



Son of the Highest



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2026: The Story of Jesus



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The First to Bow

There is a prophecy in Isaiah. Maybe you remember it: “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath” (Isaiah 45:23). Paul cites it in Philippians 2 (and in Romans 14:11) speaking of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. That is probably where you know it from:

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (vv. 9-11).

I’ve been thinking about this wonderful prophecy as we continue the “Story of Jesus” into His birth and childhood. Matthew and Luke record those early years and all the curious characters who witnessed the humble, and seemingly irrelevant, origins of the Son of the Highest. While the Babe was still in Mary’s womb, Elizabeth called Mary “the mother of my Lord” (Luke 1:39-45). Lowly shepherds saw and glorified God after finding “a Babe . . . lying in a manger” (2:8-20). All will confess that Jesus is Lord, but these were the first to do so.

The wise men from the East capture my imagination most. Who were they, and how could they have possibly known the significance of this Child-King? They were the first to kneel: “When they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11).

Only a few — foreigners, shepherds, a mother, and her betrothed — knew what everyone else discounted or missed.

God promises that all will bow and confess eventually! His Word is true. But these first examples of worship inspire us. We, too, can be shepherds, mothers, and foreigners as we bow when others cannot, or will not. Let us not wait. Jesus is Lord! And like those shepherds on that lonely night, let us praise God and spread the good news.

— Jason Overman





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Two responses that changed the world.

by **Moises Capetillo**

When we tell the story of Jesus' birth, it is easy to focus on the miraculous moments: angels, dreams, stars, and prophecies fulfilled. But behind the wonder of heaven touching earth stands something just as powerful: two ordinary people who said yes to God when His plan completely disrupted their lives.

Before Bethlehem, before the manger, before the songs of angels, there was a young woman and a faithful man whose

obedience made room for the Son of the Highest to enter the world.

Mary's surrender

Luke 1 introduces us to Mary in the middle of an ordinary life in an unremarkable town. Then suddenly, heaven interrupts her routine: "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you" (v. 28).

The angel Gabriel announces that Mary will conceive by the Holy Spirit and give birth to a Son, whose kingdom will never end. This child will be called the Son of the Highest (vv. 32, 33).

Mary is troubled — and understandably so. She asks an honest question: "How can this be . . . ?" (v. 34).

This is not doubt; it is faith

seeking understanding. Mary does not resist God's plan; she leans into it. And then she speaks words that would echo through salvation history: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (v. 38).

Mary's yes was not convenient. It came with risk: social rejection, misunderstanding, and uncertainty. Yet she surrendered her plans to God's purpose. Her availability became the doorway through which the eternal Son entered time.

Mary teaches us that faith often looks like trusting God without knowing how everything will unfold. She did not have all the answers, but she trusted the One who did.

Joseph's obedience

If Mary shows us courageous surrender, Joseph shows us obedient strength.

Matthew describes Joseph as a "just man" (1:19). Before any angel appears, we learn something important about his character.

When Joseph discovers Mary is pregnant, his world is shaken. According to the law, he can expose her publicly. Instead, he chooses compassion, resolving to quietly end the engagement.

Then God speaks through His angel: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (v. 20).

Joseph is given a divine assignment that requires immediate trust. And Scripture records his simple response: "Then Joseph, . . . did as the angel of the Lord commanded him . . ." (v. 24).

No further dialog needed. No recorded words. No debate. Just obedience.

Joseph becomes the quiet protector of God's promise. He leads Mary to Bethlehem, fulfilling prophecy (Micah 5:2). He shelters his family, flees to Egypt when warned, and later returns to Nazareth. He provides, protects, and models faithfulness — all without standing in the spotlight.

Joseph teaches us that sometimes obedience does not announce itself. Sometimes it listens in the silence and acts in reverence.

Heaven's plan, human hands

Together, Mary and Joseph remind us that God's greatest work often begins in ordinary

homes. The eternal Son of God entered the world, not through power or prestige but through the surrender and obedience of two servants willing to trust God with their lives.

Mary surrendered her future. Joseph surrendered his reputation. Both trusted God's word over their circumstances. Jesus, the Son of the Highest, was raised in a home shaped by obedience, humility, and faith.

As we think of Jesus' early years, we remember babies need to be fed, held, and led. In His wisdom, God didn't send Jesus into a palace. He sent Him into a yes. A yes you can live in. A yes

interrupts our lives with divine purpose. Unexpected seasons. Unplanned responsibilities. Assignments that stretch our faith.

Like Mary, we are invited to say, "Let it be to me according to Your word."

Like Joseph, we are called to obey even when the path is unclear.

Like Immanuel, we are called to live "with God" more than "for God."

The story of Jesus' early years reminds us that God accomplishes His eternal purposes through obedient people who are willing to trust Him completely. And sometimes, the most powerful

“Long before He taught crowds or calmed storms, Jesus watched faith lived out at home in real time.”

that changes diapers, makes dinner, works hard, prays often, and stays faithful. Jesus' earliest years were holiness at home, nurtured under God's perfect love and raised by parents whose surrender and obedience made room for heaven.

Long before He taught crowds or calmed storms, Jesus watched faith lived out at home in real time.

Our invitation

God may not call us to raise the Messiah, but He still

worship we can offer is a simple, faithful yes — just as the yes of the Son of Mary, Son of Joseph, Son of the Highest lived out. **BA**

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Majesty in a Manger



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Marveling at the humble
origins of salvation.

by Ruhama Tewodros Assefa

The way we are saved and given new life in Christ is truly astonishing. Often, our focus is on Jesus' crucifixion — His sacrificial death — and His glorious resurrection. These are indeed the foundation of our faith.

Yet the wonder of Jesus does not begin at the cross or the empty tomb. His entire story — from His divine parentage and miraculous birth to His quiet years in Nazareth, suffering, resurrection, and future glory

— reveals a mystery beyond human understanding. He is the Son of the Highest, and His life fulfills a divine mission planned long before the New Testament.

This mission stretches back into the Old Testament, woven through prophecies spoken by people who sometimes understood what they were saying and sometimes did not. God spoke through prophets who anticipated a coming Savior, and He spoke through ordinary lives that foreshadowed Christ. Some prophecies, like Isaiah's prediction of the Virgin Birth, were clear. Others, embedded in historical events, only later revealed their greater meaning. In His perfect wisdom, God shaped these prophecies to prepare the world for His Son.

Divine mission

During a recent Bible study, this truth struck me. As I read John 17:12, I became curious about the prophecy Jesus mentioned. Following the references, I landed on Psalm 41:9 and Zechariah 11:12, 13.

Psalm 41:9 was originally David's heartfelt lament over betrayal by his trusted adviser, Ahithophel, during Absalom's rebellion. Yet through the Holy Spirit, David's words also pointed forward to a greater betrayal: Jesus' own, by Judas.

Jesus' birth and death, and even His betrayal, were part of God's divine mission. This is an example of dual fulfillment, or typology, where a real event in the Old Testament foreshadows

a much greater reality in Christ's life.

If even Jesus' betrayal was foretold, how much more His birth and early life? These were no accidents but essential parts of God's salvation plan.

Son of God and Man

Many people today question how Jesus can be both man and God. They debate, doubt, and try to fit Him into human logic. But the truth is that Jesus did not enter the world the same way we did. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and formed in the womb of a virgin — a miracle that also stands at the foundation of our faith.

The story begins when the angel Gabriel appeared to a young woman named Mary (Luke 1:26-35). Mary was an ordinary girl living in an ordinary town, yet heaven visited her with an extraordinary message: She would conceive a Son. Gabriel declared, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest."

These words reveal everything. Jesus' identity was not rooted in human lineage but in divine origin. He did not begin at conception; He simply took on flesh.

Mary's virginity was not just a detail in the story of Christ's birth. It was the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14, the ancient prophecy that said a virgin would bear a Son who would be called Immanuel, meaning "God with us." Mary's womb became the holy place where God's plan entered human history.

Though not the biological father, Joseph played a vital role in the story as well. In Matthew

1:18-25, an angel instructed him to take Mary as his wife and to name the child Jesus. Joseph was chosen to protect and guide the holy Child, to raise Him with honor, and to stand as the earthly guardian of the One who came from heaven.

This is the mystery of Jesus: He is the Son of God and the Son of Man at the same time. He was born of a woman, as Galatians 4:4 says, yet conceived by the Holy Spirit. He grew up in a human family, yet His Father was the Lord of heaven. Divinity clothed itself with humanity, not through power but through humility.

“Jesus' identity was not rooted in human lineage but in divine origin.”

The beauty of this truth is that God did not enter the world with royal ceremony. He came quietly, gently, and humbly, showing us that His greatest works often begin in the simplest places.

