

E-Herald of the Coming Kingdom

"The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is near.
Change the way you think and act, and believe the Good News."
Mark 1:15 GW

In This Issue:

**Of What Danger Are False Doctrine?
Decieved By All
A Tribute To Charlie "Pooh"
Growing Old Isn't For Sissies
It Begins and Ends With Kingdom Preaching
Dynamic Christianity**

**DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S COMING
KINGDOM TO BE ESTABLISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS**

Contents

Editorial
Pages 3 & 4

Of What Danger Are
False Doctrine
Page 5
James L. Rankin

Deceived by All
The Story of Israel
(Part Three)
Page 6
Wally Winner

A Tribute to Charlie "Pooh"
Page 18
Dennis Baldwin

Growing Old Isn't for Sissies
Page 22
Rex Cain

It Begins and Ends
With Kingdom Preaching
Page 27
Richard Eldred

Dynamic Christianity
Page 31
Kent Ross

2 Timothy 3:15-17 "

*All scripture is inspired
by God and is useful to
teach us what is true and
to make us realize what is
wrong in our lives. It
straightens us out and
teaches us to do what is
right. It is God's way of
preparing us in every
way; fully equipped for
every good thing God
wants us to do. "*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Wally Winner - Kent Ross



Interesting Developments

Atlanta Bible College is the only college, we know of, in the entire world that teaches the truths as we believe God revealed them through His Word. That's why it is so important what happens to it in the future.

It has undergone some severe financial concerns. Those are being addressed by the new Board and the staff that remains in place with the exception of a new president.

But it has also struggled with keeping enrollment up. Fewer and fewer students have come, finished their training and then opted to enter into the ministry.

As a result church struggle without leadership and the danger is of the faith waning. There certainly would be remnants, pockets of faith, but leaders are needed to be spokes person for the truth of the Bible.

In a bold move the Board asked the delegates at the annual Conference to consider the question of stepping out on faith to purchase the building that was being leased for facilities for classes and offices. Though unable to take formal action, approval was indicated for the Board to move ahead to make the purchase.

Funds once in reserve have been largely expended, so this was a move of faith asking for the needed funds to make such a bid.

If this is of God, it will all work out, and I am not opposed to the matter itself. However there remain troubling concerns:

- 1) The lack of needed operating funds,
- 2) The very low enrollment figures,
- 3) The recent management decisions of the past few years have left the administration and stability of the college weakened.,
- 4) And the ensuing concerns that have reverberated amongst the churches.

Perhaps these will be addressed, perhaps they are already being addressed, but concerns do remain.

I am told that while these concerns are real, we should just move on and know that this time it will be different. I hope it will be. I do have confidence in this Board and staff, but concerns do remain.

Let prayers be offered for God to open these doors because Atlanta Bible College is needed to continue preparing leadership for the Faith and for our churches.

As the End of This Age Draws Near

Prophetically the signs we see in society's moral decline, and the political instability in our world, all point toward the end of this age, and it is concerning to consider how we should best be involved in doing our Father's business.

It seems there is little effort being made in several areas. We need to be:

- 1) Building new churches, not necessarily buildings, but new churches,
- 2) Strengthening our existing church groups,
- 3) Reaching people for Christ, many more people.,

4) Making disciples of all nations, yes, but beginning here in our own country, and Canada.

We are making wonderful efforts in some areas of the world, notably Africa, but we need to have strong, burgeoning churches that can be the support for these efforts.

It is worrisome to remember that the Lord posed the question as to whether, when He returns, if He would find faith on the earth.

We need to determine that there will be a faithful remnant, and that we will be part of that faithful remnant, in spite of the increasing darkness that seems to be enveloping the world.

Israel, God's sign-post nation, is being surrounded by enemies of Jehovah. The nations that have always been her staunch allies seem to be weakening their commitment to her existence. Be sure and follow Co-Editor Wally Winners wonderful series on Israel prophetically.

Anti-God forces, anti-religions, seem to be on the increase, and though we know that is what we've anticipated, we need now to be prepared to face the consequences of our faith. The Lord will stand beside us and never leave us, but the forces of evil are ominously preparing their attacks,

Stand strong and be of good courage. Hopefully the articles contained within this issue will renew your confidence in the Lord and in His mighty power to yet reach out to the world with the Gospel of the Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus Christ.



Some of the Dixon youth during the ministry era of Ed and Lois Graham

Church of God History Conference 2011 September 22-24 North Hills Church of God Springfield, OH

Among the featured presentations will be material on the ministries of Francis and Iris Burnett, Ed and Lois Graham and Milon and Joan Hall.

To register go to : http://www.abc-coggc.org/index.php?option=com_jforms&view=form&id=5&Itemid=121

The History Committee is looking for issues of The Restitution 1874-1925. This magazine predated The Restitution Herald and was published first in Chicago, then Plymouth, IN, and finally Cleveland, OH. We have most of the issues on microfilm and CD, but the early years from 1874-1890 or so are scattered with many issues missing. The Restitution began publishing in Chicago in 1871 but those issues were lost in the Chicago fire. So any copies from 1871-1874 would be extremely rare and therefore very valued.

Please check all your files for any copies handed down from your parents or grandparents, or stored in your church records and archives that might have early dates on them. Pastors please announce this to your members and ask your isolated or shut-in members. If anything is located please contact Jan Stilson at jstilson21@comcast.net We would like to gather all these lost copies and interfile them in our existing files. We will accept loose copies or bound volumes. We will accept actual copies or jpg scans of them.

OF WHAT DANGER ARE FALSE DOCTRINES?

A BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

By James L. Rankin

Introduction to the Matter of Truth

“Truth” is indispensable.

“Truth” is incompatible with “lies.”

In our Biblical search, we begin to sort out what is true and what isn't from God's revelation.

Recognize that the true God, Creator of mankind, must be worshipped in spirit and truth.

Key Texts: 2 Corinthians 11:1-4, 13-15 and John 4:24.

We consider three categories of false doctrine.

1. Another Jesus.

- Matthew 24:4-5—Many shall come in my name.
- Luke 17:22-23—If they say, “See here or there,” go not after them.
- 1 John 2:18—“Antichrist shall come.”
- Ø “Antichrist” = “In the stead of Christ” (Strong's Concordance Greek Lexicon).
- Ø Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- Ø Note especially verses 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4—Opposes and supplants.
- Ø “Antichrist” = “In the stead of Christ” (Strong's Concordance Greek Lexicon).
- Ø Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.
- Ø Note especially verses 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4—Opposes and supplants.
- 1 John 4:1-3—False prophets taking the place of Christ: Try them.

2. Another Spirit.

- Ephesians 2:2—The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.
- 1 John 4:4-6—Spirit = Unseen Power.
- Ø “He that is in you” (the Church) VS “He that is in the world.”
- Ø “Spirit of truth.” VS “Spirit of error.”
- Ø Acts 26:17-18—“Light”—God VS “Darkness”—Satan.
- Ø 2 Timothy 1:7—Spirit of “power,” “love,” and “sound mind.”

3. Another Gospel.

- Galatians 1:6-11—“Which is not another”: True Gospel = ‘Not after man.’
- Galatians 2:4-5—Truth of the Gospel. VS False brethren.
- Jeremiah 28:1-17—False prophets taught sweet sound of ‘other gospel.’
- 1 Kings 13:1-32—false prophet destroys true prophet by lying.

Conclusion. Lack of Knowledge caused by Rejection of Knowledge.

- Hosea 4:6—“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”
- 1 Peter 1:3—“According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue.”
- Acts 17:26-27—“And (God) has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth...that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”

DECEIVED BY ALL

The Story of Modern Israel

Part Three

From Statehood to the Present

By Wally Winner

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

*“Do not fear;
Zion, let not your hands be weak.
The LORD your God in your midst,
The Mighty One, will save;
He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will quiet you with His love,
He will rejoice over you with singing.”*
(Zephaniah 3:16, 17)



The United Nations Security Council was to begin a “debate” about whether or not they will divide Jerusalem without negotiation or approval from Israel at the end of July.

It was reported by the Haaretz newspaper that Quartet members (United Nations, EU, USA, Russia) were “expected to release a statement endorsing U.S. President Barack Obama’s May 19 speech on the Middle East, which called for...the borders of a future state based on pre-1967 lines...”

According to an article in the Jerusalem Post, Netanyahu said he was ready to restart negotiations “tomorrow morning” but the Palestinians “refuse” to negotiate now. Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) recently reported, “Palestinian negotiators refuse to return to talks unless Israel freezes settlement; Israel will not consider talks with the Palestinians unless the P.A. (Palestinian Authority) breaks off its talks with Hamas, and unless the framework of the talks includes recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, an end to refugee claims and a long term Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley,” [without which Israel cannot defend her existence.]

Trouble is coming....an armed conflict, but this is not the first, second, or third time. “We’re about to crash into the wall. We’re galloping at full speed toward a situation where Israel will cease to exist as a Jewish state,” said Israeli President Shimon Perez. “Whoever accepts the basic principle of the 1967 lines will receive international support from the world,” Peres said. “Whoever rejects it will lose the world.”

As the British forces pulled out of Palestine on the eve of U.N. Resolution 181, the Arab states declared that if such a state was declared, they would invade it. Armed with the promise of US President Harry S. Truman that he would recognize such a state if it was declared, the Israeli Declaration of Independence was read out on Friday, the 14th of May 1948 by David Ben Gurion. He became the first Prime Minister of the new state. Chaim Weizmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, was elected as the first president. The



State was quickly recognized by the United States and the USSR. It is a country no larger than the state of New Jersey.

