

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*

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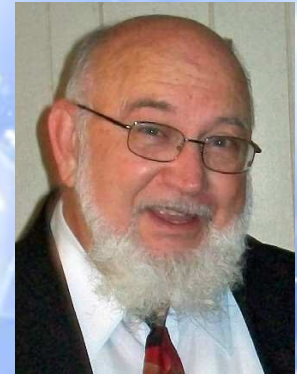
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***DEDICATED TO SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S COMING
KINGDOM TO BE ESTABLISHED WHEN JESUS RETURNS***



EDITOR'S NOTE

Co-Editors: Kent Ross - Wally Winner



What's Our Purpose?

Truth is and ought to be our one of our core values. That is why, over the years, have carefully studied the text of the Bible, believing God gave it to us through his servants the prophets. By reading, learning it, studying it, discussing it, we seek to come to the truth implanted within it by the hand of the Lord.

Much of Christendom is in error in understanding those things revealed by the Lord. Of course, many, perhaps even most, disagree with our understanding of the Bible. Some have wanted to somehow compromise with the so-called orthodoxy, yet there seems to be no way to do so, and remain true to the Scriptures.

We insist that God is One, but so, seemingly, does most of Christendom, but in fact they do not. Their one God is comprised of three, which somehow, impossibly, is three, yet only one. When there is discussion on this point it usually deteriorates, and those who hold to the three-in-one position find themselves unable to defend their position with the Bible and must resort to the Catholic councils (325-481 ca). Those councils took positions that are yet today inexplicable, and defenders resort to usage of words used in no other format.

The same is true of other "orthodox" doctrines. Man's immortal soul is not found in Scripture and even doctors of theology admit that, yet remain somewhat fearful of saying otherwise, and use language to obfuscate the issue completely. The "hell" of orthodoxy is not Biblical, but is more dependent on Dante's Inferno than on the Bible's position. Language studies confirm this over and over again by all linguists. Heaven as a reward for the righteous completely ignores and misunderstands the concept of God's Eternal Kingdom, which Jesus is prophesied to return and establish it here on earth, not in heaven.

With so much error abounding in Christendom it becomes imperative that we, though small and seemingly alone, maintain our positions of what is true. While we are often looked at as holding heretical positions, it is in fact so called "orthodoxy" that holds heretical positions according to God's Word. It is only on that, the Bible, that we can stand and do naught else!

Year of Education

To what is the Church called? To be Defenders of Truth? Yes, but not only Defenders of Truth, but teachers of truth. Teachers to those in error, but also to those in ignorance, or who lack knowledge of the Scriptures. There is a place for those who would battle with defenders of orthodoxy, who debate them, but there is a need for others.

To that end, we need others to be teachers, especially of our own children. It is good that we are producing an Adult Quarterly of lessons that truthfully propound the truth of the Bible, but that is not enough.

In the past, we have produced children's material that remained faithful to the Bible. Right now there is work being done to consider once again producing our own material to ensure that it is Scripturally-based. Too often our churches have utilized orthodoxy's own materials, which are bright, and colorful and exciting, but they often teach incorrectly about God, about His Son, Jesus, about the Kingdom and on and on.

Colorful, bright and exciting may be good, but it is not better than truth. Yes, often those materials we produced lacked the color and art and teaching kits, and somehow that became our excuse to use materials

that often had non-truths within lessons and left confused states of mind. We tried to maintain truth, even by stripping in new lines of words to maintain Biblical integrity, but even that was finally given up.

Now we hope teachers and preachers will catch those errors, but often they are not caught, except by the unfortunate students who are left confused and incorrect. Oh that our defense of the faith once delivered was rebuilt anew in every child we teach, every youth we influence.

Some have looked askance at this, insisting that when we taught "truth," it often result in bigotry and a meanness of spirit. That is, of course, tragic, but truth maintain in quietness and gentleness is what we are called to be. Peter leaves us these instructions (1st Peter 3:15-17) – *"¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."*

This Issue is Filled

The concerns about the Future are again address by Co-Editor Wally Winner in his article on Jerusalem, the center of the coming battle of the Ages. But there are also an important consideration that Theology Matters, by Angela Moore. We need to hear more of her and Tony's story. Carlos Xavier story of the Last English Martyr reminds us that there is a cost to our faith, further evidenced by the true story of John Nisbet (Who? But when you read it you will be challenged.)

But we're further challenged to consider that too many churches are not growing, not for just numbers, but for increasing members of God's family. God did it once in Acts. No, many timesd in Acts, and wants to do it again today. Church of God Board Chairman Joe Myers really lays before us the importance of seeing results!

'We think this issue will lift you, prod you, and encourage you in your walk of faith, a walk that will come under increasing pressure as the times grow dark.

MARANATHA, COME, LORD JESUS



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A FASCINATING STORY

Pastor Delbert Rankin

We began 2011 with the histories of God Bless America and Do You Hear What I Hear?...Now let's close 2011 with the history of I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day. Let's take our minds back in time to a house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, a home that would be tied to war. A pro-British fellow lived there, a house built in 1759. American soil was building momentum toward the Revolutionary War: cast off England's king and bring independence to this shore. As war drums beat louder, the house became vacant. It was dangerous to stay there and support British control here.

When Boston was besieged, General George Washington commandeered that house as his military headquarters and drew battle lines against England's heavy thumb. In 1776 George and Martha celebrated their 17th anniversary there, the year attributed as the one of independence for America. After the war Andrew Craigie bought the house. Widowed, Mrs Craigie turned it into a boarding house. It was then a man named Henry boarded there. First a professor at Bowdoin College, second he became professor at Harvard.

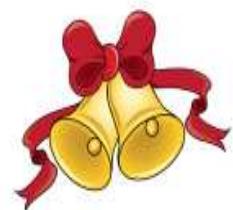
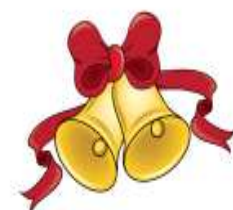
Traveling to study in Europe, Henry's first wife Mary died in childbirth. That tragedy interrupted his studies but he did run into a family and met a lady who was to be his second wife, Frances. Henry and Fannie were married in July 1843. Fannie's father purchased the Craigie house as a wedding gift for them. If you listened socially, you would know the drums of war began to slowly beat again.

Theological and social arguments concerning human slavery led to the split of the Presbyterians in 1838, the Baptists in 1840, the Methodists in 1844, South versus North in the country. Now Henry and Fanny were both Unitarian in persuasion and Pacifist in conviction, two aspects in which (much of) the Church of God of Civil War days shared.

The evils of the world did vex them, though. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a series of poems regarding the ills of slavery full ten years before Harriet Beecher Stowe published the stirring Uncle Tom's Cabin in 1852, which story brought the Longfellow's blood to 'a boil.' By the late 1850s the judicial arena brought the issue to a peak. Longfellow was at least 120 years ahead of his time in his personal conviction of racial equality and civil rights.

