One day it will become a beautiful butterfly. Where did you find it? We need to put it back so it can eat enough food."

Brian led her to the plant on the side of the pathway where he had found the caterpillar. "Why can't I keep it so I can watch it become a butterfly?" he asked.

"Well, are you sure you can care for him and provide him with everything he needs?"

"Sure! How hard could it be?"

"It might be pretty hard," replied Ariana. "We need to research how to care for him."

After school that day, the two searched for information and found out that their caterpillar was going to become a monarch butterfly.

Even Brian was getting excited now. "Let's go get our caterpillar!"

Ariana insisted that they prepare a home for him first. They took a jar with netting on it to the milkweed patch. They carefully uprooted the whole plant and put it, caterpillar and all, into the jar.

Every day after school the two picked another milkweed plant to bring home to their pet. They watched as he grew fatter and fatter. "Is he ever going to change into a chrysalis?" wondered Brian.

"Someday soon," replied Ariana.

And sure enough, one day after school they peered into the jar and couldn't see their fat little friend anywhere. Instead, they saw a light green chrysalis hanging from a branch of the milkweed plant. Over the next ten days, they looked for any changes. Then one morning as Brian was getting ready for school, Ariana called, "Come quick! It's happening!"

Brian ran all the way to Ariana's house. When he arrived, he found the butterfly was still very much inside the now clear chrysalis. The beautiful butterfly slowly emerged, wings all crumpled at first, but finally full and beautiful. They took their jar outside and removed the netting. The butterfly crawled to the top of the plant and then flew out into the sky.

The next Sabbath, the pastor started his sermon by reading 2 Corinthians 5:17. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Brian and Ariana looked at each other, mouths open wide. The pastor caught the looks on their faces and asked, "Brian and Ariana, do you have something you want to share with the rest of us?"

The two of them were taken aback, but not for long. "We were just thinking that maybe this new creation Paul is talking about is like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly," stated Brian.

"Yes, the caterpillar becomes a totally new creation!" continued Ariana.

The pastor smiled. "That is a perfect example. God wants to transform each of us from being selfish, proud, and sinful into becoming loving, humble, and righteous. Paul underwent quite a transformation himself, and all of us can too. We can be transformed from ugly caterpillars into beautiful butterflies!"

Crossword Puzzle: The words in this crossword puzzle come from 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.

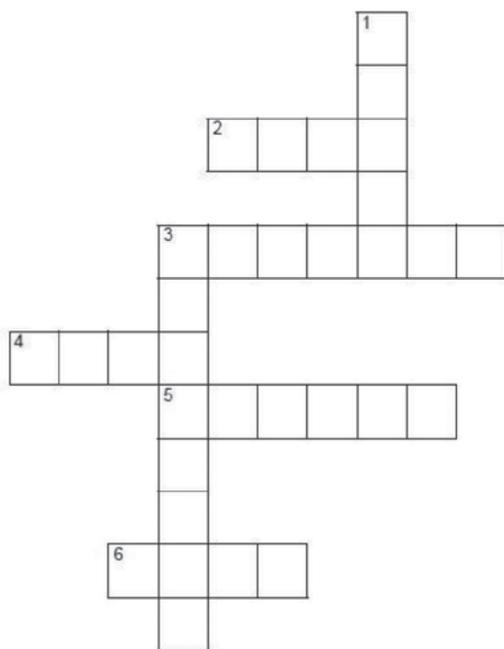
Across

- 2. Stopped living
- 3. Forces or pressures
- 4. Opposite of die
- 5. Any person
- 6. Moved upward

Down

- 1. To decide in court
- 3. Something that has been made

See page 26 for answers.



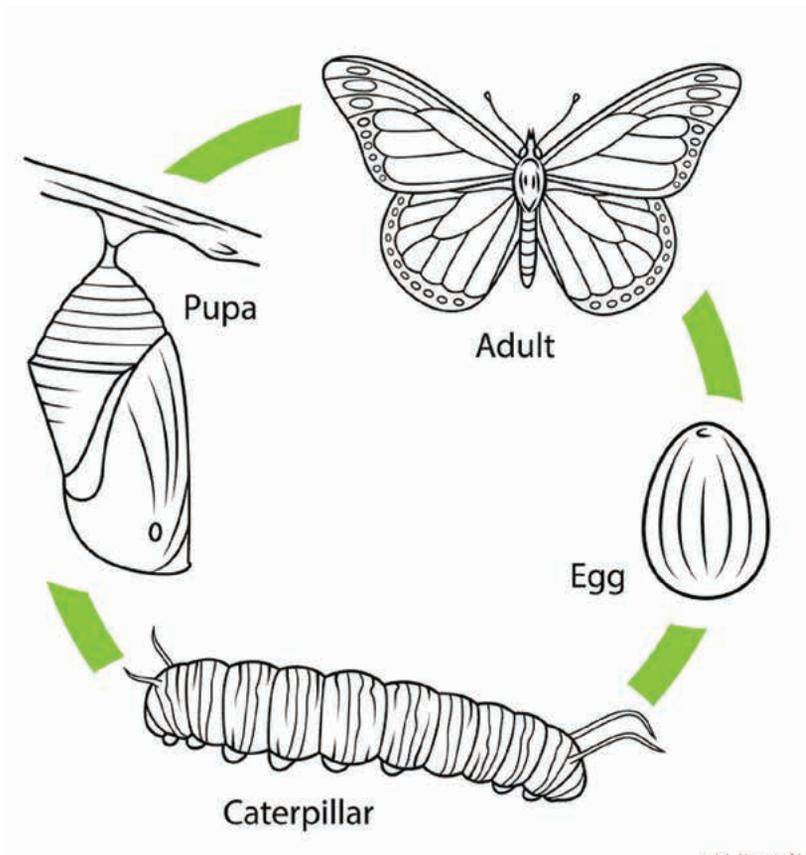
Snack Time: Edible Caterpillar to Butterfly