Extraordinary and ordinary

Jesus' birth took place in Bethlehem, a small, humble town chosen by God for a divine purpose. The prophet Micah foretold this centuries before: "But you, Bethlehem . . . out of you shall come forth to Me the

One to be Ruler in Israel" (Micah 5:2). It was here that heaven's King made His entrance — not with grandeur or fanfare but in a lowly stable.

The contrast between Jesus' divine status and His birthplace could not be greater. The King of Kings was born among animals, laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. This ordinary beginning reveals a profound truth: God did not come to rule through earthly power or wealth but through humility and love.

The night of Jesus' birth was marked by a heavenly announcement to simple shep-

herds. Luke 2:8-14 tells us that an angel appeared, and suddenly the sky was filled with the glory of the Lord. The hosts of angels proclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!" The shepherds' fear turned to joy, and they rushed to see the newborn Savior.

Later, wise men — Gentiles — from distant lands came to worship Jesus, bringing gifts and recognizing Him as King (Matthew 2:1-12). Their visit shows

that Jesus' birth was not only for Israel but for all nations. God broke down barriers: Divine met human, rich met poor, Jew met Gentile.

This event teaches us that even the most ordinary places and people can be the setting for God's greatest purposes. The manger scene challenges us to see God's glory not in wealth or status, but in simplicity and surrender. Jesus' birth reminds us that God's kingdom often starts quietly, in hidden places, and

prophets had spoken: "Out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1). Even when Jesus was a baby, His life was intertwined with God's plan, showing that His mission was carefully guided from the very start.

After returning from Egypt, Jesus grew up quietly in Nazareth, a small town often overlooked by the world. Luke 2:40 tells us that Jesus "grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." These hidden

perfect balance of divinity and humanity.

Despite His unique identity, Jesus submitted to His earthly parents, returning with them to Nazareth and living under their care. Even the Son of God valued family, respect, and patience in the hidden seasons of life.

God's timing is perfect. Jesus did not rush into His mission but grew through ordinary human experiences, learning, obeying, and waiting for the appointed time. He shows us that growth often happens in quiet moments, away from the spotlight.

As we reflect on Jesus' youth, we see the pattern of humility and preparation that shapes every believer's journey. God calls us to grow in wisdom and favor, trusting Him as He prepares us for the purpose He has planned.

“Even the most ordinary places and people can be the setting for God's greatest purposes.”

grows in ways the world does not expect. It encourages us to trust that even in humble beginnings, God is at work, fulfilling His divine plan for salvation and hope.

Growing in wisdom and favor

After His birth, Jesus' early years were marked by both protection and growth, fulfilling prophecies even in His infancy. Soon after the Magi's visit, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus to escape King Herod's deadly plan (Matthew 2:13-15). This journey, though dangerous and difficult, fulfilled what the

years were crucial. During this time, Jesus learned obedience, grew in knowledge, and prepared for His public ministry.

One of the few glimpses we have into Jesus' youth is the story of Him at age twelve in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking questions (vv. 41-52). When His parents found Jesus after three days of searching, He said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

These words reveal Jesus' awareness of His divine mission even as a boy. Though fully God, He experienced human growth and understanding, showing the

Hope and strength

As humans, we face many challenges and struggles. Words often fail to express the depth of our feelings. Yet there is one comforting truth: Jesus understands it all.

Except for sin, He has experienced everything we go through. He was one of us — fully human — and so He knows our pain, our sorrow, and our every burden. Because of this, we can find hope and strength, knowing we are never alone in our journey.

BA

Ruhama Tewodros Assefa writes from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.





A Light in Darkness

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by Emmanuel Huerta

The arrival of Jesus into the world marked a pivotal moment in human history. His birth was not only an extraordinary event but the fulfillment of a promise that brought light to a world shrouded in darkness. Isaiah prophesied, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (9:2).

This light, personified in Jesus, came at a time of great despair for Israel. For centuries, the nation had been under the oppression of various powers, and they longed for a Messiah to deliver them. Jesus’ arrival fulfilled that promise and reshaped the people’s understanding of salvation — not through the law but through the blood of Christ.

The light of Jesus wasn’t just for Israel. It shines for us in three ways today.

Hope. Years ago, the truth about hope transformed my life. After experiencing several worrisome symptoms, I was diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease that would affect my life in ways I had never imagined. I was in the hospital, feeling vulnerable and scared, facing a chronic illness that was weakening me. In the midst of this storm, I found myself in profound despair.

But in that hospital, I had a life-changing encounter with Jesus. I began to pray and seek God with all my heart. One night while lying in bed, surrounded by machines and uncertain diagnoses, I felt a peace that surpassed all understanding. That peace didn’t come from the circumstances but from faith in a God who can heal and restore.

Over time, my health improved, and what had seemed like a grim outcome became a testament to the grace and power of Jesus. The healing I experienced wasn’t just physical; it was a spiritual rebirth. I learned that even in the darkest trials, Jesus is the light that shines, guiding us toward hope. I can share that hope today with others.

Humility. The birth of Jesus in a manger invites us to value simplicity and authenticity. By coming into the world in such humble circumstances, and maintaining that humility in His ministry, Jesus showed us that true worth lies in love of and service to others. In a world that often seeks success and recognition, the life of Jesus challenges us to re-define what it means to be truly great.

Philippians 2:5-7 urges us to have the same mindset as Christ, who, despite His divinity, “emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant.” This attitude of humility and service lets the light of Christ shine to those around us.

Growth. Luke 2:52 says that “Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” This growth reflects His physical development as well as His spiritual maturity. Like Jesus, we are called to continually grow, seeking wisdom and understanding so we reflect His light. Every experience, good or bad, can be an opportunity to learn and draw closer to God. Personal and spiritual development is a journey that never ends, and we depend on God every step of the way.

The world is still a dark place. Jesus’ birth and childhood invite us to be bearers of light. In every challenge we face, His example guides us toward a life of hope, humility, and growth. May His light shine through us, illuminating the path for those around us. **BA**

Emmanuel Huerta is an elder in the congregation in Lexington, KY, where he lives with his wife and five children. Scripture quotations are from the *English Standard Version*.



In My Father's House



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What we learn about Jesus
as a boy in the temple.

by **Caroline S. Cooper**

I love spending time in God's house. My husband and I are the kind of folks who are present at church almost every time the door is open. Not because we have to be there or are seeking approval from others, but because we love learning God's Word, spending time in worship, and enjoying fellowship with our Christian brothers and sisters.

From the time the Israelites constructed the tabernacle to the present day, the church building has been recognized as the place for God's people to come together in God's presence. When Solomon constructed the temple in Jerusalem, "the priests

could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house" (2 Chronicles 7:2). Who wouldn't want to be in this holy place, filled with God's presence?

Three times a year, the Jewish people traveled from their homes around Israel and other locations to celebrate annual feasts at the temple in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph did this. When Jesus was twelve years old, they took Him to celebrate the Passover. The Bible describes what happened: "When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it" (Luke 2:43).

Lost and found

At the end of a day's journey back to Nazareth, Mary and Joseph did not find Jesus among their relatives and friends.

I wonder if Mary's stomach dropped when she discovered Jesus had vanished.

Sometimes when we read stories in Scripture, the events seem to happen instantaneously. But the Bible says Joseph and Mary traveled a full day away from Jerusalem on their way home (v. 44). It took another full day to return, and another three days of searching (vv. 45, 46). Four days without finding their Son. Four long, confusing, anxiety-filled days.

As the days passed for Mary and Joseph, I wonder if they began to think they might never see Jesus again. The Bible identifies several siblings Jesus had who were most likely left in the care of relatives while their parents searched. At what point would they consider giving up and returning home to their other children?

At the temple and home

When they found their Son in the temple, Mary and Joseph could have stood with pride as Jesus interacted with the Jewish scholars. Or they could have rushed in and pulled Him away, scolding Him for abandoning His family.

Instead, they responded like concerned, loving, and patient parents — a mom and dad who had been searching anxiously for Jesus for days and were amazed at where they found Him. A small crowd had gathered in the temple to watch Jesus interact with the teachers. “And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (v. 47).

While the Bible does not record every detail of the event, because of their humble and respectful nature, Mary and Joseph most likely waited for a pause in the dialogue to address Jesus. “Son,” Mary said, “why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously” (v. 48).

Mary revealed a human mother’s heart. But in Jesus’ reply, we see a glimpse of the Son of God in this twelve-year-old boy: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (v. 49).

Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus was saying. In the twelve years since His miraculous birth, had they grown accustomed to raising Jesus and His younger siblings from an earth-bound point of view? As the oldest male child, Jesus held a privileged place in the Jewish family. He might have already been serving as an apprentice in Joseph’s carpentry business.

How could Mary and Joseph comprehend the plan God had for His Son? Jesus was destined to follow in His Heavenly Father’s business of saving souls. He could think of no other place to be than in the temple.