The declaration stated that Israel "will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

Less than 24 hours later, the regular armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq invaded the country forcing Israel to defend the sovereignty it had just declared. Iraqi forces occupy Judea, Samaria and eastern Jerusalem, including the Old City and the Temple Mount. Jordan annexes East Jerusalem, destroying all Jewish settlements. Egypt occupies Gaza. The Arab refugees, approximately 720,000, were encouraged to leave Israel by Arab leaders promising to purge the land of Jews. Sixty-eight percent left without ever seeing an Israeli soldier.

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al Husseini stated, "I declare a holy war, my Moslem brothers! Murder the Jews! Murder them all!"

In what became known as Israel's War of Independence, the newly formed, poorly equipped Israel Defense Forces (IDF) were able to drive back the invading armies in fierce fighting which lasted some 15 months and claimed over 6,000 Israeli lives (nearly one percent of the country's Jewish population at the time). The British had left their military weapons to the Arabs on their withdrawal. With each Israeli victory, the IDF confiscate the weapons and used them in the fight.

During the first months of 1949, direct negotiations were conducted under UN auspices between Israel and each of the invading countries (except Iraq, which refused to negotiate with Israel), resulting in armistice agreements which reflected the situation at the end of the fighting.

At the conclusion of the War of Independence, in 1949, all of the Arab countries who invaded Israel signed cease fire agreements with Israel, starting with Egypt on February 24 and concluding with Syria on July 20. These



agreements specified the interim borders between Israel and the Arab states, as decided by the outcome of the battles.

The territorial result was:

- The border with Egypt was restored to its previous line, with the exception of the Gaza Strip where Egypt continued in control.
- The border with Lebanon was restored to its previous line.
- The border with Syria was restored to its previous line.
- Jordan retained control of the hill country historically known as Judea and Samaria. This territory was renamed the “West Bank”.
- Jordan controlled the Old City of Jerusalem.

The “1949 Armistice Line” has become known as the “Green Line”.



The Palestinians did not declare a state immediately, and though several attempts were made to do so, they were blocked by the Jordanians and then by the Egyptians. The Egyptians later allowed the declaration of such a state in Gaza in September 1948, but it was recognized by no-one and had no resources and no real existence. Arab states had no interest in the formation of a separate state in Palestine, both because each state had territorial ambitions in Palestine, and because they feared the radical influence of Palestinian leadership under Haj Amin El-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

In the years 1948-52 870,000 Jews were expelled from Arab countries. Many of their communities dated back 2,5000 years. Most flee to Israel and are absorbed. During the same period, 720,000 Arabs flee from Israel and are confined to refugee camps. The camps are still in existence today. Arab refugees were INTENTIONALLY not absorbed or integrated into the Arab lands to which they fled, despite the vast Arab territory. Out of the 100,000,000 refugees since World War II, theirs is the only refugee group in the world that has never been absorbed or integrated into their own peoples' lands. They live in tent or “cardboard” cities being fund by the UN not by the wealthy oil rich Arab countries. They are used for political purposes and news sources are encouraged to show pictures of the plight of these Arabs.



will become the country which has the most number of UN resolutions directed against it. Israel has never been permitted membership in the International Red Cross.

The new nation encouraged Jews to return to their land. In the first four months of independence, some 50,000 newcomers, mainly Holocaust survivors, reached Israel's shores. By the end of 1951, a total of 687,000 men, women, and children had arrived, over 300,000 of them refugees from Arab lands, thus doubling the Jewish population.

The new Jewish nation began building housing, mechanize agriculture, establish a merchant fleet and a national airline, exploit available minerals, develop industries and expand roads, telecommunications, and electricity networks.

Towards the end of the first decade, the output of industry doubled, as did the number of employed persons, with industrial exports increasing four-fold. Vast expansion of areas under cultivation had brought about self-sufficiency in the supply of all basic food products except meat and grains, while some 50,000 acres of mostly barren land were afforested and trees were planted along almost 500 miles of highways

Terrorist raids continue from 1952-1956 into Israel from adjoining Arab states, including Egyptian-sponsored fedayeen raids from Gaza (*Fedayeen meaning "those who sacrifice" is a term used to describe several distinct, militant groups and individuals in the Arab world at different times in history. It is sometimes used colloquially to refer to suicide squads, especially those who are not bombers... Wikipedia*). The Israeli army adopts policy of reprisals.



Israeli Tanks in the Sinai

In 1956, the U.S. retracted its offer to finance Egypt's Aswan Dam. In response on July 26, 1956 Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalizes the Suez Canal and blocks Israeli shipping. Israel then captures the Sinai from Egypt and terrorist bases in Gaza are dismantled. U.S.-Soviet pressure forces Israeli withdrawal from Sinai without a peace treaty. United States President Dwight Eisenhower guarantees protection to Israel. Armed with this promise, Israel withdraws their troops. Nasser was honored by Arabs as a leader who had saved the Arab world. Despite the guarantees that the waterways would remain open, Egypt refuses to open the Suez canal to Israeli shipping.

A meeting in Cairo in 1964 forms the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) with the aim of "liberating" Palestine. The PLO Charter calling for Israel's destruction is adopted (still in place). The campaign of terror attacks across Israel's borders escalates.

After the 1956 Suez Crisis, the United Nations had established a presence in the Middle East, especially at sensitive border areas. The 3,300 United Nations troops were only there with the agreement of the nations that acted as a host to it. By May 1967, the Egyptians had made it clear that the United Nations was no longer wanted in the Suez region and expelled the peace keeping troops. Gamal Nasser, leader of Egypt, ordered a concentration of Egyptian military forces in the sensitive Suez zone. The view in Israel was that

Egypt was preparing to attack. The Egyptians had also enforced a naval blockade which closed off the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. The American guarantees made by President Eisenhower to protect Israel fail to take effect. The American government declares they cannot find the paperwork. There is no military support from the U.S.

This led to the Six-Day War which took place in June 1967. The Six-Day War was fought between June 5th and June 10th. The Six-Day War was initiated by General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli's Defense Minister as a preventative military effort to counter what the Israelis saw as an impending attack by Arab nations that surrounded Israel. The war was against Syria, Jordan and Egypt, all nations that moved troops to Israel's borders.



Israel believed that it was only a matter of time before the three Arab states co-ordinated a massive attack on Israel. Rather than wait to be attacked, the Israelis launched a hugely successful military campaign against its perceived enemies. The air forces of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq were all but destroyed on June 5th. By June 7th, many Egyptian tanks had been destroyed in the Sinai Desert and Israeli forces reached the Suez Canal and were headed to Cairo with little resistance. On the same day, the whole of the west bank of the Jordan River had been cleared of Jordanian forces.

The Golan Heights were captured from Syria and Israeli forces moved 30 miles into Syria itself. From these heights, Syria had shelled and destroyed 205 houses, 175 acres of orchards and 75 acres of grain.

Once again, it was the United States that pressured Israel to stop at the canal and not move on to Cairo. The United States again made protective promises to Israel. Once again Israel took the United States at their word.

This time Israel did not withdraw to the 1949 armistice lines. They had learned that international guarantees were meaningless. The only security for Israel's citizens was the protection that came from occupying the strategic property they now had.

The war was a disaster for the Arab world and temporarily weakened the man who was seen as the leader of the Arabs – Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt. The war was a military disaster for the Arabs, but it was also a massive blow to the Arabs morale. Here were four of the strongest Arab nations systematically defeated by just one nation.

The success of the campaign must have surprised the Israelis. However, it also gave them a situation that was to prove to be a major problem for the Israeli government for decades. By capturing the Sinai, the Golan Heights and the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Israelis had captured for themselves areas of great strategic value. However, the West Bank also contained over 600,000 Arabs who now came under Israeli administration. Their plight led many young Arabs into joining the PLO, a group that the Israelis deemed a terrorist organization. Israeli domestic policies became a lot more complicated after the military successes of June 1967.

Jerusalem is finally reunited. However, Moshe Dayan gives administration of the Temple Mount to the *Waqf*, the High Muslim Council of Jordan. Though it may have seemed like the right political thing to do at the time, it will eventually become a disastrous decision. It will give Islam a safety zone in Jerusalem to collect and hide weapons and to organize terror campaigns.

The PLO does not take long in responding. On July 22, 1968, an El Al Israel Airlines plane departing from Rome and headed for Tel Aviv was hijacked. The plane, carrying 32 passengers and 10 crew members, was diverted to Algiers. It marks the beginning of PLO campaign of international terror. Yasser Arafat becomes the head of the *Fatah* guerilla wing and gains control of the PLO in 1969.



The War of Attrition lasts from 1969-1970. Syria launches a campaign of continuous attacks along the Golan Heights. The PLO steps up terror attacks across the Jordan River.

During this time, Egypt and Israel engage in the more serious part of this War. Israel utilized its aircraft as flying artillery. For the first time, modern American-made fighters took part in the action. This development was the direct result of a French arms embargo to the Middle East following the Six Day War. In reality, the embargo applied only to Israel, which had previously relied on French aircraft of all types.

Israeli aircraft were able to reach strategic targets deep inside Egypt. Before long, they began hammering Migs in dogfights. In fact, the U.S.S.R. took an active role in Egypt's air defense, providing the latest equipment along with thousands of "advisors." Soviet participation went far beyond a training role. Russians operated the sophisticated radars and surface-to-air missiles and succeeded in downing several Israeli planes. They even flew Egyptian Migs until Israeli pilots shot down five Russian pilots, without loss, in a massive dogfight.

