

March - April 2022

BA
BIBLE ADVOCATE®

The Gospel of the Kingdom



2022: Living the Gospel



ARTICLES

- 4 Teach Like the Master | Joyann Dwire
- 7 The Terrifying Truth | John Klassek
- 8 Kingdom Rest | Jason Overman
- 12 Two Donkeys | David Kidd
- 14 A Legacy of Faith | Diana L. Walters
- 18 Rethinking Kingdom Expectations | Loren Gjesdal
- 20 The Gospel According to Paul | R. Herbert
- 22 When Did the King Come In? | Yvonne Kays

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 First Word — A Kingdom Word
- 11 Questions & Answers
- 16 The Gospel
- 25 Poetry — Glen L. Blesi
- 26 From the Editor's Desk
- 27 GC Ministries News
- 28 On Mission — The Kingdom of God
- 31 Last Word — A Kingdom Gospel

Scripture quotations

Unless otherwise noted, scripture quotations are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, *English Standard Version*® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NIV) are from the Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

King James Version (KJV) Public Domain

Photos

Unless otherwise noted, photos in this issue are from Pixabay.com.
Cover Photo © Photowitch | Dreamstime.com

 Find us at baonline.org

 "Like" us on Facebook!

 publications.cog7.org



A publication of the

Church of God (Seventh Day)

This magazine is published to advocate the Bible, represent the Church, and glorify the God of grace and truth.

Volume 156 • Number 2

© Copyright 2022 by the Church of God (Seventh Day)

All material in this issue is subject to U.S. and international copyright laws and may not be reproduced without prior written approval. Permission may be obtained by writing the editor.

The BIBLE ADVOCATE (ISSN 0746-0104) is published bimonthly by Bible Advocate Press, 330 W. 152nd Ave., Broomfield, CO 80023. Periodicals postage is paid at Broomfield, CO, and at additional offices. Subscription is free to any who ask. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bible Advocate Press, Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233-0677.

Bible Advocate Press

Jason Overman: Editor

Sherri Langton: Associate Editor

Keith Michalak: Director of Publications, graphics

Martha Muffley: Translation

Hope Dais-Clark: Proofing

Subscriptions and Orders

Bible Advocate Press
P.O. Box 33677
Denver, CO 80233-0677
phone: 303/452-7973
fax: 303/452-0657
email: bap.orders@cog7.org

Notice: Send all address changes and other correspondence to the address above.

Publications Agreement No. 40042428

The Bible Advocate Online appears at baonline.org.

A Kingdom Word

Something terrible has happened. One of the Bible's most precious words has been turned inside out! It's the Greek word *euangelion*, and it means "good news," though our English Bibles usually translate it "gospel." Ironically, that word is well known in North America today by the word *evangelical* — not as it signifies those who bring glad tidings of peace and salvation in Jesus, but as Christians who identify with the political Right. For many the word *euangelion* doesn't evoke good news at all but contempt for culture war adversaries they see as "bad news." What a waste!

It's notable that *euangelion* held strong political overtones in the first century. For Jews of Jesus' time, it would have evoked Isaiah's gospel of the Lord's coming kingdom: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news . . . who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (52:7). But *euangelion* held different connotations for most of the Roman Empire, as it was used in proclaiming the good news of a royal birth or the ascension of a new Caesar.

The gospel of the kingdom that Jesus taught fulfilled Isaiah's gospel and subverted Caesar's. Like us, Jesus' disciples had political options. The Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots weren't just religious sects but political alternatives. Yet, the Messiah did not conform to these. He represented a different order: the politics of the kingdom of God. Maybe if evangelicals can make King Jesus and His kingdom our first priority, we can recover the power of a lost word: *euangelion*. That doesn't mean we'll be held in less contempt or stand for less, but if we are to be hated by the world, let it be for naming Jesus as Lord and living in the reality that He is.

If the last generation of Christian political activism has taught us anything, it's that neither the Moral Majority of the Right nor the social gospelers of the Left have done much to halt our national and cultural decline. In this BA, we are focusing on the gospel of the kingdom and the implications for living it out loud. Something wonderful happens when evangelicals live up to their name. Who else will bring glad tidings of Jesus to our lost world?

— Jason Overman





Following Jesus' model to
connect with our students.

by Joyann Dwire

I stopped listening to Professor Miller's answers to student questions after only a few days in his class. He had two PhDs and could intelligently discuss any topic under the sun, but he somehow managed to make basic college math unintelligible. He repeated the same complex answers over and over, as though the repetition was enough to knock the concept into our heads. He meant well, but the professor couldn't come down to our level with his explanations.

Fortunately, Jesus never had that problem. He set the standard for teaching with stories or object lessons that always connected to His audience in at least four ways:

- He taught with images His listeners knew well.
- He looked around and instructed from His observations.

- He saw individual needs and addressed them.
- Most of all, He spoke the truth, even when it hurt.

We all serve as teachers at times. Perhaps officially in Sabbath school or church, or perhaps as parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles influencing the children in our lives. However we teach, we can learn much from the way Jesus taught His followers.

Speaking in pictures

Jesus used metaphors to describe Himself: "I am the light of the world." "I am the bread of life." "I am the Good Shepherd." He gave a whole series of analogies to illustrate the kingdom of heaven: a grain of mustard seed, leaven, a lost coin, a treasure. Even the poorest, most illiterate Jewish listener of Jesus' day

could have visualized any of these images.

Dr. Miller could have used a simple example worked out for us on the blackboard, or apples and oranges or *anything* visual to help the math illiterate in his class. Students, old or young, need a depiction of something they use or see in their everyday lives in order to make an application.

Teaching from observation

When He said, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few” in Matthew 9:37, Jesus was likely looking across a field of golden wheat. When He gave His parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-8, He may have been watching a boy scatter seed. As He spoke of a fig tree putting forth leaves in Matthew 24:32-35, Jesus was possibly standing near a fig tree. When He talked about the judgment day in Matthew 25:32, 33, using the image of sheep and goats, He may have been watching shepherds sort out their flocks. The people listening to Jesus would have followed His gaze and understood.

As teachers, we need to stop texting and start observing. See that young person in the department store with green spiked hair? Perhaps an illustration of people coming in all sorts of “packages” and our need to accept them as they are. The mockingbird that chased a squirrel away from its nest? A picture of the way God protects His children. The lessons are all around us, just waiting to be noticed.

Making it personal

At times Jesus addressed the needs of a specific indi-

vidual with His parables. In Luke 12:13-21, when a young man expressed concern about his family inheritance, Jesus told the story of a rich man who pulled down his old barns and built bigger, better ones. When an expert in the law asked Jesus who his neighbor was, Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In both cases, He addressed the deeper need of each man’s heart.

As teachers of God’s Word, we also need to look for ways to make our points personal. Each week I look for examples I

can use in my adult class. I have talked about my own struggle with depression in order to help the class members deal with it in their lives. I’ve talked about a co-worker, who came to work with difficult questions, in order to show how the Holy Spirit provides answers. I’ve referred to the loving care Brother Ray gave to his wife of sixty-two years during her illness as an example of God’s faithful love. Personal examples provide relevance and are easily understood.

Speaking the truth

Perhaps the most important element of Jesus’ teaching is that He spoke the truth, even when it was uncomfortable. When the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-24 walked away dejected, unwilling to give up his riches, Jesus told His disciples it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus also didn’t pull any punches when talking about the scribes and Pharisees. He said they were like cups that were

“As teachers, we need to stop texting and start observing.”

washed on the outside but were filthy on the inside (23:25, 26), and He called them whitewashed tombs (v. 27). These were vivid images. No one wants to drink out of a filthy cup. And no matter how much you whitewash a tomb, what’s on the inside is still dead. Jesus’ audience got the message, even though the Pharisees didn’t.

Jesus was blunt in His condemnation of the religious leaders of His day because their hypocrisy was sin. And in spite of modern society’s insistence to the contrary, sin is still sin.

As teachers of God’s Word, we need to speak the truth — truth that is always tempered with love — in order to draw students into a relationship with Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

Making connections

Even though you may use these methods, on some occasions the confused looks on your students’ faces will let you know they didn’t comprehend

your message. Even Jesus found that His down-to-earth parables weren’t always understood, though He was ready to explain them for those who were motivated to ask. It’s important to remember that people understand as they are able, and not everyone will “get it” every time. When we give an illustration, we need to be sure to draw it into our lesson and make the application so our students can take home a challenge for their lives.