Upon returning home to Nazareth, Jesus lived out His childhood in obedience to His parents.

This story is the last reference to Jesus as a child in Scripture. The Bible does not reveal any other details about His early religious training or additional trips to Jerusalem. What Scripture does reveal is that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (v. 52). And Mary pondered all these things in her heart.

public ministry, Jesus spoke eight woes against the Pharisees (Matthew 23:13-31), calling them hypocrites, blind guides, and a brood of vipers. Having spent time with His Father, Jesus demanded that the truth of God’s Word be taught without commentary or compromise.

Jesus was obedient. Jesus obeyed His earthly parents out of love and respect. Later in life, He set an example of radical obedience to God that we may find difficult to follow. Paul writes, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Jesus had wisdom. As a boy, Jesus would have been at the top of His class. His wisdom was



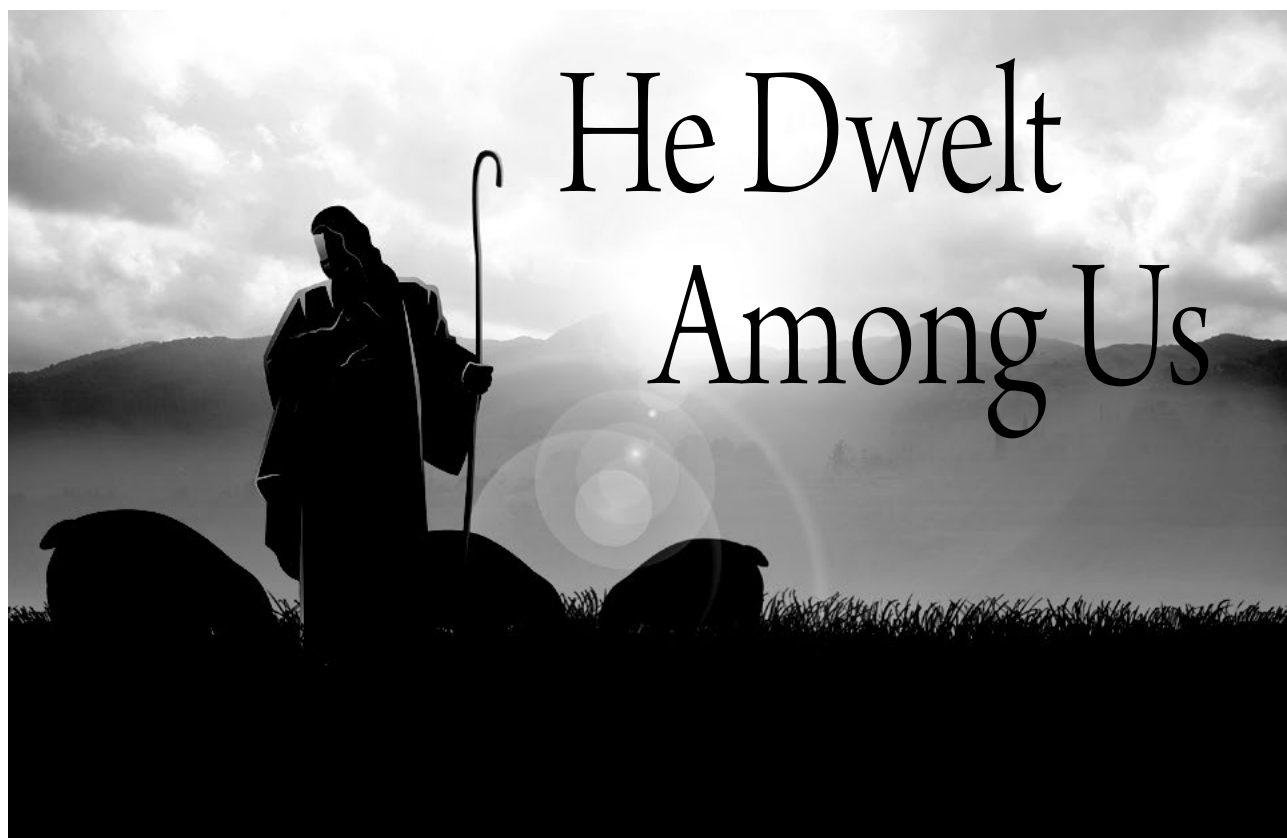
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Lessons from Jesus

Jesus wanted to be with His Father. Jesus remained in the temple to spend time with God and to grow in understanding. The Bible does not reveal what He learned as the teachers responded to His questions. Did Jesus gain knowledge about the Scriptures, or was He already formulating a future dialogue with the religious leaders? In His

revealed not just in His interactions in the temple but later in His teaching and storytelling. His intelligence and insight were evident in conversations with His disciples, those seeking salvation, and the people who wanted Him to die. Jesus said the right words at the right time in the right way, as with the woman at the well: “But the hour is coming, and

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Seeing the humanity of Jesus
in the Gospel of John.

by R. Herbert

In the first half of the prologue to his Gospel, the apostle John gives us seven names/titles of Jesus that show His divine nature as the Son of God (see “From the Beginning” in the January-February BA).

In the prologue’s second half John gives seven names/titles of Jesus that show His human identity and roles when He dwelled on earth. This article looks briefly at each of those titles.

Human identity

God’s Chosen One. *“I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One”* (John 1:34, emphasis added here and throughout). While some Bible versions translate part of this verse as “this is the Son of God” (KJV,

etc.), recent translations have preferred to follow those biblical manuscripts that say “this is God’s Chosen One” for a number of reasons.

Additionally, when the Jewish religious leaders questioned John the Baptist, we are told “John replied in the words of Isaiah” (v. 23). In his reply, John said, *“The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain . . . I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One”* (vv. 33, 34). This seems to reference Isaiah’s words: “Here is my servant, . . . my chosen one . . . I will put my Spirit on him” (Isaiah 42:1). John’s Gospel shows in this title that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of a human servant chosen by God (Isaiah 42:6, 7; 61:1, etc.).

Lamb of God. “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29). The title *Lamb of God* appears only in John’s Gospel and is of particular interest. The image draws on a number of symbols from the Old Testament, especially that of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1-6).

But there is another aspect to the Baptist’s words. When he said, “Look, the Lamb of God,” he doubtless used Aramaic, the language spoken by the people of Judea and Galilee at that time. The Aramaic word *talya*, which can mean lamb, also means child, son, or servant. But of the several meanings of the Aramaic word, the apostle chose “lamb” and tied it to the symbolism of Christ as the human Passover Lamb that John developed as one of the central themes of his Gospel.

Rabbi. “They said, ‘Rabbi’ (which means ‘Teacher’), ‘where are you staying?’” (John 1:38). Here, and in verse 49, John records Jesus being addressed with the title of *Teacher* or *Rabbi* by those who would become His disciples. Both of these individuals in John 1:38 came to Jesus, rather than respond to His verbal call, showing their perception of Him as an important teacher.

The word *rabbi* was comparatively unknown among the Gentiles when John wrote his Gospel. Therefore, he explains it for his readers, as he does with several other Hebrew words in this section (vv. 41, 42, etc.). In Jesus’ case, the title was given even more weight by the understanding, as shown by Nicodemus,

that He was a “Rabbi . . . come from God” (3:2). When the enemies of Jesus tried to trap Him, even they hypocritically gave Him this title (Luke 20:21).

Jesus of Nazareth. “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth . . .” (John 1:45).

The name Jesus (Hebrew *Yeshua*, meaning “Yahweh is salvation”) was popular in first century Judea, so additional identifiers were often added to it (as in the name Yeshua Bar Abba – Barabbas). But while the name Jesus alone had definite divine connotations – as Savior – the title *Jesus of Nazareth* clearly stresses the human aspect of a person with a home in a specific geo-

time. The suggestion that John was admitting the human parentage of Jesus, as some Bible critics have claimed, is based on a complete lack of understanding. John, as any competent historian did, recorded what people said in such instances, whether or not they understood what was true at that time. In any case, this was a normal human title showing an aspect of the human Jesus as a person with a known family and social background.

King of Israel. “You are the king of Israel” (John 1:49). The title *king of Israel* (Zion) is found in Psalm 2:6, which, by the first century, was commonly known and quoted in Jewish discussions regarding the promised Messiah. The title is virtually identical to



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graphic location. This title was, of course, inscribed on Jesus’ cross, as only John’s Gospel records (19:19).

Son of Joseph (John 1:45). This title naturally follows *Jesus of Nazareth* and was the legal way in which Jesus would have been identified in the society of the

king of the Jews, which was used by Gentiles (John 19:3, etc.). John’s Gospel alone states that the title *king of the Jews* was affixed to Jesus’ cross (19:19), thus confirming the reality of His kingship, even if those hoping for a political messiah did not recognize it. In this regard, it is interesting that only John records

Jesus' declaration to Pilate that He indeed was a king, but not a political one (18:36).