You can make an edible caterpillar that turns into a butterfly following these simple directions. You will need a banana or cheese stick, large pretzel twists, and raisins or chocolate chips.

Directions

Peel the banana and cut a 3-inch section off one end. Place that piece on a plate. Add raisin eyes. This is your caterpillar. Now, push a pretzel onto one side of the banana, near the center. Push another pretzel onto the other side of the banana. These are your butterfly's wings. Break off two pieces from another pretzel to act as antennae. Poke them into the banana just behind the raisin eyes. Your caterpillar has turned into a butterfly!

Art Time: Life Cycle of a Monarch Butterfly



Author: Artsashina · License: ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) · <http://www.supercoloring.com/coloring-pages/life-cycle-of-a-monarch-butterfly>.



Kids Time activities are abridged from the BAP children's curriculum. Order at cog7.org/online-store.

Creation

by Amber Mann Riggs

It wasn't your intention to send some of your garbage on a tropical vacation. Nevertheless, there it lies, basking in the sun as it floats near Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. In an odd twist, some of its toxic chemicals may wind up back in your home and on your plate, courtesy of the fish that bathed in the same waters.

This is one reason that Dutch inventor Boyan Slat is on a mission to remove the garbage and make the oceans like new again. In late 2019, Slat announced the first major success of his ocean cleanup device. His company plans to take the trash they successfully removed and give it a second life as something that won't wind up in the ocean. He'll have plenty of material to work with. Right now, there is enough garbage in the ocean to cover the state of Texas. Twice.

Slat isn't the only one who is in the business of making old things new.

God's mission

Genesis 1 and 2 laid the foundation for God's goal for all of creation. It started with God setting aside a small plot of earth as the hub for an expansion project. Eden was an oasis in the middle of an untamed land. That garden was the place where two human priests reflected God's character and ways onto earth, and God dwelt among them. When we hold Genesis 1:28 with Genesis 2:15, a picture emerges of these priests expanding the garden, thus reconciling the untamed wilderness to God's care. Eventually God's dwelling place would fill the entire earth.

Accordingly, what do we find in the final chapters of the Bible? God's dwelling place filling the entire earth.

Despite popular teachings of escaping earth to live forever in heaven, helping humanity escape earth has never been God's mission. Rather, God's mission has always been for humans to cultivate the entirety of earth into a cosmic palace that is fit for a King. This palace is intended to be aesthetically beautiful, and the community within it will relate to one another in love.

New creation, new humans

God's mission took a detour when humanity balked. The evidence is still all around us that humans don't want God to be King over the earth. Rather, we want to run earth our own way. Our way, not God's, results in hunger, slums, sex trafficking, smog, and garbage-filled oceans. Is it any wonder that "creation groans" (Romans 8:22, NASB)?

Because "God so loved the [cosmos]" — not just humanity — "He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16, NASB). Accordingly, what John invited us to picture in Revelation is a renewed heaven and a renewed earth, all made possible through Jesus. Renewed humans are part of this renewed creation, but we don't constitute all of it.

Jesus was a new type of human. He reflected God's care for the world in a way that had never been seen. When you are born again in Jesus, it is another way of saying God is re-creating you in Christ's image (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29). Paul put it this way: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

However, Paul continued, "All

Waits

this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the [cosmos] to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19a).

A huge component of this ministry of reconciliation is helping our fellow humans be reconciled to Christ so that they too can become part of new creation. However, new creation doesn't end with humanity. We are where it begins.

Rejoining God's mission

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he wrote of how creation "waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (8:19). Yes, creation has been waiting on you. And on me. Why? Because we subjected creation to decay. But as we reflect God's care into the world, we also play a role in its renewal.

In yet another letter, Paul explained we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works" (Ephesians 2:10). However, we have been re-created to do not only good works but works "which God prepared in advance for us to do."

