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2024: Meeting God in Scripture



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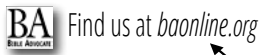
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The Father and the Son

Welcome back, readers! In our aim to meet God in Scripture, we now come to the Gospels. Having traversed the Old Testament in our previous issues this year, I would sooner summarize those thirty-nine books than these four. I could sum up these four in a word: Jesus (Matthew 1:1). But as John writes in the last verse of his Gospel, the world itself can't contain all that could be written about Jesus (21:25)!

So what can I say in this space? Simply this: In the four Gospels we meet God in Jesus. The God of Israel is revealed, declared in Him.

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18).

Notably, both texts refer to Father and Son. Israel knew God as Father, though the term was not often used (Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10). That changes in the Gospels, where God is called Father 175 times, and almost always by Jesus himself. Abba is the Aramaic form that Jesus used (Mark 14:36). Devoid of religious formality, *abba* is a warm, familial term for a dear father. We meet God as Father in the Gospels and come to know Him intimately as our heavenly Father (Matthew 6:14, 26, 32), by Jesus alone, because the Father sent His only Son to make us sons through Him.

And so — like Father, like Son — we meet God in the Gospels as Son. In naming the Son Jesus ("God saves") and Immanuel ("God with us," Matthew 1:22-25), the Son's person and work are disclosed, as well as His inseparable union with the Father.

At the end of the Gospels, two more names for the Son reinforce this profound truth. Thomas speaks them: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). These names, like Gospel bookends, summarize the four Gospels: God, as Father and Son, has come to save! That is good news indeed!

— Jason Overman





An Unexpected Prophet

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God's salvation
after His silence.

by R. Herbert

Where does the story of the New Testament begin? The Gospel of John gives us a prequel, introducing the pre-existent Word who became the Son of God. But the actual first events of the New Testament are recorded in Luke 1.

As the gospel story begins to unfold in this chapter, we know that, historically, there had been over four hundred long years of prophetic silence in ancient Israel — from the time of the prophet Malachi (about 420 BC) to the appearance of John the Baptist

in the early first century AD. It was as if God had forgotten His people. As the majority of Israelites fell progressively further from Him, He no longer reached out to them with prophetic guidance and light.

But that would change with a sudden outpouring of revelation — a flash of great spiritual truth that came through an unexpected prophet. There was no prophet in Judea at that time, until prophecy returned to the lips of a priest.

Prophet priest

Luke tells us that both Zechariah and Elizabeth, the priest and his wife who became the parents of John the Baptist, were descended from the priestly family of Aaron. The Hebrew name Zechariah means “God

remembers” or “God is remembered,” and in a way, both meanings were fulfilled in the lives of the priest and his wife. They certainly remembered God, as Luke affirms: “Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly” (1:6). God, in turn, remembered the righteous couple and blessed them with a child in their old age (vv. 24, 25).

We are all familiar with this part of the story. An angel appeared to Zechariah while he ministered in the temple and promised the priest a son, although Zechariah would be speechless until the child was born. Elizabeth gave birth to the child John, who would become one of the greatest of Israel’s prophets (Matthew 11:11). Yet

before that occurred, Zechariah became the instrument of God's remembering His people and returning the word of prophecy to them.

In first century Judea, it was customary for the father to name his child, and, in so doing, to formally accept the child into his family. This is why it's interesting that when the time came to name the baby, Elizabeth clearly said the child's name was to be John, because Zechariah could not speak (Luke 1:57-64). The neighbors turned to him for confirmation. As Zechariah wrote the name John, his voice was returned to him and he "was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied" (v. 67).

Priest's prophecy

If we are to truly understand the importance of this event, we must not forget the four hundred years of God's silence leading up to it. In a real way, Zechariah's prophecy was the beginning of God's giving of truth through His human servants in the New Testament. (Mary's earlier prayer is in the past tense, showing what God had accomplished, while Zechariah's words are largely future-tense prophecies.)

Although we may tend to see the priest's prophecy as a detail in a larger story regarding John the Baptist, we should pay particular attention to what Zechariah said:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David (as he said through his holy prophets of

long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us — . . . to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear . . . to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God . . . to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace" (vv. 68-71, 74, 77-79).

When we think of salvation, we tend to think of it in a single dimension: that of Christ's sacrifice and the resulting offer of salvation from our sins. This is, indeed, the central aspect of

Salvation from enemies.

Zechariah may have presumed this meant physical enemies of that time, like the Roman conquerors of Judea. But we know from the Bible's larger prophetic picture that the physical salvation of God's people from their enemies would come later — at the Messiah's return.

But there is also a spiritual application of this prophecy. Jesus did save His people from their spiritual enemies: the spiritual powers that desire our destruction (1 Peter 5:8, 9). This aspect of our salvation is certainly in place now (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; 2 Timothy 4:18).

Salvation from sin. Zechariah also foretold that the promised

“Zechariah’s inspired words show us the three forms of salvation we receive through the work of the Son of God.”

salvation. But Zechariah's prophecy shows that God's salvation of those who turn to Him is even broader. Under divine inspiration, Zechariah clearly identified the coming Messiah who would be heir to David's throne. He would provide salvation for His people from "our enemies and all who hate us," from sins, and from "darkness and the shadow of death."

One would bring salvation to His people through the forgiveness of their sins. Luke records the angel telling Mary, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus" (1:31). His name, of course, means "salvation." Matthew's account makes this explicit by saying, "you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (1:21).

While we often think of this salvation in a somewhat abstract

way, like the canceling of a debt or the overturning of a guilty verdict, we should remember that it is salvation from the very wrath of God. The apostle Paul made this clear: “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” (Romans 5:9). Sometimes we need to remember this to see the full extent of this aspect of the salvation we are given.

Salvation from death. Finally, in saying that we are saved from “living in darkness and in the shadow of death” (Luke 1:79), Zechariah indicates that we are saved from the way we naturally live, according to our own carnal minds (Ephesians 2:3). As

Matthew’s Gospel puts it, quoting Isaiah: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (4:16). This refers not only to sin and sinfulness but to the sad darkness that clouds most human minds so that we hurt ourselves and others endlessly for lack of knowledge of what is good, sane, and right (Hosea 4:6).

Complete salvation

So Zechariah’s inspired words not only reinstate prophetic revelation from God but also show us, in a single passage, the three forms of salvation we receive through the work of the Son of

God: from the spiritual enemies who would destroy us, from God’s righteous judgment of our sins, and from ourselves — from destroying our own well-being due to our spiritual blindness, which ultimately leads to death.


The words of the unexpected prophet show that God saves us from far more than an abstract spiritual debt. Rather, in His kindness, He saves us in every way that we need to be saved. **BA**

R. Herbert (a pen name) holds an earned doctorate in biblical studies and ancient Near Eastern languages and archaeology. Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.



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Spotlight on John: Life, Light, and Love

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But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (20:31).

The fourth Gospel is for many the best loved of all Scripture. It was written by John, the beloved disciple (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20), though his name is not found therein.

The unique Gospel: Written after the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke), John repeats very little found in them. They emphasize Jesus' ministry in Galilee; John focuses on Jerusalem. They report many miracles and parables; John uses only a few events to report the divine person of Jesus, His conflict with the religious leaders, and His relationship with His followers.

Key words

Word - the *logos*, i.e., active reason, self-expression, personal communication, that connects God and man (1:1, 14)

I Am - a form of Yahweh, the Hebrew holy name for God (8:58)

believe - verb form of *faith* (about 100 times)

Father/Son - divine family imagery

Life/death - the choice before every soul (5:21-29)

Truth/lie - God's Word is truth; Satan traffics in lies (8:32-47; 17:17)

Light/darkness - metaphors for *truth* and *lie*, *righteousness* and *sin* (1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35, 36, 46)

Above/beneath - Jesus is from where no human has gone (3:13, 31; 8:23)

Supporting cast

- Who recognized the Lamb of God and said, "He must increase . . ." (1:19-36; 3:23-36)?
- Who went with Jesus to a wedding and stood at His cross (2:1ff; 19:25)?
- What leading Jews privately befriended Jesus (3:1ff; 19:38ff)?
- Unnamed women of moral failings were graced by Jesus (4:1ff; 8:1ff).
- What doubting disciple called Jesus "my God" (20:24-29)?
- What quick-spoken disciple was slow-footed (6:68, 69; 20:2-4)?

Jesus said "I AM . . ." (8:58) the bread of life (6:35, 41, 48, 51); the light of the world (8:12); the door (10:7, 9); the good shepherd (10:11, 14); the resurrection and the life (11:25); the way, the truth, the life (14:6); the vine (15:1, 5).