So it was, American against American, brother against brother, faiths against their own. Henry and Fannie maintained their pacifist stance, though to them as to most, Civil War—an oxymoron in its own right—became an inevitable and supremely sad fact. Hatred and bloodshed erupted. In 1861, two tragedies hit, one country-wide, one at the Craigie house. Christmastime 1860 rebel military moves brought exchanges of fire on April 12-13, 1861, which had no casualties in the hostilities. But it started the 'snowball rolling.' Later, on a hot July 10th, Fannie Longfellow's hoopskirt accidentally caught fire. Unable to quench the flames, Henry himself was badly burned and Fannie died the next morning. Henry and several children were left. Grief and depression set in for Henry, which was never fully overcome.

Christmases: for the next three years, indeed every holiday, were downers for him. Eighteen years later he still was healing as he wrote the poem The Cross of Snow. He continued, always, his pursuit of poetic literature. "Personal traumas...the loss of loved



ones...trigger responses which often scream out for acknowledgement."Too many fend off feelings of difficult historical moments rather than healing by granting expression. — Holiday Blues, Rappaport

On March 13, 1863 Henry received a letter. Four days earlier his eldest son Charles had gone off and joined the Army of the Potomac, against his dad's wishes. Impetuous, "too precipitous," Henry chided him. He still loved him but his concern for Charley mushroomed. By promotion Charley was a lieutenant in the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry. It wasn't long before Charley had to return home to Craigie. He had contracted typhoid and malaria. In his recovery he missed the Battle of Gettysburg on Pennsylvania soil, July 1-3, 1863. Buried was the bloody hatchet. Buried was the dreadful war club; Buried were all warlike weapons, And the war-cry was forgotten. There was peace among the nations. The Song of Hiawatha, Longfellow.

Pre-Civil War. Enter another saga. Latecomers in the Scotch-Irish emigration from Northern Ireland to this land (maybe 1/4 million in the 1700s) were a Rankin family, 1839. This family settled near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, just twenty-two years before the Civil War. What brought the Scotch-Irish? Wanderlust? Persecution? Better life? Adventure? All or a mix of the above. Whatever the reason, it seems this ethnicity put an exclamation point upon it. If there was a cause to fight for, then the fight was to be fought religiously...sometimes to the point of taking matters into one's own hand. (See Leyburn's The Scotch-Irish. A Social History.)

Samuel and Mary Jane Rankin, people of no great reputation, had a family of five, three of them boys, James, Samuel and John. Quick to take up the cause of their new home, James Rankin was mustered into the Union Army of the Potomac with the 155th Pennsylvania regiment on August 23, 1862, a part of the July call for 300,000 more volunteers.

Come Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863, the 155th Pennsylvania regiment saw battle. The 1st Massachusetts Cavalry came in on the second and third day of that fray, but remember Charley Longfellow was home ill. Totals: 166,000 set in battle array, 7,863 dead, 37,325 wounded, captured or missing. General Meade continued after General Lee.

Come Mine Run Campaign, November 27 – December 2, 1863. The Army of the Potomac came up against the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. The 155th Pennsylvania regiment was there. Samuel Rankin enlisted, mustering into the 155th Pennsylvania regiment November 12th, 1863, joining his brother James. Charles Longfellow had rejoined his comrades of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry. Totals: 129,000 set in battle array, 379 dead, 4,541, wounded, captured or missing.

Midway of the campaign, at the point of Payne Farm and New Hope Church—November 29th—Henry Longfellow's concerns for Charley became reality. A shot rang out. A bullet tore into Charley Longfellow's left shoulder, clipping his spine and exiting his right shoulder. No, he didn't die. He was shipped off to Washington, D.C. with the wounded. Receiving a telegram December 1st, Henry Longfellow rushed off to D.C.

After seeking medical assistance for his son, he took Charles back home to the Craigie house to recover. One conjectures:"Longfellow's distress over Charley was symbolic of the nation's sorrow"—"split-divided-torn asunder..."

Come the Petersburg Campaign, June 15, 1864 – April 3, 1865, the last major eastern effort of the Army of the Potomac leading to the end of the American Civil War, when General Lee would surrender to General Grant at Appomattox. Casualties claimed 70,000.

Establishing the siege of After Petersburg, Virginia, a group of the 155th Pennsylvania rushed the fortification on June 18th, 1864. After a time, James Rankin tried to retreat in broad daylight. Shot down, he was 20. About six months later, February 6, 1865, and



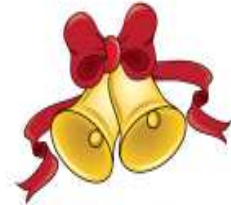
about two months before war's end, Samuel Rankin fell at Dabney's Mill and Hatcher's Run. He was 19. They were both taken back home to Pennsylvania for burial. Total American Civil War carnage: 625,000, more lives of Americans lost than in the Revolutionary War, World War I, World War II, Vietnam and the War on Terror combined. (John Rankin back home buried his brothers, had a family of eleven and moved to Kansas. His son John married, had a family of seven, including my dad (Delbert Rankin), and moved to Washington state. It was at this point in the late 1920s that the family lastingly came into contact with the Church of God Abrahamic Faith and its gospel ministries.)



"Let us have peace." —Ulysses S. Grant "I have only one desire; and that is for harmony [reconciliation], and a frank and honest understanding between North and South." Journal 1878



H.W. Longfellow It could be Henry realized that he could deal with grief and depression by granting expression from the depths of his sentiment, for himself, for his immediate family and for his broader desires for human kind. Because he was so popular with the public, it could be he was touching poetically their heart strings. Whether he rejoiced over the return of his son home or saw the end of the Civil War coming, it was on Christmas Day, 1864, that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow granted expression to the depths of his sentiment: Christmas Bells*



*I heard the bells on Christmas Day their old, familiar carols play
And wild and sweet the words repeat Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*



*And though how, as the day had come, the belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song of peace on earth, good-will to men!*



*Till ringing, singing on its way, the world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, A chant sublime of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

Then from each black, accursed mouth The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound the carols drowned of peace on earth, good-will to men!*



It was as if an earthquake rent the hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn the households born of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

*And in despair I bowed my head; "There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song of peace on earth, good-will to men!"*



*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good-will to men."*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow penned this December 25, 1864 as Christmas Bells. Having referred to the American Civil War in two stanzas (),



John Calkin excluded the two and put five stanzas to music in 1872, rearranging the stanzas, slightly tweaking the words and renaming it (*) I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day: this is how it appears in the Church of God hymnal, Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs (1980), hymn 98.

Theology Matters

"WE'RE ALL THEOLOGIANs. THE QUESTION IS, IS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GOD TRUE?"