This is covenant language. A covenant is a partnership with God. What has human partnership with God been about from the very beginning? Reflecting God's character and ways and reconciling the world — and the communities within it — to God's care.

Living alongside God

Is your congregation or business working to feed hungry people? Pay off debts? Clean up roadsides? Ransom slaves? End gun violence? This isn't just outreach. This is living alongside God and reflecting His care to reconcile the wastelands of this world to His rule. Through Jesus, we get to invite others to live alongside Him, become part of the new creation, and join in God's mission.

Like removing garbage from the ocean and transforming it into something beautiful, these spiritual tasks can seem huge and impossible. Even as we do good, the world continues to do evil. Even as Christ cleans up the messes inside us, we find new ways to falter. The good news is God assures us that one day all the remnants of evil on this earth will be gathered up and

melted away, while the beauty of the kingdom of God will remain. Then, like a true covenant partner, Christ will finish the work He began — and is continuing to do — in and through us. And His presence will finally fill the entire earth. **BA**

Amber Riggs is dean of administration for Artios Christian College. She lives near Eugene, OR, with her husband, Bryan, and their four daughters.



Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, unless otherwise noted.



For resources on leading your congregation to work together toward new creation, visit Artios Christian College's Lead Up section in [baonline.org](https://www.baonline.org).

It Is Finished

Living the story with
the end in mind.

by Jason Overman

It has been said that history is *His-story* – God’s. The same can be said for His book, the Bible. In it is contained the plot that gives meaning and purpose to all things and all time. To know the story well, to find our place in it, is the goal of faith. And like any good story, it is written with the end in mind.

Here it is in a nutshell: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). A new creation in Christ is the story, and where it is heading.

In this issue, we swing the spotlight to the end of the Book and *His-story*. When we think of new creation, we’re drawn to Revelation 21. John’s record echoes Paul: “Behold, I make all things new . . .” (v. 5). But it adds something: “It is done!” (v. 6). God’s new creation began with

the resurrection of Jesus, but its full realization awaits completion. In a world of evil and suffering, we groan for the finished new. Revelation 21 points to it.

Open your Bible and follow along as we shine the light on just a few of the vivid details of this hopeful chapter.

Three are ‘new’

This apocalyptic passage (21:1 – 22:5) not only reminds us that the story continues to its promised consummation but also tells of the story itself, and its Author: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (v. 6). In a variety of ways, we find the full breadth of the biblical narrative, and God’s sovereignty over it, in this slice of Scripture dedicated to His renewal of all things.

One of those ways is by counting the *new’s*. John sees three: a new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem (vv. 1, 2). The first two take us back to Genesis 1: “In the beginning God created . . .” and the prophet’s promises (Isaiah 65-66). Jerusalem was the

heart of His covenant people, Israel, where He will reign: “Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, who dwells in Jerusalem!” (Psalm 135:21). These three *new’s* sum up the Bible: of a Creator who intends to live among His creation (Leviticus 26:11).

In Revelation 21, the story is fulfilled: heaven, earth, and Jerusalem are transformed to their ultimate purpose. God reigns from His throne openly: “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” (v. 3). There’s no need for sun, moon, or temple here because God and the Lamb are light and temple (v. 23). God is there (Ezekiel 48:35)!

Seven are ‘no’

But there are *no’s* that go along with the *new’s*, and these explain why the old had to be made new. Count them: no sea; no death, sorrow, crying, or pain; no curse; no night (vv. 1, 4; 22: 3, 5). These define the first and former things that must pass

REVELATION 21

away (21:1, 4). It's a world we know well. Each shows how sin and death wrecked a good creation and separated God from His people.

For the ancients, sea and darkness represented the chaos that threatened destruction. The curse and the sorrow and death that follow from it are the plight of fallen humanity. These all take us back to Genesis 3. The curse is now reversed. These seven *no's* admit that the old story was neither straight nor smooth; it was bent, broken. The new is needed.

The old tale of sin and death continues, overlapping with the new that has come in Christ. We feel the weight of the "old" still, and long for the fullness of our faith. We await God's eternal *no!* to all that defiles and lies (Revelation 21: 27). From the throne, sin is judged and excluded; there is no place for old here. But the overcomer will inherit the new as a child of God (vv. 7, 8).

Twelve by twelve

As we view the vivid details of New Jerusalem with John, we recognize that the great city was always more a people than a place. Indeed, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife," and she radiates the "glory of God" (vv. 9, 11). *Twelves* organize her striking stature. Her

twelve foundations correspond to the apostles of the Lamb, her twelve gates to the tribes of Israel (vv. 12, 14). Like the Most Holy Place, she is a perfect cube, but on a grander scale — twelve to the cube of ten (or 12,000) furlongs in every direction. Her walls are measured similarly: twelve by twelve cubits (144).