Eight signs of His identity

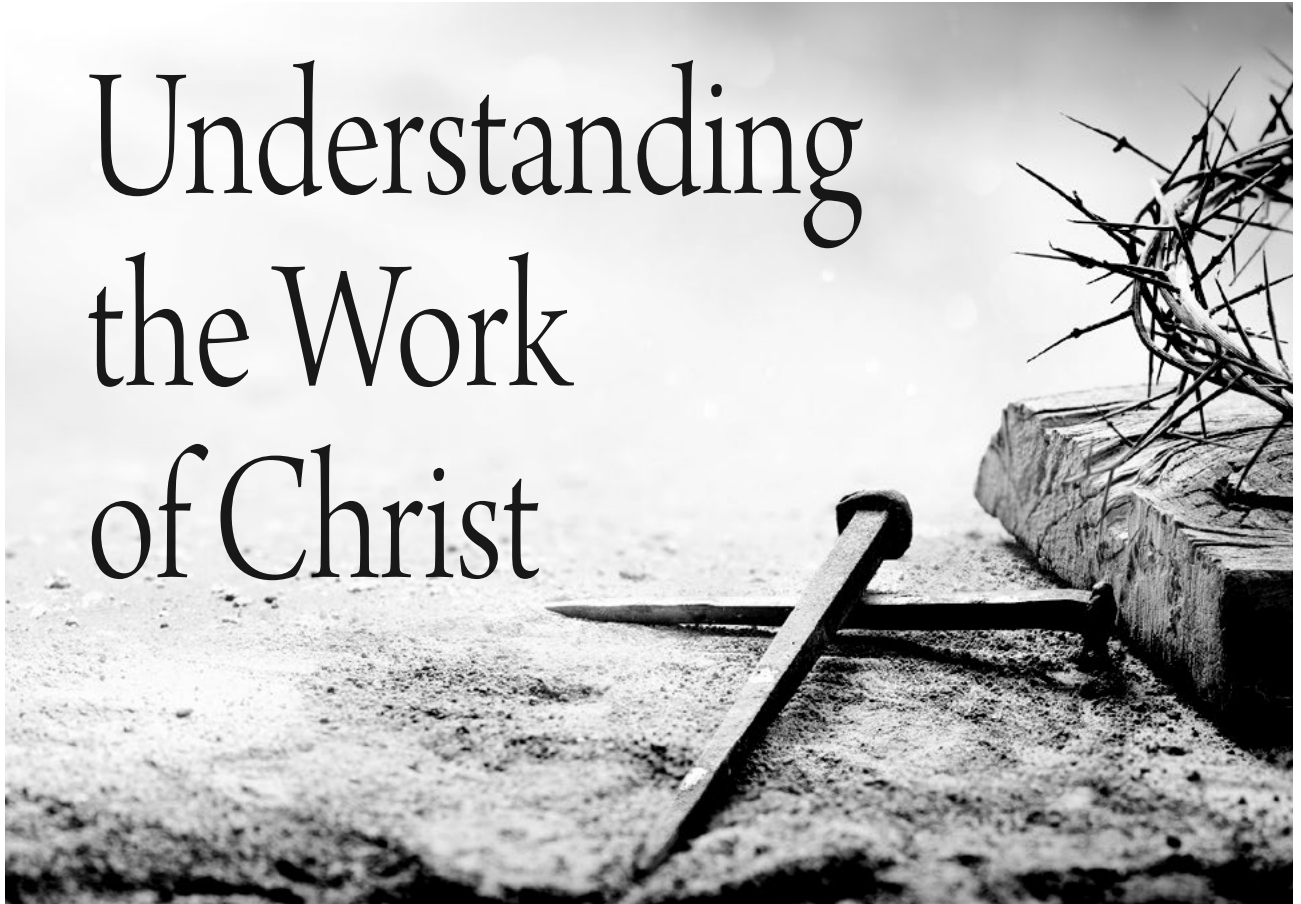
- (20:30; 21:25)
- turning water to wine (2:1-11)
- healing a nobleman's son (4:46-54)
- healing a cripple at the pool (5:1-18)
- feeding the 5,000 (6:1-15)
- walking on a stormy sea (6:16-21)
- healing a blind man (9:1-41)
- raising Lazarus (11:1-57)
- catching many fish (21:6-11)

John in a sentence: God loved the world and sent His only begotten Son — the eternal I AM-Word-Messiah — to reveal the Father, show the way, witness the truth, give His life, and take it again so we might believe and live abundantly and eternally.



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Understanding the Work of Christ



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A balanced look at the
atonement.

by **Dr. David R. Downey**

All history points to Jesus' work among us. It was appropriate that time-dating used to go according to BC and AD (before Christ and anno Domini, or "in the year of the Lord"). Though often criticized by some, for us, history still pivots on the appearance, life, and work of Jesus Christ.

Additionally, if we were to list the events of His earthly life in significant order, the Resurrection and Ascension would have to be the pinnacle. Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of our hope in life. This hope is offered to all who trust in Him, even in ages to come and to all who called Him friend (James 2:23).

However, to interpret the

Resurrection faithfully, we should never lose sight of the Cross. As a pastor, I tried to include the message of the triumphal entry before I spoke of the Resurrection. This was simply to emphasize that Jesus approached the joy of the Resurrection riding humbly on a donkey, receiving the praises of folks who would soon abandon Him to the cross.

Certainly, the message of the Cross and the Resurrection bring us great joy. Earthly time and spiritual time coalesced in these great events. The power and significance of their meaning takes our breath away. But the backbeat of this story is that it is set in a broken world in need of redemption. While contemplating

Jesus' sacrifice, we must hear the bass tones of cruelty in a world that would sacrifice a perfect man.

Loss of life

God wants to give us a deeper meaning. He wants to tell us what we must remember when contemplating the gift of His Son. Two thoughts come to mind. The first is this: You cannot experience resurrection without first experiencing loss of life.

It seems obvious that you would have to lose life to regain it. But in a spiritual context, we might miss this.

Years ago, an assignment in a preaching class required that I explain the "Servant passage" (Isaiah 52:13–53:12) by using exegesis. This means using language, background, and biblical resources carefully to interpret the meaning — or, as we seminar-ians interpreted it, to study until your eyes fall out.

I dreaded the assignment at first glance, but then came to appreciate it as I peered into the text. Some of the words in this wonderful messianic prophecy are, to use an A. T. Robertson phrase, like clods of earth falling on a coffin:

His appearance was
marred more than any man
... like a tender shoot ...
out of parched ground ... He
was despised and forsaken
of men, a man of sorrows ...
our sorrows He carried ... He
was pierced through for our
transgressions ... Like a lamb
that is led to slaughter, ... He
did not open His mouth ...
the LORD was pleased to crush
Him, putting Him to grief"
(52:14; 53:2-5, 7, 10).

It helps to remember that ten days of repentance preceded the great Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This clearly revealed to the Jews the need to repent before celebrating the atonement. The Day of Atonement itself was the most sacred of the feast days and the only one that required fasting. On that solemn day, shedding blood was necessary, and symbolically released the sins of the people into the wilderness through the scapegoat. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy and showed us that the hard work of a sinless life, culminating in a sacrificial death, brings us the hope we celebrate today.

We display our victory by following the Master. Like Him, we have lost our life to gain it. We

should not follow Jesus only occasionally but all the time. He gave us, through His sacrifice, the great joy of atonement: Since we have received such a great gift of eternal life, we are compelled to gladly give all of ourselves all the time.

Empty tomb

The second thought about the gift of God's Son is this: Alone, the cross would just be a sad human event, but an empty tomb remains today.

The Lord of life submitting to death is a tremendous message, but His resurrection is foundational to our joy and worship all year long. He is no longer in the tomb!

Action Steps

If you have asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life, then consider an appropriate response. Following are a few suggestions for action, each followed by a verse for meditation.

- Understand that your new life includes the cross. "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38).
- Look up! (After all, He ascended.) "Straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28).
- Walk, realizing that what began in grace continues in grace. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).
- Share your joy! "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

— Dr. David Downey

Many great leaders, spiritual and political, have a shrine where they rest in state. Why did no one preserve the place of Jesus' burial and turn it into a shrine? We are not certain where this tomb is today because no one thought to mark it.

Jesus is not there; He only visited a short while. In the tumult and victory of the Resurrection, who could think of a tomb?

The day of Jesus' resurrection stands as the greatest day ever recorded. In her song "Was It a Morning Like This," Sandi Patty describes that great day and the earth resounding in praise that He had risen. Isaiah prophesied this victory in the aforementioned Servant passage:

"Behold, My servant will prosper . . . surely our griefs He Himself bore, . . . by His scourging we are healed. . . . My Servant, will justify the many, . . . Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great" (52:13; 53:4, 5, 11, 12).

It is no simple "feel good" message we share. We are not trying to pump ourselves up, as some would suggest. We are responding to the historical event of the Resurrection: Jesus ascended and sat at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and He has promised to share His victory with those who will accept Him!

BA

Dr. David Downey writes from Burleson, TX. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



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Comfort or Call

And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him (Mark 1:20).

"I don't like it."

"It doesn't feel good."

"I don't want to."

"Why do I have to?"