Son of Man. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man"* (John 1:51, ESV).

The double *truly* at the beginning of Jesus' words in this verse is found only in the Gospel of John, where it occurs twenty-five times — always spoken by Christ when He stressed things of particular importance. The title *Son of Man* is also used only in the Gospels by Christ when referring to Himself. In the Old Testament, the title is used in three ways:

to signify His own humanity.

This is an important fact because we often tend to think of John as the Gospel that shows Jesus' nature as the Son of God. In the seven titles he uses, however, John shows us that Jesus' humanity was just as important as His divinity.

Unique humanity

We see this throughout John's Gospel, both in his continued use of the *Son of Man* title and in the way that he includes several unique accounts in which Jesus' humanity is made explicit.

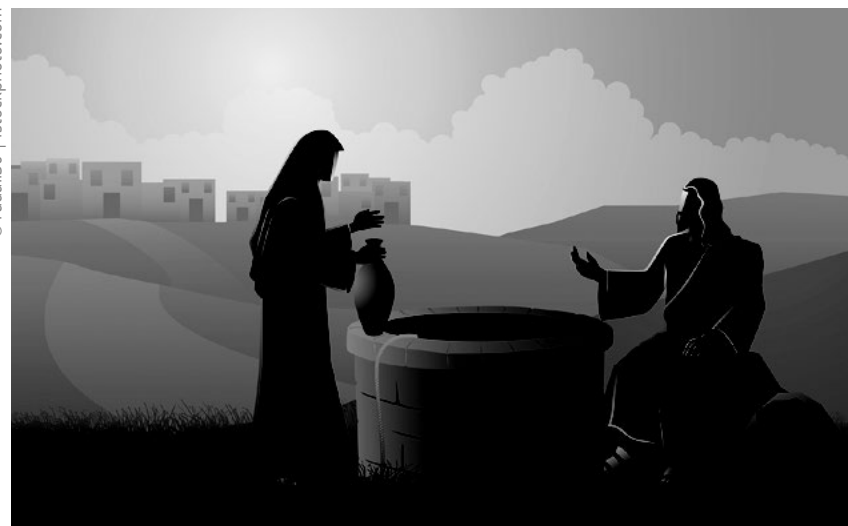
An example is in the story (which only John records) of the

This may be partly because, soon after the formation of the early church, many early Christians who had accepted that Jesus was God struggled with the idea that He was also fully human. In fact, one of the first heresies that entered the Christian church was that of Docetism, which taught that Jesus was God appearing in human form and not truly a man. John presents evidence against that idea throughout his Gospel and continues to argue against it even more directly in his epistles (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7).

Completeness

John uses additional names and titles for Jesus in the course of his Gospel (6:14, etc.). But the seven titles in the prologue stressing aspects of Jesus' divinity and the seven stressing aspects of His humanity clearly fit the apostle's pattern of showing completeness. He does this by means of groups of seven: the seven miraculous signs done by Jesus, His seven "I am" statements, the seven testimonies, etc., as well as the many examples in Revelation.

Because the prologue of John's Gospel uses precisely seven divine and seven human titles, he clearly intended to show Jesus as the completely divine Son of God who also came to earth and became the completely human Son of Man. **BA**



1) of the ideal man (Psalm 8:4-8, ESV, etc.); 2) of Ezekiel, when God addressed the prophet (2:1, etc.); 3) in Daniel, where the prophet is said to have seen "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. . . and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13, 14). But *Son of Man* was not a common term for the expected Messiah (John 12:34). Jesus seems, in fact, to have consistently used the title

woman Jesus met at the well in Samaria. John begins the story by stating "Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon" (4:6). John could have omitted all these details — Jesus' weariness, His need to sit down, His need for water in the heat of the day — and still have told the story of the Samaritan woman. But he consciously included them to affirm, and even emphasize, the humanity of Jesus.

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

Questions & Answers



Why is the Virgin birth important?

The Virgin Birth is central to Christian theology. It ensures that Jesus lived on this earth being truly God and truly human, did not inherit a sinful nature from an earthly father, and was the perfect sacrifice for human salvation.

The Virgin Birth demonstrates God's unique initiative in redemption, fulfills prophecy, and establishes Jesus' identity as the unique God-man (Immanuel) to restore the relationship between humanity and divinity, enabling true atonement for sin. Without it, humanity has no viable Savior. The Virgin Birth is the way God fulfilled His prophecy in Genesis 3:15 regarding the deliverance of humanity and the death of Satan.

Jesus the Christ (Messiah) was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, thus uniting two natures — human and divine (*This We Believe*, p. 17). The following declaration appears in *This We Believe*:

... Jesus Christ the Son was, in His preexistence and in His eternal essence, God. Not a second God, He shared the singular deity of the Father. Jesus was introduced as such in the announcement of His impending birth: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel — which means, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:23). The full import of the Immanuel passage is seen when we read it against the backdrop of the prophecy from Isaiah that it fulfills. Isaiah 9:6, 7 refers to a promised Child, the Son who will rule and be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end..." (NKJV) (p. 21).

The New Testament says Mary was a virgin (Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 1:18-23), fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14. Mary herself confirms her virgin status in Luke 1:34. The Gospel writers maintain the doctrine of the Virgin Birth later in their writings. Luke mentions that Jesus was "the son (as was supposed) of Joseph" (3:23, ESV). Matthew carefully avoids calling Joseph the father of Jesus (1:16). So the prophets and apostles agree. In Isaiah 9:6, the child who is "born" is also the son who is "given." In Galatians 4:4, Paul teaches the preexistence and virgin birth of Christ: "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman."

The Virgin Birth enabled the Word to become flesh (John 1:14). It upholds the divinity of the One who entered this world as the last Adam to save humanity (1 Corinthians 15:45). Consider scriptures showing Jesus as the Son of God and sacrificial Lamb, including John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; Isaiah 53; and Revelation 5:6, 12.

Romans 5:12 declares, "As sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (ESV; cf. vv. 17-19). For this reason, Jesus claims that we must be spiritually born to enter His kingdom (John 3:3-5). Spiritual life is found only in repentance of sins and faith in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Ezekiel 36:27).

The Virgin Birth provides that Jesus had no sin nature (Hebrews 7:26) and therefore could be our perfect substitute (1 Peter 1:19), conquering sin and death once for all (Hebrews 10:10). A natural birth would dismantle the entire gospel and turn the good news of Jesus Christ into an insignificant historical event.

— Elder Chip Hinds



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Room for the Redeemer

by **Christopher L. Scott**

Americans are busy. We have jobs, production quotas, projects, deadlines, reviews, and sales quotas. Why do we work so much and so hard?

It was a busy time, too, when Jesus was about to be born, because of a census ordered by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1, 2). He did this so citizens could register and be assessed taxes. This meant “everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city” (v. 3).

At that time, approximately eight million Jews lived in the Roman Empire, and Joseph and Mary were among those Jews traveling for the census. Luke writes, “Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child” (vv. 4, 5).

The people of Bethlehem probably did not have space to accommodate all the people going there to register for the census. Most middle-class housing in Bethlehem had one large common area, rooms for the family, and often a guest room for travelers. Many homes had a lower-level section built into the side of a hill where animals were kept. (Or they would be kept in a cave.)

In his Gospel, Luke shows us that a Roman emperor makes a decree, lots of commotion happens, and then when it’s time for Jesus to be born, there’s no room for Mary and Joseph in the common places guests would stay. Luke writes, “She gave birth to

her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (v. 7).

Because there were no guest rooms available, the Child was born in a room where animals normally stayed. He was placed in a manger (a feeding trough for animals) and wrapped in strips of clothing to keep His body straight and warm.

Like those people in Bethlehem, you and I have our own stuff going on. We’ve got dinner to prepare, a house to clean, trips to the store, a career to keep on track, and volunteer jobs at church. There was no room for Jesus in Bethlehem. Is there room for Him in our hearts and lives? Does He get a portion of our time every day when we read His Word? Does He receive uninterrupted communication with us in prayer? Does He have a say in our decisions? Does He get our attention only when we desperately need Him for something, or hear from us only when we have a prayer we need answered?

More than two thousand years ago, there was no room for Jesus Christ when He arrived. I pray that we have room for Him in our lives. Whether we do this the first time by placing our faith in Him or by using our time, energy, and money more wisely, let’s make sure the Redeemer has room. **BA**

Christopher L. Scott writes from Exeter, CA. Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.





Something About That Name

by Ken Lawson

My favorite gospel chorus is “There’s Something About That Name.” It is almost constantly going through my mind these days, having sustained me since my open-heart surgery about a year and a half ago. A nine-bypass surgery with pneumonia will certainly bring about a change in your focus!