The detailed numerology of New Jerusalem symbolically illustrates the beautiful unity and authority of God's people and purposes across both Testaments. We recall all the stories of twelve tribes and disciples, their calling and exploits of faith, their fatigue and failure. It is all brought to fulfillment here, gathered and fitly framed for all it was meant to be.

The New Jerusalem descends from heaven. She is God's creation. Compared to the first day of creation ("Let there be light"), here is a greater creation still. The light of the city lights the nations, reflecting the light of the Lamb and the Lord God (vv. 11, 23, 24; 22:5). This golden, gem-encrusted city-bride is more than illumination; she is a revelation. She glitters gloriously, her gates welcoming that there's room for all who have been transformed by the new.

One Lamb and life

The new creation promised in Revelation teems with the life of

a new Eden. We find the water of life for the thirsty, a tree of life for the healing of the nations (v. 6; 22:2; Genesis 2). The garden of God is complete with His living presence, but it is much more than coming full circle; it is the arrival of something brand new. This life has already begun because it is inseparable from the Lamb and the life He is. Let's live into it.

The Lamb of God has been part of the story from the foundation of the world. He is the story and its ending. The new heaven and new earth, new Jerusalem, are the outworking of the life of the Lamb, and those who belong to Him are found in His Book of Life (v. 27). The old life is passing away. Let's live into His new.

"It is done!" marks an end yet to be seen — an ending we anticipate, but that is in God's hands. "I make all things new" is a message we live and share now. It's also a caution. New creation, like the resurrection itself, is an apocalyptic act of God. It is not accomplished by human politics or progress. "I make" rebukes human pride. "I make" insists that what is new is not a novelty, and what must be finished only God can.

For those in Christ, "It is finished" has come, and still comes. And *His-story* is ours. **BA**



Are We Ready?

The wedding is coming!
by Dr. Donna Sherwood

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:2, 3).

Every bride will tell you that she didn't just saunter down the aisle in her regular clothes. And worse, not her pajamas! Her long-awaited wedding day and subsequent marriage required much preparation: deciding to marry the person in question; engaging in premarital counseling; and selecting the bridal party, venue, menu, invitations, and other items.

An earthly wedding and marriage are potentially beautiful and are clearly not microwave experiences, but require detailed preparation. If this is true, what about preparing for eternity as the bride of Christ? The magnitude of eternity requires that we pause, reflect, and, most of all, get and stay ready.

It is often said, "There is no such thing as an ugly bride." But is that true of the bride of Christ? Are we being diligent in

our preparation to make ourselves beautiful for His return? Are blemishes of sin making us unsightly? Our marriage to Jesus suggests we are a new creation; old habits, lifestyles, and status have changed. In Christ Jesus all things have become new. Revelation 19:7-9 gives us advice and a sure promise:

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Beautiful city

As the bride of Christ, we have so much to prepare for, so much that awaits us!

The Alpha and Omega, who is true and faithful, has promised us that one day the New Jerusalem will come from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride who has made diligent preparation for her husband. Imagine the newness of all things and being enraptured by the holy God, whom our hearts have long waited for. Imagine the sublime existence when God himself, and not another, will wipe away all our tears. Goodbye to the separation of death, to sorrow, to crying, and to all versions of pain.

Most important, imagine the grandeur of the foursquare city of God, Holy Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21:10-26. The city will be splendid with the glory and light of God. John writes that her high wall has twelve foundations named after the twelve apostles and is adorned with all manner of precious stones. The city also has twelve gates, each a different pearl with an angel and the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The streets of the city are made from gold.

To top it off, there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem because God himself will be there, and the brightness of the Lord will render the sun and moon of no effect. This is an experience, existence, and place not to be missed. What a glorious time it will be when the redeemed who overcame will be with the Lord permanently, inheriting all things!

Royal invitation

This glimpse of eternity should motivate us to be the new creations we are called to be in Christ Jesus, to prepare ourselves to be His bride. We have been issued a royal invitation like none other, described in the parable in Matthew 22:1-14.

In the story, guests reject two wedding invitations, issued by a king. They were told about the sumptuous provisions made for them: "Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage" (Matthew 22:4). In the end, those who rejected the invitation were deemed unworthy and were destroyed by the king's army.

Committed to having guests at

his son's wedding, the king sent his servants to issue invitations to all in the byways and highways, and they accepted. Sadly, one person who came ignored the protocol of wearing an appropriate wedding garment and was put out of the wedding.

Jesus' invitation

This parable bears stark resemblance to the royal invitation issued by Jesus to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb at the end of the age. Right now, as in the parallel parable in Luke 14:15-24, many people are making countless excuses, like business and family commitments (vv. 18-20). Do such excuses sound familiar?