Do those words sound like a spoiled child or rebellious teen? Perhaps. However, they may also reflect our attitude as reluctant Christians when God calls us out of our comfort zones.

I fear that all too often, we give in to society's mantra of "If it feels good, do it." The implied flip side tells us "If it doesn't feel good, don't do it." That mindset bombards us in music, movies, social media, magazines, and books. If we let down our guard, those misleading messages drown out God's voice.

When God called James and John, they could have held on to the financial security and family ties they enjoyed as fishermen. Yet without hesitation, they left behind the life they knew to follow Jesus into an unknown future.

What a future they faced: three years of ministry in the presence of the promised Messiah, a lack of material possessions but a wealth of spiritual truth, the grief of the crucified Christ followed by the joy of a resurrected Savior.

As He did with those men, Jesus calls us to follow Him — not looking back, not holding on to a me-first frame of mind.

We choose: God's Word or the words of the world; our comfort or God's call.

— Diana Derringer

Questions & Answers



How can Jesus be divine and yet “subordinate to the Father in rank,” as your Statement of Faith says?

The Bible teaches both. As our Statement of Faith also reads, “The phrase ‘only begotten Son of the Father’ reveals two complimentary truths about Jesus Christ: 1) His inherent, essential nature and 2) His position within the Godhead” (*This We Believe*, p. 22). The deity of Christ and His order in the Godhead need not be seen as contradictory.

As is implicit in the title, God the Father is the “head of Christ” and greater in position or rank (1 Corinthians 11:3; John 14:28), but not in essence and nature, as John’s Gospel declares: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (14:9; cf. 1:1; 20:28). It is wrong to assume that if one is greater in one way, one must also be greater in another way. When the Bible speaks of the Godhead, it is speaking of the divine essence, or nature, of God (Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9). There is equality of essence and nature in the Father and the Son; neither is inferior to the other. Yet their roles and rank within the Godhead are distinct. Divine nature is not compromised by subordinate order.

Since God exalts and bestows authority to Jesus (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:9-11), some assume He cannot be God. However, the error is in assuming the bestowal extends to the nature and essence of the Father and Son. Notably, both exaltation texts have in view the Son in His incarnate humanity.

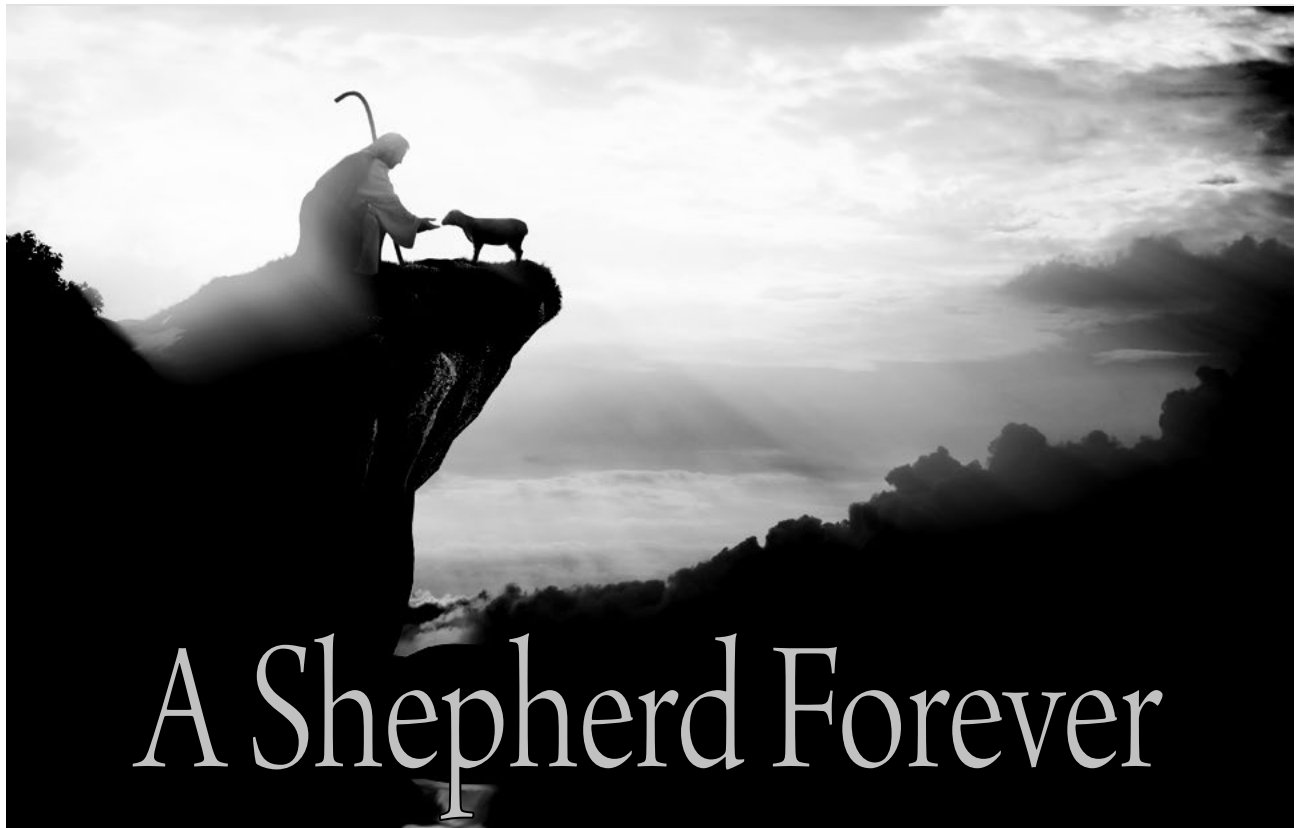
Regarding the full divinity of Christ, our Statement of Faith reads as follows:

The unique nature and identity of Jesus Christ is further seen in Scripture by the fact that several divine names are used in reference both to the Father and the Son. . . . Jesus shares not only the names of God but also His nature: “Who [Jesus], being in very nature God . . .” (Philippians 2:6). “He is the image of the invisible God . . . For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him. . . . For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 1:15-19; 2:9). “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being . . .” (Hebrews 1:3) (TWB, pp. 18, 20).

Regarding His subordination to the Father, Christ is called God’s Son. He is the begotten, while the Father is unbegotten. Again, the title Son implies their shared nature and likeness, as well as an eternal order on the part of the Son to the Father. Unlike earthly fathers and sons, this order is not temporal (in time) but eternal, as God’s nature is eternal. Yet just as earthly fathers can be greater in authority than their sons without implying an inferiority of being, the Father giving authority to His Son in no way implies that the latter is not God or is an inferior being (John 5:19, 20; 8:42).

First Corinthians 15:28 says, “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.” In short, the Father and the Son share the unity of essence and nature in equality, and the Son willingly submits to the authority of the Father in rank once He has conquered all enemies of God, including death. Subordination is in rank only, not in the divine nature.

— Elder Chip Hinds



A Shepherd Forever

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The role of the shepherd in the story of Israel.

by Dorothy Nimchuk

A bowl of lentils bartered for a birthright and a stolen blessing precipitated Jacob's journey to the flatlands of Padan Aram to seek a wife from his mother's relatives. Twenty years later, Jacob returned with wives, children, livestock, and servants.

Near the end of his life, he declared, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, . . . has been my shepherd all my life long . . ." (Genesis 48:15, ESV).

Is this a testimony all of us can declare, that the Lord has been our shepherd our entire lives?

When we understand the significance of shepherds in the Bible, we can appreciate Jesus' role as our Good Shepherd now and for eternity.

Shepherds in Israel

Common in the Middle East, shepherding had been the life-style of the patriarchs. Moses acquired leadership skills in Pharaoh's household, but he learned to shepherd his father-in-law's flock in the desert, preparing for God's call forty years later to lead His flock. Denied entrance to the Promised Land, Moses prayed for a new leader so the flock would "not be like sheep which have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17; cf. 20:2-13).

Keeping sheep was practical in Old Testament times. Grass and water were scarce, and

sheep were easily moved from place to place but were helpless, tending to wander. Isaiah used this analogy when, early on, the Lord God placed the burden of the world's guilt on His Son's shoulders: "All we like sheep have gone astray; . . . and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all . . ." (53:6).

God bemoaned the fact that His sheep wandered with no one to help, so He appointed a shepherd to feed them. Isaiah announced it: "Unto us a Child is born" who would "feed His flock like a shepherd" and reign on David's throne (9:6; 40:11; 9:7).

A shepherd reigning on a throne may sound odd, but the humble guardian of the flock was an apt image for the good rule of the Lord and Israel's king (Psalm 23; 78:70-72; 80:1). The rustic shepherd formed makeshift,

U-shaped folds from brush and bushes, topped with thorny branches to keep sheep in and marauders out. He slept across the opening, fitting the caring, protective profile of king David and what his heir, Jesus, would do as “the door of the sheep” (John 10:7).