The words of this Bill and Gloria Gaither tune fill my repaired heart with joy, peace, and hope. I hum it during the day, at the store, or while fishing, but especially at night when I’m ready to go to sleep. And then I start over again as soon as I wake up. I especially focus on two key words about our Lord.

Master, Savior. These words give me strength and courage because they are about Jesus. My walk of faith began seventy-plus years ago when one of our ministers, Elder Carl Stacy, came to my home church in Elmira, Oregon, and preached a simple and beautiful sermon about a man named Jesus.

For perhaps the first time in my life, I really listened to the sermon! The Jesus he preached loved me so much that He willingly gave His life on the cross to cleanse me from sin and save me for a beautiful eternal existence, right here on this earth.

Back in those days, we heard a lot of sermons about the end times, with terrible beasts, massive armies, gigantic wars, earthquakes, plagues, and other earth-shaking calamities. We’d better repent right now because Jesus is coming back soon and will shake the earth, and all the cities will crumble into rubble!

Unfortunately, those sermons just kept me up at night. A lot of what I heard will eventually happen, in some manner. However, the sermons themselves didn’t really offer me much personal or practical purpose — the why or how to make faith and hope

come alive in my heart. Sermons that sponsored only fear and sleepless nights were not very attractive to me. But Elder Stacy’s message — now that sparked a willing response to a name, and that name was *Jesus*!

I believed and was baptized. My life changed. I became a learner and a disciple of this one called Jesus. A few years later, I felt God’s Holy Spirit call me to “Go and preach Jesus!” I did that for about sixty years, and I did my best to preach mostly Carl Stacy-type sermons.

I’ve witnessed many wars and national changes. I’ve seen presidents come and go. Human power and politics invariably disappoint, and gained riches disappear quickly. Scandal, fraud, and hate dominate the news, along with anxiety and fear. Friends and family often divide, and even faith can be shaken and lost amid the turmoil.

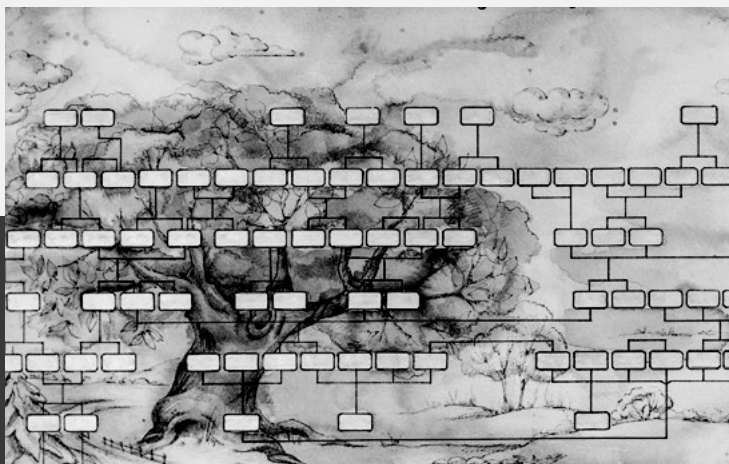
But the sermon that presented Jesus to me changed me, and *He* removed my sin and fear.

And so today at age 82, even while watching the stress-inducing news, I find myself happily humming “There’s Something About That Name.” Why? Because salvation is found in no one else. “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

So trust Him! He is coming back, and He will clean up the mess man has made. Give Him your heart and hope, and hum along with me. *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.* . . . Come quickly! **BA**

Ken Lawson and his wife, Sandra, live in Cottage Grove, MN.





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Genealogies

by **Brian Franks**

Genealogies seem to be one of the hardest things in the Bible for people to get excited about. Thankfully, they don't come around too often. I've noticed that every time a genealogy does come around, however, something pivotal is happening.

In Genesis 10, the genealogies depict the spread of humanity across the world. They help us see the connections among different people groups, and they introduce all the tribes we will follow in the Bible. Genealogies serve as cast lists for a play.

Many Bible readers skip the genealogies in 1 Chronicles 1-9. However, these list Israel's ancestors and all the active royal lines from David when the nation was struggling to see her own permanence during the Babylonian exile. This is how the Chronicler chooses to begin retelling the history of Israel to the exiles and beyond. The genealogies mark where they came from and who they were and who they could still be. They speak to a people seeking identity and waiting for a promised Messiah.

Son of David

Another genealogy starts off the New Testament. Why? Because, like it or not, genealogies are important. Matthew makes the critical connection between the Old Testament and the New with the genealogy of the Messiah. This serves as one of the most pivotal pieces of evidence that Jesus could be the Messiah because He comes from the royal line that the Messiah is prophesied to come from. A genealogy is something no person can control about themselves.

Matthew lays the groundwork with the first of many connections proving Jesus is the Messiah that the world was waiting for. More than that, Matthew's genealogy arrangement "preaches." He divides the genealogy into three sets of fourteen names. You don't even have to count to figure this out; Matthew states it right there in the text (1:17). He makes an explicit connection between David and Jesus. How? In Hebrew numerology, each letter of the alphabet has a corresponding number value. David's Hebrew name is *D-V-D*, with *D* being the fourth letter and holding that value, while *V* is the sixth letter and carries that value.

So, $4 + 4 + 6 = 14$. Jesus is

the fourteenth generation after the Exile in this line. However, to make the list of the kings reduce to only fourteen, Matthew omits a full seven names: Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash, Amaziah, Jehoahaz/Shallum, Jehoikim/Eliakim, and Zedekiah/Mattaniah.

Theological points

Before you cry, "Treason!" as Athaliah did, Matthew is not trying to hide the discrepancy and hope his original audience won't notice. Of course they will. They will know the lists of kings, and they can consult the records from the books of Kings and Chronicles in case they can't remember.

While there are naturally fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and from the Exile to the Messiah, there are actually twenty-one generations from David to the Exile. By dropping seven names from two groups of kings, Matthew makes a theological point. His audience notices that the missing names explicitly draw more attention to the point.

Rather than Matthew rewriting the genealogy willy-nilly, he contracts out the two most unstable periods in the kingdom. The first group of names omitted comes in conjunction with the collapse

and Jesus

of the house of Ahab in Israel and the complicity of the monarchy in Judah with that cursed house. It includes the illegitimate rule of Queen Athaliah and the disgraceful end to Joash's rule (with the execution of righteous priests, who were also his relatives).

The second set comes with the destabilized period of sons and relatives of King Josiah, who ruled after his death. Some ruled only a short time, some were bound and taken into exile, and some disobeyed God's direct commands. By these omissions, Matthew is not hiding these kings or their stories. He is emphasizing their unfaithfulness and removing their names from his presentation and, in so doing, reduces the list to fourteen kings. Even some of these kept on the list were not so good.

This is an interesting example because it shows that writers of the Bible saw genealogies not merely as a list of boring names but as a way to make theological points. Even the Chronicler does it, when David is first said to be the eighth son of Jesse, but 1 Chronicles 2:15 presents him as the seventh son. We know he is actually the eighth son (cf. 1 Samuel 16:10). But

by switching his birth order in the genealogy, the Chronicler emphasizes David's role as the preeminent example of a king. Again, the readers will know he is the eighth, but they will notice the switch and consider the implications.

This is to say nothing of Luke's use of a genealogy in his Gospel and the theological points he makes with it (3:23-38). Hint: Think about where Luke starts and ends his list.

A genealogy of two

The Bible contains one more important genealogy. As a result of what Jesus Messiah has done, those who believe and follow His commands become adopted brothers and sisters to Christ. They are joint heirs with Him (Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7) and thus, sons and daughters of God. Regardless of where a person comes from, if they believe, they are adopted into the family and find their new genealogy throughout the Bible: sons and daughters of the Most High God, siblings to Christ.

If you are fatigued by the long lists of names you see in the other genealogies, this one is only two levels deep. As a

beloved older member of my congregation used to say to me, "God doesn't have any grandchildren — only children."