If any one of us sees that our
continued on page 28

Questions

It's time to pause and ask ourselves some sobering questions:

- Do I sufficiently appreciate that I am a new creation of the Most High God who was purchased at an enormous price of the life of Jesus Christ?
- Am I ignoring the King's wedding invitation for His Son's wedding feast?
- Am I unimpressed despite the Father's "all things" of the New Jerusalem having been made ready through Jesus Christ, and am I attending to everything except Him?
- Am I ready as a new creation in the right wedding garment for the marriage supper of the Lamb?
- Am I a new creation witness to others to come taste and see that God is good and that they, too, can have eternal life?
- Have I purified myself by the blood, Word, and Holy Spirit for the hope of eternal life and the sure promise made to me by God?
- Do I emanate the radiant beauty of Jesus Christ's righteousness?

Metamorphosis

Fuzzy, wuzzy,
wooly,
Inching along the
brown bumpy
branch.

Never knowing now
the Promise
Of soaring, sailing,
shimmering
In the coming Dance.

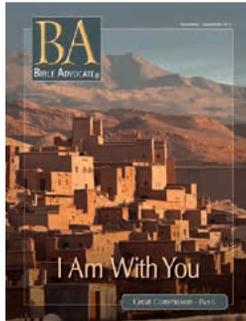
Bumbling, bleary,
blinded
Stumbling we go
Through life's weary
winding ways
Till the Promise
we know
Of beauty, bliss,
brilliant life unending,
Awaiting
our metamorphosis.

Yvonne Kays





Readers Write



Helpful articles

Thank you so much for the *Bible Advocate* each month. While I am able to use a computer and cell phone, I especially enjoy the printed copy that I can read away from the screen that [is] not kind to my eyes.

In the November-December issue, I especially enjoyed two articles — “The Revelation Challenge” by Harriet E. Michael and “Shepherd Stories” by Mike Wallace. The latter went right along with the theme of our Senior Adult Retreat at Sis-Q Meadows in September.

Thank you and keep up the good work.

M. W.
Eugene, OR

BA outreach

I enjoy the *Bible Advocate* very much. . . . I am thankful it is reaching the nations. 180. Wow! That is so needed. Thanks for the great job you all do.

L. S.
La Plata, MO

Preserving the Past

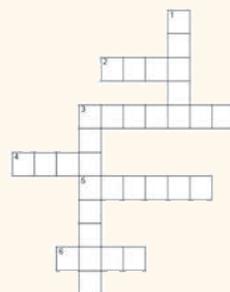
From 1863 to the present, the Bible Advocate Press has stored many issues of *The Hope of Israel* up to the current *Bible Advocate*. Through the years, the older copies have deteriorated, and this decay continues at a faster rate. As documents published by the BAP age, we’re increasingly seeing a need to better preserve the past and our written history.



Therefore, with the board’s authorization, the BAP recently purchased an archiving machine. The BookEye 4v2 (pictured) has a scanning surface that is 17½” tall and 24” wide, and scans two pages in one pass. The laser sensor keeps the type in focus for clear copies of any document. With this kind of quality, the BAP can preserve its priceless documents for the future.



Would you like to invest more in the future? Then consider contributing to the BAP Equipment Fund, which goes toward maintenance of the BAP’s aging equipment. Giving is easy. Just visit <https://cog7.org/give-2-ba/>.



Answers to crossword puzzle (p. 17)

Across

2. Died
3. Compels
4. Live
5. Anyone
6. Rose

Down

1. Judge
3. Creation



John Klassek (left) and
Bryan Cleeton

On Mission ... with International Ministerial Congress

In this On Mission Conversation, IMC Secretary John Klassek interviews GC Missions and IMC Director Bryan Cleeton. During a recent visit in Dallas, Texas, they talked about the goals of the international Church.

The following is an edited transcript of the video interview, which can be viewed in its entirety at http://imc.cog7.org/media/bryan_yt.html.

John Klassek (JK): Bryan, welcome to Conversations. I remember meeting you, I think, in 2007. Since those days, both of us were observers at the IMC, and we look back on all that God has been doing among us, and with us, and through us. You find yourself now as the executive director of the IMC of the Church of God (Seventh Day). Can you tell us a little bit about your journey and experience that bring you to where you are today?

Bryan Cleeton (BC): I grew up in the CoG7, and I was always

interested in what the Church was doing worldwide. I got the opportunity to see images and hear about activities that caught my attention. I felt that God was leading me to be involved in that kind of work, and so as a teenager, I started getting a vision for getting involved somehow. I also had the desire to see our church achieve more of her potential, because I always felt that our church is unique and has a lot to offer the world. As I have traveled in different parts of the world, I see that people are look-

ing for a church like the CoG7. So I went to school and got a business administration degree, knowing that the type of work I was interested in was going to be more administrative. Following that, I got training in more ministerial-type education, to prepare me for whatever God might want me to do. When I was around 30 years old, I felt God was directing me to get involved, because I knew there was a need. I contacted Brother Whaid Rose and Calvin Burrell and asked if I could help out and see how it would go for about six months. They gave me that opportunity, and from that point on, I was given more opportunities to serve. Eventually I was asked to help as executive director, and have been doing that for about three to four years now.