Israel then started some daring missions. They stole a brand new Soviet radar and flew it back to Israel. Helicopters inserted troops on many missions in Egypt's heartland. Together with the strategic bombing missions these deep penetrations revealed Egypt's vulnerability. Egypt decides they have had enough and calls for an end to the war.

The events of September 1970 change some directions in the Arab world. On September 28th, Egypt's Nasser dies and is succeeded by Anwar Sadat. In a bold move, the PLO with the aid of Syria attempt to take over Jordan. King Hussein massacres Palestinian Arabs and expels Arafat and the PLO in "Black September." The PLO is forced to flee and from 1971-75 relocates to Lebanon and establishes de facto state on its territory, which becomes a base for all international terror organizations. The PLO campaign of massacres continues in northern Israel.



The XXth Olympic Games were held in Munich, Germany in 1972. Tensions were high at these Olympics, because they were the first Olympic Games held in Germany since the Nazis hosted the Games in 1936. Early in the morning of September 5th, eight members of the PLO group "Black September" (taken from the 1970 Jordan expulsion), broke into the Israeli housing in the Olympic Village. The terrorists killed two members of the Israeli Olympic team and then took nine others hostage.

After some negotiations, the terrorist and hostages were transported to the airport where they expected to get passage to Cairo. German military and police were waiting for them. When the terrorists knew the end had come, one of them jumped into a helicopter and shot four of the hostages, then threw in a grenade. Another terrorist hopped into the other helicopter and used his machine gun to kill the remaining five hostages. Three more terrorists were killed in this second round of gunfire. Three terrorists survived the attack and were taken into custody.

Less than two months later, the three remaining terrorists were released by the German government after two other Black September members hijacked a plane and threatened to blow it up unless the three were released. This action earns the PLO and Yasser Arafat international notoriety.

Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. Many Jews who do not observe any other Jewish custom will refrain from work, fast and/or attend synagogue services on this day. The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement."



On the 1973 celebration of Yom Kippur while most of the Israeli army was home with family or worshipping, Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack against Israel. On the Golan Heights, approximately 180 Israeli tanks faced an onslaught of 1,400 Syrian tanks. Along the Suez Canal, 436 Israeli defenders were attacked by 80,000 Egyptians. It was a David against Goliath event.

Thrown onto the defensive during the first two days of fighting, Israel mobilized its reserves and despite heavy casualties, Israeli army reverses the tide and advances toward Cairo and Damascus. The Arab states were swiftly resupplied



by sea and air from the Soviet Union, which rejected U.S. efforts to work toward an immediate cease-fire. As a result, the United States belatedly began its own airlift to Israel.

It is the Arabs that ask for a cease fire after three weeks of fighting. Egypt was saved from a disastrous defeat by the UN Security Council, which had failed to act while the tide was in the Arabs' favor. Israel negotiates disengagement agreement with Egypt and Syria, setting cease-fire lines in the Sinai and the Golan.

The response from the Arab world was an oil embargo. International oil prices rise dramatically.

In one of their many resolutions against Israel, the United Nations passes a resolution defaming Zionism as racism in 1975. The PLO control of Lebanon is challenged, and full-scale civil war erupts between Moslems and Christians. No country really wants the PLO as part of their populace. Syria takes advantage of the situation and invades Lebanon and sets up permanent control over more than half of that country in 1976. The Western press ignores this.

On June 27, 1976, four terrorists forced an Air France plane to land in Uganda. They quickly demanded that Israel release 53 convicted terrorists. The hijackers freed the French crew and non-Jewish passengers, while retaining 105 Jewish and Israeli hostages. A 48 -hour deadline was set before executions would begin.

Faced with little choice, the Israeli government announced that it would enter into negotiations. This bought the precious time needed to consolidate a seemingly impossible military option. A new ultimatum was issued for 1 p.m. on Sunday, July 4th.

The Entebbe airport at which the hostages were being held was built by an Israeli construction firm, which was able to provide blueprints. The released, non-Jewish hostages were able to describe the terrorists, their arms, and their positioning.

Aircraft took off at 1 p.m. on July 3 and headed south. The lead Hercules carried the rescue force, led by Lt. Col. Yonatan Netanyahu (brother of present Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu). It had a black Mercedes which was a perfect copy of dictator Idi Amin's personal car. Two additional Hercules carried reinforcements and troops assigned to carry out special missions, such as destroying the Migs parked nearby. A fourth Hercules was sent to evacuate the hostages.

They landed undetected at 11:01 p.m. The soldiers freed the hostages in a lightning attack, killing all eight terrorists in the process. Force commander Yoni Netanyahu was killed as he led the hostages toward the safety of the aircraft. Two hostages were killed in the crossfire inside the airport. The other squads accomplished their missions in virtually the same time. By 11:59 p.m. the planes were on their way home. The operation, which was predicted to last one hour, in fact took only 58 minutes. Israel had served notice that they would not negotiate with terrorists.

The Likud government takes control in 1977 in Israel. Menachem Begin is the first Likud prime minister. Begin invites President Anwar Sadat of Egypt to Israel. Sadat responds to Begin's invitation and visits Israel. This eventually leads to peace treaty in 1979.



Two hundred thousand Soviet Jewish immigrants are welcomed to Israel in 1978 and 1979. It is a result of Soviet/American detente.

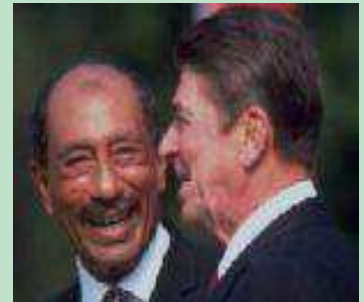
Brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Israel and Egypt signed an agreement on Sept. 17, 1978 at the U.S. presidential retreat at Camp David. That led in the following year to a peace treaty between those two countries, the first such treaty between Israel and any of its Arab neighbors. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat

officially titled it the “Framework for Peace in the Middle East.”

As part of the agreement Israel agrees to return the Sinai. The Sinai was three times the size of Israel. Israel had built cities and harvested many different crops in the previously barren area. The oil in Sinai would have provided oil independence for Israel. The Beduins were provided with schools and medical clinics.

Even though the treaty had the Sinai returned to Egypt, it did not receive favorable reviews in the Arab world. Sadat and Egypt were celebrating all those accomplishments on Oct. 7, 1981, Egypt’s Armed Forces Day, when Sadat was assassinated. The attackers would eventually come to be identified as Islamist nationalists associated with the Muslim Brotherhood under the name of Islamic Jihad. The group was subsequently found to have hatched the assassination plot with Al Gamaa al-Islamiyya, a Brotherhood offshoot that would , in the mid-1990s, develop ties with al-Qaeda and be chiefly responsible for the 1997 terrorist attack in Luxor on Nov. 17, 1997, when six men dressed in black attacked tourists visiting the famous site in Upper Egypt. Sixty-two men, women and children were killed.

The Israeli ambassador is shot in London by the PLO in 1982. Israel invades Lebanon with aim of dismantling PLO terrorist bases. The PLO is expelled from Lebanon forced to move. This time they relocate in Tunis.



During the administration of President Ronald Reagan, the United States-Israeli relationship was significantly upgraded, with Israel becoming a strategic partner and de facto ally. A number of bilateral arrangements solidified this special relationship. In November 1983, the United States and Israel established a Joint Political-Military Group to coordinate military exercises and security planning between the two countries, as well as to position United States military equipment in Israel for use by American forces in the event of a crisis. This led to the 1984 U.S. and Israel strategic cooperation agreement formalizing the alliance.

Israel had occupied Lebanon since the end of the 1970’s. Israel withdraws from Lebanon and establishes security zone north of Israeli/Lebanese border in 1985. Syria remains in control of most of Lebanon.

On October 7, 1985 four heavily armed terrorists representing the Palestinian Liberation Front hijacked the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro, with some 100 mostly elderly passengers on board, in Egyptian waters. The hijackers demanded that Israel free 50 Palestinian prisoners, and to prove their determination, they shot and killed a disabled American tourist, 69-year-old Leon Klinghoffer, and threw his body overboard with his wheelchair. After a two-day drama, the Egyptian government, unaware that Klinghoffer had been murdered, provided the hijackers with safe passage in exchange for freeing the ship and its passengers.

Once the murder had been discovered, US Navy F-14 fighters intercepted an Egypt Air 737 airliner flying the hijackers to freedom in Tunisia and forced it to land in Sicily. The terrorists were taken into custody by Italian authorities, were tried and convicted to long prison terms.

The U.S. and Britain bomb Libya in 1986 as retaliation for Libyan-supported terror attacks.



The PLO pressures Jordan's King Hussein into renouncing all claims to the West Bank in 1988. Now from Algiers, PLO declares establishment of Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem. Israel calls for Palestinian elections; the Arabs say no.

It was a bad time in the Soviet Union in the years 1989-91. There is the collapse of the once super power. This allows for the second wave of Soviet immigration to Israel. It brings 600,000 new residents in five years.

Immigration continues as Ethiopian Jewry is airlifted to Israel in 1990. The rest of the world's attention is focused on the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

This introduces the United States to the Persian Gulf War in 1991. The U.S. led international coalition drives Saddam from Kuwait. Israel is attacked by Iraqi Scud missiles but is kept from intervening by the U.S.

An attempt at Middle East peace was made at the Madrid Peace Conference among Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and a Jordanian/Palestinian delegation. Israel is branded as the chief obstacle to peace, and is pressured to negotiate with PLO representatives.