Chief Shepherd

Fast forward many generations. Angels appeared to shepherds watching their flocks. First to hear the angelic chorus announcing Messiah’s birth, they were quick to spread the good news. Patriarchs and prophets had longed to see Messiah’s day. Those who should have welcomed Jesus rejected Him as a charlatan. Yet He didn’t back down from His identity, laying claim to both deity and messiahship (Isaiah 9:7).

The Chief Shepherd was not like most of the leaders in Israel’s history. They were like hirelings, caring little for their charges and apt to flee at the first sign of danger. Unfaithful leaders (both civil and spiritual) exploited their flocks. Those who served spiritual food to God’s flock deserved to have their material needs met, but often failed to reciprocate (Ezekiel 34:1-10; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Timothy 5:17, 18).

Jesus wasn’t like these shepherds. He was popular with the masses because of the miracles He performed, but He met opposition from Pharisees and other leaders. Jealous of His popularity and viewing Him as a threat, they tried to discredit the Chief Shepherd. Jesus exposed their despicable behavior (Matthew 23:13-15; cf. Ezekiel 34:18-22).

The rulers of the people finally

succeeded in ridding themselves of Jesus’ influence, or so they thought, by nailing Him to a cross. The Resurrection changed everything, and the early church exploded across Asia Minor, with the Word reaching into every corner of the world.

A welcoming flock

As the cornerstone of Hebrew society, shepherding demanded a solitary lifestyle, and Bedouin hospitality prevailed: setting a lavish table for drop-in guests, anointing their heads with oil (a sign of hospitality and respect), refreshing after their travels. With this in mind, Jesus reprimanded His Pharisee host for failure to provide the simplest of courtesies to Him as guest, while praising the uninvited woman who anointed Him (Luke 7:36-48).

As the Cornerstone-Shepherd of our faith, Jesus welcomes the

lost with His better-than-Bedouin hospitality. His table is spread with the Word of Life and an inexhaustible supply of living water. He anoints with the refreshing, perfumed oil of joy. Yet many a man would barter Jesus’ invitation in exchange for this world’s allure (Mark 8:36-38).

Our heavenly Father also has a table prepared to celebrate the upcoming marriage of His Son and His bride (God’s flock, Revelation 19:7-9). There we will join the masses of people, not sheep, afforded a special place at God’s table in His redemptive plan of salvation. Hallelujah! **BA**

Dorothy Nimchuk writes from Medicine Hat, Alberta, where she lives with her husband, Nick.



Pastors as Shepherds

“I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15).

The shepherd metaphor extends to pastors. Peter describes how pastors should shepherd the flock of God as overseers, willingly and eagerly, as examples and “as being lords over those entrusted to you” (1 Peter 5:3, emphasis mine). The reward for doing this is great: “when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory . . .” (v. 4).

Those who would lead God’s flock should feed them God’s soul-satisfying Word, lead (not drive) in decision-making in a Christlike manner, protect from false doctrine, gather them so none are lost, and diagnose the flock regarding their spiritual health. Pastors will meet with resistance in their flock at times and should bear in mind a “What would Jesus do?” approach to their reaction and discipline.

— Dorothy Nimchuk

Destination: Salt Lake City



Why would someone want to take a trip to Salt Lake City, Utah? I'm so glad you asked! We ran the numbers and did some exploring, and we came up with a list of reasons for you to consider.

1. The General Conference Convention is going to be held there June 30-July 5, 2025. Make sure you pick this week to come!

2. God commanded us to. Well OK, that's a stretch. But Hebrews 10:24, 25 tells us not to forsake meeting together and encouraging one another. This applies not only to your local church but also to the greater body of the CoG7. We need each other!

3. Family reunions are the best! This is the perfect opportunity for your family, who may live all over the country, to spend a vacation together. And don't forget about the friends you know who want to see you as well. They are waiting for you!

4. Speaking of family, there is a Family Search Library just down the street from the convention center, and it's free! Within a short time, you will be able to trace your ancestors, identify famous relatives, and find your country of origin. Bring any family info you might have to begin the search, and see how many generations you can find.

5. There's plenty of excitement for city folks and country dwellers! If you like city life, it's a free ride on the UTA-Trax train around the downtown area. The train can even bring you to the hotel from the airport for just a couple bucks per person. The City Creek Mall (huge outdoor mall, spanning blocks) is just across the street from the convention center, with many restaurants to choose from. Purchase a CONNECT pass (one-day, two-day, or year) and get free admission to eighteen venues for a great price.

You like zoos? There's a great one in Salt Lake City! Wanna get out of town? Park City, where the 2002 Olympics were held, is within an hour's drive. You can ride a bobsled, or maybe the beauty and fun activities of Thanksgiving Point are more your style. Perhaps you'd enjoy floating on the great Salt Lake.

If you missed national parks at the Albuquerque Convention in 2019, Utah is home to several famous national parks: Arches, Zion, Bryce Canyon, and more. The views there are stunning! God's grandeur is on display here. Definitely a must-see!

Have we provided a reason to lure you to Convention '25 yet? It's less than a year away, so it's high time to get that excitement built up and the planning made. Yeah, we know everyone says, "You don't want to miss this one!" I guess you'll have to come find out if it's true. Hope to see you there!



David Discovers Christ's Sacrifice



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by Marcia Sanders

"Hey, Papa!" David exclaimed. "I didn't know that you and Nana were coming today. Wanna go fishing?"

"Sure." Papa smiled. "Let's grab the poles and go catch some grasshoppers."

As the pair wandered down to the pond, David became quiet, lost in his own thoughts.

"Hey, you!" Papa gently thumped David on the top of his head. "What heavy thoughts are going on between your ears?"

"I was just thinking about the book I'm reading in my literature class. It's called *The Whipping Boy*, and it's about this prince who is such a brat that people in the castle call him Prince Brat — only behind his back, of course."

"*The Whipping Boy*?" Papa asked.

"Yeah, according to the book, the law in that land said that no one could lay a hand on the prince, since he's royal. But this prince was always doing naughty things that deserved punishment, so the king and queen found this orphan boy, Jemmy, and he got all the whippings that the prince should have gotten. That doesn't seem fair, at all." David sighed.

Papa shook his head. "No, it doesn't."

"The story was making me really angry at not just the prince but his mom and dad too," David continued. "I mean, how could they treat this other boy so badly? But then, I got to thinking about how Jesus died for *my* sins, not because He did anything wrong. So am I all that different from Prince Brat? Jesus lived on this earth without ever committing a single sin, but He died a horrible death on the cross

so that I could live forever, so that my sins would be forgiven. That doesn't seem fair either."

"I can see why that would bother you," Papa mused. "One difference, as I see it, is that Jesus came to this earth knowing what His mission was. He chose to willingly give His life for our sins. Mark 10:45 says, 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many'" (NASB).

"That's certainly a difference," David responded. "Imagine caring so much for someone that you would willingly die for them — and such a painful death too. It makes this verse in 1 Peter 2:24 even more meaningful: 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed'" (ESV).

David pondered the words. "By His wounds, I've been healed . . . His wounds . . . and He did it so that I could die to sin and live a righteous life."

"That's right," Papa agreed. "Our reaction to His sacrifice either shows how grateful or ungrateful we are."

"I have always wanted to serve God with my whole heart," David said. "But now it is even more important to me than it was before. I don't want to be an ungrateful spoiled brat, but an appreciative child of God." **BA**

Marcia Sanders writes from Fort Smith, AR, where she attends the Church of God (Seventh Day) with her husband, Randy.



The Exclamation Point



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by Christopher L. Scott

In English, we use an exclamation point after an interjection, to indicate strong feelings, or to show emphasis. It's sometimes called a *bang* or *shriek*.

John 3:15 is an exclamation point for anyone reading through John's Gospel: "so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life." This verse emphasizes that the purpose of Jesus' death was to give life to those who place their faith in Him.

The Gospel writer, John, tells us about the salvation of believers in John 3:16-18. Verse 16 interprets the mission and the message of our Lord: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

This was new for Israel. The Israelites knew that God loved them from what the Old Testament revealed about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation of Israel. For God to love the world was revolutionary in their minds.

But it is true! Notice: "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him" (v. 17). See, judgment is already occurring; we are placed under it at birth. Jesus didn't come to *judge* the world; He came to save the world. That's why we call it the gospel (which means "good news"). And through that belief in Christ we escape the judgment we're born under. Everyone is born a sinner, and everyone is destined for destruction. That's why Jesus Christ came — to offer salvation to everyone who accepts His gift of salvation.

Jesus leaves no stone unturned. There's no room to misunderstand what He says. He elaborates, "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he

has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (v. 18).

Trust in Christ prevents condemnation because He takes our place and pays the penalty for our sins when we place our lives in His hands (Romans 8:32). No one is saved without believing.

Jesus tells us about the sanctification of believers — the result of His light in them:

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:19-21).

There should be a change in believers who embrace the light of Christ. Those who come to the light practice light, and they show the light to others. In John, darkness is often used as a common picture of the state of a sinner (8:12; 12:35, 46; 1 John 1:6; 2:8, 9, 11). Those who depart from darkness through faith in Christ come into the light, and, when sanctified, also work in the light.