My task for my children’s class one Wednesday night was to make the abstract concept of unshakable faith clear to girls under the age of nine. After some thought, I asked them to build marshmallow towers. I watched and waited as the towers went up.

Then I shook the table.

After the screams subsided, the girls began again, and once more I shook the table. Several attempts later, all five girls understood what it meant to be shakable, and from there it was easy to explain the opposite.

The Power of Our Wandering Thoughts

by Danielle Hawkins

Oh, the questions that nag at us till we don’t know what to think.

The questions thrown at us from left and right, like the classic “If a good God exists, why would He allow us to suffer?”

The times we shrink back into doubts and unbelief because of these very questions we can’t understand.

The mind of the mouse can’t understand the mind of the president, and like the mouse, we become lost because of what we cannot know.

Who knows the mind of his Master? The plan of their Creator?

Yet we hold onto these questions as if they are the cornerstone on which we stand, as if they are the anchor to our boat.

Yes, there are answers, but they are few and unfold even more questions of their own.

But when we stand, when we put truth in front of human thought and enemy deception, when we believe (for we know belief is the key), then there is the awakening of faith.

Danielle Hawkins, 19, attends the Marion, OR Church of God (Seventh Day).

Learning from Jesus

We fail our students if our only desire is to impress them with our knowledge of theological terms and flowery language. Jesus didn’t want to sound smarter than the religious leaders (although He was), and He didn’t want people to follow Him just to see miracles. He wanted the people to hear and understand kingdom principles.

As teachers, we need to follow the example Jesus set for us. We need to be *His* students and learn from *His* parables and illustrations so we can teach *our* students. Paint that picture your listeners know so well. Observe the things around you that young and old alike will recognize. Make your images personal. Most of all, always speak the truth, even when it’s not popular.

BA

Joyann Dwire

writes from Toccoa, GA.



The top of the page features a painting of a sunset with three crosses in the foreground. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and red, with the sun setting behind the crosses. The crosses are silhouetted against the bright orange and red light of the sunset. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The Terrifying Truth

by John Klassek

Bloodied, bruised, beaten, nailed, and speared. It was hard to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, the Word (*Logos*) made flesh, was dead. After all, He was the Messiah, the promised and long-awaited anointed Savior! Ancient prophecies told of His kingdom might and power. During His earthly ministry, Jesus healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and forgave sins. And if you knew those ancient Scriptures, then only God can lay claim to that.

The brutality of Roman rule seemed to triumph once again. The King of the Jews was dead. Those who had hoped for a different outcome now covered in a mixture of fear, contempt, and brewing anger. The turn of events, unpredictable at best, was not what any of Jesus' disciples anticipated.

Earlier in the ordeal, when the soldiers came with clubs, swords, and lanterns to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked them who they were looking for.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am He."

Jesus' answer knocked them down. The power of the "I AM" in Jesus' response caused even battle-hardened warriors to collapse in helplessness. But then, Jesus let them arrest Him. That's when Peter, seeing events seemingly go so wrong, clumsily wielded his sword, failing to decapitate the high priest's servant (John 18:1-11).

Now, hours later, Jesus was dead. Darkness and terror lay in the hearts of the living — most of all, His followers. It just wasn't meant to happen that way! Or was it?

The Gospel narratives clearly show that on several occasions, Jesus predicted His death, to be followed by His resurrection three days and

three nights later (Mark 8:31, et al.). But it didn't register even with His closest disciples. However, Jesus' detractors, the Jewish religious rulers (namely, the Pharisees), did remember Jesus' prophetic assurances. Added security was enforced around the tomb, ensuring no unpredicted outcome.



The belief in the literal resurrection of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, is at the heart of the Christian message, hope, and doctrine. There is no other central teaching, no other matching doctrine. Jesus died on a Wednesday afternoon, was buried before sunset prior to the high day of Unleavened Bread, and rose from the dead sometime around sunset that following Saturday night. When Mary arrived at the tomb early on Sunday morning, Jesus was gone.

The angelic messenger questioned her: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" (Luke 24:5, 6).

Today, we stand on the testimonies of those first century eyewitnesses. We see their despair and feel their darkness. And then, just as Jesus predicted, we also exult in their exceedingly great joy at seeing their Lord and Savior again. Such gladness continues to echo across the millennia in the endearing and enduring faith of those who would follow.

Many years later, one of Jesus' closest disciples again saw the now glorified Son of God in a powerful and terrifying vision. Jesus said to John, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen" (Revelation 1:17, 18).

continued on page 24



The Messiah and Israel's long hope for rest in God.
by Jason Overman

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29).

If there is a word that captures the character of the kingdom best, it might be *rest*.

By the time we get to Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11, He had already established His ministry around the good news of the kingdom. More than just teach-

ing it, He demonstrated it by calling people to repentance and discipleship, causing the blind to see and the deaf to hear; by healing the sick, banishing demons, feeding the hungry, and raising the dead; by calming storms and forgiving sins. In the King (Messiah) the kingdom is manifest, wrongs are set right, the weary are refreshed. God's good intention for creation is restored. What better word than *rest* to summarize all this.

But this kingdom rest didn't come out of nowhere; it capped Israel's long story of promise and hope. It was a rest and restoration of both experience and expectation throughout the Law and the Prophets. We grasp the full significance of Christ's rest as we appreciate Israel's story and its climax in His coming(s). Let's look.

Genesis rest

From the beginning, rest is deeply integrated into the very fabric of time and space. We see this in a couple of important ways in Genesis 2 as God concluded His work of creation:

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done (vv. 1, 2).

We are most familiar with rest as it relates to the weekly rhythm of Sabbath. Unlike other fixed times (day, month, year), the seven-day work-rest cycle is explained, not by the motion of heavenly bodies but by God's creative pattern alone. God's fourth commandment springs from His divine blessing and

sanctifying of this seventh day, and it continues to order our lives in His rest today (v. 3; Exodus 20:8-11).

But there's another dimension to the seventh day. As the crowning and completing day of God's creative work, it signifies a general or cosmic rest that marks the *telos* of creation. Rest, in God and with God, is the divine goal and intention of creation. But this special day and all it signified was shattered by sin (Genesis 3). With man separated from God, the weariness of restlessness filled the void.

The weekly and cosmic significances of divine rest are not mutually exclusive, but mutually reinforcing. They each participate in and point to each other and our full creation rest, spiritual and material. But after the Fall and the fallout, the focus of the Old Testament story is God's restoration of His lost rest.

Rest in Torah

The law has a robust view of rest that comprehends all creation: for people, land, and even animals. The rhythm of Sabbath supports this vision, but the Torah also held out a specific promise of a kingdom rest for Israel that would encompass her whole life in God after she entered the Promised Land. Moses instructed:

"You shall not at all do as we are doing here today — every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes — for as yet you have not come to the rest and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the

LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety . . ." (Deuteronomy 12:8-10).

Moses looked in two directions. First, to the present "today" and Israel's wilderness rebellion. That "today" was not marked by rest. That generation failed to enter into God's rest because, like Adam and Eve, the people abandoned Him to do what was right in their own eyes. But Moses looked forward too; God set another day before them. He was giving them the land, and with it, His rest.

God was restoring what was lost in Eden. Through Israel and this slice of land, He planted a

"The LORD your God is giving you rest and is giving you this land" (Joshua 1:13; cf. 23:1).

"Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses" (1 Kings 8:56).

Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around (2 Chronicles 20:30).

Maybe the book of Judges speaks of the promise and warning of Moses best. When Israel was faithful, there was rest (3:11, 30; 5:31). But when Israel rebelled, the people forfeited rest

“The law has a robust view of rest that comprehends all creation.”

kingdom that would fill the earth. The theme of Israel's kingdom rest would recur throughout the Old Testament, beginning with the first Yeshua (Joshua).

Rest in history

The narrator of the books of history will return to this promised rest often. From Joshua to Jehoshaphat, we see that this kingdom rest was experienced in part:

for themselves and the land, and they exchanged peace for oppression.

Unfortunately, Israel's story is marked more by restlessness and rebellion than by the rest God wanted to give her. Despite moments of peace and rest, her story is marked more by weariness and oppression. Like Moses, Israel's prophets and poets look back in warning and ahead to the hope of rest to come.