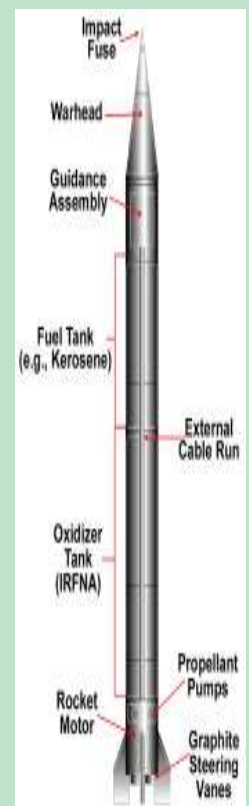
As the Labor party returns to power in Israel in 1992, Yitzhak Rabin becomes prime minister. He pushes secret negotiations with the PLO in Oslo, Norway in 1992-93. A Declaration of Principles ("Oslo I") signed at the White House ceremony, transfers control of Jericho and Gaza to PLO control.

Another Peace Treaty signed by Israel in 1994. This time it is with Jordan. The Gaza Strip and Jericho is formally turned over to the PLO. There seems to be plenty of honor all around as Yasser Arafat, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres receive Nobel Peace Prize.

An Interim Agreement ("Oslo II, 1995") is signed with the PLO which cedes Bethlehem, Hebron, and over 450 villages to Palestinian control. For his part in the land for peace process, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated. Shimon Peres succeeds him.

Benjamin Netanyahu wins his first national election for Prime Minister in 1996. The final status talks were to begin that would decide the fate of Jerusalem. Netanyahu did not last long on his first introduction to the office of Prime Minister. Ehud Barak was elected Prime Minister of Israel on May 17, 1999.

On September 28, 2000, Ariel Sharon made a visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the holiest place in Judaism to emphasize Israel's claim to sovereignty over the Temple Mount. Palestinians maintained that Sharon came with "thousands of Israeli soldiers" and defiled a Muslim holy place, when in fact, Israel's Internal Security Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami permitted Sharon to visit the Temple Mount only after calling Palestinian security chief Jabril Rajoub and receiving his assurance that if Sharon did not enter the mosques, no problems would arise. Sharon did not attempt to enter any mosques and his 34 minute visit was conducted during normal hours when the area is open to tourists. Palestinian youths — eventually numbering around 1,500 — shouted slogans in an attempt to inflame the situation. Some 1,500 Israeli police were present at the scene to forestall violence.





Following Sharon's Temple Mount visit, the Palestinians, under the direction of Yasser Arafat, launched an unprecedented wave of violence and terror against Israelis, dubbed the "al-Aksa Intifada" by the Palestinians for its association with the al-Aksa Mosque located on the Temple Mount. Palestinian leaders claim that Sharon's visit sparked the violence, but on November 7, 2000, an investigatory committee led by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell was established to determine the causes of the violence and to make recommendations for calming the situation. The Mitchell Report issued in April 30, 2001, concluded "the Sharon visit did not cause the "al-Aksa intifada."

In a special election held February 6, 2001, Ariel Sharon was elected Prime Minister. He presented his government to the Knesset on March 7, 2001. After calling early elections to the 16th Knesset, which were held on January 28, 2003, Ariel Sharon was charged by the president with the task of forming a government and presented his new government to the Knesset on February 27, 2003.

After several years of bloodshed, terror, and stalled peace talks with the Palestinians, Sharon devised a bold plan that would ensure a higher degree of security for Israelis, and improve the lives of Palestinians. While Palestinian terrorism against Israelis was at its peak, and going virtually unchecked by Arafat and other Palestinian leaders, Sharon decided that Israel should act unilaterally to improve its security situation and reduce bloodshed. This plan, known as the disengagement plan, called for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers in the Gaza Strip, as well as the dismantlement of all settlements in the area, including four settlements in northern Samaria. Between August 16 and August 30, 2005, Israel safely evacuated more than 8,500 Israeli settlers and, on September 11, 2005, Israeli soldiers left Gaza, ending Israel's 38-year presence in the area. Another attempt at land for peace.

The minister of finance, Benjamin Netanyahu, resigns on August 7, 2005 from the government in protest of the disengagement plan. On December 19th in the elections for the leadership of the Likud party Benjamin Netanyahu wins by 44%.

On January 4, 2006, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is hospitalized in Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem. Israel prays for his speedy recovery. Ehud Olmert fills his place. In the March 28th general elections, the Likud party wins 12 seats. Benjamin Netanyahu is head of the opposition. On July 12th, on the northern border, soldiers on reserve duty, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev are kidnapped and the cities of the north are destroyed by Hezbollah missiles. The Likud leadership supports the activities of the military and the objectives of the government. During the war against Hezbollah, Netanyahu sets out on an international awareness campaign. Following the February 10, 2009 parliamentary election, Netanyahu formed a coalition government.

On May 31, 2010 Israeli naval commandos stormed a flotilla of ships purportedly bring humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Ten people are killed. The Israeli troops were attacked with knives and metal pipes as they attempted to board one of the ships from a helicopter. The shooting started when one of the civilians made a grab for a soldier's gun. The organizers had ties to global jihad, al-Qaeda and Hamas. Israel had given pro-Palestinian activists the option of unloading their cargo at the Ashdod port, and offered to bring it to the Gaza Strip on their behalf. United States Vice President Joe Biden tells Charlie Rose that the Israel Navy might not have needed to drop commandos onto the Gaza-bound ship, but insists that Israel is entitled to defend its security.

May 19, 2011, a day before the arrival in Washington of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, President Barack Obama declared that the prevailing borders before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war should be the basis of a deal. This represented a significant shift in American policy. The Israeli government immediately protested, saying that for Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders would leave it "indefensible."

On July 28, 2011 the United States reaffirmed its opposition to Palestinian plans to sidestep negotiations with Israel and declare a state this fall at the United Nations. At the last open meeting of the UN Security Council prior to the Palestinians' expected unilateral declaration of independence (UDI), U.S. Deputy Permanent Representative Rosemary DiCarlo, pronounced that "symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September will not create an independent Palestinian state. The United States will not support unilateral campaigns at the United Nations in September or any other time."

The Elite Givati Brigade is training for possible conflict following Palestinian statehood bid. With the IDF's August 2011 draft in full swing, hundreds of new recruits began their journey on last week to earn the coveted purple beret of the prestigious Givati Infantry Brigade, which is preparing for potential turmoil in September resulting from the upcoming Palestinian statehood bid at the United Nations.

"The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah [and] against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."

Zechariah 12:1-13



A TRIBUTE TO CHARLIE "POOH"

By Dennis Baldwin

How does a mother or father; grandfather or grandmother; brother or sister find comfort after losing a precious child? I am so glad that Paul made it plain that hope in Christ in this life is ever so comforting. But, he said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable." Our hope is not limited to this life even though it is in Christ.

- And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. ²⁰ But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. 1 Cor 15:19-20 (NLT)

I think those Bible verses speak not only to those who believe in Christ but to all those who loose a loved one to the great enemy death. *The last enemy which will be destroyed is death.* I Corin. 15:26.

To be very honest, I cannot direct you to any one scripture that gives a specific assurance of salvation for anyone who does not believe in Christ. I, however feel sure that God in his infinite wisdom and mercy knows and has determined just exactly what he plans to do. But though some things are hard to be understood (2 Peter 3:16), there are verses which do appear to me to give insight into the question of babes and children and salvation.

- Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi. ¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: ¹⁸ "A VOICE WAS HEARD IN RAMAH, WEEPING AND GREAT MOURNING, RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN ; AND SHE REFUSED TO BE COMFORTED , BECAUSE THEY WERE NO MORE." Matt 2:16-18 (NASB)

Jeremiah's answer from the Lord gives comfort as it did in the days of Herod. Because of the Savior who was born and protected from the envy of Herod we can find the same comfort as was offered following the above verse:

- Thus says the LORD, "Restrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For your work will be rewarded," declares the LORD, "And they will return from the land of the enemy. ¹⁷ "There is hope for your future," declares the LORD, "And *your* children will return to their own territory. Jer 31:16-17 (NASB)

While this prophecy does have prophetic implications regarding the nation of Israel, it also has implications with reference to the bringing of our children back to their own territory from the land of the enemy (*death*). Rachel refused to be comforted. Finding comfort in this type of circumstance is difficult to come by. The level of sorrow seems to be much like the incident with David in Ziklag and the Amalekites.

- When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive.⁴ Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until *there was no strength in them to weep*. 1 Sam 30:3-4 (NASB)

THE GOD OF THE BAD TIMES

When things happen to our family, which we feel our duty to protect and defend, there is a sense of sorrow unlike any other I should think. We want to blame ourselves. What could we have done that we did not do? How could God have allowed this to come about? Please do not forget the words of Job after having suffered all the losses which he suffered: losses of family members, personal property, and the boils upon himself. Even after all that he said:

- “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him. Job 13:15 (NASB) The NLT says, (*God might kill me, but I have no other hope*).