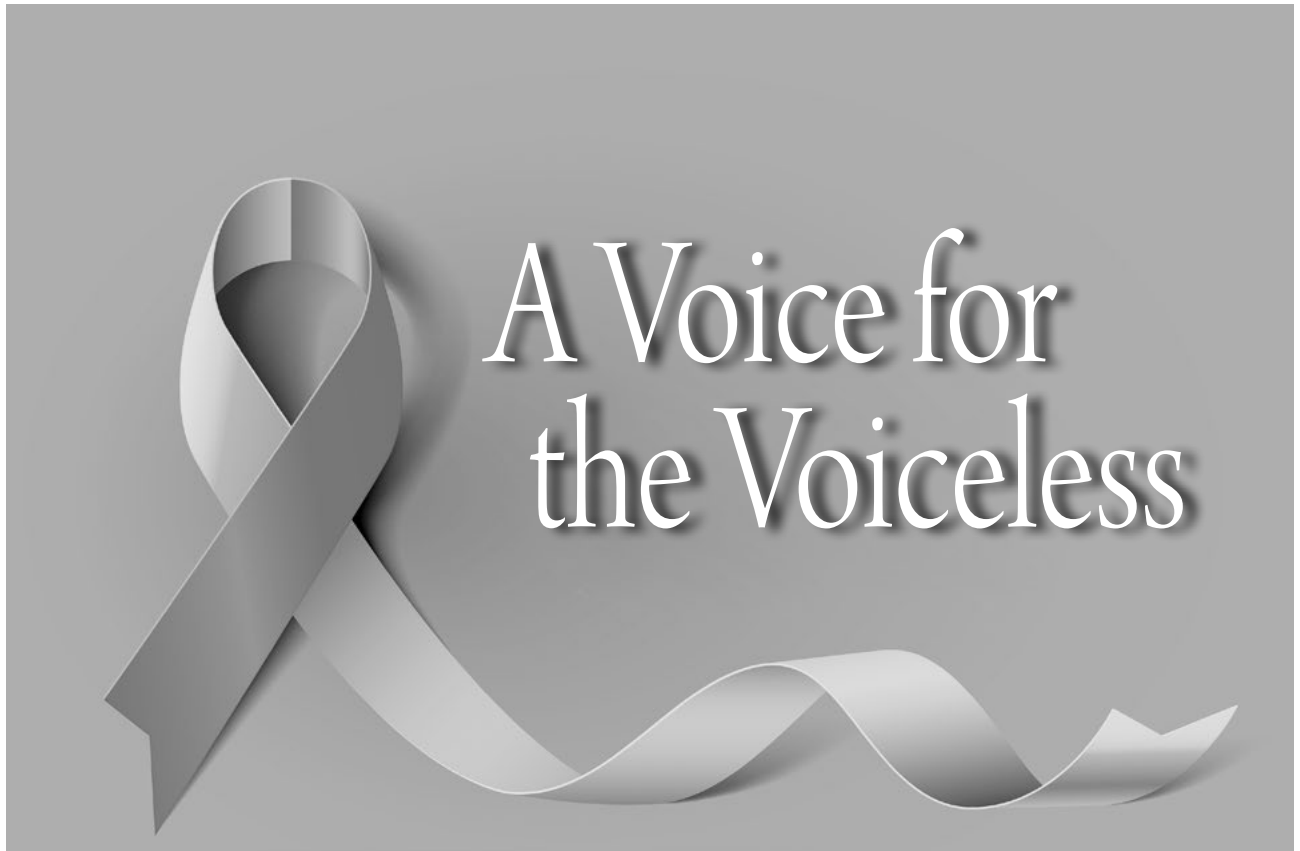
Though it may take some study and time to notice these kinds of details, the payoff is huge. Each genealogy has its purpose in the Bible. Those who believe can find their genealogy in the Bible as well, living their life for God — not a far-off, impersonal deity but Abba Father. **BA**

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.



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The witness of Mary and Elizabeth for the unborn.
by Kelsey Gjesdal

My heart pounded as I stood on the sidewalk, holding a laminated sign. It was sprinkling, and my fingers were cold. I felt so out of place.

I looked over at my sister. Her eyes were closed in silent prayer. She felt none of the nervousness that was wracking my body. A car drove up to the clinic, and she stepped up to offer a brochure. The driver pretended not to see her. Despite the rejection, she stepped out again and again. Each time a car pulled up.

People honked and gave us

the finger. Others screamed out their windows. A few encouraging people told us to keep up the good work.

At the end of our shift, I got into my sister's car and asked her, "Does this even make a difference?"

She smiled. "Former abortion workers have said that when people pray on a sidewalk outside of an abortion clinic, the no-show rate is seventy-five percent."

For the next four weeks, my sister, a small group of friends, and I prayed outside the same abortion clinic every Saturday afternoon. Doing this scared me. We were in a sketchy area of town in a pro-abortion state with constant rioting and turmoil in certain cities.

But praying where I knew

babies were dying changed something inside me. No longer was the abortion issue something "out there." It was happening in my city, before my very eyes, and I could no longer look away and think, *Someone else will do something.*

When life begins

Edmund Burke is attributed with saying, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Many Christians have been silent on the abortion issue for too long. It's time for the church to speak up so that good triumphs over evil. However, even within some churches there are arguments over whether abortion is a sin, and, if it is, at what point is abortion a sin?

As Christians, we all agree that murder, or taking the life of another human being, is sin (Exodus 20:13). But when it comes to abortion, our disputes on calling it murder boil down to one question: When does life begin?

There is a genetic answer to this question. A zygote is formed when an egg from a woman is fertilized by a man's sperm. Twenty-three chromosomes from the mother and twenty-three from the father are combined to create a completely unique individual with his or her own set of genes. This zygote has the same genetic makeup as the baby, the child, and the adult he or she will become further on in development. Dr. Suess said it well: "A person's a person, no matter how small." Life begins at fertilization.

What Scripture says

There is also a biblical answer to the question of when life begins. One of the best answers is found in the Gospel of Luke.

Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she

who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord" (1:39-45).

When Mary, who was pregnant with Jesus, came into Elizabeth's presence, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. This is significant to the abortion debate. In Luke 1:26, the angel Gabriel announced the coming Messiah to Mary in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Verse 39 says Mary went "in a hurry" to go see her cousin, and Mary remained with her for three months, presumably until John was born (v. 56). This means that when

for those who willfully take another human's life (Genesis 9:6). God created us in His own image, as the pinnacle of His creation (1:26-31). David writes that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

Jesus demonstrated that human life is valuable, regardless of age or disability, by welcoming children into His presence (Matthew 19:14), by touching and healing the sick (8:3), and by making the good news available to all who will call on His name, for we are saved by grace and not by our works (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

“Jesus demonstrated that human life is valuable, regardless of age or disability.”

Mary came to see Elizabeth, she would have been a few days along in her pregnancy.

Not months. Not weeks. *Days.*

If the presence of the Lord Jesus was recognized as life in Mary's womb a few days into her pregnancy, who are we to say that a fetus is not alive until the child can survive outside of the womb or until a heartbeat is detectable?

Besides this, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that human life is valuable to God. This is why He instituted the death penalty

Life matters to God from womb to tomb. We should remember the words of Proverbs:

There are six things which the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers (6:16-19).

“Life matters to God from womb to tomb.”

Judgment and forgiveness

God hates murder; therefore, God hates abortion. Abortion is a sin, regardless at what stage the pregnancy is willfully terminated. And the Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished (Revelation 21:8).

Sin separates us from God. The unholy cannot come into the presence of the holy. Murderers cannot stand before God and live. Neither can liars. Or idolaters. Or the cowardly. *None of us* can stand before God and live, for we have all sinned and deserve God's righteous wrath (Romans 6:23).

But that's not the whole story. There is forgiveness in Jesus Christ for the sin of abortion (Psalm 130:4). Christ's death and resurrection secured eternal life for all who would call upon His name, and His blood can cover all our sins — our lies, our idolatry, our cowardice, and our abortions. “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19).

For those who have been complicit in the act of abortion, whether as a doctor, the

mother or father of the unborn, an extended family member pressuring a loved one into “taking care of the problem,” or by voting to support “reproductive rights,” they can come before the Lord in humility and allow the blood of Christ to bring times of refreshing.

Way of the church

Christians in the early first century were known as baby savers. According to Early Christian History (earlychurchhistory.org), infanticide was legal in Rome since its founding. Unwanted babies would be thrown into trash heaps and left to die. But the early Christians knew that all life was precious to God. They would seek out these abandoned infants and care for them, either adopting and raising them as their own or tenderly caring for them in their final moments of life.

What are we known for today? For our value for life, as the people who will support mothers with unexpected pregnancies? Are we known as the people who champion families — who respect and care for the elderly and dying, who spread the good news because there is a life

beyond this one that matters for all eternity?

Ask the Lord how you can be a voice for the voiceless today. Maybe it's through praying on a sidewalk outside an abortion clinic or through voting in alignment with godly principles. Maybe it's through financially supporting a pregnancy resource clinic in your area or donating old baby things to a family in need. Whatever the Lord calls you to do, be faithful to do it.

We don't have to be silent in the face of evil. **BA**

Kelsey Gjesdal

lives in Albany, OR, with her parents and three siblings and attends the Marion congregation. Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Have you seen our Online Extras? Sometimes we don't have enough room for all the articles we want to feature in the print *Bible Advocate*, so we add them to our online content for each issue.

For this issue, we're featuring “Convergence” by Dorothy Nimchuk. Visit baonline.org. And be sure to check out our archive!