By Angela Moore

This past Saturday night at KidZone (a small group Bible study I teach to elementary aged students), the Bible lesson was about Gideon from the book of Judges. Of course, when it came to the teaching time, we went off script. It's amazing what you hear, when you let kids ask questions. Many grown ups would be surprised at the depth of their understanding and the seriousness of their questions. I take each question and each child seriously, and I often allow the discussion to take on a life of its own, while still steering them, to a certain extent, back onto our topic. But this past Saturday night, one child asked, **"Who made God?"**

You see, the study of God is called Theology, and I believe that many adults, when they were young children, never quite got their questions adequately answered, and as they grew, they marked God down as a fantasy, like Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, and then moved on with their lives. They got busy with life, and then never paused to wonder again, about who made God; where did He come from; has anyone ever seen Him before; where does He live; How can He be in heaven and be in everyone's hearts at the same time; What does He look like, and many, many more questions! I think that if people really did pause occasionally to ask some of these questions, to a person who really cared to listen and would help them grapple with these issues, there would be a whole lot more believers in the world, than there are now.

Oh, a lot of adults have an 'idea' of what God is like, but many of the things that they think or have imagined, aren't based on the Scriptures at all! Even people who proclaim to be Christians, are sitting in the pews, oblivious to who God really is. It's incredibly sad and this fact should motivate all of us! It should challenge us to go on a mission to study our Bibles and learn who God really is, according to Scripture! It should move us, to want to share what we have learned, with others, who are just beginning their pursuit of knowing the Almighty God!

So many people take for granted that they know God, but do they really? Have they really sought to know Him, what He's like, what pleases Him, what His purpose is for us, what He expects us to have faith in, and what the whole point of creating us was all about? To find out is life changing! To not know, and remain ignorant of God and His great plan for mankind, is maybe the easy thing to do, but what are you missing? Is God real? If He is, will you be missing something great if you don't believe? What exactly will you be missing?

I sincerely believe that if we begin to look into these bigger, deeper, wider concepts of the Bible and seek to know and love God with all our hearts, souls, mind and strength, we will not be disappointed. Our relationship with our God will be intensified, become more intimate, and make more sense than it did before we pursued our knowledge of Him. God knows every hair upon our heads and knows us each by name. Sadly, many Christians don't even know His Name! This should not be! How can this ignorance of who God is, possibly be in the information world we live

in today? It's a cryin' shame is what it is, and every believer should be **ashamed** of ourselves for not making **getting to know the one and only true living God** awesome, and instead look so dry, boring and crusty that no one ever wants what we have! **We should show kids and adults alike, what an amazing, exciting, thrilling, fun, awesome thing it is to study and know the Creator of the universe!** To see Him with eyes that yearn for the day in which He will come to dwell with mankind on the earth and brush away our tears. We should be so in love with this God, who we know so intimately, that we cry out to Him, "Daddy!" and feel His Presence comforting us, when our hearts ache and our lives feel too overwhelming to live without faith in Him. This type of knowledge and understanding of our Heavenly Father takes an investment of time on our parts, and we have to do the hard thing, and spend some time with our nose in our Bible, looking and seeking to know the one true God.

That is Theology, my friend! And if you haven't studied it before, I do **not** recommend Josh Harris' book, but rather suggest Greg Deuble's book, "**They never told me THIS in church**" along with studying the Scriptures with a fine tooth comb, as if turning over every rock looking for every possible clue that you can find, to see who this great and awesome, holy God is, who alone is good! If your relationship with God is stale and boring, it certainly isn't HIS fault! Only your own concept and understanding of who God is will make our Maker appear dull. How well do you really know Him?

So, are you wondering how I answered the child who asked "**Who made God?**" Do you want to know? Do you think I knew the answer? Why, of course I didn't know! And I told him so! This is what I said: "No one knows how God came to exist, we just know that the Bible tells us that He always has. He had no beginning and He has no end. The Bible also tells us that no one has ever seen Him before. (I Tim. 6:16; Exodus 33:20). So, if someone tells you that they don't believe in God, what do you say? Is there a God? Why, absolutely! How do we know this to be true? Just look at creation. How many different kinds of flowers are there? Trees? What about the human body?" I spent some time exclaiming how cool our eyeballs are constructed, and our legs are made up of muscle, tissue, ligaments, etc! You get the picture! And then I told them, that the Bible says, "that man is without excuse, because of creation. (Romans 1:20). We **KNOW** there must be an intelligent Creator behind all of this, and that's our God." Of course, we went on to talk about other things, but it was a very good question, from a child who wasn't afraid to ask. Or doubt. Or wonder. We adults need that freedom to do the same thing. **Ask. Doubt. Wonder. Care! And then grapple with the answers. Search our Bible diligently!** Ask people you know, who you know have studied their Bibles to discuss things with you. Find good resources out there to study. There are a plethora of books and websites available that have more information than we can ever consume in a lifetime. www.kingdomready.org & www.christianmonotheism.com are great places to start. Begin to study God (a.k.a. Theology). Don't be intimidated. Yes, it's a little overwhelming, but you have to start someplace. Why not start with studying who God is, for if we are to believe in Him, worship Him, love Him, serve Him, and obey Him, shouldn't we **know Him?** **Getting to know God is never boring and it will change your life when you get to know the one true God, Yahweh.**

Theology **does** matter.

"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with **all** your heart.

And I will be found by you," declares YHWH."

Jeremiah 29:13-14a. (*emphasis mine*).

Can Churches Still Grow?

By Kent Ross

Whenever we look into the Book of Acts, we're struck with the expansion of the New Testament church. It started with 120, but at the end of that Day of Pentecost there were 3,120. As you follow the church in those early years it is astounding to see their growth, which seemed exponential. The story in Acts is of phenomenal growth.

Notice

1:20 – about 120

2:41 – 3000 were added that day

4: 4 – number of men grew to 5000

5:14 – more men and women believed and were added to their number

6: 1 – in those days when the number of disciples was increasing

6: 7 – the number in Jerusalem increased rapidly

8:12 – when they believed, they were baptized, both men and women

9:42 – many people believed in the Lord

11:21 – a great number of people were brought to the Lord

11:26 – Saul/Paul met with the church and taught great numbers of people

13:43 – many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas

14: 1 – a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed

14:21 – preached the good news and won a large number of disciples

16: 5 – churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in number.

And so the story goes.

But that is hardly the experience of most churches today. True, there are a few mega churches today that regularly have attendances in the thousands. These churches would hardly be preaching doctrines that we feel are Biblical, but somehow and in some way people respond to what they do preach and teach or exemplify in how they do church.

Is the only way to have a dynamically growing church today is to begin preaching a more acceptable “gospel,” one that is more familiar to more people, that doesn't demand a careful perusal and reading of Scripture? Is it that we need to change? If so, to change what and to what?