How many of use trust God enough to say that? If God were going to kill us could we still find it in ourselves to trust in him? Even though Jesus suffered and asked his Father to let the cup of suffering pass from him: even though he cried “*Why hast thou forsaken me*”? (Mat. 27:46) in spite of all this he continued to follow the path laid out for him to tread. It was not an easy path; it was even the most difficult of paths; but he walked it nonetheless. He realized that “*The God of the mountains; is still God in the valley. When things go wrong, he’ll make them right. The God of the good times; is still God in the bad times. The God of the day; is still God in the night.*” (A song made popular by the McKameys.) A song taken from the following verses:

- Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, “Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we; but rather let us fight against them in the plain, *and surely we will be stronger than they*. 1 Kings 20:23 (NASB)

When Jesus said to Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again”; her reply was “I know that; he will live again in the resurrection at the last day.” What Jesus wanted her to do was to realize that he is the resurrection and the life. As we put our trust in him we can find comfort in the midst of sorrow. Comfort sometimes is so illusive until we can decide that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

- Jesus said* to her, “Your brother will rise again.” **24** Martha said* to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” **25** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” John 11:23-26 (NASB)

A GEM OF COMFORT FOUND IN ISAIAH

- Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. **8** The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. **9** They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:7-9 (NASB)

The nursing child is the child who has yet to be weaned. In the day when the cow and bear will graze together; the lion will eat straw; when they will not hurt or destroy; when the earth will be filled not only with the glory of the Lord but also with the *knowledge* of the glory of God; the unweaned (*the sucking*) child will play by the hole of the cobra. It seems apparent to me that there will be small children even babies in the kingdom of God. Malachi said:

- “But for you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in his wings. And you will go free, (*the KJV says grow up*) leaping with joy like calves let out to pasture. Mal 4:2 (NLT)

In essence we all are and will in some sense be like little children. Compared to the age we will attain in God's great tomorrow, we appear as but a baby. *With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.* 2 Peter 3:8 (NASB) We will all have some growing to do and will have all of eternity in which to grow, ever surround by and filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

WE ARE ALL CHILDREN

I particularly like the firm stand that Moses took when confronted by Pharaoh, who wanted only the adults to leave Egypt and leave the children behind. It speaks of the connection parents develop with their children. This speaks of just how important our children are to us. To the mother who carries the baby for nine months; to the father who anticipates the new life becoming a part of his family; to the grandparents who see their life being replicated by their progeny. Pharaoh was not a little concerned that the “little ones” should stay behind and let the others go; but not so with Moses. “We shall go with our young and our old.”

- So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh, and he said to them, “Go, serve the Lord your God! Who are the ones that are going?” **9** Moses said, “We shall go with our young and our old; with our sons and our daughters, with our flocks and our herds we shall go, for we must hold a feast to the Lord.” **10** Then he said to them, “Thus may the Lord be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Take heed, for evil is in your mind. **11** ”Not so! Go now, the men *among you*, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desire.” So they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence. Ex 10:8-11 (NASB)

The most compelling of all is the things said about children and the way both Moses and Jesus elevated the sanctity of the lives of our children:

- Then *some* children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. **14** But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." **15** After laying His hands on them, He departed from there. Matt 19:13-15 (NASB)

"The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Alas, we must be converted and become as little children.

- Unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. **4** "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. **5** "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; Matt 18:3-5 (NASB)

Losing a child ranks high in the life events that cause the most damage to our heart. Hopefully, in time the pain will be replaced with hope and a grand anticipation of what the future holds; *when creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God; Romans 8:21 (NASB) when all of God's children will go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.* (Malachi 4:2)

David was right on target when he said:

- Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. **4** Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. **5** How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; Psalms 127:3-5 (NASB)

Written by Dennis J Baldwin; touched by the love of a grandfather who lost his grandson to the enemy death when he was only eight months. A tribute to this family's love for little Charlie "Pooh". The rest of the story from Granddad:

"Our family recently lost our eight month old grandson, Charlie. He was what appeared to be a perfectly healthy little boy, full of joy. Our grandson was put down for a nap and when he was checked on later, Charlie had quit breathing. As you can imagine we all are devastated. Right now we feel robbed. We don't believe he is in a better place like some try to tell us. But there is still some questions about the resurrection status of someone as young as Charlie.

We know that so often we just have to trust a loving God with the unanswered. But as you can probably understand our faith has been shaken to its core with the death of our Charlie "Pooh". We prayed for Charlie daily, his Dad and Mom prayed often, "Dear God grow Charlie up big and strong and a man after your own heart". Our faith struggles much right now. It is hard for us to encourage each other as we are all broken. As with many families, Charlie's parents both worked and so he spent his days at grandma and grandpa's house. So, Charlie Pooh was more than a grandson, he was the focus of our days.

His parents selected a cemetery on a rolling hill and Charlie is in an area designated as "Babyland". Down in the valley below is the Veteran' cemetery where grandpa and grandma will be buried when our time comes. I can imagine when that last trumpet blows and the dead in Christ rise, I can look up the hill and wave to Charlie and yell, "Hey Pooh this is what we been waiting for". May God speed that day when the Lord Jesus will come. We would all greatly appreciate any insight you have gleaned from scripture about children like Charlie."

Growing Old Isn't For Sissies

By Rex Cain



**RETIREMENT CELEBRATION AT GENERAL CONFERENCE:
Three retiring pastors and their wives were honored at the
Church of God General Conference in Omaha, NE. (L to R)
Sharon Cain, Pastor Rex Cain, Pastor Scott Ross, Gayle
Ross, Pastor Dale Ramsey. Unable to attend Connie Ramsey.**

Trying to decide what I might speak on these last 3 Sundays before I retire hasn't been easy. Speaking last Sunday about the unexpected return of Christ - and us, His Bride, being prepared, alert and always watching seemed like an appropriate topic – not only for this time but at anytime! When would it ever be wrong to teach and preach about our Savior's soon return and being spiritually ready for the momentous event?

But today's subject that I've selected might make you scratch your head. I can hear you saying, "Why would Rex choose this morose topic for his next to last official sermon at Bedford?"

Well, I guess it's because I'm about to retire. If you're normal, retirement means you're getting up in years and so you begin to think very seriously about the brevity of life.

I guess I decided it wouldn't hurt for all of us to have a reality check about life – even the very young. In fact, Solomon writes in Ecc. 12 (my text for today) in order to address the young and urge them to get their priorities straight early in life. Even though Solomon takes us through the aging process, its intent is to help the young discover true reality and make good solid decisions early in

life. It seemed right to me since I'm retiring and am on Social Security ... and I want the young to not be in ignorance about life and its conclusion.

When I prepared my S.S. lesson for 2 weeks ago, I came across the following verse in the Message paraphrase and it got me to thinking about old age (old - which is what I am) and the fact that I'm retiring. Life certainly passes quickly, especially when you're at the end looking back down the road. It looks much longer when you're at the beginning trying to see the end? Most don't try. Youth rarely thinks about things I'm now required to think about as all the rest of us who might be called senior citizens.

At any rate, the verse reads from the paraphrase: When my skin sags and my bones get brittle, God is rock-firm and faithful. (Ps. 73:26 Msg) How I rejoice in that truth as I'm about to retire and as my bones complain a lot more than when I was 25!

Did you know there's a chapter in the Bible that talks about old age?

Some of us here don't need this chapter since we're still young and chipper, but thought I'd look quickly at a few verses so we can know what to expect when we DO get old!

It's found in the OT book of Ecclesiastes, chapter 12 – written, remember, by the wisest man who ever lived, Solomon. Solomon wrote Proverbs, Ecc., Song of Solomon – but when it comes to covering the human dilemma, it's hard to beat Ecc. In this short 12-chapter book he covers a multitudes of topics from money: "He who loves money will not be satisfied with money" (5:10) to death, "For there is no work, thought or knowledge or wisdom in the grave to which you are going." (9:10)

He begins chapter 12 by saying... (Eccl 12:1 NIV) Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"—

Anybody here ever complain about finding no pleasure in old age? Solomon said those days would come. Our world has tried to brighten the truth by calling them our Golden Years. But I've heard many say it's more like pewter years! (Young people may not know what pewter is.) So right off, Solomon urges youth to get their priorities straight at the beginning of the road of life!

I believe Solomon is warning young people that before your bones get brittle and arthritis sets in and your energy level falls, serve the Lord now in the vigor, vitality and the energy of your youth!

All of us can remember when we were young and could run and play all day, stay up all night, and still keep going the next day. But the old body now says "no, no, no" to that behavior as the years roll on.

Thus, Solomon is telling youth – if you're going to serve the Lord, the best years to do this is while you're still young and full of energy. I'm very grateful that there are still young people who love the Lord and are serving him very effectively in their young ages.

We currently have a program in our Church of God youth called The Up Project wherein youth serve for one full week somewhere in the U.S. ... although now they're talking about overseas. Just this past week, Dan Cain worked with a group of youth in Omaha NE and Council Bluffs IO (two cities on each side of the Missouri River) sandbagging the Missouri River against the coming flood. They were on TV news and interviewed this week. Dan sent many people the link to watch it.

But, they're doing things older folks can't do and in the process securing more tightly their spiritual experiences and spiritual life by fellowshiping with other believers and learning servant hood ethics that will repay them many times over in life. Many of these young people make these lifelong contacts at our state and national camps. If anyone would like to join the Up Project group for next year, just see me and I'll give you all the details. One of the 3 leaders that you might know is Julie Driskill who married a son of Leon Driskill, one of our late pastors who once pastored at Brushcreek. She now runs our Higher Ground campgrounds in St. Paris Ohio.

You've heard the saying, "Getting old isn't for sissies." Yes, you have to be tough to handle old age, but serving the Lord requires long-term energy, which is reserved primarily for young people.

Solomon gives us a sober reminder that a day will come when we'll say I find no pleasure in them ... i.e., our days will become more difficult as we age. I think most of us know what Solomon is talking about.

Just a little humor: YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLD when almost everything hurts. What doesn't hurt doesn't work anymore. It feels like the morning after the night before, and you haven't been anywhere. You get winded playing chess. You look forward to a dull evening. Your knees buckle but your belt won't. You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there. You try to straighten out the wrinkles in your socks and discover you aren't wearing any!"