Notice: Not perfect! Just working in the light.

Praise God for His exclamation point of eternal life — the light of Christ in us! **BA**

Christopher L. Scott writes from Moses Lake, WA. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Power of a Word

by Bonita Jewel Hele

John the Beloved arguably knew Jesus more intimately than any of His other followers. He was with Jesus during His most celebrated moments and walked with Him through the darkest times as well.

John beheld Jesus transfigured into holiness on a mountaintop, witnessed Him raise a girl from the dead with a single word. John knelt at the foot of the cross on which Jesus bled and died. He was the first to recognize Jesus standing on a distant sea-shore after He had risen from the dead.

John began his testimony with a message that encompassed space and time in its scope: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). He went on to describe the actions of this Word, clearly not a normal word as we think of the term today.

Words are generally spoken or written. They have definitions and meanings but do not in themselves have the ability to do things. They cannot move or live or breathe.

If you are a reader and enjoy a good book, you know the power of words. When woven together in the right way, they can open up worlds of the imagination. You might have read a story like *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as a child. You may have been filled with wonder at the thought of entering a world like Narnia, with talking animals and the prospect of being transformed into a king or queen.

Yes, words have power. But the Word that John referred to in his Gospel is different.

“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (1:3). The description in the first chapter of John connotes

a picture of something . . . of someone sentient, which an inanimate word cannot be.

The Word was a being, and a powerful one at that. John’s statement evokes an image of omnipotence.

John then wrote, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (v. 4). He is not only life but light as well. In literature, light is often synonymous with knowledge and life; darkness, with death and ignorance and sorrow. This Word, John said, became a light for every person entering the world (v. 9).

The Word illuminated the world He created, shining His light into the hearts of the men and women, whom He designed in His image.

But the world did not know Him.

The very ones who could have — should have — recognized and welcomed Him did not receive Him. This Word-that-was-God descended to earth, a priceless gift unwrapped and laid bare for all to see, and many turned and walked away.

The whole story would have been a tragedy if not for the next words John penned. A promise: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God” (v. 12).

What — *Who* — is this Word that holds power to welcome those who believe as sons and daughters of God?

He is the only begotten Son of God, firstborn of many brothers and sisters. He descended to earth to show who the Father truly is, to glorify His name and make Him known. As He traversed worn paths to Cana and Capernaum, to Galilee and the Gadarenes, to Bethsaida and Bethany, and finally to Jerusalem and the cross, His words and deeds conveyed an image of God the Father.

continued on page 25



■ [Leadership]

A Savior in a

© RomoloTavani | istockphoto.com

by **Brian Franks**

Jesus is the coming King, the Messiah, the Chosen One, the very Son of God. If humans had written the story, surely this Savior would have made a big entrance — one showing His greatness and glory, a story worthy of the highest hero. Instead, we read these details, displayed in God’s Word, rather than hidden:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly (Matthew 1:18, 19).

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn (Luke 2:6, 7).

Jesus’ mother was found pregnant with Jesus, before beginning her marriage to Joseph. Oh, the scandal! Had Jesus been conceived the normal way, Mary would have been stoned by the community. If Joseph was a normal man, he would have been the key witness to testify to her unfaithfulness. Yet he opts to separate quietly so Mary would not be killed or put to shame.

Matthew 1:20 abruptly changes course. God tells Joseph of His once-in-a-universe event and that it’s OK. Mary has been faithful.

As prophesied, Jesus is born during a trip back to Joseph and Mary’s ancestral home, Bethlehem, King David’s birthplace (Micah 5:2). But a detail stands out: There is no room in the inn, so Jesus is born in a lowly barn and swaddled in an animal’s trough.

God’s plan

It’s easy to get inoculated to such details of the Christian story and move on to the nuances and doctrines that seem more important. However, we need to ensure that the details of

the story still land freshly on our hearts and minds. The Messiah was not born in a royal mansion, a fancy hospital, a hotel, or even an average home. He was placed in a manger.

Why is this important, and why would Luke include it? Because His lowly birth set the stage for His ministry. Jesus was clear that He is the Savior of all — not just of the rich and privileged but of anyone who would believe (John 3:16). Jesus had a particular concern for the needy and strong rebuke for the privileged who lorded it over the poor. As a result, He made sure that all have equal opportunity to draw near to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16).

These details show God’s perfect, glorious plan for the Messiah. The Savior who would bring many sons and daughters to glory (2:10), who would reconcile humanity back to the Creator, began His journey as an “illegitimate” son, born in a barn.

Exalted Servant

Why would the early Christians glory in these humiliating details? Because the truth is so

Manger?

much more wonderful than the potential scandal. Jesus is the Son of God, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Though anyone familiar with the gospel story may shrug at such details, they fill any committed Christian with gratitude and amazement. Philippians 2:6-11 reinforces those feelings.

Here, Paul says that though Jesus was God, He became a servant, and was born “in the likeness of men.” He further humbled Himself by dying on a cross (vv.6-8). Paul then writes:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that 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 (w. 9-11).

Note the Father’s response. Jesus is honored above all, and all creation will bow before Him. The greatest thing we can do is to simply stand in God’s presence, in genuine awe of what He has done; overwhelmed at our sins being forgiven by Jesus’

sacrifice; serving a God who loves us so much. He paid the price to reconcile us from our sins against Him.

Laying down our lives before God, as Jesus did, we find no greater thing than knowing that the baby born in a lowly manger is Christ Jesus our Lord.

Transformation

For all his writings, for all his travels, for all his trials and boasting, for all his revelations and accomplishments, Paul drew the same conclusion:

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (3:7, 8).

The real test of this revelation is not if you agree that it would be a nice way to think or that Paul is telling the truth. The real test is that who Christ is has so changed your life that you can no longer fathom any other identity or anchor point. The fruit of

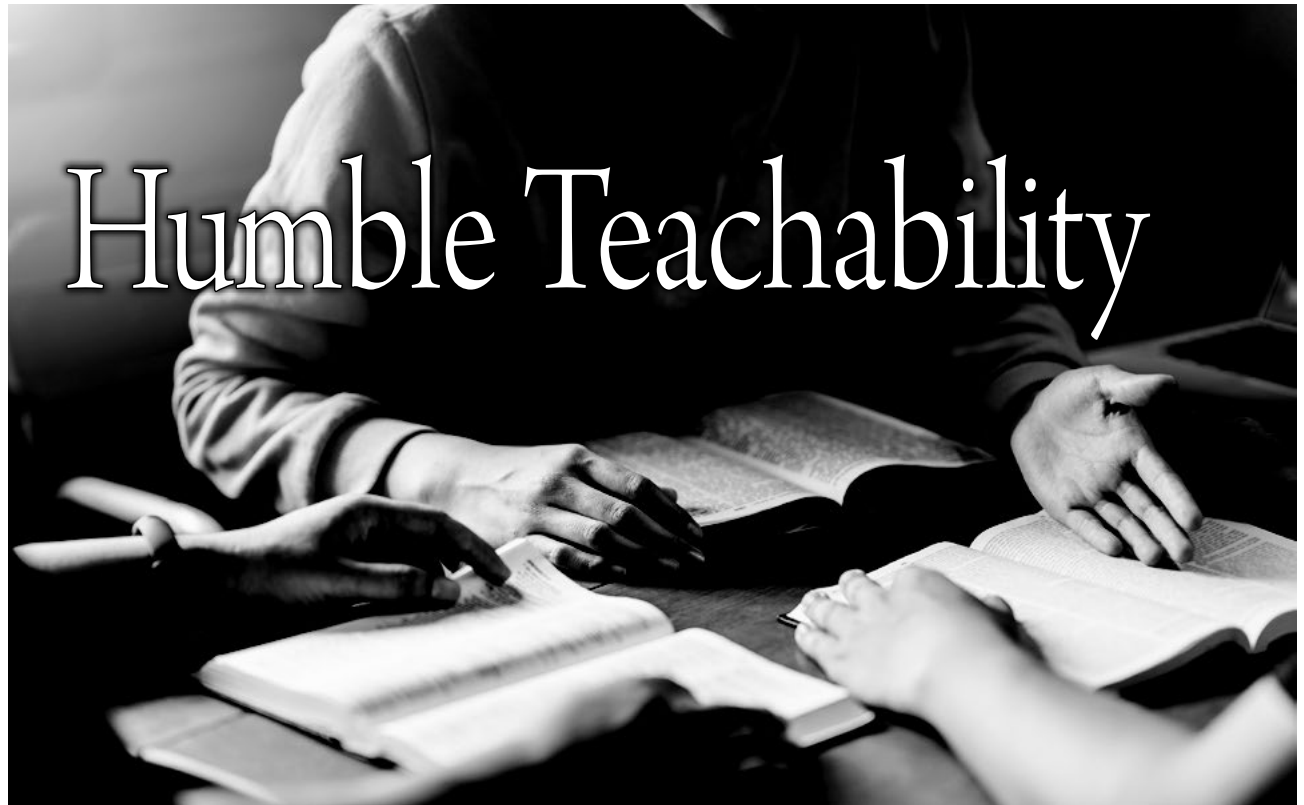
belief in this radical fact of Jesus as God’s Son, born in a manger, our Savior, is transformation from being in fellowship with God every day, because of what Jesus has done.