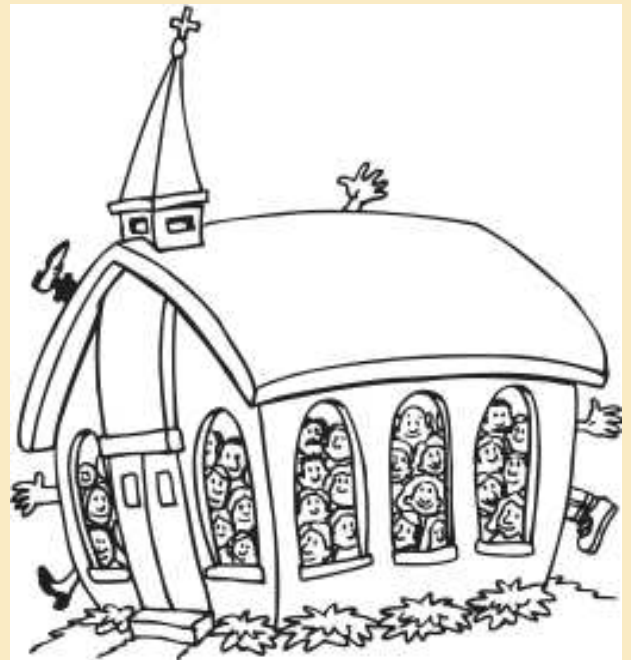
Paul warns against preaching another gospel, so it is still the gospel of the New Testament that must be preached. It is still again Jesus the Son of God and His sacrifice on the Cross for the sins of the world and the coming Kingdom of God that will be established on this earth when Christ literally returns to this planet and raises the dead to life everlasting. Those remain non-negotiable.

But if those are faithfully being preached, then why are so few churches that preach such things show signs of significant growth? Or do they? Is growth in numbers the only measure of success? No, but it is one measure, and not one to be ignored.

The reason is that the Bible indicates that God, Himself, is not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to eternal life. Now if that is His desire, so much so that He was willing for His Only Begotten Son to give His life for that reason, how can that not be of utmost priority in our mission?

There seem to be two truisms to consider regarding how churches can grow. Can they again have the phenomenal growth they had in Acts?

Before we feebly answer “No, maybe not,” consider:



- 1) Is God unable to help that happen again?
- 2) Is Jesus' death still applicable to men's sin?
- 3) Does Jesus still direct the Holy Spirit of God in the work of His Church?

The answer to those three is simple:

- 1) Is God unable? NO
- 2) Is Jesus' death still applicable? YES
- 3) Do Jesus still direct God's Holy Spirit among us? YES

Then we should consider these two principles and their implications. These principles are quite simple, but as in all things, the "devil" seems to be in the details. While we may easily agree with the two principles, carrying them out seems beyond many churches.

Principle One: The Pastor(s) must want the church to grow and be willing to pay the price.

Principle Two: The Church must want to grow and be willing to pay the price.

As regards Principle One, you might expect the answer to be that, "Of course, all pastors want the church to grow! Duh!" However thought it is seemingly true that all pastors want the church to grow, it is often only in a vague generalized sense. Any pastore would want the church they pastore to grow from 20 to 30, then to 40, and then to 75 and then to 100 . . . and then to . . .

But wait a minute. If the "devil" is in the details, then what about the second part of Principle One? They must be willing to pay the price. Just what is the price? If you advertised that every person that attened your church next Sunday would be given a crisdp \$50 bill, the expectation might be that your attendance would increase dramatically. The more you let people know what they would receive, the more you might continue to grow Sunday after Sunday. However, being as most don't have an Uncle Scrooge and his money bin, we probably couldn't continue that, even if that were our approach.

Or we could change what is preached and taught to something more acceptable than what is Biblical. Buit we earlier said that is also unacceptable. Well, then what is the price a pastor may need to be willing to pay. These come to/ mind:

- 1) He or she must seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment for what is to happen;
- 2) He or she must be prepared to work hard at:
 - a) Preparing sermons that preach truth and touch people's hearts.
 - b) Work at extending their outreach into their community.
- 3) He or she must spend significant time in prayer for their own ministry, and seek God's leading and power;
- 4) They must prepare to minister to the people the Lord sends their way. They must have a plan in mind to teach those who come, a plan for the discipling of those who come, and a plan for leading all those new ones into their own ministries.

Now all of that demands the pastor(s) spend time planning, praying and preparing to respond to what the Lord does in their midst. If the Lord wants His lost people found, then we must be prepared when He begins to send them our way.

Of course, there may be things we can do to encourage people to come, but in those early days in Acts, they didn't know much about "outreach and evangelism." All they knew is what they had seen and experienced, and God gave the increase.

But what about Principle Two? That is almost equally important: the Church must want to grow and be willing to pay the price. Again, an automatic response is "Yes, our church wants to grow. Of course. Duh!" And that is generally true, but again the "devil" is in the details.

It should be noted here that in some instances a pastor i.n wanting the church to grow and being willing to pay the price of hard, hard work, can, with the Lord's help, bring people to faith and increase their ministry, BUT if the church isn't willing to pay the price, he will finally wear down and leave, and the church will drop back to those lower levels where everybody denies wanting to be, but where they are comfortable.

The price a church must pay is also high, and many when they realize what it means find themselves unwilling to pay the price. It is "too high" in some way. Consider the price a church must be willing to pay:

- 1) They must want the Lord to work His work in their midst and be willing to yield to that;
- 2) They must be willing to give generously because they believe this is God's will for them;
- 3) They must be willing to let the pastor lead. This may be the most difficult of all, because many churches don't trust a pastor, or aren't willing to yield their authority to him or her. A careful reading of Hebrews 13 brings two concerns to mind, and why many congregations "decide" that growing their church and reaching the lost, though regrettable is not for them:

First – 13:7 - ⁷ Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith

Second – 13:17 - ¹⁷ Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

In the first instance there is a decision, on the part of some, that the leaders aren't trustworthy. Their lives betray that what they say is not how they live and their very lives betray them. If this is so, then it is needful to change leadership for the leader must be trustworthy.

However, at times, the charges against the leader are scurrilous and subsequent evidence betrays that the charges against the leader are, in fact, false. At times it is a small group, with evil intent, that can bring down good leadership and the outreach that could have been in stymied. Thus it is true that such charges against leadership must be substantiated beyond mere rumor.

Even the Apostle Paul saw the work God had given him to do stymied and weakened by men's evil charges, unsubstantiated charges (Acts 13:45 - When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.). Being an Apostle, he spoke against them with strong words, and even warned of dire consequences (see also Romans 16:17,18; and 2nd Timothy 4:9-15).

Of Course Churches CAN Grow!

I think that can be said unequivocally. God wanted it to happen then, and His people, the Lord's church, responded and went in to all the world preaching the goods news of Jesus and of the Kingdom of God.