“Jesus’ kingdom rest is creational and incarnate, as His ministry and miracles attest.”

Rest in the Prophets

Under the weight of captivity, Isaiah saw a time when “the oppressor has ceased,” when “The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked . . . [and] The whole earth is at rest and quiet” (14:5, 7). But he also addressed a people who refused rest when it was offered (28:12).

It was the same for Jeremiah. He celebrated Israel’s God who had delivered, and would again:

Thus says the LORD: “The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness — Israel, when I went to give him rest.” The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love” (31:2, 3).

But Jeremiah encountered the same rebellion Isaiah did:

Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it’” (6:16).

Rest in Psalms

Israel’s later songs address this same reality. While they en-

couraged Israel to “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him” (Psalm 37:7), they also warned of missing out on God’s rest:

Today, if you will hear His voice: “Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (95:7-11).

Like Moses, the psalmist speaks of “today,” that “seventh day” in its cosmic sense, when God’s rest is offered to His people. Will they accept and enter into it with gladness, or refuse in rebellion as the wilderness generation did? That question is for us today too.

We glimpse from these Old Testament passages the concrete character of God’s rest that will be made flesh in Christ. Far from a disembodied, otherworldly escape, His kingdom rest is creational and incarnate, as Jesus’ ministry and miracles attest —

inseparable from people and place, restoring God’s purposes for His creation both spiritually and physically. This rest is the silence of every enemy, but more than the absence of war; it is all things set right. *Shalom* (peace) is the Hebrew word closest to this rest that Scripture speaks of and that Jesus realized.

A remaining rest

This is just a brief recital of Israel’s story of God’s promised rest. Israel hoped for it. She tasted this *shalom* in part at times, but never in full. In the end, in captivity, she would look forward to the day when God would bring rest again. That cosmic day, with the defeat of every enemy and the completion of every promise, arrived when King Jesus revealed what kingdom rest looked like in full.

While Jesus revealed kingdom rest in His first coming, what is complete in Him is to fill the whole earth at His second coming. In between, we enter His rest by faith, demonstrating it in concrete and cosmic ways, like Sabbath and salvation, even as we anticipate kingdom fullness still to come. But the warning of Moses and Psalm 95 remains for us *today*. Quoting that psalm, and recalling Israel’s unbelief in the wilderness, Hebrews 3 admonishes us:

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers

continued on page 24

Questions & Answers



We often hear fellow believers referred to as evangelicals. What does it mean to be an evangelical Christian?

Let's explore *evangelical* from biblical, popular or political, and ecclesiastical perspectives.

Evangelical is one of a family of words (*evangel*, *evangelism*, *evangelistic*, etc.) linked with the word *gospel*, as in *gospel of Christ* or *gospel of the kingdom*. It is a close transliteration of the Greek noun *euangelion*, found dozens of times in the New Testament. It is mostly translated as “gospel” in older English Bibles and “glad tidings” or “good news” in modern English. Mark 1:14; Romans 1:1; and Galatians 1:11 provide familiar examples.

By extension, then, the term *evangelical* has been applied to persons whose faith and practice rest mostly on the powerful core truths of the Christian gospel: that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1ff), rose again, and ascended to glory, and that He will return to put all enemies under His feet.

As commonly used for the last century, the term *evangelical Christian* does not refer to all Catholics or orthodox Christians, to cults, to ultra-fundamentalist groups, nor to large swaths of mainline Protestant churches. These were heavily influenced by the Enlightenment and corrosive philosophies of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries (evolution, modernism, etc.).

With that in mind, *evangelical Christian* properly applies to most conservative churches like Baptist, Pentecostal, and charismatic; to many independents, and to the conservative wings of mainline churches, like Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian. (*Conservative*, here, refers less to political issues of state than to reli-

gious matters of faith and practice, and to one's view of Scripture, etc.)

These evangelical Christians and churches sponsor a lion's share of the conservative educational institutions, radio and TV networks, evangelistic crusades and other world mission efforts, pro-life, pro-marriage and pro-family, Bible-based ministries.

Second, the term *evangelical Christianity* is linked today with a strong politically conservative segment of voters in recent elections in the US and in other countries. In this vein, fierce patriotism to any nation under the guise of God and country is biblically deficient and not really evangelical at all! A healthy patriotism and political participation are secondary in importance to a firm biblical faith in, and full-fledged obedience to, Jesus Christ.

The truest evangelical Christians may distance themselves from those who curry our political support to build their own kingdom more than Christ's. Let's withhold our absolute loyalty from, and rather speak truth to, those political leaders whose evangelical support is mostly linked to their political prowess, and not to their personal loyalty to the biblical truths of the everlasting gospel.

Finally, the term *evangelical Christian* also carries an ecclesiastical component that applies to any congregation or denomination that lives out full-hearted faith in Jesus Christ, and joins in His Great Commission. Based on our ten-point vision of a Vibrant 21st Century Church, the Church of God (Seventh Day), too, is evangelical in our faith. As such, we are not defined so much by national politics but are Christians committed to preaching the gospel of the kingdom and supporting others in world evangelization by lifting King Jesus high!

— Elder Calvin Burrell



How Jacob foretold the coming of Christ and His cross.

by David Kidd

Have you ever read the incredible little prophecy in Genesis 49:8-12? Its surprising prediction of part of the gospel story may not be so familiar to you. It contains one of the earliest forecasts of Jesus' life-giving work on the cross:

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp [cub]; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as

a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [Messiah] comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk."

In Genesis 49, Jacob blesses his sons before he dies. Judah will be highly praised and take the prominent place among the tribes of Israel (v. 8). He is likened to a lion (v. 9). Judah will be the ruling tribe until Shiloh comes (v. 10). Both Jewish and Christian theologians believe Shiloh is the Messiah and, indeed, a ruling Messiah whom people obey. He will ride a donkey and a donkey's colt just before He

washes His clothes in wine and the blood of grapes (v. 11).

Donkeys and a Lion

With this in mind, it's interesting what we read about Jesus in Matthew 21:1, 2. He mysteriously arranges two donkeys for His entry into Jerusalem, just before the crowds welcome Him as king and His clothes are covered in blood at the cross. We also know that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah and called the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

Further, as the prophecy foretold, Judah was indeed the prominent tribe in Israel up until the time Jesus lived. Could it be that Genesis 49:11's mention of washing His clothes in wine and the blood of grapes was a poetic way of prophesying that the Messiah would die a bloody death? I am certain it is.

This early prophecy, most impressively made before Judah

and his brothers were established as tribes in Israel, is perhaps not as well known as the prophecy of the two donkeys in Zechariah 9:9:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Critics may try to downplay the splendor of this prophecy, quoted in Matthew 21:5, by suggesting anyone could have arranged two donkeys and claimed to be Messiah. However, only someone special could have generated the type of response Jesus did while riding a donkey into Jerusalem.

Servant and King

Matthew 21 describes what is known as the triumphal entry. Everything in this chapter cries out King Jesus, the one whom people shall obey. The red carpet, so to speak, is rolled out before Jesus as He rides the donkey and the multitudes spread their clothes and palm branches on the road in front of Him. This is reminiscent of Solomon, the son of King David, riding on David’s mule as he was assuming the throne as king of Israel. The crowds back then cried out, “Long live King Solomon!” (1 Kings 1:38-40). Now the crowds cry out to King Jesus, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” In the parallel account in his Gospel, Luke records them crying out, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!” (19:38).

By His actions, Jesus also shows His royal authority by driving out the unrighteous dealers from His Father’s house (Matthew 21:12-14). He demonstrates Messianic power by healing the blind and the lame there. Even the children declare Him to be the Son of David. Everything cries out, *King!* By the way of the cross to His death, Jesus would be on His way to being raised up (resurrected) to sit on David’s throne, exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:30-33).

Jacob’s gospel prophecy in Genesis 49 is also special because it tells us of a great ruler who humbles Himself as a servant because of His great love for us. He not only sits lowly on

among us and died for us, is one we can love and fully trust because He understands our weakness and pain and all the hard things we experience. Hebrews 4:15 puts it well: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

Because Jesus understands us and died for us, the apostle John gave this beautiful prophecy at the other end of the Bible:

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).



a donkey, but much more than that, humbles Himself to die a bloody death on our behalf. He didn’t deserve this death, because He was so pure — as white as snow (perhaps a fulfillment of Genesis 49:12 – “his teeth [being] whiter than milk”).