Let it be so, Lord. **BA**

Brian Franks lives in Colorado Springs, CO, with his wife and four children. He is also the dean of Academic Affairs at Artios Christian College. Scripture quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.



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Humble Teachability

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Being willing to grow in
grace and knowledge.

by Mike Wallace

She came in late to the weekly adult Bible study class and found a seat after we welcomed her. She quickly began participating in the question-and-answer session.

We enjoyed having someone new join us — until she started taking over the class. She delivered a diatribe about a gospel of Jesus that was not part of the Bible. She had her own interpretation and wanted everyone to quickly convert to her spurious message.

When the woman found no one was taken in by her

ramblings, she got up and left. It was clear that she had come to teach her views, rather than be humbly taught by the truth being shared in the study group.

Unteachable and proud

Jesus traveled, taught, and healed throughout the area of Judea and into Galilee. He brought the gospel of love and His coming kingdom to the poor and oppressed. He gave hope where hope had been swallowed up in defeat. Despite His message, Jesus encountered a group of people who lacked the spiritual gift of humble teachability. The religious leaders of Judea mocked and scorned Him.

The Pharisees, also called the doctors of the law, knew so much Scripture, they felt no need to learn anymore. As leaders of

the community, admired and often called rabbi (teacher or master), the Pharisees became so righteous that they decided no one was going to guide, direct, or tell them what to do. They were not teachable, following instead the vanity of their own self-worth and false righteousness.

Jesus encountered the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees — the most scripturally learned men of His day — and found them wanting. He rebuked them repeatedly. In Matthew 23, He said seven times, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” (vv. 13-15, 23, 25, 27, 29). He called these learned doctors of the law “blind guides” (v. 16) and a “brood of vipers” (v. 33).

Apparently, just knowing the Scripture is not enough to enter the kingdom of God. Religious leaders paid a “tithe of mint and

anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (v. 23). They were so physically righteous in their minds that they forgot to practice the spirit of the law.

Jesus gave His final indictment against these leaders shortly before His crucifixion: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her!" (v. 37).

Teachable and humble

What does Jesus expect of His true disciples? To "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). To do this, we must be humble, and thus teachable. The religious leaders of the time had lost their humility and were not willing to learn the truth from Jesus.

We are all familiar with the story of the good Samaritan. In Luke 10:25-37, we see an illustration of the religious leaders walking on past and ignoring the needs of the beaten man lying on the side of the road. How could these religious leaders walk past the poor man? Their lack of compassion was informed by an absence of humility.

Along came a Samaritan, despised by the Jews and called lower than dogs. He had compassion on the man, took him to an inn, and paid for his stay, food, and medical needs.

The good Samaritan got it right, while the Pharisees got it wrong. They were proud, with their faith displaced by their self-righteousness. We see the contrast in Habakkuk 2:4: "Behold

the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."

Are we teachable?

What does God want from us? Micah 6:8 gives the answer: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

God wants nothing more from us than a broken heart, a contrite spirit, and respect for His Word (Isaiah 66:2). That's what humble teachability is. This quality is

God has given elders for this purpose. Paul told Titus that an elder should hold fast "the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict [teach] those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). He wrote to Timothy that an elder must be "temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2).

Sadly, the young lady who visited our Bible study reminded us of the unteachable Pharisees. We don't want to be like that. We want to be disciples of Jesus, ready to learn from Him. Let's

“Apparently, just knowing the Scripture is not enough to enter the kingdom of God.”

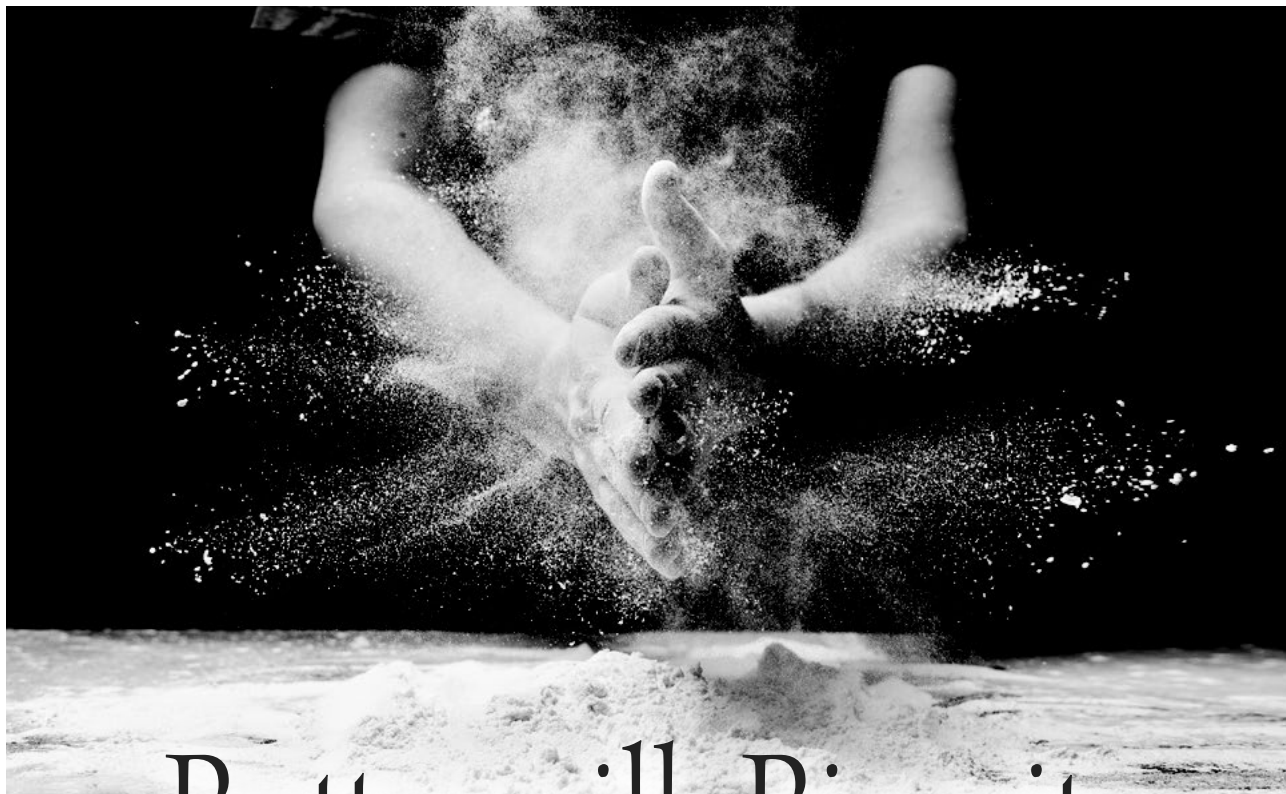
paramount in our road of salvation and discipleship. It is essential when we gather at church to hear the Word taught and preached, especially if outsiders visit who have divergent, divisive views.

The psalmist David wrote, "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). This is the orientation of the teachable. It is not so much about what we know but about being ready to grow — to learn from those God has put over us to teach.

have an attitude of humility so we can grow in His grace and knowledge. Let us all spend a lifetime humbly learning and doing the Word of God. **BA**

Mike Wallace, an elder in CoG7, is the senior spiritual advisor for the Colorado Springs, CO, congregation and coordinator for the CoG7 in Montana. He lives in Florence, MT, with his wife, Bonnie.





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Buttermilk Biscuits

The perfect recipe for a witness.

by Isaac Overman

Weigh, sift, mix, grate, combine; knead, roll, fold, cut, bake; cool and eat.

I woke up every Sunday at four in the morning. With the Bee Gees blaring in the background, I got ready for the long two-hour drive to work. At six, I was making buttermilk biscuits, poaching eggs, and mixing the pancake batter. Every weekend was this way for nearly two years.

As my work improved, my responsibilities increased. Not long after I started, I was promoted

to executive chef. This was a dream I had harbored for years. I'd worked diligently toward this goal, and now I'd achieved it. My excitement was as though I had won the Olympics. I was sure God had answered my prayers.

Looking back, I realize that the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away.

Frustration

Growing up, I was frustrated because I did not have a moving conversion story or touching testimony. In the Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples to go preach the good news to the world (Matthew 28:19). How could I do that if I did not have a personal story? God had blessed my twin sister and me

by placing us in a loving family of faith, immersed in the church. And I could not be more frustrated about it. My father took us across the country to various churches where I heard heart-wrenching stories of loss and restoration.

To be honest, I was jealous.