God takes no pleasure in the wicked remaining wicked and would that all might come to salvation. *'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live'* (Ezekiel 33:11).

God's arm is not shortened, or weaker now than then. His desire remains for ALL to come to salvation.

Thus it was given into our hands. Weak they might be. Few there are, but "they" were weak then, and there were but that few . . . about 120 . . . but with the power of God those few changed their world.

A world that again needs to hear the call to change and follow the ways of God to His coming Kingdom.

Let not Demas be our model!

Demas was once commended – Col. 4:14 commendation, Philemon 1:24

But Demas lost his first love, and then . . .

Paul said Demas has forsaken me – 2nd Timothy 4:9

A Call to His church to awake, receive his power, even in doubt and fear and go forth as they did after their Day of Pentecost. May His Spirit fall afresh on us.

Covenanter John Nisbet Rejoiced to Be Hanged

By Dan Graves, MSL

When John Wycliffe sent his barefoot preachers throughout England in the 14th-century, carrying the Scripture in English, and calling for real heart changes, his message crossed the border into Scotland. There Murdoch Nisbet heard and believed. He acquired one of the rare English-language manuscripts of the Bible. Murdoch's son, grandson and great grandson followed his footsteps of faith. The great-grandson was John Nisbet of Hardhill. (A great-great grandson, James Nisbet wrote his story).

John fought for the Reform faith on the European continent during the Thirty Years' War. Then he returned to his native Scotland and fought some more. King Charles II's government drove hundreds of pastors from their pulpits and perpetrated many other outrages of a religious nature. This led a number of Scots to take up weapons. (Their theology taught that it was allowable to fight in preservation of religious freedom).

In 1666 John marched with a group of Covenanters which was attacked on Rullion Green. Outnumbered four to one and short of weapons, the covenanters fought valiantly but suffered defeat. Wounded in seventeen places, John was left for dead. He recovered, and wandered as a fugitive for years. His brave wife and children were thrown out of their home and some died of hunger, cold and disease. Eventually, while at prayer with three others, John was attacked by a party of dragoons, led by one of his cousins. In the desperate fight that followed, he was wounded seven times. The men with him were shot through their heads on the spot, but John was kept alive because of the reward offered for him. Taken to Edinburgh, he was tried. He told his captors he would rather die than lie (by pretending to change his faith). He was condemned to death.

Despite his serious wounds, he was loaded with chains weighing 100 pounds. Under this harsh treatment, he rejoiced all the more, claiming he'd had a vision of God so intense it would have killed him if God hadn't given him the strength to bear it. "It has pleased Him [God] to give me such real impression of unspeakable glory as without constant and immediate supports from the Giver will certainly overwhelm me," he said.

The prospect of being hanged on Friday only made him happier. "O for Friday! O for Friday! O Lord, give patience to wait Thy appointed time!"

He wrote his last will and testament. In it he said, "Be not afraid at His sweet, lovely and desirable cross, for although I have not been able because of my wounds to lift up or lay down my head [without help] yet I was never in better case all my life."

On this day Friday, December 4, 1685, the soldiers led him to his execution. Witnesses said his face shone in anticipation of glory. He exclaimed, "I have longed these sixteen years to seal the precious cause and interest of precious Christ with my blood. And now, now He has answered and granted my request, and has left me no more ado but to come here and pour forth my last prayers, sing forth my last praise to Him...mount that ladder, and then I shall quickly get home to my Father's House..."

On the scaffold, he preached a farewell sermon, urging the onlookers to prepare for the day of judgment. The soldiers did their best to drown his voice by beating their drums. John Nisbet sang a last psalm and they swung him off into eternity.

Edward Wightman: The Last English Martyr

By Carlos Xavier

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“If, then, dead books may be committed to flames, how much more live books, that is to say, men?”¹

This is the story of Edward Wightman,² a name unknown to modern Bible students, yet known to history as the last person in England to be burned at the stake for heresy.³ Like most cases of this kind, it is a story dominated by the religious and political climate of its time, an environment firmly controlled by men who held sway over all matters pertaining to the Christian faith. Most sources are biased in their portrait of the “heretic” as some kind of demon-possessed, deranged mind. Yet Wightman was a well-respected business man and community leader, whose zeal for his faith and freedom of expression ultimately took him to the attention of the King of England, James I. James’ own religious zeal as the “Defender of the Faith” led him to sign the last known execution for burning at the stake.

Wightman’s parents hailed from Burton-upon-Trent, near Staffordshire. He was born there in 1566 and like most residents was baptized in traditional orthodox fashion.⁴ He attended Burton grammar school and entered the clothiers business of his maternal family.⁵ In 1593 he married Frances Darbye.⁶

He became involved with the Puritans and in 1596 was chosen as one of the leaders assigned to the investigation of the demonic possession of 13-year-old Thomas Darling.⁷ This suggests that by the mid-1590s Wightman was an important and well-respected public figure, taking part in the newly formed movement that began to hold sway over Burton’s society and politics. His involvement in the Darling case proved a turning point in his life, making him entirely amenable to the possibility of unmediated spiritual intervention. Darling not only claimed to be possessed by the devil, but engaged in a series of “spiritual wars” in which both demonic and angelic voices were said to emanate from him.⁸ This was something that, as we shall see, affected the way Wightman later perceived traditional orthodoxy.

His initial descent into heresy involved his understanding of the mortality of the soul, a view that progressively became more radicalized and unorthodox.⁹ Between 1603/4 and 1610/11, his behavior grew increasingly bolder and louder. According to court records, he was a prolific writer, although none of his writings is yet to be found.¹⁰ He

¹ Matthieu Ory, Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity for the Realm of France, Paris, 1544. Lawrence Goldstone, Nancy Goldstone, *Out of the Flames*, Broadway, 2003.

² “In the King’s letter, under the privy seal, as well as in the warrant for his execution, he is called ‘Edward Wightman, of the parish of Burton-upon-Trent, in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield’” (Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, E.T. Whitfield, 1850, p 567-568).

³ Narrowly edging out another accused anti-Trinitarian and heretic, Bartholomew Legate, burned in London three weeks earlier.

⁴ “In the parish church of Burbage, in south-west Leicestershire” (Leicestershire Record Office, Bodleian Library, ms Ashmole 1521 B, 7, 16–17; The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford, 2004).

⁵ Eventually, he served an apprenticeship as a woolen draper in the town of Shrewsbury. (A. Macdonald, *A Short History of Repton*, London, 1929, p 86, 91, 244).

⁶ Staffordshire Record Office, marriage recorded as Sept. 11, 1593.

⁷ D. P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits*, London, 1981, p 56; J. Bruce, ed., *Diary of John Manningham*, Camden Society, 1st series, 99, 1868, p 169.