This probably doesn't help our attitude about old age, does it? We do have to adjust to being called G'ma or G'pa. Or, when we begin to get mail from AARP urging us to join. Or when the restaurant clerk says, "Do you want a senior discount?" Or, we get a phone call trying to persuade us to purchase their pre-plan funeral arrangements!

Solomon wisely suggests that youth serve the Lord while they're churning with energy. That's not to say older folks can't serve the Lord, but the heavy-duty work is mostly for those who have the strength. However, prayer warriors are effective anytime in life! I'm very grateful to have many older people praying for me!

(Eccl 12:2 NIV) before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain;

In a word, Solomon is telling youth – before the clouds of old age appear on the horizon – give your best years to God! Solomon pictures old age as a slowly gathering storm.

We see in this chapter that at v. 2 Solomon begins using figurative language for our weakening body parts. It's a most unusual passage that many don't realize is in the Bible. But it's one that any older person can truly relate to.

(Eccl 12:3 NIV) when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim;

Here the author compares old age to a house. The keepers are the head, hands, arms and legs. He says they will one day tremble. He uses the word, stoop, meaning some bend over as the years come on. He speaks of grinders obviously referring to our teeth ... many of which we may have lost – he says, they are few. And he speaks of windows growing dim – that's obviously our eyes – they ain't what they used to be! Some folks about this time in life just throw up their hands and declare, "Everything is falling apart!" I realize none of us here can relate to this chapter, but we must listen for our own good. J

(Eccl 12:4 NIV) when the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades; when men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint;

The word "doors" in Hebrew is dual suggesting two doors or double doors. He obviously is talking about our ears that have grown hard of hearing. We just don't hear as well as when we were 20! The sound of grinding is no doubt referring to toothless chewing. We probably don't have as many teeth as we did at 16. And rising at the sound of the bird no doubt refers to insomnia – we can't sleep at nights. The slightest noises wakes us up and then we can't get back to sleep!

As I said earlier, growing old isn't for sissies!

(Eccl 12:5 NIV) when men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets.

This sadly is a continuation of our various body parts that are deteriorating. "Afraid of that which is high" no doubt refers to shortness of breath. We don't like climbing steps or going up steep inclines.

It takes too much energy and we're panting heavily by the time we reach the top ... if we reach the top. J

On vacation a couple years ago in the Blue Ridge mountains we were climbing a very high rock to a lookout. I tried hard but had to quit and sit down about three quarters of the way up. Sharon went on up and met me on her way down. When I was 16 I would have gone straight up the rock and skipped using the steps!

The phrase, "fears in the way" probably is referring to not wanting to contend with walking on uneven ground where there are dips and holes and the fear of twisting or breaking one's ankle. We're simply not as sure footed as we used to be.

The almond tree probably refers to gray hair ("I hear ya Solomon!"). Although the blossoms on the almond tree are actually pinkish, when seen from a distance and the wind is blowing the leaves, the tree in full blossom takes on a snowy white appearance. Gray hair. It's obvious, isn't it, that Solomon is picturing the decline of health and vigor – something I suspect many of us can comprehend quite clearly!

Solomon really knows how to hurt a fella, doesn't he?

The illustration of the "grasshopper" is best translated "shall drag itself along" (as the NIV has already done) is a graphic image of a person who shuffles along having lost their nimbleness and flexibility to bounce along through life.

The phrase "desire shall fail" is explicit and bold. The phrase in the original literally means, "the carper berry shall fail." This berry was an aphrodisiac that stimulated physical appetite. This appetite will wane as the years roll along. Solomon is not leaving out any aspect of old age! His words are painful probably because they're very true. But he has a reason for making us feel miserable. He's getting to that in a few more words.

(Eccl 12:6 NIV) Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well,

This figure represents an expensive gold-and-silver lamp hung from the ceiling. Its chain is snapped so that it comes crashing down to the floor. The oil spills out of the "broken bowl" and the "light" is gone. Of course, light is a symbol of life. The "pitcher" and "wheel" continues the same idea but taken from the symbolism of drawing water up from a deep well.

So, he's saying, the "pitcher" is broken so that it can contain no more water, that is, any more life. The "broken wheel" at the cistern is broken and can no longer draw up the water of life.

The body, Solomon warns, is coming close to the end. He is talking about life slowly draining from us. We've all probably dropped a bucket in a sister or used a pulley to draw water from a well. Solomon's picture here is of the broken wheel that no longer works – thus cannot bring life giving water. It's a moot testimony that the former days of our lives are not what they used to be.

(Eccl 12:7 NIV) and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Solomon gets painfully clear here. The dust refers of course to our bodies and its returning to the ground refers, sadly, to death.

At creation we read that "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath (ruach) of life and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7) So, man was a dead soul before he received breath and he's a dead soul when breath leaves him. The same word is used by Job in 34:14 when he writes, "If God should take back his spirit (ruach/wind/oxygen/spirit/breath) to himself, and gather to himself his breath (ruach), all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust." Obviously, the body (soul) and breath (spirit) are two different things but need one another to form a living soul (or person or being). Thus, Solomon is declaring that at death the body returns to dust and the spirit (breath/oxygen) goes back to God in the sense our breath returns to the atmosphere, which is God's. God gave us breath/air, and at the end, it returns to God.

In the few verses we're read – we see he goes from youth to old age describing bit-by-bit how our body weakens, becomes feeble and finally leads to the “broken bowl” - “sleep” – hopefully, in the loving arms of Jesus.

(Eccl 12:8 NIV) “Meaningless! Meaningless!” says the Teacher. “Everything is meaningless!”

(Eccl 12:9 NIV) Not only was the Teacher wise, but also he imparted knowledge to the people. He pondered and searched out and set in order many proverbs.

(Eccl 12:10 NIV) The Teacher searched to find just the right words, and what he wrote was upright and true.

(Eccl 12:11 NIV) The words of the wise are like goads, their collected sayings like firmly embedded nails—given by one Shepherd.

(Eccl 12:12 NIV) Be warned, my son, of anything in addition to them. Of making many books there is no end, and much study wears the body.

Let's skip a few verses where he repeats his refrain in different words (common in Jewish writings). I will mention verse 11 where he speaks of his words as “goads” and “nails.” It's a way of saying; you can stake your life on these words I've spoken! You can live and die with these truths I've given you.

It's hard truth. As we grow older we can appreciate more and more what he's saying. Old age is not for sissies.

(Eccl 12:13 NIV) Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. (Eccl 12:14 NIV) For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

After 12 chapters of dealing with the “vanity of life” and the “brevity” of life from every imaginable angle, he finally concludes “fear God ... keep his commandments ... this is the whole duty of man.”

Life is short. To beat death requires wisdom. God has shown us how to overcome the “broken bowl.”

Solomon's great inquiry - the wisest man who ever lived ... the question which he pursues throughout all of Ecclesiastes is found in 2:3, “I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.”

Solomon declares that knowing what lies before feeble mortal man, the conclusion should be: fear God and keep his commandments. This is the wisest thing anyone can do! We know we don't have immortality, so he's saying, get ready for eternal life by obeying God now while you can. That still includes all of us here! None of us is too old to be obedient to God's teachings! “Today is the beginning of the rest of your life” so begin to be faithful to God if you haven't already.

If we are wise, as Solomon begs us to be, even in death there is hope. One of our lady pastors put a line on our pastor's list this week that has been commented upon by many other pastors. She wrote: “Just think – with a peaceful grave-nap, we're just resting up so we are ready to party and worship in God's Kingdom.” (Merry Peterson, 7-12-11)

This hope following our “grave-nap” of a glorious resurrection helps us endure old age and our frailties that Solomon so graphically pointed out to us. Thinking on them is painful but sadly Solomon had it right.

And all that truth led the wisest man who ever lived to this conclusion at the end of his book of listing the vanities of life – a very logical one – Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

IT BEGAN AND BEGINS WITH KINGDOM PREACHING

By: Richard Eldred



Consider an airplane pilot coming on the intercom and announcing to his passengers the following information: “Ladies and gentlemen, we have plenty of fuel, the weather is great, we are making good time. The problem is, we are lost in the fog and we have no idea where we are going.”

Today, many in the world are lost in a ‘religious fog’. Some would tell you that all religions are valid. You have your belief; I have mine. If you want to follow Buddhism, Islam or Hinduism it is your choice. They all believe in a god. They all have their good points, it is your choice. A number of years ago I heard Hillary Clinton make the statement,

“Bill and I don’t just celebrate Christmas, we observe Ramadan and Hanukkah too.” That is not just ‘religious fog’, that is D-U-M - STUPID. Evidently, according to Hillary, they are all credible religions worthy of honor. Lost in the fog!

Even within the Christian religion, those who believe Jesus Christ is the only way to eternal life, many have a foggy view of what the future holds. The return of Jesus the Christ to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth is our “*blessed hope*” (Titus 2:13). Yet some Church leaders and teachers never mention it. I had a conversation with a priest about the return of Christ. I said, “Don’t you teach the return of Christ?” He said, “It could be thousands of years.” It wasn’t even a remote part of his thinking, he was oblivious to the fact that Christ is coming to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords as He establishes God’s Kingdom on earth.

Let me give you another example of twisted foggy thinking: A few years ago while hauling steel I was making a delivery. I got to talking with a young man about the return of Christ (Every door that comes open, I stick my foot in). He believed in Christ and seemed to be quite sincere. He openly disputed the return of Christ to earth. I quoted from Acts chapter one that, “*Jesus was taken up into the clouds, but would come again just as the men had seen Him go into heaven.*” He said, “He is only coming back as far as the clouds, he is not coming all the way to earth.” Again I quoted Scripture, “*When His feet stand on the Mount of Olives it will split in the middle from east to west*” (Zech 14:4). He said, “I will bring you a verse to prove he is not coming to earth.” The next time I saw him he had a verse from the King James Bible, “*...thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption*” (Acts 2:27, emphasis mine). He said, “The world is corrupt and he can not come back to a corrupt world.” I said, “That simply means that he would not stay in the grave and decay.” He discounted my firm stand on Scripture for his own distorted ‘foggy’ explanation of the word ‘corruption’.