It seemed that I could not be an effective witness of the good news of Jesus if I could not even provide a moving testimony. I'd accepted Christ as my Savior, but Jesus had always been my Savior. He was all I knew.

Job loss

I dwelled on these thoughts till late last year when, as abruptly as it had started, my restaurant closed. I lost my job.

In the months that followed, I sulked. I lamented all the hours I put into a job that vanished in mere days. I grieved the personal boundaries I had broken between the world and my faith, and my commitment to Christ that had faded from my daily life along the way.

In short, my heart was broken. For more reasons than one. I loved cooking — the heat, the organized chaos, my little kingdom of creativity. But I had put my life on hold for a passion I no longer felt.

After I sufficiently wallowed in my self-pity and barely cooked a single meal for two months, my father reminded me I had agreed months prior to cook for a pastoral breakfast our church was hosting. I reluctantly agreed to fulfill my promise.

I woke up that Saturday at four in the morning. I grabbed my equipment and made myself ready while humming along to my music, as before. For the first time in nearly three months, I cooked. I decided to make the buttermilk biscuits and skillet gravy I had made so many mornings for the restaurant.

As I finished and served the pastors of Newton County, Arkansas, I was hit by a wave of relief. It sounds funny to write now, but I realized something fundamental to my faith: My life is my conversion story.

Lifelong story

Many Christians describe their conversion story as a singular event in which they were living in sin, then repented and made whole again. But it did not happen that way for me. I learned that day that my conversion story

was not just an event but a process, and a process I suspect will take my life to finish.

This occurred to me because, while I had not fallen away from the faith, I had stagnated in the life and walk of conversion. While I worked hard day after day to polish my biscuit recipe, I had left the recipe of my witness to fall by the wayside. A hard reality struck me: I had not been an effective witness to my Savior. Instead, I had compromised my beliefs and testimony in pursuit of my dream. I used the gift God had given me for my own gain, not His.



Romans 12:2 speaks to this hard reality: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (ESV).

I understand now that as our minds are transformed by God, we must continually resist being conformed to the world. As we withstand the world’s pressure, we become witnesses to the world through a life distinct from it. I was so caught up in my dream that I had forgotten to

discern God’s will for my life: to share Him faithfully in whatever I did. So the Lord removed the idol that had taken His place in my life, the stumbling block to my testimony: cooking.

My broken heart is mended because God acted to save my life. I recognize that now.

As I look forward to the future, I do not know if I will ever lead a restaurant or cook professionally again. What I do know is that I have a testimony for Jesus that is built on my life — how I live it, through my words and actions. My prayer now is that God allows me to make buttermilk

biscuits for Him and His people, that I can use my gift to share Him through my life’s testimony.

BA

Isaac Overman,

pictured with his fiancé, Dani, lives in Fayetteville, AK. He is studying English literature at the University of Arkansas and attends the Jasper Church of God (Seventh Day).





The Father's Fervent Grace

My hair all matted, my clothes all stained,
I reeked of mud and spoiled grime;
Plagued with hunger that always remained,
Forced to work in the fields of the livestock
My people would consider a crime.

My inheritance robbed, my friends all gone,
I recalled the servants of my father's house.
They were always well fed with a place to lay their head.
Upon the sweet thought, I headed home
to be rid of the louse.

My lips chapped, my feet sore,
I was still far off upon the sudden warm embrace.
Tear-struck eyes overflowed, my father's love still at his core.
Wrapped in the finest robes and well-worn sandals,
Reminded forevermore of His fervent grace.

Kenzie Tenpas

Power of a Word

continued from page 17

And what was that image?
One of healing. Mercy. Grace.
Adoption. Acceptance.

The Word was with God. The Word was God. The Word was the only begotten Son of God. The Word was made flesh and blood and tears and sighs. Made laughter and friendship. Made compassion and meekness. Made a son in order to die.

And in His rising again, made glorious and given the right to welcome His family into a forever home — to those who beheld His glory, as John described it so all the world could see. These could somehow know and believe that grace and truth had entered the world He made.

Nothing would ever be the same again. **BA**

Bonita Jewel Hele writes from Fresno, CA. Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.



Extra, Extra!

Check out our two Online Extras for this issue:

An Advocate's Perspective
by Bonita Jewel Hele

What it Means to be a Disciple
by Caroline Cooper

Visit baonline.org

Bible-Based Riddles

Matthew to John

Who/What Am I?

My daughter's dance pleased the king.
He promised to give her anything.
I told her to ask the king for just one thing.
Head of John the Baptist on a platter bring.

In the presence of God I stand.
An angel from God to reveal His plan.
Zacharias made mute, my message not believed.
Mary is blessed, my message she received.

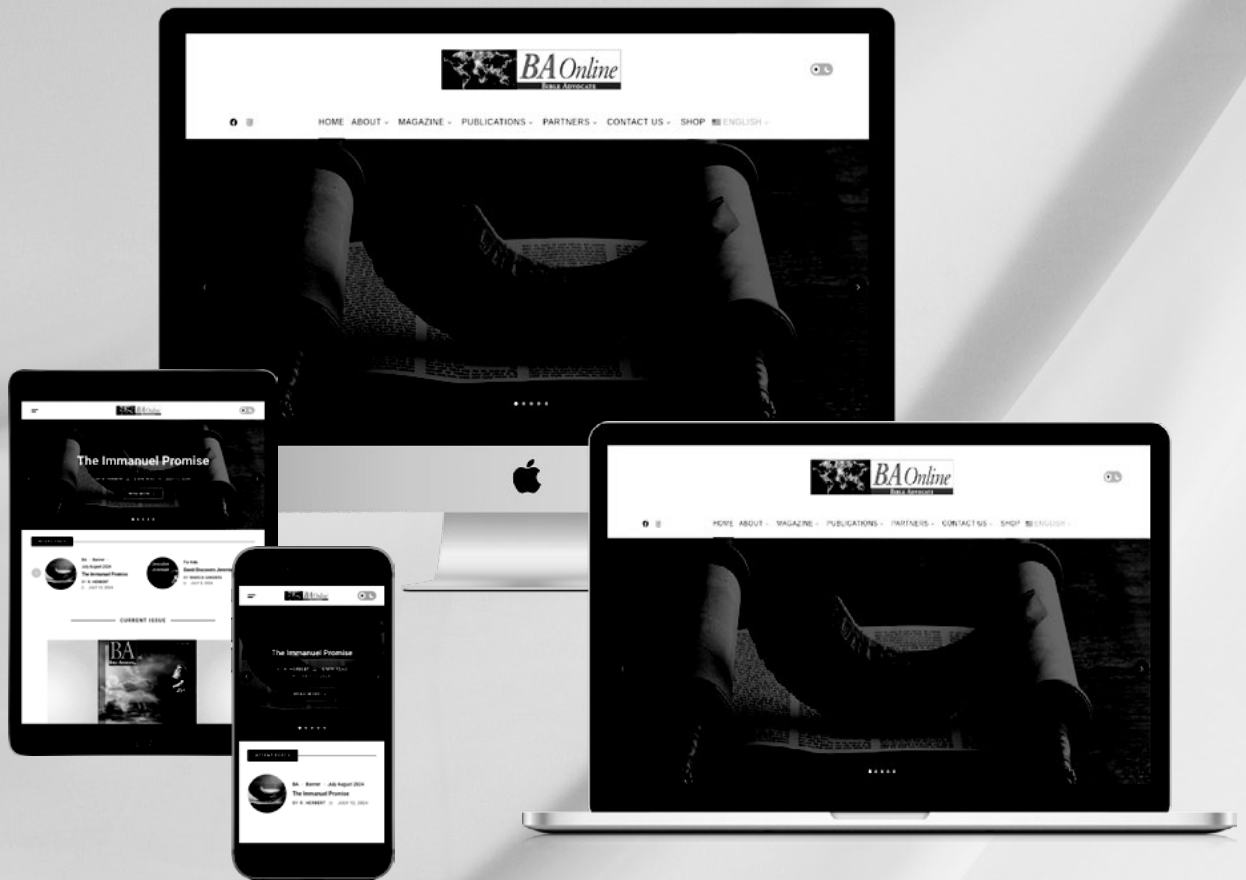
Nathanael was from this city in Galilee.
Nobleman came here for his sick child to plead.
Here Jesus told his mother it is not his time,
When she had told her son, "They have no wine."

My ancestry to King David is through his son Solomon.
An angel appears and tells me the name to give my son.
Visitors from the east, then we head south, to Egypt land.
I'm a carpenter but my son is God, come in a man.

A parable about forgiveness that teaches everyone.
Great love of a father and a wasteful son.
Poverty and pigs make son realize,
Confess and repent is where happiness lies.

"Behold the Lamb of God", I heard John the Baptist say.
Brother and I were fishermen, until Jesus called us away.
I told Jesus of boy, with five loaves and two fish.
Philip and I told Jesus of Greeks, to see him was their wish.