Trusting the Father

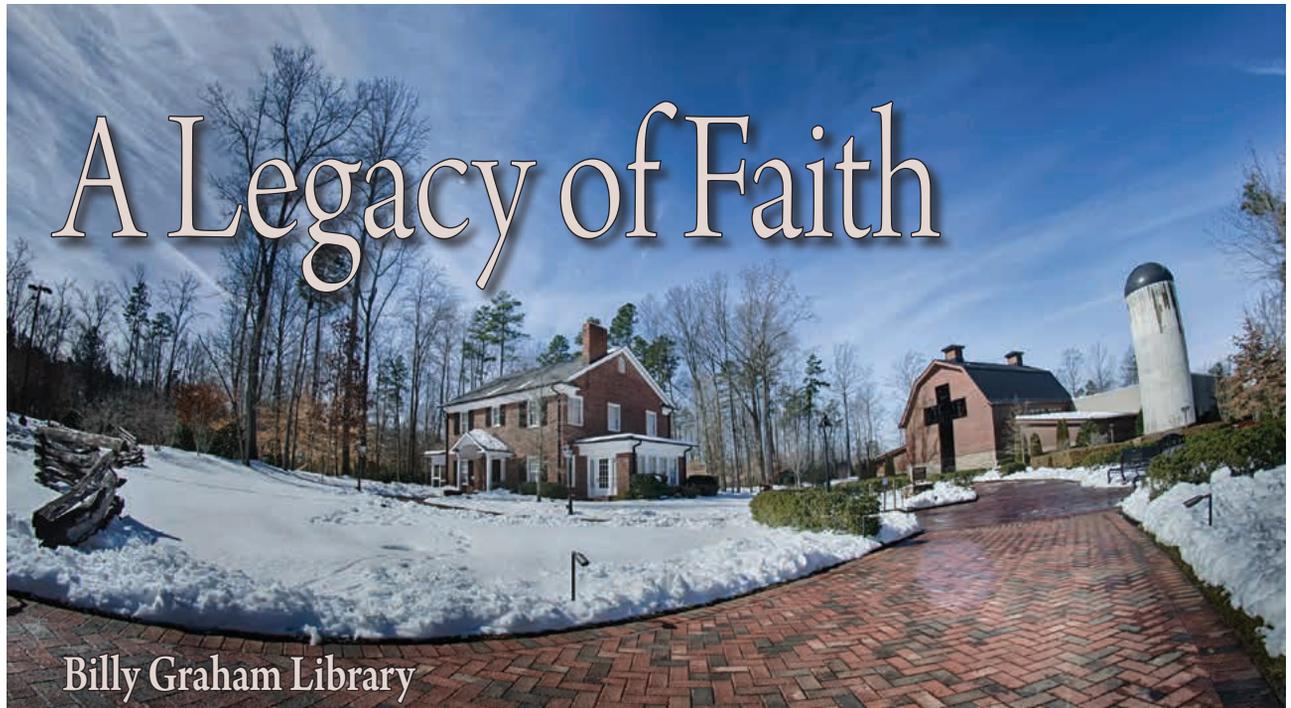
This kind of humble and committed Messiah, who walked

From Genesis to Revelation, from Jacob’s prophecy to John’s, you can trust the promises of our Father, who inspired their words. I pray they give you strength for life and true hope for the future.

BA

David Kidd writes from Tauranga, New Zealand.





Billy Graham Library

© Alex Grichenko | Dreamstime.com

The merciful and mysterious ways of God's salvation.

by **Diana L. Walters**

"Therefore know that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

I look with amazement at the way God led my siblings and me to a knowledge of His saving grace. Without the benefit of church attendance or even a Bible in the home, somehow we each came to know and accept Jesus as our Savior.

Godly influence

Our story begins with a five-year-old who arrived at Mooseheart, a village for children

whose fathers had died and whose mothers couldn't care for them. The child was Nellie, my mother, and Mooseheart was her home until she graduated from high school. During those years, Mom became acquainted with a young woman named Ruthie Bell.

Ruthie was a Christian and a student at nearby Wheaton College. She spent time with the girls of Mooseheart, talking with them, playing games, and allowing the girls to brush her waist-length hair. The children weren't permitted to have long hair until they were able to care for it themselves. So when Ruthie visited, they begged for the privilege of brushing her gleaming locks. As they took turns with the hairbrush, she told Bible stories and taught them hymns.

Ruthie's lessons and her caring spirit greatly influenced my mother. The children learned about Jesus through her hymns, stories, and prayers, leading my mother

to become a Christian before she left Mooseheart.

Troubled marriage

Soon after high school graduation, Mom met a young sailor and fell in love. They married a month later — just before his ship sailed off to join the war effort.

When Dad returned from World War II, Mom quickly realized the man she'd married had a short fuse and a domineering personality. He also made it clear he didn't want to hear any "religious" talk in his home. Mom felt intimidated by Dad and acquiesced to keep the peace.

When four babies came along in quick succession, and a surprise fifth several years later, Mom continued to obey Dad's commands — for the most part. But when he wasn't around, she sang the hymns she'd learned at Ruthie's side and quietly taught us a bedtime prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep. . . ."

Home harvest

That was the extent of our exposure to spiritual matters. Although I talked to God throughout my childhood, I didn't understand who the Lord was or what He'd done for me. My siblings didn't know Him either.

But the Lord God knew us even though we had yet to know Him. Although my mother was afraid to talk openly about Jesus, I'm convinced her prayers and hymns planted a seed that would one day be fertilized.

One by one, the five of us became Jesus followers. My brother, Don, was about to board a plane to fly to Viet Nam when someone handed him a tract. As he read it, his fear of what lay ahead evaporated. That day he accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. When he returned from his tour of duty, he was a changed man, ready to learn more about God and serve Him.

My sister tried out and rejected several religions before accepting Christ in her thirties. Afterward, she led her husband to the Lord. They have taken part in church ministry ever since. Another brother married a believer who led him to Christ in his forties. My youngest brother became a Christ follower in his teens after a friend invited him to church.

And I was twenty-nine when I knelt in front of a television and made a confession of faith while watching a Billy Graham Crusade. It was fitting that Ruthie Bell's husband, who became an internationally known preacher, would be the one to lead me to Jesus.

I doubt that Ruthie Bell Graham had any idea of the far-

reaching consequences of her visits with Mooseheart children. Her faithful service left a legacy that was handed down to me, to my siblings, and to our children and grandchildren.

Eventually my father became a believer too. Many tears fell the day we heard him pray for the first time. It was his seventy-fifth birthday, and we'd gathered to surprise him. He was the one who surprised us when we learned he'd accepted Jesus the week before.

Faithful God

Once a year, my siblings and I gather from five different areas of the country to reminisce, laugh, and pray together. The very fact that we've learned the power of prayer is evidence of God's faithfulness. Without our benefit of spiritual training during childhood, He brought people and circumstances into our lives that would lead us to Him. My family's experience is a testimony to God's faithfulness.

Whether we come to know Him as children or in our seventies, we can be assured God is "the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

He is waiting to welcome everyone into His family. **BA**

Diana L. Walters writes from Chattanooga, TN.

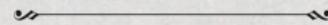


Lord's Supper

Thursday, April 14

"Do this in remembrance of Me"

(1 Corinthians 11:24).



Tracts

The Lord's Supper
/ La Santa Cena
21¢ each

(English and Spanish)

Order from our bookstore
cog7.org/online-store/.



Can't get enough BA?

Don't miss the Online Extra for this issue by Dorothy Nimchuk at baonline.org.

The Gospel of the Kingdom and ...

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Kingdom in Matthew

55 times

Key Verse: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (6:33).

Kingdom in Mark

19 times

Key Verse: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (1:15).

Kingdom in Luke

44 times

Key Verse: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (11:2).

Kingdom in John

3 times

Key Verse: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (3:3).

Seven Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13

“It has been given to you to know the mysteries of **the kingdom of heaven** . . . Therefore hear the parable of the sower” (vv. 11, 18).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** a man who sowed good seed in his field” (v. 24).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field” (v. 31).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” (v. 33).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (v. 44).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** a merchant seeking beautiful pearls” (v. 45).

“**The kingdom of heaven is like** a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind” (v. 47).