Like the young man I just spoke of, I was raised in the fog. Not in the religious group that he is involved in, but I never heard a word as a youngster in Church about the coming Kingdom of God. It wasn’t until I began to date my wife Carol and attend the Church of God in Blanchard that I heard about the King and His coming Kingdom. I sucked it up like a sponge in a pail of water. What a simple, logical, beautiful and understandable truth. It is so evident that the central theme of the Scriptures is about a King and His Kingdom. Since learning

this and falling in love with the true message of Scripture, I now tell people from traditional teachings to 'QUESTION EVERYTHING WITH BOLDNESS'. If they will come with an open mind, not defending what they have been taught, but seek the truth, God will lift the fog and remove the blinders. We must be seekers of the truth, not defenders of tradition.

One of the greatest joys of my ministry is my good friend and brother in Christ Barth Gorby. When I met him he was a back-sliden Baptist. He hadn't been in church since he was a teenager. I talked with him about the resurrection of believers and the coming Kingdom of God on the earth. He went home to get his Bible out, that he hadn't looked at for years, to prove me wrong. I gave him some verses to look up also. The good thing was, he was seeking to know the truth. He didn't have the religious blinders on that so as many others do. He looked at the verses I had given him and God opened his spiritual eyes and he began to see. He came back and said, "I think you are right." I continued a Bible study in his home with his family and he, like me years before, sucked it up like a sponge. I sit here nearly weeping as I think about it.

If you start with the Kingdom message all other doctrines fall much easier into place. The Kingdom is a common sense message that is easy to understand if you are willing to look with an open mind. The true gospel is the good news of the Kingdom of God. It began and begins with the kingdom .

I want to give you a brief look at some Old and New Testament verses that cannot be ignored:

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES OF A KING AND HIS KINGDOM

More is written in the Old Testament about Christ's second coming as King than is written about His first coming. Listen carefully to these Old Testament Scriptures:

God made a promise to King David: *"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, (When you go to the grave, David) I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, (referring to Jesus) and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build a house for My name..... and I will establish the throne of his Kingdom forever" (2 Samuel 7:12-16).* How do we know that this is referring to Jesus?

Listen carefully to what the angel Gabriel said to Mary the mother of Jesus. *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God and behold you will conceive in your womb, and bear a Son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His Kingdom will have no end**" (Luke 1:30-33, emphasis mine).*

Isaiah speaks of a King also who would rule eternally: *"A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders....There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over His Kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore" (Isa. (9:6-7).* The Child born to us, never had a kingdom, they hung Him on a cross. When He comes again he will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The government will literally rest upon His shoulders.

The Psalmist also writes of a King who would one day rule the nations with a rod of iron:

"But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My Holy Mountain. I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord; He said to Me, Thou art My Son, today I have be gotten Thee. Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as Thine inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Thy possession. Thou shall break them with a rod of iron..." (Psalms 2:6-8)

Daniel writes about a Kingdom that will never end: The statute that Nebuchadnezzar saw in Daniel Chapter two represents various governments of the world beginning with the Babylonian empire and culminates with ten nations represented by the ten toes. *“... a stone was cut out without hands, and struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed **all at the same time**, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (Dan.2:34-35). That is an allegory of Jesus Christ (the stone cut out without hands) putting an end to man’s attempt to govern the earth. Now it gets even more exciting! *“...in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that Kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever”* (Dan. 2:44).

Micah’s prophecy speaks of the one born in Bethlehem being a ruler in Israel: *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be a ruler in Israel”* (5:2). *“.....**He will be great**”* (Isn’t that what Gabriel told Mary?) *“...to the ends of the earth, and this one will be our peace when the Assyrian invades our land”* (Micah 5:2-5a). I believe a conspiracy of nations, mainly Arab nations, will one day soon invade the land of Israel. The one born in Bethlehem will be ruler and He will be their peace.

THE NEW TESTAMENT VALIDATES THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES

Isaiah prophesied that a virgin would bear a Son (Isa. 7:14). Luke, inspired by God, wrote both the gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles. His writings proclaim from beginning to end the message of the Kingdom of God, and that Jesus is the Christ - the anointed King.

Luke began the gospel of Luke announcing the virgin birth of King Jesus: Luke wrote (as I stated earlier) that the angel Gabriel came to Mary and revealed to her that she would fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy. *“Do not be afraid Mary for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son and you shall name Him Jesus...and that He would reign over the house of Jacob and **His kingdom would have no end**”* (Luke 1:30-33). *“Mary said to the angel, ‘how can this be since **I am still a virgin?**’ And the angel answered her, ‘the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the Holy Offspring shall be called the Son of God’ “* (Luke 1:34-35, emphasis mine). The sinless son of the living God will one day be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Jesus began His ministry proclaiming the Gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God: *“But He (Jesus) said to them, ‘I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, **for I was sent for this purpose**’ “* (Luke 4:43, emphasis mine). He was commissioned by God to teach the message of the ‘Kingdom of God’.

The disciples were exposed to His message: *“...He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the Kingdom of God; **and the twelve were with Him**”* (Luke 8:1, emphasis mine). He modeled for them what He intended for them to continue to preach. It begins and ends with the Kingdom of God.

He commissioned them to preach the Kingdom Message: *“...He sent them out (the disciples) **to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to perform healing**”* (Luke 9:2). As Jesus sent them out they were to continue preaching the message they had learned from Him. In the gospel of Luke he mentions the Kingdom no less than forty-three times. For Luke it begins and ends with the Kingdom of God.

Jesus’ last minute instructions: After His crucifixion and resurrection Jesus gathered His disciples together for more instructions. It wasn’t really last minute instructions, He taught them for over a month. Luke says, “

... He presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of **forty days** and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Their response was, "Is this the time you are restoring the Kingdom to Israel?" (v. 6). No doubt Jesus said something like this: "Guys, I want you to get it right. You must carry on My instructions about the Kingdom. Wait in the city until I empower you to spread this message. The people must not lose heart. I don't know the day or the hour, but I will return when the Father tells me, and I will be seated on David's throne. I will restore the Kingdom to Israel and bring peace to the nations. I must reign until I have put all God's enemies under My feet, then the Son Himself will be subjected to the Father, so that He may be all in all. Only then can My Father come and be among men. "I SHALL RETURN."



Luke goes on in the book of Acts to show that the disciples got the message and passed it on to others. When persecution hit the city of Jerusalem, "Phillip went to Samaria and began preaching Christ to them" (2:5). "When they believed Phillip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus they were being baptized men and women alike" (v. 12).

Peter preached Christ this way: "...that He may send Jesus the Christ (MESSIAH) appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:20-21). That's Kingdom preaching if I ever heard it. It began and begins with the Kingdom .

The Apostle Paul, when the fog lifted (actually scales were lifted from his eyes), "began to prove that Jesus was the Son of God" (Acts 9:29), and that He is the Christ (Messiah)." (Acts 17:3). As Luke writes his final chapter in Acts he again speaks of Paul and his message to the people. "They came to him (Paul) at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning unto evening" (28:23).

I can't help but think that as Paul opened the scrolls to preach Christ and His Kingdom, that he may have shared many of the verses that we have just looked at from the writings of the prophets. It began and begins with the message of the Kingdom.

It is amazing to me that the Jewish people can read these Old Testament Scriptures and not believe that Jesus is their long awaited Messiah. His return is their blessed hope as well as it is for the Christian. Someday the Jewish people will "look upon Him whom they crucified and they will mourn" (Zech 13:10).

It amazes me also that many who believe in Jesus don't understand that His Kingdom will be here on the earth. Dear Pastors and Bible teachers, start where Jesus and the disciples started. We as teachers cannot improve on their method. It began and begins with the Kingdom of God. The Bible began with a paradise created by God, it ends with a paradise restored by Jesus and YOU. That is the Kingdom message.

“DYNAMIC CHRISTIANITY”

By Kent Ross

Life Need:

The Christian life ought to be one of wonder, excitement and expectation! Unfortunately many Christians, according to George Barna, describe it as the most boring hour of the week. That's not just too bad, it's a shame and it's a tragedy.

That's not what it was when the church first got started. The experience found and described in Acts 2:36-41 certainly belies that. On that day were they filled with wonder, excitement, expectation?

Why? Because God had sent His Holy Spirit through His Son to be the help that little band of 120 needed. Suddenly they had to deal with exponential growth. Just think of the what was entailed in baptizing 3000 people! If all 120 of the original group were involved in baptizing, each one would have had to baptize 25! Where were the baptisms held? When? How did they schedule them? By families, or geographical areas of the city? Somehow they seemed to have worked out those details, but what an experience!

Do you think they were filled with wonder? Did they get excited as seeing God working in their midst? Read Acts 2:42-47.

Then what? What did they expect? Did they know, or suspect what was going to happen next? God was just getting started. God started adding to their number daily (Acts 2:47). God started adding to their number and soon there were 5,000 men (4:4). And then “more and more people were added to their number” (5:14).

Can it be that way again? “Come on,” some would say. “That couldn't happen again! . . . Could it?” Many, even most scoff because their experience is substantially different. They may never have seen more than 3, or 4 come to Christ in any one incident. But could it? Why not? Has God weakened and can no longer do something like He did back then?