JK: Can you tell me what the IMC is?

BC: The IMC is the ministerial body that connects our church at a global level. It was established about forty-plus years ago. Since that time, it has brought the Church together, and we're now in forty-four different nations, or conferences. IMC's purpose is to facilitate doctrinal unity and the global evangelistic mission of the Church. Our objectives are to train and bring together people from diverse backgrounds, and to work together to establish the Church in various parts of the world.

JK: So, where are we today within the IMC? Where is the focus? What is happening behind the scenes within the IMC?

BC: Well, there is quite a bit happening. We see the need to provide more services to our

members, following those two objectives I mentioned. Right now, we have been forming teams in different areas, such as media and communications, evangelism, ministerial-type issues and training, and project management. IMC is putting the infrastructure in place to facilitate this so that our member conferences can work together in a more productive manner. We are optimistic in working toward developing plans and putting in place training and materials and all kinds of different services that would benefit our conferences so they can achieve their potential. We're bringing together people from diverse backgrounds with skills that are relevant to those areas, so we benefit from the strengths that God has given to the members of our IMC.

It is a very exciting time, and we anticipate that we'll begin to see the results of that in the near future.

JK: When looking forward now, what is your personal and collective vision of where the IMC is heading?

BC: As I mentioned, the

congress is established and has representation in forty-four nations. There are about sixteen more that are developing where the Church is established. There is more interest out there for the teaching we have and support for development of their infrastructure, whether it is administrative or physical buildings, and so forth, and other ministries. Many of the people who join the IMC are coming from many diverse backgrounds. As the Church becomes well-known, I anticipate that we'll have an increasing number of people who want to be a part.

We want to prepare ourselves so they can find the Church and find a home in the CoG7. I anticipate the Church will experience more growth in the future and that we'll be able to make a greater impact.

JK: On a personal note, what has been your greatest reward in service and being part of the success story of the Church?

BC: I personally enjoy seeing people utilize their gifts and talents. I realize that I don't have all those skills. And when people



Bryan during a visit to Africa



Bryan with IMC President Ramon Ruiz and Jason Overman in Monterrey, Mexico, 2018

use their gifts, the Church is going to benefit in new ways that we could never have thought possible.

JK: Very interesting! And now on the other side, there are always challenges that stretch you. Is there anything you would like to reflect on that has been challenging as a part of the journey, and is still part of the journey that we're working through?

BC: I think the biggest challenge would be transitioning from where we've been in the past, and building and improving. Sometimes that is a process and something that's always a challenge, I think, when you are talking about an organization and growth. Growth doesn't come easily, but God is providing the people and resources we need. Also, working with people from very diverse backgrounds, different education levels, different cultures, different languages. So those are the things we have to work through. Thankfully, God is giving us ways to work together and learn from each other, and

actually benefit from the diversity we have.

JK: As we wrap up, obviously the congress meets at various times and in various places around the world. I understand that there is a congress meeting in Nigeria. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

BC: We have such a meeting every four years. We have a proposal to look at officially implementing a global administration for our church. To this point, the structure has facilitated the work to a certain extent, but we see the need for more. Originally the congress was formed as a ministerial body, so now we're working on forming an administration that can better facilitate the global work, and allow each conference to achieve more together.

JK: Bryan, I really enjoyed this conversation. We pray that God continues to bless, encourage, equip, and prepare you for the journey ahead. Thank you.

BC: Thank you, John.

Are We Ready?

continued from page 23

old creation lifestyle numbers us with the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, and all other versions of unrighteousness who will have their part in the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8), we must stop and make a radical change. Can we hear the knock of the Savior on our heart's door to become His new creation? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). What will our response be?

Let's be reminded of Jesus' words about complete commitment to Him (Luke 14:26-28). It takes great sacrifice and cost to follow Jesus as a new creation. But indescribable rich rewards await those who do.

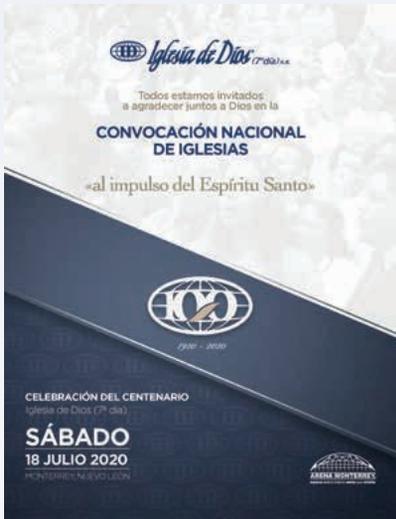
Are we ready to meet our Beloved, or are we an ugly bride with sin-stained lifestyle? Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us and promises to return for us so we can be there with Him forever (John 14:2, 3). If we diligently prepare ourselves, we'll be the spotless bride He's coming for. **BA**