⁸ “As I know at this present for a certainty, that I have the spirit of God within me: so do I with the like certainty believe, that in my dialogues with Satan, when I [quoted] sundry places of scripture, to withstand the temptations he assaulted me with: I had the spirit of God in me, and by that spirit resisted Satan at those times, by [quoting] the scriptures to confound him” (S. Harsnett, *A Discovery of the Fraudulent Practices of John Darrel*, London, 1599, p 290).

⁹ In one of his early public messages he claimed that “the soul of man dies with the body and participates not either of the joys of Heaven or the pains of Hell, until the general Day of Judgment, but rested with the body until then” (M. W. Greenslade, “The 1607 Return of Staffordshire Catholics,” *Staffordshire Catholic History*, 4, 1963-4, p 6-32; Clarke, *Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines*, p 147).

¹⁰ Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, p. 567-568.

came to the attention of the local church authorities and a warrant for his arrest was issued. The order instructed the constables of Burton to immediately bring him before Bishop Richard Neil for interrogation.¹¹

He set about to put together a compendium of his theology for his upcoming hearing and defense. Perhaps thinking that he would at least be allowed time to plead his case, he delivered copies of it to members of the clergy in an effort to shore up support. But then, perhaps as a last resort, he delivered a copy to King James I, a move that would ultimately seal his fate.¹²

James I came to the English throne in 1603, “thinking himself a competent judge of religious questions and disposed to take seriously his title of ‘Defender of the Faith.’”¹³ Since 1607 he had been engaged in a battle of books with Roman Catholic apologists over the Oath of Allegiance, both personally and by encouraging others to write in his defense. “One of the central planks of the king’s case was the preservation of his catholic orthodoxy through his adherence to the three great creeds of the church, the Apostles’, the Nicene and the Athanasian.”¹⁴

Wightman was fully aware of the King’s firm stance, yet he set about willfully to combat both his State and Church. Of the handful of fragments of his defense treatise that have survived, he refers to the doctrine and “heresies of the Nicolaitanes”...most of all hated and abhorred of God himself...the common received faith contained in those 3 inventions of man, commonly called the Three Creeds...the [Apostles’], Nicene and Athanasius Creed, which faith within these 1600 years past hath prevailed in the world.”¹⁵

Wightman had by now totally isolated himself from all other groups, calling into question all aspects of Christian truth, arguing “that the baptizing of Infants is an abominable custom...the practice of the Sacraments as they are now used in the Church of England are according to Christ his Institution...[and affirming that] only the sacrament of baptism [is] to be administered in water to converts of sufficient age of understanding converted from infidelity to the faith.”¹⁷

But what finally spelled his end was his grievous departure from the Trinity and the nature of God. It was presumably on these points that he so vehemently rejected the formulae of the Nicene Creed of 325 and the subsequent Athanasian Creed of 381. He claimed that the doctrine was a total fabrication and he maintained that Christ was only a man “and a mere Creature and not both God and man in one person... [Although this did not mean that Christ was a man like all others but] only a perfect man without sin.”¹⁸ King James was by then more set than ever in securing the execution of Wightman, since in the intervening years he had launched a dual campaign against heresy at home and abroad.¹⁹

After months of being subjected to a series of conferences with “learned divines,” Wightman was finally brought before Bishop Neil for the last time. According to Wightman, the Bishop told him “that unless I did recant my opinions he would burn me at a stake in Burton before Allholland day next.”²⁰ The final verdict and list of charges included “the wicked heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, Valentinian, Arius, Macedonius, Simon Magus, Manichees, Phontinus, and of the Anabaptists and other arch heretics, and moreover, of other cursed opinions belched by the instinct of Satan.”

¹¹ Durham Dean and Chapter Library, MS Hunter 44/17, fo. 216r.

¹² Collections for a History of Staffordshire, Staffordshire Record Society, 1982, p. 176.

¹³ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, Harvard, 1945, p 177.

¹⁴ F. Shriver, “Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair,” ante, lxxxv, 1970, p 453–4; James VI and I, *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James by the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine*, London, 1616, p 302.

¹⁵ The Nicolaitans are mentioned in Rev 2:6, 15 as a heretical group who apparently taught that Christians could eat meat offered to idols and practice sexual immorality, and against whom the churches at Ephesus and Pergamum are warned. The church fathers (notably Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hippolytus and Eusebius) added little to this understanding of the group, beyond seeing the Nicolaitans as libertines or antinomians.

¹⁶ Bodleian Library, ms Ashmole, *A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legate and Thomas Withman*, 1521 B, 7, 1a–1b, London, 1651, p. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid., p 8–9, 23.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹ Wightman’s trial was played out against the backdrop of the so-called “Vorstius Affair,” involving the intense opposition on the King’s part to block the appointment of the German academic Conrad Vorstius to the University of Leiden. Vorstius was being accused of atheism, Arianism and heretical opinions about the Holy Spirit (James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England*, DS Brewer, 2000; Ralph Anthony Houlbrooke, *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, Ashgate, 2006).

²⁰ Lincolnshire Archives Office, D & C, Cijj/13/1/2/2, fo. 1r.

He was ordered to be placed “in some public and open place below the city aforesaid [and] before the people burned in the detestation of the said crime and for manifest example of other Christians that they may not fall into the same crime.”²¹

When he was finally brought to the stake his courage had all but left him. As the fires were lit he is said to have quickly cried out to recant, although by then he had been “well scorched.” But this would not last, since two or three weeks later he was again brought before the courts and, no longer fearing the searing flames, refused and “blasphemed more audaciously than before.”²² The King quickly ordered his final execution, and on April 11, 1612, he was once more led to the stake.

“[Wightman] was carried again to the stake where feeling the heat of the fire again would have recanted, but for all his crying the sheriff told him he should cost him no more and commanded faggots to be set to him whence roaring, he was burned to ashes.”²³

In the months that followed his execution, a number of religious radicals nearly met the same fate,²⁴ even though the downfall of the bishops and abolition of the High Commission in 1640–2 did not bring about any changes to the constitution.²⁵ In May 2, 1648, a new “Ordinance for the Punishment of Blasphemies and Heresies” was created.²⁶ Opposition from independents and sectaries, however, meant that the ordinance was never enforced.²⁷ And only with the passage of another act in 1677 “forbidding the burning of heretics”²⁸ was Wightman’s position in history “as the last person in England to be burned at the stake for heresy,” secured.²⁹ Mention of his case came almost 100 years later by a handful of writers in the wake of the 1689 Toleration Act.³⁰ The only immediate result was that of a minority opposition to his execution, a shift in public opinion which may have led to a relative decline in the practice.³¹

Meanwhile, King James I seemed to have lost faith in this method of discouraging heresy and seeing that heresy still survived, “publicly preferred that heretics hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison rather than to grace them, and amuse others, with the solemnity of a public execution.”³²

²¹ Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, p 567-568.