... the Good News of Jesus the Messiah

**“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end”
(Luke 1:31-33).**

In a Word

***Meshiah* (Hebrew) > *Kristos* (Greek) > *Christ* (English) = “The Anointed One”**

Three Anointed Offices of the Messiah

Prophet

Divine Instruction

Matthew 5:21, 22

“You have heard that it was said to those of old . . .
But I say to you. . . .”

Mark 6:4

“A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives and . . . house.”

~

See Matthew 6-7; 13; 23, 24;
Luke 7:16; John 1:1-14; 4:19

Priest

Divine Forgiveness

Matthew 9:2

When Jesus saw their faith,
He said to the paralytic, “Son,
be of good cheer; your sins are
forgiven you.”

Mark 10:45

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

~

See Luke 7:36-48; John 8:11;
1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16;
7; 10:19-23

King

Divine Authority

Luke 8:25

“Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!”

John 1:49

Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

~

See Matthew 2:2; 28:18; Luke 1:32, 33; Philippians 2:9-11;
Revelation 19:16



Rethinking

by Loren Gjesdal

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15).

With these words, Mark’s Gospel inaugurates the ministry of Jesus. They carried tremendous impact in His day, and they should in ours as well.

Jesus spoke into a time of heightened expectation. John the Baptist had shattered four hundred years of prophetic silence with the look and sound of Elijah. He came on the scene when Messianic expectancy was running high, when men claiming to be the Messiah had gathered followings, been killed, and come to nothing (Acts 5:36, 37).

Jesus’ words spoke of hope, of good news, confirming the validity of expectancy. But He also spoke of change; He spoke of repentance.

What do you think of when you read or hear the word *repent*? Do you think of the ministry of John the Baptist, of people confessing sins and ex-

pressing remorse? The word itself means “to think differently . . . [to] reconsider” (*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*, G3340). Entering the kingdom of God was going to require a lot of rethinking! The kingdom of God was going to be different than expected, and to enter it would require a different kind of belief.

Changing past thinking

The Messiah would not be a conquering king on a white stallion but a suffering servant on a donkey; not a Roman evictor but a victim of Roman execution; not a pious Pharisee but the friend of tax collectors and prostitutes. The kingdom of God, too, would be different than expected. Not a Davidic throne in Jerusalem centered around temple sacrifices but a shekinah glory inhabiting millions of Gentile hearts. A kingdom not of one purified ethnic nation but for all people in all tribes and nations.

For many the drastic change of thinking was too much. For some it was not good news at all. Paul could recount the work of God through the history of Israel and be patiently received — until he said he was sent to bring the

good news to the Gentiles. To these words the Jewish mob responded, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!” (Acts 22:22).

Despite the extreme difference between expectation and reality, the truth was still good news: The kingdom of God was at hand, within reach, present at that moment in the person of Jesus. All that was required to enter was to receive Him as Savior and Lord. Yet, how few entered. How few repented.

How different this Messiah was from all the pretenders who promised to vanquish Rome and restore the throne of David. They died and came to nothing. This One made no such promises. He promised instead to forgive sins, to resurrect the dead, to be the way, the truth, and the life and the only way to God (John 14:6). How much more ostentatious were His promises! Yet He, too, died — only to validate His claims by rising from the dead.

Correcting present thinking

Here is where we need to take note, to pause and make sure that we do not repeat the errors of history. Those who

Kingdom Expectations

know the old, old story love to hear it best, says the hymn. We love to hear how much Jesus loves us, that He died to forgive our sins, but we forget that He did come to establish a kingdom. A kingdom is a place under the sovereign rule of a king.

What is our expectancy regarding the kingdom of God? Where is it? When is it? How do we enter? What must we do to be saved? These are the questions we spend time wrestling with, when the real questions are “Who is it?” and “Do you know Him?” And maybe even more important, “Does He know you?” Have you come under the sovereign rule of the King of Kings? Have you joined Him in His mission?

The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus has come. He died and rose again. He sits at the right hand of the Father with all authority in heaven and earth, and He has sent His Spirit to dwell in us. His kingdom is a present reality in each heart surrendered to His will. And His will is not a vague notion. It is a specific commission: to make disciples, to be His ambassadors, to continue what He began until He comes again.

Have we begun to see this as our personal purpose? Is that our expectation of what it means to be living in the kingdom of God?

Get focused

We, too, can miss the Messiah’s true mission. He wasn’t forging a nation-state. He was not intent on creating an enclave for the pure and holy. He did not come to condemn but to save. He was willing to leave the ninety-nine to find the one. His kingdom would not be like any in this world. The greatest would be the servant of all, and victory over enemies would come by loving them. Are we pursuing the same goals by the same means as Jesus did?

The questions the church still needs to wrestle with are “Have we turned from our old ways [i.e., repented]? Are we falling into the trap of seeking lesser things, earthly kingdoms, and familiar, comfortable, self-serving purposes? Have we sacrificed our thoughts and expectations to God to make way for Jesus’ identity and mission to reign in us?”

We long for the conquering king to ride in on the white stallion and put right all the in-

justices, to humble the proud, to purify the land (and He will). But He left glory (and the ninety-nine) to find the one wandering sheep. It was to the sick that the Great Physician went. And until He comes again, we are to do the same — to be His hands, feet, and voice; to share the invitation to enter His kingdom with those who are lost and dying in this dark world.

Jesus told all who would follow Him to take up their cross daily, denying their own desires and expectations, and to do the will of the King who died to rescue His servants. This is the narrow path of entry into the kingdom of God. Let us focus on Jesus and follow His plan as citizens of the kingdom of God! **BA**

Loren Gjesdal is co-director of Artios Christian College and co-pastors the Marion Church of God (Seventh Day) in Oregon.





Was the apostle's "good news" different from Jesus'?
by R. Herbert

It is often said that the apostle Paul changed the focus of the Christian gospel from kingdom of God, stressed in the four Gospels (Matthew 9:35), to the saving work of Christ, stressed in his epistles. But did Paul really make such a profound change within Christianity?

Letter to Corinth

It is true that Paul emphasizes the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. We can see this in his first letter to the church at

Corinth, where he summarizes his teaching in these words: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

Yet even in these verses, often quoted as an example of "the gospel according to Paul," we see the possibility of a broader reality in that Paul says these things are of "first importance." In other words, Christ's death and resurrection form the basis of other important aspects of the gospel, including the kingdom.

In fact, we need only read a little further in this same letter to see the broader picture:

For as in Adam all die,
so in Christ all will be made

alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (vv. 22-26).

Here, Paul deftly works from the concept of death and resurrection (vv. 22, 23) to that of the kingdom rule of Christ, and then finally back to the destruction of death (v. 26). But notice that Paul collapses time in this view. He telescopes the return of Christ ("when he comes") to directly touch the final outcome of creation ("the end").

Christ and kingdom

When we see his “goal-oriented” view of God’s kingdom, we better understand Paul’s teaching and the stress he places on Jesus himself. As he states in 1 Corinthians 15:14, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.” It is clearly through this lens that Paul views the kingdom of God: There can be no kingdom without the saving work of Christ, and what Christ accomplished enables us to enter that kingdom.

In the same letter Paul tells us, “I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (v. 50). This, of course, totally agrees with what Christ himself said in explaining the reality of God’s kingdom to the Pharisee, Nicodemus (John 3:1-21).

Paul also clearly states that those who live in wrongdoing will not inherit God’s kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5), making it evident that the kingdom was far more than an outdated concept for him, as some modern theologians claim.

Kingdom context

So when Paul writes unequivocally that “we preach Christ crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:23) and “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (2:2), we must see these statements in context. And when he calls a curse on anyone preaching another gospel (Galatians 1:8), we need not see this statement as meaning he preached Christ crucified as opposed to

the kingdom of God, but as the basis of the kingdom of God.

While it is true that Paul uses the word *kingdom* far fewer times than did the Gospel writers, he does use it frequently (some fourteen times) in his epistles — more than Peter, James, and John in their epistles combined. And it is precisely in the context of the kingdom of God that Paul urges Timothy to preach “in view of his appearing and his kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1). In fact, Paul goes so far as to state that those who worked with him in preaching the gospel were nothing less than “co-workers for the kingdom of God” (Colossians 4:11).

of Luke (who perhaps knew Paul and his teaching as well as anyone) when he wrote that Paul could not be hindered in what he taught: “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:31, KJV).