David Discovers the Young Jesus



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by **Marcia Sanders**

// **H**ey, Mom!" David called. "Do you know what I just realized?"
"I have no idea." Mom smiled.

"There's this huge hole in what I know about Jesus. I mean, I've read the story of His birth — which is pretty amazing, by the way. And then I read about Him being baptized and starting His own ministry when He's really old."

"Really old?" Mom asked. "You do realize He was only thirty when He began His ministry, right?"

"Yeah, that's what I mean. Really old." David was totally unaware of his mom's silent laughter. "But what about when He was my age?"

Mom looked up from the bread she was kneading. "Actually, there is a story in the Bible about when Jesus was close to your age. It's in Luke 2."

"When He was twelve years old? Really? Like me?" David asked.

Mom grinned. "Yes. How about you read it for yourself, starting with verse 41, and let me know what you learn."

David headed upstairs to his room where his Bible lay beside his bed. Half an hour later, he returned to the kitchen.

"So what did you think?" Mom asked.

"Well, first, I'm glad you and Dad never took off and left me behind for so long. I would have probably panicked. Mary and Joseph traveled a full day before they realized Jesus wasn't with them. Then another day to get back to Jerusalem. Then they searched for Him for three more days. So He was separated from them for five days! That's a long time. But Jesus didn't seem to even notice. In fact,

He just asked why they were worried. I can't imagine what you and Dad would have done if we'd been separated for five days."

Mom grimaced. "I can't imagine either. Five days! I'd never thought about how long it actually was."

"But when they found Jesus, He was talking to the teachers in the synagogue, who were amazed at how much He knew. I suppose that would kinda be like me talking to a bunch of preachers about the Bible. I know several stories and can quote a few verses, but I don't think I'd amaze any of them with that."

"And Jesus knew who He really was," David mused further. "I mean, He knew He was the Son of God. Isn't that amazing? How do you handle such information at that age? I'd totally freak out to think I carried that kind of responsibility."

"But don't you think that Jesus knew all along?" Mom asked. "After all, He had been with God, His Father, before He came to earth as the son of Mary and Joseph."

"Yeah, that's right," David admitted. "It makes me want to study and learn more, though. If I want to be like Jesus, which I do, then I need to study His Word that tells me not just stories about His life but the really important stuff — like how to live as He lived." **BA**

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



My Favorite Verse

1 Corinthians 10:13



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No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

by Mike Wallace

It was my eighth day in the hospital. At age 36, I had suffered my sixth collapsed lung. The cure for so many lung issues is to slice open the chest, spread the ribs, and cut all the bad parts off the lung. Then staple it back together and glue the lung to the rib cage. After they sewed me up, I was told to cough.

When your lung is like newly ground hamburger, coughing is not what you want to do. Every breath was agonizing because every breath moved my lung. I was alive only because of the massive amounts of morphine injected into me. The pain was more than one could stand.

In this pain-filled morphine stupor, my mind clearly recited 1 Corinthians 10:13. It became a prayer to me.

While in my agony, I somehow realized that others had gone through more than I had, like Christ on the cross without any pain killers. Most important, I believed that God is faithful and would not leave me. This trial would not overcome me because He promises that nothing will come upon us that we cannot handle with His help. I had to realize no matter how bad my lung hurt, God thought I could handle it. Wow!

This wonderful verse is scary because we do not know what we can handle, so we must simply exercise faith that God is there with us. During that first prayer, I told God that I had done all I could do. "I surrender, and now it is up to You."

I wanted to go home and be with my wife and four children. I wanted to live. I wanted to

breathe again. I had given all to God because I knew that without Him, I would be dead.

God always gives us a way of escape. As I finished my prayer, I felt a "pop" in my lung. Something inside me changed, and from that moment on, I began to heal. I went home four days later.

My collapsed lungs happened thirty years ago, and God is still using me today. Though our trials are difficult and we may not know what we can handle, God does. No matter our circumstance, God is faithful to us. **BA**

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



Editor's note: "My Favorite Verse" is a new column in the BA. Submit a reflection on your favorite verse to jason.overman@cog7.org.

Immanuel

I see Him sleeping there,
a tiny boy with downy hair,
His life on earth now just begun
this Child who came for everyone.

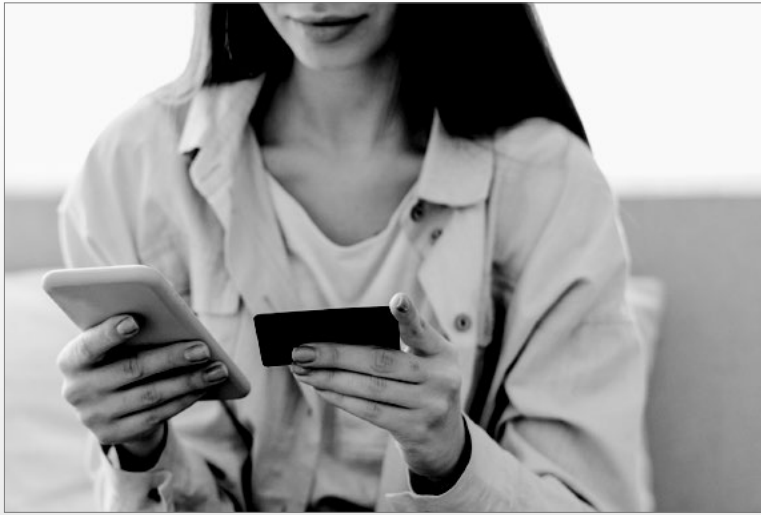
I touch His silky skin
this Babe so pure, so free from sin,
And know someday He'll weathered be
when He gives His life to set us free.

I hear His newborn cries,
see tears fill up His mother's eyes,
Yet sense somehow other hearts will sing
when we find the hope His coming brings.

Again, I see Him sleeping there
this One who came from heaven fair,
This One who gives us all that's grand
with a love that comes from God's own hand.

Chris Ahlemann





Every Gift Counts!

The *Bible Advocate* has been a free publication, supported by donations, since the early seventies. Beginning in 1863, the magazine has blessed thousands around the globe through print. In recent years, we've expanded our online presence and have made the BA available in various audio formats. That's quite an accomplishment, done at no charge, through the grace of God.

But times have changed in fifty years. The cost of business keeps rising, with printing and postage rates at an all-time high. If you can give a one-time gift or partner with us monthly, quarterly, or annually, it will be appreciated.

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Thank you!

In My Father's House

continued from page 11

now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24).

Jesus pleased God and men.

When He began His public ministry, Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized, and God responded like any proud father: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus found favor with men as well. In addition to being popular because of His healings and miracles, He drew people to Himself with unconditional love, compassion, and kindness.

Where we need to be

Mary and Joseph had a story to tell about Jesus being lost as a child, and their story reveals an important truth: Jesus needed to be in His Father's house to learn and grow in wisdom and knowledge.

So do we. Like Jesus, we need to be with our Christian family. For worship, fellowship, and spiritual growth, there's no better place. **BA**

Caroline S. Cooper writes from Harrisonville, MO.





2027 GC Convention

The 2025 GC Convention has gained a cherished spot in our past, yet its good memories live on. It also signals the anticipated arrival of our next one in 2027! Save the dates of June 28 - July 3, 2027, and plan to gather with us in Greensboro, North Carolina. Church business, Spirit-filled worship, focused times of learning, family events, and making more memories with friends, old and new, are on the docket. It will be here before you know it!



Cristo Viene - Missionary Support

GC Missions continues to support those who share the gospel in areas where it has not been previously shared. We are grateful for missionaries who have been engaged in the Great Commission, and we invite the Church to be part of this by praying and supporting their work.

Help us continue spreading the gospel by sending your donations in these formats:

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CREATE, COMMUNICATE, AND CONNECT WITH PURPOSE

CoG7 Branding

Are you creating graphics or a new sign for your local church? We have all the details on how you should use our CoG7 logo. Please send an email to cog7media@cog7.org to receive the information or the necessary help to make your church sign a success.

We want our churches to be identified across the Conference as ONE. Therefore, please refrain from using our logo without permission or in the wrong format.

If you need additional guidance, here is a video to provide you the correct brand use: <https://youtu.be/pzY3AV9dgjM?si=8HpZwoA9WC7JOM7L>.



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CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

2025 Graduates

Richmond Douglas, Hawthorne, NV - Associate of Christian Leadership (Pastoral Ministry), Summa Cum Laude

Eliasar Escobar - Associate of Christian Leadership (Pastoral Ministry)

Pete Capetillo, Albuquerque, NM - Bachelor of Arts in Christian Leadership (Pastoral Ministry), Summa Cum Laude

Karlene Green, Hamilton, ON - Associate of Christian Leadership, Cum Laude

Neftali Hernandez, Spring, TX - Associate of Christian Leadership (Pastoral Ministry), Magna Cum Laude



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by Ronald Rousseau

Early in my walk with Christ, I arrived late to a service one Sabbath. When I walked in, I noticed that the preacher in the pulpit was about five feet tall and weighed about 95 pounds. The brother had a voice on him that could keep any congregation awake and engaged during a long sermon. His name was Ray Moldenhauer.