That early church, those who had just experienced that miracle on Pentecost, then devoted themselves to Four Elements:

1. **Apostles doctrine, or teaching** – that was fundamental to the new church. Some of the original 120 had been with Jesus and had heard Him teach, but now the 3,000 new believers had some to learn. They may have been clear on who God is, that He is One and He alone is God. That was the typical Jewish belief, but there was so much more they needed to learn, starting with who Jesus was in God's Plan, the establishing of God's Kingdom, not a human kingdom, but God's Kingdom!
2. **Fellowship.** They also devoted themselves to learn who and what the Family of God now meant. They had to introduce themselves, probably tell their stories to one another, introduce their families. Fellowship has so much to it, but we'll save that for another time.
3. **Breaking of Bread.** To some this implies the Bread Jesus spoke of at the Last Supper they had had together in that upper room. It's significance went far beyond what they had previously experienced in their Passover celebration. Now they were learning how it all fit together; how Jesus was the Lamb of God.

But additionally it may also mean eating meals together in their homes, like a potluck meal, and we've done pretty well at that, but not so much in our homes. We prefer it at our church buildings.

4. **Prayer.** For them prayer was much more than the boring recitation of learning prayers. They were talking to their Lord who had shown His power in an amazing way. That didn't end with that first experience. Later in Acts (4:31), they once again saw the tremendous, immense power of God when the prayer to Him resulted in the building being shaken.

The results included: 1) People were filled with awe as they saw God at work; 2) They were together and had things in common; 3) Every day they met together in the temple courts, in their homes, breaking bread; and 4) People praised them for seeing what God was doing in them.

Then, then . . . “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” That was their experience with God back then.

Can it happen again? The answer is “Yes” and “No.” Growing, exciting, dynamic churches seem dependent on 3 conditions:

1. Is God now limiting His Holy Spirit's operation in and through Christ? **NO!**
2. Does your ministerial team want the church to grow and are they willing to pay the price? **PROBABLY 'YES'**
3. Does your church want to grow and are they willing to pay the price? **HMMMM**

Ask yourself the following four questions. They're simple questions, but the answers are complex indeed. In fact, in these four questions are the reasons why your church is either growing, or is not growing. Some might argue on this, They say, “Wait a minute. Where two or three are together, the Lord is with them, isn't he?” Yes, of course, but God doesn't want us to remain that way.

God is not willing for any to perish. Some of Jesus' last words to us were to go and make disciples of all nations, to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. God wants His lost children found, and His Plan to allow us to participate with Him. A church that grows and grows and grows. That continues to reach out to new people and allow God to add them into His family, even daily!

1. Wouldn't we like a church just like that? **YES**
2. Can God still do it? **YES**
3. Is He still willing to do it? **YES**
4. What would it take? ? ? That takes us back to those three conditions: God and now His Son, Church Leadership, and the Church's Membership.

My personal experiences convince me it can happen again. No, I never saw 3,000 people come to faith in one day, and subsequently grow to 5,000, and go on from there. No, I wasn't then, as I'm not now, a “super-pastor.” In fact, some would describe me as a stumblebum, but I have been privileged to see what can happen when we let God be God.

In my first church in Moorefield, I remember stepping into the church that first morning before Sunday School. Two greeted me with surprised expressions, and one finally said, “Who are you?”

I said, “I'm the new pastor. Pastor Ross.”



Immediately the retort came back in a gruff manner, "I didn't know we had a pastor coming!"

Admittedly, not a propitious beginning, but they came to know me and we worked together. They hadn't had a pastor in years, so we learned to work together, sort of. The church which was running about 15 in Sunday School, and they at that time did not have regular church services did grow up to, on occasion, 35-40, and two great young people made their decision to join the Family of God. No, it wasn't three thousand, etc., but it was two that decided to become part of His family.

At our next, the church grew some, not a lot, but still some, but we had many baptisms. Some were from the church families, some were young people that some of our young people brought in to church. One called me on a Friday or Saturday, and said, "Bro. Ross, are you going to give the invitation Sunday?"

I don't know that I had intended to before then, but as of that moment I was sure I would, so I said, "Yes, I believe so."

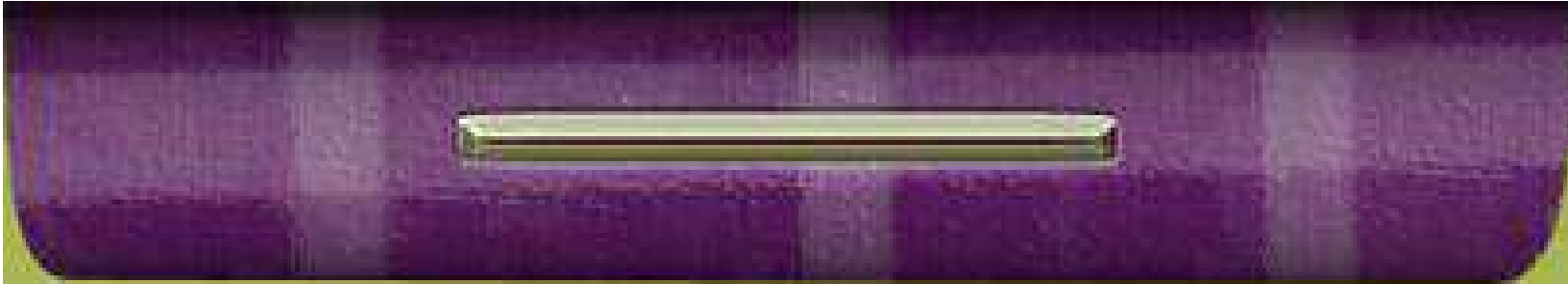
Her rejoinder was "Oh, good. 'cause I'm pretty sure that J. will come forward to accept Christ. I've been talking to her." And, yes, J. did come forward to accept Christ that morning. One night, back when we had evening services, I somehow was led of God to offer an invitation to the smaller group that night and a man and his son, surprised all of us, and both came to Christ and subsequently were baptized in to Him.

Another young married woman, who had started attending, said to me, "I've been baptized before. Do you think I need to be baptized again?" I felt, in her case, it would be best, but I said to her, "Well, M., why don't you continue coming and listen to the message, and then decide." Two or three weeks later, she made her decision, came forward, and was baptized in to the Family of God. It was a case of the people wanting the church to grow, and some were willing to pay the price. But not all of them were. They discovered the price was too high. So often that is the case as some people feel like they're losing control of their church, and therein is the problem. It's not their church. It's the Lord's, but they would rather keep control of it as it is, than to release it into the Lord's hands and let Him bless as He chooses.

In 1969 Cheryl and I moved to our third church up in Michigan. As a Pastor I had wanted the church to grow, wherever we were, and I was willing to pay the price, but like most young pastors, I was woefully ignorant of what the price included, and what the real cost would be.

This church and its people, for they are Christ's church, wanted their church to grow and together with Cheryl and I, they saw wonderful blessings from the Lord.

The year before we arrived the Sunday School there had averaged about 115 and their church service about 85. The church grew me as a pastor, taught me how to be a pastor, nurtured me as a pastor, and together we saw God do some wonderful things. Though our church seated 140, as the years went along we grew and grew. As the years went along we found we were averaging 180 people coming each week. We had to open the balcony, run a full Junior church.



Baptisms occurred regularly as God was adding to the Lord's church. I'm not sure how many people came to faith, but it was a lot of them. Faithful members would walk forward with people they had led to the Lord that week. Young people from the high school across the street would come into my office and talk about the Lord and what He was doing. And it was not me! Be assured. This was a case of a people who wanted their church to grow, were willing to pay the price and Cheryl and I were allowed to be a part of what God was doing. It was exciting.

The church, the people, that's the church, wanted His church to grow and were willing to pay the price. But again some worked against expansion though we were running 40 more than our real capacity. Some took it upon themselves to call on new attenders and "pooh-pooh" the growth and assure them, the new attenders, that likely this excitement would pass and the church would shrink back down.

That's also what happened in the New Testament church. The growth and expansion started out as exponential growth because the leaders and the members of the Body of Christ were allowing the Lord to work in and through them, as the LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY.

It didn't last back then, and too often it doesn't last today. It isn't that God's arm is shortened. It isn't that He has ceased to want His lost people found. That is always been and remains His desire. He so loved us all that He even gave us His only Begotten Son to die.

No, I've never seen another Pentecost, though I've always believed it could happen. I've seen wonderful things, enough to keep me excited about what can still be. I've seen a few times when I knew He was working. Times when 50 or 60 people came forward for salvation. I'm not sure how many there were as one was my son, Seth. I've seen a church that didn't "know" if it could grow, go from 85 to 159 in three weeks, from some 110 to 349 in a few short months. I've seen God's people begin to reach out in faith and lead people to decisions for Christ, and then work to help them grow up in Christ. I've had a man call me on Thursday and say he really wanted to seal his decision for Christ with baptism, and when I told him we could plan to do it the next Sunday, he said "No," he meant that afternoon. I went to the home of a new Christian, a fireman, to baptize two of his friends that he had led to the Lord. We did it in his pool there at home.

Maybe Pentecost won't happen again, but maybe it will. All these things happened when God took us as his leaders and church at our word to be willing to be used, and He brought His people to us to cooperate with Him in the adoption process.

Just a pastor and people, but a God who through His Son is seeking to reconcile the world back to Himself.

Dynamic, exciting, anticipating churches . . . sure we can have them. It is God's intent, His Son is still directing the Holy Spirit into our midst. It's up to us, His people and His pastors to join Him in this work in the last days of this age.