In writing this, Luke placed the preaching of the kingdom first, perhaps indicating that he considered the message of the kingdom was often in the forefront of Paul’s preaching. But the two aspects — King and kingdom — are equally part of the gospel according to Paul.

When we put everything together, the New Testament

“The message of the kingdom was often in the forefront of Paul’s preaching.”

Jesus and Paul

This is not to say that there were not different stresses in the teachings of Jesus and Paul. Jesus preached a gospel stressing His identity relative to the kingdom of God. Paul preached a gospel stressing the underlying work of Jesus that made the kingdom of God possible. In short, Paul preached a gospel that emphasized the person of Jesus and the kingdom of Jesus. To doubt that is to doubt the clear words

clearly shows that, rather than teaching a new gospel, the apostle Paul faithfully taught the gospel of the kingdom of God, as well as the gospel about Jesus Christ and how He had made the kingdom of God possible. **BA**

R. Herbert (a pen name) holds a PhD in biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern languages and archeology. He writes for a number of Christian venues. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*, except where noted.



When Did the King Come In?

Discovering the blessed assurance of salvation.

by Yvonne Kays

“Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3, NIV).

“Please be prepared to share a brief testimony next week about how you came to know the Lord.” Our Bible study leader looked around our small circle of women and smiled. “I’m sure we’ll learn some interesting things about each other.”

I was quiet as I gathered my things and put on my coat. What could I share the following week?

I did not have a dramatic conversion story to tell.

Because I was born into a Christian family, my first memories of church were flannel board pictures and wearing a white gown with tinsel in my hair as an angel in the church pageant. We attended church throughout all our growing-up days, and membership at an appropriate age was an expected transition.

Early memories

Later that week after Bible study, I sat down in my living room with a pen and opened my notebook to a blank page. Having walked with the Lord for many decades, I scoured my brain for memories of the beginning.

When did You come into my heart, Lord? Was it when I joined the church?

A picture came into focus. I sat in our living room with my parents and my twin brother the spring of our eighth grade year. Our pastor, a gentle gray-haired man of God, asked questions about our beliefs. Did we believe in God? Did we know that we had sinned?

Oh yes, I certainly knew that I sinned. A perfectionist at heart, I tried so hard but could never do everything right. And even if I did nine things right, my father had the knack of noticing the one thing I did wrong and pointing it out to me. Some of my attitudes and behaviors were certainly not godly or holy.

Did I believe that Jesus died and rose again? That He paid the price for my sins? Yes. Were we willing to be baptized and join the church? Yes, we both agreed.

The following week my twin

brother and I went forward to declare our faith. The pastor sprinkled us with the waters of baptism, and we were welcomed into church membership.

Life seemed to go on just as before. No strong emotion or changes. Was this all there was?

I thoughtfully gripped my pen and gazed out the window at white-crowned sparrows fluttering around the bird feeder. Indecision flickered within.

Hmm . . . could this really be when Jesus came into my life?

Faith crisis

Another scene flashed into my mind, a time of doubts and indecision.

I was in college, my freshman year. Serious conflicts in my relationship with my parents had arisen over the years. Doubts about my faith came to a head that fall as a close friend explored another religion and my sociology professor expounded on evolution, scorning beliefs about creation.

Confused, I questioned much I had known and believed. I walked the campus one night with tears on my face, looking up into the starry heavens, and begged God to guide me to the truth.

A required class assignment to write about family caused repressed feelings of hurt and anger to surface, leading me into counseling. The holiday break brought an opportunity for a painful but necessary reconciliation with my parents.

A nurse who had been our youth group advisor in high school wrote me a long letter about her own season of ques-

tioning and the answers she found. I talked with my pastor and studied the Scriptures. Gradually God guided my heart to the healing and spiritual answers I needed.

Springtime came. One week at church, I walked down the aisle to rededicate my life to Jesus. On a sunny April day I was baptized by immersion.

The following morning as I showered, I experienced a moment of overflowing joy. As water cascaded over on me, internal waves of ecstasy brought tears streaking down my cheeks. An indescribable touch of the Holy Spirit confirmed . . . I was His beloved daughter.

This must be when the Lord came into my life, I reasoned.

Church camp

Suddenly, a Voice spoke in my heart. *What about the campfire?*

Startled by this question, I closed my eyes. A long-forgotten memory surfaced. I sat on a wooden bench with all the other campers, gathered around a blazing campfire by the lake. Crickets chirped.

It was the summer after fifth grade, the last night of a week-long church camp.

A young man, one of the youth counselors, stood before us with the light of the campfire flickering on his face. He spoke about how much Jesus loved each of us and how He had died for all our sins, His blood paying a price we could never pay.

He told us the story of Nicodemus, a learned teacher of the Jews, who came to see Jesus at night. How Jesus shocked him when He stated, "You must be born again." How could that happen?

The counselor continued. "In Revelation 11:3, Jesus says He stands outside the door of our heart knocking. He promised that if we open the door, He would come in and live in us. Do you want to be forgiven and ask Jesus into your heart? Just repeat after me."

I bowed my head and prayed that prayer. Sincerely repenting and believing, I asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my Lord.



Transformation

The memory faded, and I slowly opened my eyes.

The King had come in.

I had forgotten, but Jesus did not forget. He knew the exact moment He entered into the heart of a little ten-year-old girl. And even as I doubted and searched and walked my own way at times, transformation happened as I grew in knowledge and in faith. He had never left me. He had never given up on me.

Yes, I did have a story to tell.

BA

Yvonne Kays
writes from Bend,
OR.



Have you heard
the news?

The *Bible Advocate* has an audible edition! Listen to the AudioBA, over 90 minutes of content from the January-February 2022 issue. Read more about this project on page 26, and find it at baonline.org.

The Terrifying Truth

continued from page 7

If it is true that Jesus, the Son of God, died and rose again, then this narrative needs our serious attention. It's otherwise foolish to relegate such compelling evidence as fables to be discarded to the realm of fantasy. As a verifiable, factual recording of events, Jesus' resurrection must be the most terrifying truth we could ever encounter. It suddenly condemns our society's atheistic suppositions as deceptively and dangerously wrong, just as it also opens up the realms of possibility and hope.

Without resurrection, we have no hope. Human life is otherwise just a random accident, neither good nor bad, with no meaning or purpose. But if the Logos who spoke everything into existence, then entered our reality of time, matter, and space to demonstrate complete redemption and forgiveness by His own sacrifice — and if He is who He says He is — then you and I have a responsibility to ask, "What does it mean for me and for everyone else who has ever lived?"

Are we willing to explore the compelling reasons to believe and hope in the power and promise of glorious resurrection life? **BA**

John Klassek
writes from Perth,
Australia, and is
secretary of the
IMC.