As soon as he was done, he was gone. I did not have the chance to speak to him.

This scenario repeated itself three times. Each time I arrived late to church, and each time I was captivated by Brother Ray's presentations and the

intensity, clarity, and conviction with which he spoke.

After the third time he delivered a sermon, Brother Ray hung around a bit, and I approached him. I had a brief but confusing conversation with him. Since he had such a strong presence in the pulpit, like a bull horn, I expected he would be boisterous while talking with someone one-on-one. But his speaking voice was angelic, kind, and soft.

I share this story because it relates to legacy. Elder Ray Moldenhauer passed away long ago. Without that last encounter with him, I would have engraved in my heart that he was a preacher with a great presence, and that's it — that would be his legacy in my mind. But with an encounter of less than a minute, I had the opportunity to see that he was

also a kind man. This impression was reinforced years later when I found out that Brother Ray had left a generous donation to one of our churches, allowing the congregation to construct a large building.

One of the frequent concerns of parents in the Church of God (Seventh Day) concerns legacy: What, if any, affiliation will their children have with the Church in the future? In other words, what will their legacy be as it relates to their children and their relationship to the Church?

To answer this question, we must take stock of the reality of our situation. In this life, the faith of those who profess to follow Christ will be challenged. We should not be surprised that our children will go through trials and tribulations. They will be attacked

and tempted, and some will fall during those trials. But parents who leave a strong legacy for their children can help them stand under the pressure. Therefore, it behooves these parents to focus on three things.

Harmony with the Spirit (Romans 8)

As we walk with Christ, it should be evident that some aspects of our lives are invisible to us. We have eyes but we cannot see (Mark 8:18). Harmony with the Spirit is needed so that we do not walk in darkness but in light. We should be among those who are in Christ Jesus and “do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

Remember that our battle is not with flesh but with principalities that operate in places we cannot see or touch. Paul faced the same conflict: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (7:24). Therefore, we must surrender to the Spirit to defeat the flesh.

If we desire a legacy of faith for those who follow us, we must be in harmony with the Spirit. By ourselves we cannot overcome the challenges of this world. But we can through the Holy Spirit — God’s gift for victory and a lasting legacy!

Harmony with the brethren (Psalm 133:1)

Humanity has a basic desire to be alone. For one thing, it’s convenient. One of the things I like to do is to listen to music or the Bible with my headphones on as I fall asleep — to isolate myself.

But as a married man, I must take my wife into consideration in everything I do. So I limit my listening alone.

Since my baptism, I have had the conviction to regard everything I do with my brothers and sisters in Christ in mind. It would be easy to concern myself only with what I want or need. But there’s a higher love — a sacrificial love — that takes the needs of others into consideration.

This sacrificial love was fundamental to the ministry of Jesus Christ when He suffered and gave His life for us. The beginning of living in harmony with our brothers and sisters is to put their needs above ours. Dedicating our lives to benefit others ensures that our legacy will be remembered not only by people

but by our Father God as a blessing to future generations.

David wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1). Unfortunately, unity can be a challenge. The church can be plagued with constant discontent and gripes — evidence that the Holy Spirit is missing among us. Harmony with the brotherhood comes only from the Spirit, not through the flesh. The flesh destroys. When we are in harmony with the Spirit, we will leave a lasting legacy of harmony with our brethren.

Kindness to one another (Ephesians 4)

Kindness doesn’t come naturally in our humanity. True kindness is divine, and it begins with

A Legacy of Christ

In December 2025, we took a small group of missionaries with us to Monterrey, Mexico, for a new GC Missions ministry called Missionary Immersion Training (MIT). It focuses on equipping young people to do missions work where they are. Training occurs before, during, and after the mission.

Why another ministry? Because at GC Missions, we want the next generation to protect the legacy of Christ. We want them to see Jesus in His followers, the missionaries of the Church of God (Seventh Day). We guide these faithful ones to be in harmony with the Spirit, to be in harmony with the church, and to exercise kindness, just as Jesus did.

We pray that from this effort we will prepare missionaries who can work in domestic and foreign lands. We also pray that the entire Church will be reunited in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and that our reunion will result in constant worship to the greatness of our Father God.

— Ronald Rousseau

forgiveness. In fact, Paul puts these two qualities in the same sentence: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

We cannot find forgiveness in the flesh because the flesh desires vengeance. Remember, the Lord said, “Vengeance is Mine” (Deuteronomy 32:35). In the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is where Christians find the strength to forgive. Since He died for us and forgave us, we have the ability and responsibility to forgive. This divine gift provides hope for life and a solid part of our legacy.

Consider the German word

kinder. Its root is *kind*, as in the way we treat children with kindness. The tender and fragile disposition of children invites us to be kind to them. One can argue that it’s easy to be kind to children, but what about kindness to the children of God? A true mark of a Christian is their ability to offer the same kindness to others that Jesus offered to all of us. That is the standard that we will be judged by.

How can we be known as kind people? One way is by protecting others from our own pain. The Bible urges us to share our burdens with others (Galatians 6:2), and we should. But

sometimes when we are afraid, we project that fear onto others to alleviate our own suffering.

In order to be kind, we need to take our suffering to God in prayer and not take it out on those who are around us. This is the legacy that honors God.

Pass it on

Many of our elders, like Brother Ray, left us more than a legacy of strong preaching and influence. They left us a legacy of harmony in the Spirit, harmony with our brethren, and kindness to others.

It is a legacy of love, the legacy of our Lord Jesus, and it can unify our families and churches, too, if we will pass it on. **BA**

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Need some quiet time?

Tune in to the *Bible Advocate* on your favorite streaming service anytime, anywhere! It's perfect for on-the-go people like you.

Ronald Rousseau

is the director of GC Missions and superintendent of the Central District. He writes from Chicago, IL.



Lord's Supper

is
Tuesday
evening,
March 31.





"Out of Egypt I Called My Son"

The early years of Christ's life as the incarnate Son of God have surely sparked wonder and imagination in the hearts and minds of God's people since the beginning of the church. What was He like as a baby? Did He cry? Was He fussy? Did He ever get a cold or argue with His siblings? Did He do miracles?

While we are given some specifics, such as His interest in the temple and His awareness of His heavenly Father (Luke 2:46–49), the facts and circumstances of His childhood, or pre-ministry years, have largely gone unrecorded. Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit knew we would not need these details nor be preoccupied with themes not germane to Christ's mission.

There is, however, one detail from Jesus' early life that mirrors an important truth for every Christian. Matthew gives the account:

Now . . . an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph . . . saying, "Arise, take the young Child and . . . flee to Egypt, . . . for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." . . . he took the young Child and His mother . . . and departed for Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son*" (Matthew 2:13-15, emphasis added).

In this story the author states that Jesus was literally called out of Egypt. And through careful study of Scripture, it becomes evident that Christ is not alone in this calling. Rather, He physically embodies the universal and spiritual call God has given to all His people: to come out of this world. Therefore, may we be careful to not

overlook this small yet important piece of history: "Out of Egypt I called My Son."

The Scriptures are replete with the theme of God calling His people out. Abram was called out of Ur (Genesis 12:1). Moses and Israel were called out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1; Hebrews 11:24-27). Daniel, while physically in Babylon, was spiritually called out of it (Daniel 1:8; 6:10). Christ's church is also called out of Babylon, to refuse her sins and escape her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

The beauty of these accounts lies in the spiritual principle they reveal: Within Scripture, Babylon and Egypt function as representations of spiritually corrupt and broken systems of humanity — fallen, lost, and far from the knowledge of God. Indeed, Babylon and Egypt represent all world systems that operate apart from the lordship of Christ and are, consequently, dominated by sin, lawlessness, vice, temporal pursuits, and unbelief.

Therefore, this important lesson is to receive with fresh insight the witness of the Holy Spirit: to live not as the world lives but in holiness, keeping the commands of God and living moral, spiritual lives fully dedicated to Him (Ephesians 5:11).

As the Church of God embraces and walks in this timeless call, may we boldly proclaim this same message to people so desperately in need. May the whole world hear God's call to the grace, hope, and power found in Christ alone — to come out from and overcome this world so lost and broken. *May it be so!*

— Greg Lincoln



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All members of the NAMC are invited to this important meeting. Credentialed and licensed ministers, local pastors, and local leaders may attend, as well as elders, deacons, and pastors' wives.