²² Ibid.

²³ George Birkhead, Michael C. Questier, *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p 153.

²⁴ Champlin Burrage, *The Early Dissenters in the Light of Recent Research* (1550-1641), vol. I, p 169-171.

²⁵ “The act of the Long Parliament which abolished the Court of High Commission used such very general words that, if it did not abolish the old ecclesiastical courts, it practically deprived them of their power. At the Restoration, however, by statute passed in 1661 (13 Car II, c. 12) it was ‘explained’ that this was not the desired result; the Court of High Commission was not to be re-established, but the old ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts was to be exercised as of old” (F.W. Maitland, H.A.L. Fisher, *The Constitutional History of England: A Course of Lectures*, Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 2001, p 522).

²⁶ “Principally those of the triune God, the resurrection, the last judgment, and that the Bible is the Word of God...relapse is to be punished as felony with death without benefit of clergy” (Felix Makower, *The Constitutional History and Constitution of the Church of England*, Ayer, 1972, p 193).

²⁷ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, 3 vols., London, 1911, p 1133-6; H. J. McLachlan, *Socinianism in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, 1951, p 163–217.

²⁸ Burning at the stake remained on the statute book in England until 1790, as the punishment for a woman who murdered her husband (A. Aspinall, A. Smith, *English Historical Documents 1783-1832*, Routledge, 1996, p 339f.; F. E. Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550-1700*, Cornell, 1994).

²⁹ Fisher, *The Constitutional History of England*, p. 522.

³⁰ G. Croese, *The General History of the Quakers*, London, 1696, 2, 193; E. S. De Beer, *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols., Oxford, 1976–89, 6, nos. 2621, 2631, 2653; Truth brought to Light: Or, the History of the First 14 Years of King James, London, 1692.

³¹ The case “much startled the common people” (Thomas Fuller, J.S. Brewer, *The Church History of Britain: From the Birth of Jesus Christ until the Year 1648*, 1845, p 506-508).

³² His actions owed more to a thaw in his private attitude to Roman Catholics than to any feelings about the impropriety or inadvisability of burning heretics (A. J. Loomie, “Bacon and Gondomar: An Unknown Link in 1618,” in A. J. Loomie, ed., *Spain and the Early Stuarts 1585–1655*, Aldershot, 1996, ch. 10).

O JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM...

By Wally Winner



Another planned meeting to work out a solution to the Israeli-Palestine stalemate on territory that will eventually lead to statehood for Palestine begins this week in Amman. Israeli envoy Yitzhak Molcho under the auspices of the Quartet members - the US, EU, UN and Russia will meet with his counterpart - chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

Erekat said on Monday, January 2, 2012, the Palestinian Authority demands for a full cessation of settlement construction and acceptance of the pre-1967 lines as the basis for a two-state solution, saying this would pave the way for the resumption of real and serious negotiations between the two sides.

Those pre-1967 lines would require a divided Jerusalem. It is difficult to see Israel allowing Jerusalem to be partitioned again.

Jerusalem is a holy city to three religions of the world – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is a city filled with shrines, monuments and historic sites for each of those religions.

Jerusalem was not always the city that it appears to be today.

When Abraham begins his journey of faith in the land he is promised, an alliance of Mesopotamian cities drove Abraham's nephew, Lot, out of the Canaanite city of Sodom where he lived and took him captive.

When Abraham heard of Lot's capture, he rallied his forces to pursue Lot's captors and was victorious.

Upon his return to Canaan, a most unusual event occurred. Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought bread and wine and refreshed Abraham and his people (Gen. 14:18).

Melchizedek was king of Salem. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the late first century A.D., tells us, "That name signifies the *righteous king* and such he was without dispute, in so much that, on this account, he was made the Priest of God: however, they afterward called Salem, *Jerusalem*" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, I, x, 2).

This righteous king was also the priest of the most high God (Gen. 14:18). Abraham knew he was the priest of God and so gave Melchizedek his tithes (Gen. 14:20).

In advance God was showing where He planned to establish his headquarters for His government when it was reestablished upon the earth?

Gap of 550 Years

Strangely enough, we know little about the city of Salem (to become Jerusalem) for nearly 500 years. We do know Canaanites lived in the land.

During the years between Abraham and the settling of the children of Israel in the Promised Land, we have only one other brief encounter that directs our attention to the city of Jerusalem.

One of the best known episodes in the Bible was God's instruction for Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to Mount Moriah and there to sacrifice him. Through this tremendous example of faith, we once again have a hint of God's future plans for Jerusalem. Some Bible scholars have concluded that Mount Moriah, where Abraham came to offer Isaac, may have been the very spot in Jerusalem upon which the Temple was constructed. Other scholars suggest that Mt. Moriah was the same place as Golgotha.

The willingness of Abraham to bring Isaac to Mount Moriah to be sacrificed has a spiritual parallel. God was to offer his only Son for the sins of the world. It was a spiritual parallel that Abraham brought his son to Jerusalem as a type of what would happen later.

In the course of time, the descendants of Abraham came to live in Egypt. Jacob and his 12 sons and their families found relief from a great famine.

A pharaoh came to the throne who did not know the good that Joseph and the early Israelites had contributed to Egypt. He made slaves of the Israelites. During their time in Egypt, the population of Israel grew to some 2½ million. It was then God's time to deliver his people from slavery and lead them to the Promised Land—a land he promised Abraham more than 400 years before.

Under the leadership of Moses, Israel was led out of Egypt. After 40 years wandering in the Sinai wilderness they came to the east bank of the Jordan River, which they prepared to cross.

Into the Promised Land

Moses died before the entrance of the Israelites into Canaan. Joshua, meanwhile, was chosen by God to lead the people and to direct the settlement.

Many well-known events and stories of the Bible come to us from the time of Joshua and the conquest of the land of Canaan. An especially familiar story is the fall of Jericho to Joshua's armies.

Shortly after the Israelites took Jericho, the next town, Ai, fell. At this point, we once again have mention of the city of Jerusalem in the Bible. The king of Jerusalem was named Adoni-zedek. Jerusalem was a city inhabited by a tribe of Canaanites called Jebusites. The name of the town was called Jebusi. Adoni-zedek formed an alliance with four other kings thinking they could withstand the oncoming armies of Joshua.

The Jebusite army was defeated and fled through the Beth-horon pass and out into the valley of Ajalon where God rained down great hailstones.

In spite of the victory, however, Joshua did not choose to occupy the city of Jebusi or Jerusalem. Shiloh, in the north, became the tribal capital.

The area of Jerusalem and south became part of the territory allocated to the tribe of Judah (Josh. 15:8). In verse 63, we find Judah did not drive out the Jebusites who had resettled the city of Jerusalem.