Kingdom Rest

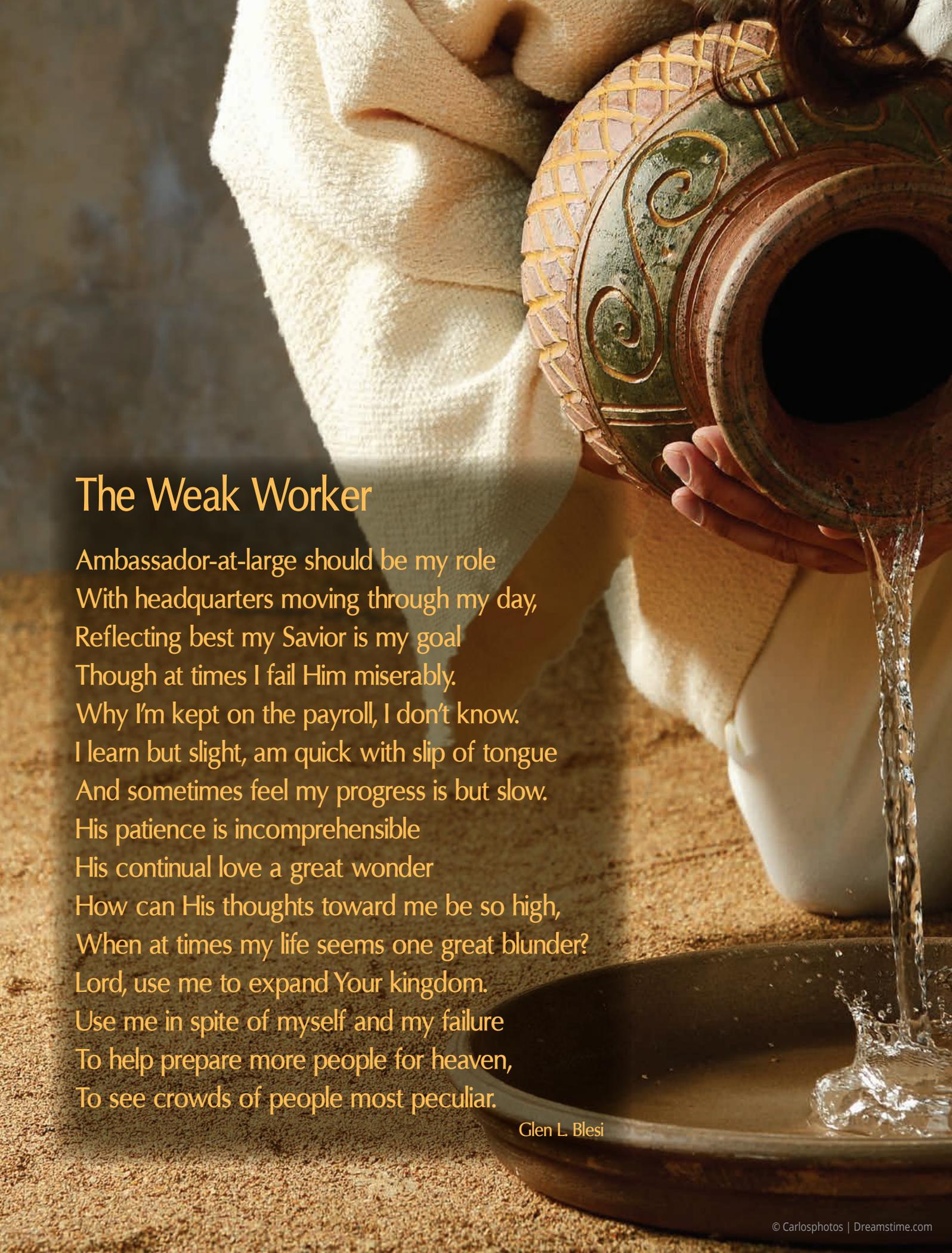
continued from page 10

of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" (vv. 12-15).

But with the warning is also the promise of rest. The first Yeshua could not deliver all that the second Yeshua did! So "there remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (4:9, NIV). Recalling the climactic conclusion of creation, and the goal of rest that creation groans for, Hebrews quotes Genesis 2 also, when "God rested on the seventh day from all His works" (Hebrews 4:4).

Our world is so weary. Maybe we are too. But Jesus bids us, "Come and rest!" Are we listening? Will we let go and let Him? Today is the day of salvation, and the goal of creation is seen in Christ. So "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' . . . For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (vv. 7, 10).

As we live for the King, may we not fall short of His kingdom rest. **BA**



The Weak Worker

Ambassador-at-large should be my role
With headquarters moving through my day,
Reflecting best my Savior is my goal
Though at times I fail Him miserably.
Why I'm kept on the payroll, I don't know.
I learn but slight, am quick with slip of tongue
And sometimes feel my progress is but slow.
His patience is incomprehensible
His continual love a great wonder
How can His thoughts toward me be so high,
When at times my life seems one great blunder?
Lord, use me to expand Your kingdom.
Use me in spite of myself and my failure
To help prepare more people for heaven,
To see crowds of people most peculiar.

Glen L. Blesi



From the Editor's Desk

Questions on baptism

May you please spare time to look at the following questions?

1. Why did baptism in the Spirit precede water baptism in Cornelius' household (Acts 10:44-48)? It is well known that water baptism and the laying on of hands precede baptism in the Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

2. In Acts 9:18, the Word of God says, "Immediately there fell from [Saul's] eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized." Which baptism is referred to here?

N. A. A. T.
Malawi, Africa

Editor's note: I'll take your second question first. In all the cases I can find, the phrase "was baptized" refers to the act of water baptism (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21; John 3:23; Acts 8:13; 16:15, 33). I think we should understand Acts 9:18 in the same way. Where the baptism of the Spirit is found, it is specifically identified.

Your first question is more interesting. I don't think I can provide a definitive answer for this "exception." Rather, I think we should take from it that the Holy Spirit cannot be simply contained or put into a box. We see a general pattern that Spirit baptism follows water baptism, but that is not necessarily true in all cases. The Spirit moves as He wills. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: "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 3:8). The story of Cornelius is one of those times when the Spirit moved in a new and unexpected way. It's a good reminder that the Holy Spirit, while reliable, is not predictable.

Praise for AudioBA

Editor's note: Recently, I posted about the AudioBA on my personal Facebook page. I'm so excited about this project (see page 24)! I've been wanting an audio version of the Bible Advocate for some time. My talented and hard-working kids, Tabitha and Isaac, recorded and edited the January-February issue over their holiday break — about 20 hours of work. I'm proud of the results and of their willingness to dedicate the time to this project. They caught my vision and ran with it.

So if you don't have time to read the BA, Tabi will read it to you! Check out the new AudioBA at baonline.org (Sections).

Here are some responses I received from my posting:

Awesome! — D. A. S.

What a blessing! Tabi had a great voice for this project and her pacing is excellent. Isaac has done an equally amazing job of editing as well. — M. S.

Great work! The transformation of the BA is amazing. Determined and focused on leadership. The Church is marching on. — G. U.

I can't imagine the work this must have been. I am sooo excited! Thank you, Tabi. Your reading was so clear — blessings to the entire family for this great contribution to God's people and the CoG7! ¡Dios les bendiga! — S. C.

Great job, Tabi and Isaac. Fantastic audio presentation of the BA. This issue was full of interesting articles as usual. It will be good to have the audio available to enjoy. — B. S. B.

Praise the Lord for giving you this plan. I love that now we have the audio, and thanks to my brother and sister for putting it together. They did a great job. — J. J.

Wow! — L. H. H.

What a blessing, brother! Thank you guys for such dedication, and may the Lord continue to use you to bless others! — M. E.

This is wonderful. This is "change," the only constant that we have. God bless you and your family for your vision and work. — L. H. R.

Impressive! — N. L. C.

I loved it! Great job! — A. S.

A few last words

I would like to give thanks to God for the uplifting message of the BA. "Oh, the Faithfulness of God!" [by] Stephen Whitewell [November-December 2021 BA] is very encouraging, stirring our hope in Him who will bring to pass His will to give us life again. Despite [Adam and Eve not believing] the surety of His word (that man lives by God's word) and [eating] of another tree, by giving us another opportunity, He reveals to us His excellent (indescribable) nature (First Word, Jason Overman) . . . He is not only our creator (brought us into existence) but also a loving and gracious Father who is ready to forgive His errant children (even before they ask for it). Such a great gift of repentance.

May He bless the staff of BA, the disciple fraternity, and the readers at large.

*K. S. L.
Kenya*

We enjoy the BA, especially the Q&A, the variety of writers, and diverse perspectives on each issue's theme. Thank you for your work and ministry.

*C. C.
Tallahassee, FL*



Would You Support the Bible Advocate?

Here we are, well into 2022, and we've made it because of the Lord's compassions, "new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22, 23) — and every year! We look forward to seeing the new things God has planned for us as we seek to do His will.

Some things don't seem so new, however. Like the pandemic. We're still battling it, with advances and setbacks. As you've heard, the pandemic dealt a hard financial blow to the Bible Advocate Press in 2020 and 2021, which we described in our annual spring support letter. We continue to struggle with postage and paper costs that increase regardless of what the virus is doing. This affects the printing of the BA and our original BAP study material.

At year end and three-quarters through the fiscal year, our expenses exceed revenue by \$32,700. That's a big deficit! Of course, we still endeavor to be faithful stewards of the resources God has provided, finding every way to save money. But we need your help.

The *Bible Advocate* has been a free publication for decades, and we want to keep it that way for as long as possible. Please give to the BA and purchase our products as you are able. We've made it easy. Just go online to baonline.org and click on "Donate." It's safe and convenient. We welcome donations by check as well. Please make your check out to Bible Advocate Press and mail it to P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

Help us start 2022 out right, trusting God for our needs and watching His compassions renew in the new year.