Dr. Donna Sherwood writes from London, England. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

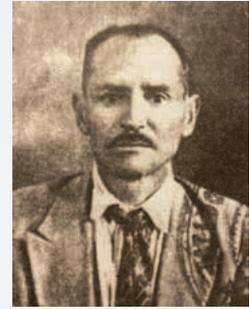




Mexico Conference Celebrates 100th Anniversary in 2020



The first pastor in Mexico was Minister Refugio Ojeda from Saltillo, Coahuila. According to the history of Church of God (Seventh Day) in Mexico, brother Arturo G. Tabel (missionary) was going to Honduras from the US. As he traveled to this place in 1920, he brought with him a lot of tracts or brochures and left some in all the places where he stopped. One brochure in Spanish was titled *What the Church of God Believes and Why*. Published in 1917, it listed the Church's forty points of faith, written by Andrew N. Dugger. The brochure got into the hands of Brother Ojeda, and evangelism started there.



*Minister Refugio Ojeda,
one of the founding
pastors of the Church in
Saltillo Coahuila (1925)*

The city where the Church started is called Saltillo, Coahuila. Between 1920 and 1921 the first mission of the Church was formalized.

The celebration of the one hundred years will take place in the Arena Monterrey on July 18, 2020, in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon.

Mexico at a Glance

- Church president: Israel Delgado
- Churches: 899
- Baptized members: 35,471
- Districts: 17
- Church headquarters: Cuernavaca, Morelos



*First baptisms
performed by Minister
Roman R. Sainz,
Saltillo, Coahuila,
Mexico (1938)*



For more
information,
visit our website:

<http://www.iglesia7d.org.mx/>



2020 NAMC Meeting

We request the presence of all members of the North American Ministerial Council (NAMC) at the meeting scheduled for October 12-17, 2020, in Hebron, Kentucky (15 minutes from Cincinnati, Ohio). This invitation extends to both credentialed and licensed ministers, as well as to local pastors and local leaders. This year, we offer a special invitation to pastors' wives.

Two topics to be discussed at council are the roles of women and old and new covenants.

Important information is listed below.

Dates: October 12-17, 2020

Location: Cincinnati Airport Marriott, 12395 Progress Drive, Hebron, Kentucky



Rates: \$109/night, plus tax, for up to two adults in a guest room (king or two double beds); includes a free breakfast

To reserve a guest room, each attendee must make their reservation by calling 1-800-696-0163. The code word to receive the discounted rate is "NAMC." You may request a room with a king-sized bed or two double beds, but there should be no more than two

adults per room to receive the free breakfast. Three or more people will invalidate the free breakfast for *all those in the room*. If two ministers/pastors are sharing a room, each minister/pastor is responsible for paying his share of expense at departure.

Accommodations

The hotel is pleased to offer the following:

- Free parking
- Complimentary high-speed Internet in guest rooms and meeting rooms
- Complimentary shuttle service to and from the Cincinnati International Airport (CVG)
- Complimentary shuttle service to and from Crestview Hills Town Center

Take a few extra days before or after the meetings to visit many other attractions in the area, like the Creation Museum and the National Freedom Center. An offsite trip to the replica of the ark is being planned.

We encourage pastors and their wives to make plans to attend. Please look for the special NAMC October meeting questionnaire in the *Forum* and on other sites. We want to hear from you!

For questions, please email namc-office@cog7.org. More information will be provided in future publications and on social media.

– Daniel Flores, Monico Muffley, Wayne Hrenyk
NAMC Officers



Old and New

When it comes to things new and old, I'm of two minds. My preference depends on the new or old thing under consideration.

If we're talking about casual clothing, give me the old! A comfortable old pair of blue jeans, long broken in and worn with time, is like an old friend. Breaking in a new pair is uncomfortable! On the other hand, if we're talking about cars or electronic hardware, I prefer the new if I can afford it. I don't want used or refurbished. Who knows what unknown problems I might inherit?

Have you noticed that our use of the words *new* and *old* is usually related to time? Old jeans are old because we've had them for a long time. New jeans are new because we have not had them for a long time. Both old and new are jeans; the difference is the length of time we've had them. On occasion, however, we use *new* to describe something that has never existed before. It is not something updated and improved; it's the original! It's new in kind, form, or quality.

The Greek language, from which most of our New Testament versions were translated, had the benefit of offering a word to indicate *new* with regard to chronology or time (*neos*), and a different word (*kainos*) to indicate *new* with regard to kind, form, or quality. The writers enjoyed the ability to use the word that communicated exactly what they meant by *new*.

So what do New Testament writers speak of as being new, not in terms of chronological order but in kind, form, or quality? Three of the most important, I think, are new creation, new covenant, and new commandment.