*Answers on page 26. Excerpted from 250 New Testament Riddles
by David Keith Robinson. Used by permission.*



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Riddles answers (p. 25)

Herodias (Mark 6:17-28)

Gabriel (Luke 1:11, 19, 20, 26, 45)

Cana (John 2:1-4; 4:46-53; 21:2)

Joseph (Matthew 1:6, 17, 20, 21; 2:1, 2, 13; 13:55)

Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)

**Andrew (Matthew 4:18, 19; John 1:35-40; 6:8, 9;
12:20-22)**



Artios Ambassadors

Artios Christian College is looking for volunteers who are willing to familiarize members with the school and its mission and vision, as well as invite potential students and encourage financial support for Artios.

Contact Ambassador Coordinator Lisa Harp Hinds at lisa.harp@artioscollege.org to discover how you can serve in this capacity. Only former and current students can be Artios Ambassadors.



Ways to Fundraise for GC Missions

Everyone can help GC Missions raise funds for all the areas it is working in.

Here are three easy ways to raise funds and give:

Change for Change. Collect your change each Sabbath. Your coins and dollar bills can multiply when you set a fundraising goal.

One Dollar a Day. Challenge yourself and your friends to save a dollar every day. At the end of the year, send us your donation.

Events. Your local men's, women's, and youth groups can organize an event to raise funds for GC Missions.

Be creative and transform the lives of others around the world with your support.

Send your donations via Zelle to give@cog7.org. Or mail your check to P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233. Make sure you write "GC



Missions" on the memo line. You can also give online at <https://secure.cog7.org/giving/>.

Be sure to share your photos with us at gcmisions@cog7.org or cog7media@cog7.org.



Branding Authorized Usage

The brand of the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the United States and Canada reflects our shared values and guides our future as a church and Conference.

The General Conference has granted use of its brand (in the form of sub-brands) to its affiliated entities. These entities consist of the GC board of directors and its executive team, the three GC Ministries, NAMC, seven district superintendents and their district boards, and all GC-affiliated local churches.

The General Conference does not grant use of its brand to individual GC members or any other individuals. Therefore, only those acting under the authority and on the express behalf of one of these entities can use the brand as specified at <https://cog7.org/church-resources/brand-guide/>. Each entity within the General Conference is responsible for the care and protection of its own sub-brand, including the authorization of its use.

Please protect our identity in our brand. If you need assistance in creating your own sub-brand logo, please contact cog7media@cog7.org.



On Mission in Peru

by **Orlando Romero**

To talk about the mission in Lima, it is necessary to go back to 2010. That's when the Church of God in Mexico had contact with two families that sympathized with our church's doctrine and regularly attended church on the Sabbath.

Some history

At the beginning of 2017, the International Ministerial Congress (currently named the International Federation) and the Church in Argentina wanted to grow the mission in Lima, so they decided to formalize the Church before the Peruvian government. An evangelistic medical campaign, carried out by SHINE Ministries,

was planned for the end of that year in La Campiña in Lurigancho-Chosica, a district on the outskirts of the capital of Lima. On November 12, 2017, sponsored by the Cristo Viene ministry and the Church in Mexico, brother Jose Orlando Romero Ramirez was sent to Lima to participate in the campaign.

The following week, Argentine pastor, Jorge Gillig, an IMC representative of Zone 3 in South America, traveled to Peru to legalize our church, as it had no legal presence. Three months later, in March 2018, a missionary named Orlando and his wife, Lucia Santamaria, were preaching the gospel. Glory to God, two young people, Larissa Biena Huaymacari and Rodrigo Gonzales Cruz, decided to be baptized, becoming the firstfruits of the work.

The process to legalize our church in Peru was concluded in January 2019.

Growth of the Lima mission

The firstfruits of the evangelistic work were two 15-year-old young people. It continued, with three more young people baptized. In 2019, the mission grew to twelve members. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Orlando and Lucia continued preaching while respecting the security protocols. Seventeen more people were baptized by the end of 2020.

The year 2021 was also productive because, even with the mandatory social isolation, the people received the message of good news. God touched the lives of five more people who went down to the waters of

baptism. Today, the La Campiña mission has baptized thirty-two people, to the glory of God.

Opportunities and challenges

Preaching the gospel in this country is challenging, but God has been good. He has made the work grow despite the difficulty of preaching to people with a particular idiosyncrasy. In his writing, "The Being of the Peruvian," *Peruvian Medical Act* (2011), author Peña describes what his own people are like:

Peruvians look at the country's affairs and believe that these particular problems only occur in Peru. They don't understand that everything is part of the great processes of the world. . . . Poverty and misery, incompatible with human dignity, lead a considerable amount of people to an affective, spiritual, psychic, ethical, and intellectual deficit and to an obvious risk of falling into corruption, drug trafficking, crime, smuggling, terrorism, etc.

The Peruvian mentality is marked by the past. The plundering of the country's resources, perpetrated by the Spanish conquistadors, now generates suspicion toward foreigners in general. This complicates preaching the gospel by missionaries who come from all over the world. Despite all this, God keeps working. There are churches of various denominations throughout the country.

On the other hand, poverty in some regions far from the capital forces Peruvians from the provinces to emigrate to Lima, hoping to improve their living



conditions. Because of this, new colonies and settlements have been formed. Such is the case with La Campiña, which will celebrate thirty-one years since its founding on August 30, 1993. La Campiña is home to Peruvians from remote provinces of Peru – that is, from the highlands, the Amazon rainforest, and the Andes region. Each has its different native customs and religious traditions.

Although they claim to be believers, Peruvians have native customs and religious rituals dedicated to Mother Earth, typical of the Inca worldview. This is a challenge for the missionaries. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to make the truth known to them through God's Word.

Methods of evangelization

Evangelization in this place has been carried out in many and varied forms: for example, medical campaigns, social aid and service, booklets, knocking on doors, one-on-one evangelism, and campaigns in which

members of the congregation bring a guest to church services. We have tried everything, and God has blessed our efforts. We know that this is not dependent on the missionaries' skill, nor on the effectiveness of the methods used, but rather on God. As Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

We believe this work will continue to grow and that we have



Peru

Country: Republic of Peru

Population: 34,694,491 (45th)

Capital: Lima

Land area: 496,200 sq mi / 1,285,216 sq km (19th)

Official languages: Spanish, Aymara, Quechuan

Official religion: secular; 92 percent Catholic

Official CoG7 congregations: 1

CoG7 membership: 32



not reached our goal. It will be necessary for the Church to support us in prayer and with financial resources. When a church contributes to missions, it joins in what God wants to do in the world. Let's read what the Lord said to Paul in Acts 18:

"Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them (vv. 9-11).

Let us continue with the mission in Peru. We believe that

there are still people chosen by God to be saved. The only thing left to do is go and preach. **BA**

Pastor Orlando Romero and his wife, Lucy, have completed eighteen years of service together in pastoral ministry. They are from Acapulco, Mexico, and have two daughters, Zuri and Jared (married), and two grandchildren. In 2008, the Romeros made their initial request to the Mexican Conference and Cristo Viene ministry to serve as international missionaries.





Not Ashamed

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Romans 1:16, 17, ESV throughout).

These two verses are the theme and the heart of Romans, the apostle Paul's most thorough and systematic presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They concern the good news that we may be saved from the wrath of God against sin by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. *Ashamed* means "feeling shame, guilt, or disgrace." There are many things a person should feel ashamed about, but the gospel is not one of them. The gospel is the greatest news that anyone could ever hear! So Paul boldly declares, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

Why, Paul? What are your reasons for such confidence in the gospel? In the two verses above, Paul tells us.

First, the gospel about Jesus Christ is infused with power from God to save everyone who believes it and places their faith solely in Christ. The gospel has power from God to bring regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, and the imputed righteousness of Jesus "to everyone who believes."

The power of God and the inability of humanity are consistent themes throughout God's Word. The Bible tells us that humanity is born in sin and powerless to change its sinful condition. "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because

they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Humanity is so spiritually powerless that Ephesians 2:1 describes sinful people as being "dead" in their "trespasses and sins." Being dead is the ultimate condition of being powerless and incapable.

But while humanity is powerless and incapable, God is powerful and absolutely capable. God has infused the gospel with saving power: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). When we share the good news about Jesus, we don't have to be the power that causes people to accept it. The gospel is filled with God's power! We just need to tell it.

Second, in the gospel "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith." God himself is the very measure of righteousness. The bad news is that no mere human can achieve God's sinless perfection: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). But the good news is that there is righteousness that we may receive from God by faith. "For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we [who believe] might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The good news that Paul was given to share is that we may be saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8, 9). No wonder Paul was not ashamed of the gospel! No wonder Paul was eager to share this good news! The power of God it is! Power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes it. Do you?

— Loren Stacy



Engage in His Glory



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Where: Salt Lake City, Utah

When: **June 30 - July 5**

Theme: "Engage"

Registration: at ***cog7.org*** in early January 2025

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