Jason Overman
Editor



A Big Vision for Small Churches

Coming in 2022!

Now more than ever, small churches are the right size to deliver hope and healing to our broken world. This one-day event will equip your church with the vision, information, and resources you need to be salt and light to this generation.

Bring this event to your local area. Contact the Artios Center for Vibrant Leadership at *center*. artioscollege.org for more information.



Whaid Rose



Tanzania Church gathering in Biharamulo

The Kingdom of God

Discovering the relationship among kingdom, church, and world.

by Ramon Ruiz

Jesus broke into the history of humanity and began His ministry by declaring, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). In fact, this statement represents the axis of His entire ministry.

Kingdom centered

The phrase *kingdom of God* appears more than seventy times in the New Testament. If we add its equivalent *kingdom of heaven*, it is repeated approximately one hundred times. Most of them appear as sayings of Jesus. Many of the parables were told to

illustrate the kingdom of God, beginning with “The kingdom of heaven is like.” Jesus frequently used the phrase in opposition to the kingdoms of this world.

The concept of the kingdom of God establishes the core of Christ’s message. It is interesting to see that generally the evangelical church, from a theological point of view, defines itself as Christ centered. This is not an error, since Christ is the “heart” of the Holy Scriptures. But we must recognize that Christ spoke much more of the kingdom of God than of Himself. Even when He spoke of Himself, He also spoke in terms of the kingdom.

In the longest sermon of Jesus recorded in the Bible, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus climbed the mountain, as Moses ascended Sinai. But Jesus also spoke from the mount, as God did with Moses. There Jesus quoted this concept of the

kingdom several times and established the Beatitudes as the new criteria for the new reality of the kingdom of God.

Kingdom coming

In addition to Jesus, John the Baptist affirmed that we human beings were not going to the kingdom. Rather, the kingdom of God comes to us. Human beings are “dead” in sins, unable to take any initiative and save themselves. Paul affirms, “Even when we were dead in trespasses, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Ephesians 2:5). The arrival of the kingdom was not by human action but by divine — God’s initiative. In fact, Christ teaches us in the Lord’s Prayer that we must pray for the kingdom of God to continue coming to this world, to truly transform the reality of misery in

which humanity lives (Matthew 6:9-13).

Kingdom come

The pastoral work of the church, among other things, is directly proportional to the vision of the kingdom of God. If the vision is only eschatological or futuristic (as I believe it once was), then the pastoral work is limited, with the belief that nothing can change until Christ comes. It is true that the kingdom of God has not been fully established. If this were the case, the world would be different. But it is also true that the kingdom of God has a dimension that is present, here and now. God has already visited us through His Son Jesus Christ, who inaugurated His kingdom among us. Right now that kingdom is a reality in all those whose lives have been transformed because they have accepted Christ as their Lord and King.

The Pharisees questioned Christ about when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus' answer: "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20, 21).

It is interesting to see that the last verb in Jesus' response is in the present tense: "The kingdom of God is within you" — that is, here and now.

Other kingdoms

When Jesus met with Pontius Pilate, governor of the province of Judea and representative of the Roman kingdom, He focused on the kingdom of God. The



Pharisees accused Jesus of declaring that He was king. Unsure about what they said of Jesus, Pilate asked Him directly, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:33, 36).

The expression "My kingdom is not of this world" must be understood in the sense that the kingdom of God does not resemble or arise from the kingdoms of this world in any way. Earthly kingdoms arise from the love of power, while the kingdom of God arises from the power of love. In Paul's words, the kingdom of God is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). In contrast, the kingdoms of the world

are characterized by injustice, violence, corruption, and many more evils that overwhelm human beings.

A kingdom response

In the Gospel of Mark, when Jesus announced the arrival of the kingdom, He demanded a response from the listeners: "Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (1:15). You cannot be a citizen of the kingdom of God and be a member of other dark kingdoms. Jesus also affirmed, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters" (Luke 11:23). Furthermore, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and



CoG7 youth in Tanzania



CoG7 congregation in Tanzania

the violent take it by force” (Matthew 11:12). Doing nothing about the arrival of the kingdom is a negative response in itself, and those who fail to respond will face consequences.

Church and kingdom

After what has been said so far, the question arises, “What role does the church play in respect to the kingdom of God?”

To answer this, we must understand that the church lives in a double reality. On one hand is the kingdom of God and on the other, the increasingly sinful world it lives in. The answer requires a clear understanding and arrangement of the trilogy: kingdom, church, world.

Interestingly, the definition of *church* (from the Greek word *ekklesia*) means “called-out assembly or congregation.” The members are called to leave the world and are summoned to remain outside it. This is spiritually significant. As Christians, we are called to forsake the sin that defines the world, and we are called to live the remainder of our lives set apart from that sinful activity. It is not about literally leaving the world, because we have no other world we can go to, nor is that God’s desire. Rather, it is about spiritually leav-

ing the world, as Jesus asked His Father: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15).

While it is true that the church is not the kingdom of God, it is also true that she is a different community than the worldly community that bears witness to the kingdom of God and participates in it. Conversion to Christ and the Holy Spirit, who dwells in believers, makes them new creatures with a new conscience, new purposes, and a new lifestyle, where the practice of sin is no longer the rule.

The believer, saved by the grace of God, still lives within their human nature, which naturally tends to sin. This reality is known as the paradox of now, but not yet. The believer is already forgiven of sins and saved from condemnation, but not yet fully transformed. Paul explains it better: “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Romans 7:22, 23).

This paradox will end when Christ comes and we are transformed from our human nature

to His divine nature. John affirms that one day when Jesus is revealed, we will be like Him, “for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

The church is called to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. This means that the church is the sign that the kingdom of God has arrived and that it spreads like leaven in the dough until it permeates everything. The church is responsible for infusing society with the gospel of the kingdom. It is then about having less presence of the world in the church and more presence of the church in the world.

Ramon Ruiz is president of the International Ministerial Congress and pastors the Melbourne church in Dallas, TX, with his wife Rebeca. They have one son, two daughters, and several grandchildren.



GC Convention 2023 will be held July 11-15, 2023, in Covington, Kentucky.

Begin making your plans to join many others in Covington. Remember, a trip to the Ark Experience will still be a pre-convention excursion. Your prayers for a safe and exciting convention are appreciated.

See you in 2023!



A Kingdom Gospel

Modern believers tend to focus on the part of the gospel that tells how Jesus died for sins so that those who truly believe in Him won't face God's wrath. Jesus is presented as a heavenly "Get Out of Jail Free" card: "Do you want to avoid hell? Please accept Jesus." It is good news that those who truly believe in Jesus will be saved, but the Bible presents a greater gospel — one that focuses first and foremost on Jesus and His kingdom.

Jesus began His earthly ministry "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Matthew 4:23, ESV throughout). When Jesus sent His disciples out to evangelize, He instructed them, "And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (10:7, 8). Luke echoes Matthew: "He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal" (Luke 9:2).

These repeated proclamations of the kingdom, accompanied by heavenly signs and wonders, are important because Jesus came not only as the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world (Revelation 13:8) but also as Messiah, Son of Man, Lord, and King. The many miracles Jesus and His disciples performed were signs of His kingdom authority. They were tangible evidence that the King and His kingdom were invading the fallen world and setting things right.

An imprisoned and doubtful John the Baptist sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you really the One?" Jesus responded, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the

deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:22). Jesus could have simply answered, "Yes, I'm the One." Instead, Jesus pointed to the tangible evidence of His kingdom come.

You may remember that, beginning His earthly ministry, Jesus reintroduced Himself to the people of Nazareth by reading a prophecy from Isaiah of the coming Messiah and His kingdom: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" — and then stating, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21). In response to John's doubt, Jesus pointed to the tangible evidence and told John, "Look! It's happening!"

The gospel John the Baptist proclaimed was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The gospel Jesus preached was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (4:17). The apostle Paul proclaimed, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10, 11).

The good news is not just the possibility of personal salvation. The greater gospel is "Get ready. Bow the knee. The King is coming!"

— Loren Stacy





Bible Advocate Press



We've come a long way ...

From handset type for print to digital — and now, audio (see p. 26)!

Along the way, the Bible Advocate Press has endeavored to make the best of our resources. The past few years have taken a toll on those resources, so we're asking for your help. Please read the letter on page 27 for more information.

Thank you for your continued support!