New creation. The apostle Paul tells us, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has

passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV). The word Paul uses throughout this verse is *kainos* – new in kind, form, or quality. Paul is consistent in his writings. He's not talking about Humanity 2.0; he's talking about total transformation (Romans 12:2). In Christ, God is creating a new humanity, not a better, more recent version of the old humanity.

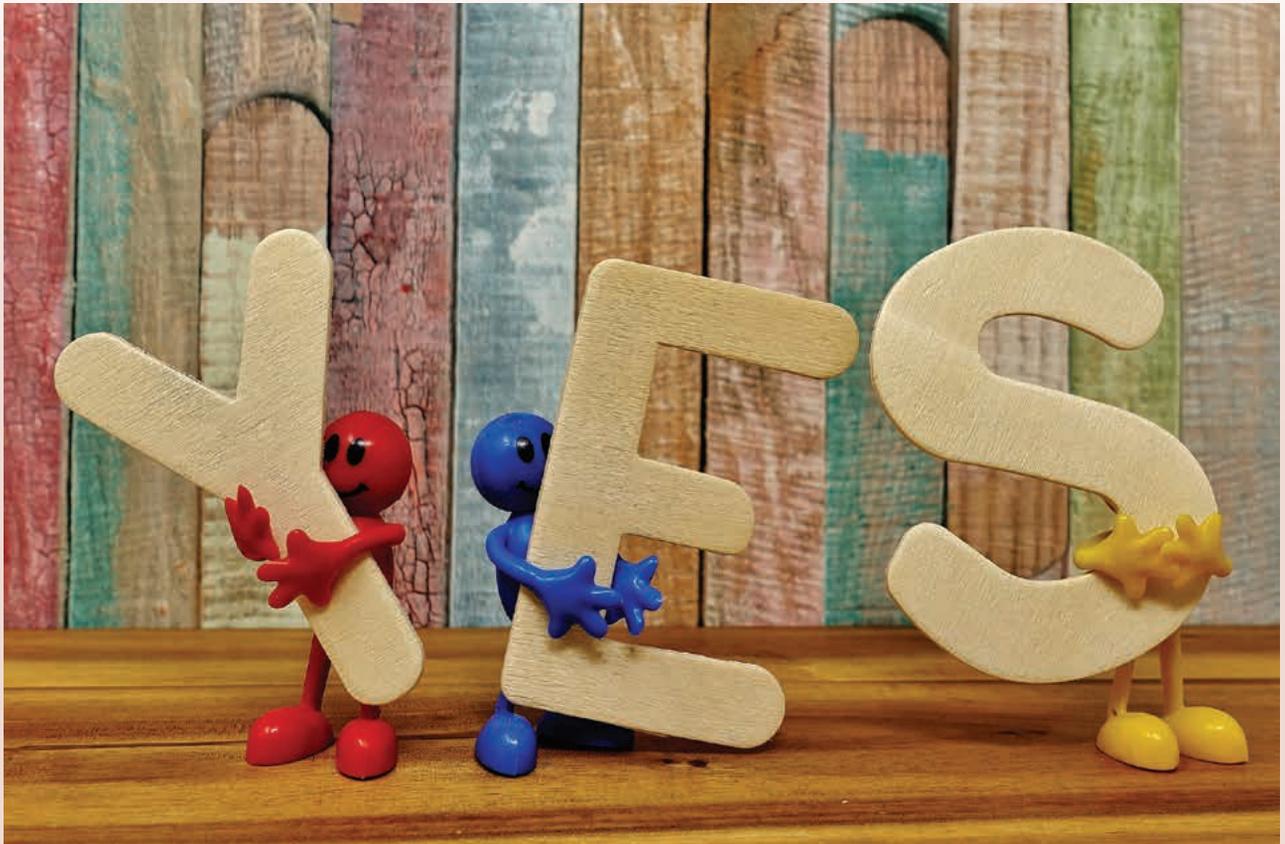
New covenant. During His final Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus transformed the traditional Seder into something new. He said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20, ESV). The covenant He was introducing that night, in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31, was not Mount Sinai 2.0. It was Mount Calvary 1.0. It was new. The new covenant is not new because it came after the old covenant. It is the new covenant because it is a different covenant – new in kind, form, or quality: "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13, ESV).

New commandment. Jesus told His followers, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34, NASB). A new commandment for a new covenant for a new humanity. *New*, not as most recent but in kind, form, or quality. "And He who sits on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new'" (Revelation 21:5, NASB).

Amen, Lord Jesus. Make us new.

– Loren Stacy





Why are we asking you to say YES.

When you say yes, you help your district by . . .

- Participating in functions — retreats, Super Sabbaths, youth activities
- Supporting financially — in partnership with local, district, and national needs
- Praying for our leaders — local, district, and national
- And supporting GC Ministries — Artios Christian College, GC Missions, Bible Advocate Press

Say YES to a strong, healthy church!