After the death of Joshua, Judah did take possession of Jerusalem for a short time. *"Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it, and smitten it with the edge of the sword, and set the city on fire"* (Judg. 1:8). But Judah never really built a permanent settlement there. The Jebusites moved back in and possessed it most of the next 300 years.

Near the end of that long period, the Israelites desired a government like the nations round about. They wanted a human king whom they could see. They had rejected God's prophet Samuel—which in reality was rejecting God as their king (I Sam. 8:7). God let them have Saul. But Saul became disobedient to God. God rejected him.

When David was King

As the reign of Saul became more corrupt, God began to prepare his choice for king over Israel—David, a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). Notice the story in II Samuel 5:4-5, *“David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.”*

At last, some 900 years after Abraham brought Isaac to Mount Moriah and nearly 400 years after Israel took possession of the Promised Land, Jerusalem became the nation’s capital city. This was the real beginning of what probably became the most loved, most beautiful, most controversial, most war-torn city in the history of man.

It is ironic that the name *Jerusalem* means “City of Peace.” Jerusalem has not been able to symbolize peace for most of its troubled history. In the near future Jerusalem will yet become the world center of peace.

Small Beginnings

Jerusalem certainly did not have a pretentious beginning. Jebusi (Jerusalem) began as a small walled city—only a fraction the size of modern Jerusalem. After David established his residence inside the walled city and built a palace, the territory became known as the City of David. The entire area encompassed only about 12 acres of ground. Probably fewer than 2,000 people lived there.

But why did David choose Jerusalem? Did he know Melchizedek had been there? Did he think Mount Moriah was the spot Abraham came to so long ago? Did he plan originally that the threshing floor of Oman the Jebusite, north of the City of David, would become the site of the temple? Did he have a concept that Jerusalem would some day become the very center of the government of God on earth?

In all probability, David did not clearly realize the full significance of these threads of history. God was choosing Jerusalem for the future.

David probably had a variety of reasons for choosing this site. It was centrally located. It was a neutral city, that is none of the 12 tribes had really occupied it. Jerusalem had a beautiful climate (remember David grew up in nearby Bethlehem, only a few miles south of Jerusalem). Jerusalem had an abundant supply of water from the Gihon spring—water was the life of any city-state.

The two most forceful reasons for the selection of Jerusalem as the capital city were that it was a fortified city that had been able to withstand most sieges for some 400 years and it had a bountiful water supply. The Jebusites had constructed a vertical shaft from the hilltop down to the spring. The shaft was protected by the city walls. Water could be drawn from within the walls while soldiers atop them held off enemy troops.

Later, king Hezekiah of Judah engineered a tunnel built more than 1,700 feet through bedrock underneath the city of Jerusalem from the Gihon spring to the pool of Siloam. In Hezekiah’s day this tunnel was largely responsible for the Jews being able to hold off the invading armies of the Assyrians under king Sennacherib. Hezekiah, who had turned to God for protection, witnessed angels of the Lord smite the Assyrians. One hundred eightyfive thousand troops were slain without the nation having to lift a sword (II Kings 19:35). The Jews were safely inside the walls of Jerusalem with the newly constructed water supply.

Once David was established in Jerusalem, God began to give a glimpse of what kind of ultimate future the city would have. David had in mind building a temple for the ark of God. Because of his warlike activity God did not permit David to expand the city of Jerusalem or to build the temple.

David did build a fine palace in the northern extremity of the city and Jerusalem became alternately known as the City of David, Mount Zion and Jerusalem.

It is interesting that when the government of God is established on the earth, the Bible says the Messiah will rule from the throne of his father David—so we know in advance the center of government is going to be in that area of Jerusalem (Isa. 9:6-7).

Solomon’s Temple and Palace

After David’s death, Solomon took the throne of Israel and Jerusalem became a leading city in the

world of that day. Solomon built the Temple on Mount Moriah. Walls of the building were overlaid with gold and jewels. The finest workmanship and materials available were put into this building.

In addition to the temple, Solomon built his own magnificent palace. With this and many other construction projects of homes, stables and landscaping, Jerusalem became a showplace. The fame of Solomon and Jerusalem spread throughout the Middle East and the world that then was. When the Queen of Sheba came to Jerusalem to see for herself she said, *“It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard”* (1 Kings 10:6-7).

However, Jerusalem’s prosperity and peace did not last. They were conditional— based on Israel’s obedience. By the end of the reign of Solomon, Israel had wandered far from God’s ways.

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom split in two. The northern 10 tribes revolted against Solomon’s son Rehoboam and established their own nation—the House of Israel—with the capital later at Samaria. The House of Judah kept Jerusalem as its capital.

The northern 10 tribes of Israel were defeated by the Assyrians and carried into captivity. The House of Judah, with some remnants of the northern tribes who had fled earlier into Judea, was taken captive by the Chaldeans. Jerusalem’s inhabitants were slain by the thousands—the city burned to rubble and the magnificent temple torn down. The gold and precious jewels and accoutrements of the temple were carried to Babylon by the conquering Babylonians. The glorious city of Jerusalem was totally destroyed.

A Time of Restoration

After the Medes and Persians conquered the Babylonians, the Persian kings permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem. A temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel. Under the direction of Ezra and Nehemiah the city walls eventually were reconstructed. The second temple had little of the glory of Solomon’s temple. But the Jews had reestablished themselves in their homeland and had a temple.

Within another 250 years Jerusalem was once again torn to pieces by war.

In 167 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes destroyed large segments of the city and polluted the sanctuary by sacrificing swine’s blood on the holy altar. Thousands of Jews were killed in the onslaught. But in the end they prevailed.

During the first century B.C., the war machines of Rome began to absorb the world. Jerusalem fell to the Roman general Pompey in 63 B.C. Thus, Judea became a Roman protectorate.

The Romans appointed Herod the Great as king of the region. Under his rule Jerusalem was rebuilt into a showplace for the Roman world. Herod restored the second temple, which, by this time, had existed longer than Solomon’s temple. It was in this temple that Jesus would appear and teach during a brief 3 ½ year ministry. Jesus didn’t really spend a great deal of time in Jerusalem. As custom was, he went up for the annual festivals (Luke 2:42). When Jesus looked upon Jerusalem he longingly sighed, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate”* (Matt. 23:37-38).

In A.D. 70 the Roman armies under General Titus marched into Jerusalem and once again that great city was destroyed. The temple that Herod had constructed was torn to the foundations till finally, as Jesus had foretold, not one stone was left upon another (Matt. 24:2). The Jewish people were scattered throughout the known world and, until comparatively modern times, Jerusalem was not a predominately Jewish city.

Jerusalem Since the Time of Christ

In the 300s A.D., the Roman Emperor, Constantine, professed himself a Christian and Christianity became a dominant influence in the Empire.

In the 600s A.D., the Moslem Arabs gained control of Jerusalem. A magnificent structure called the Dome of the Rock built by Abd el Malek ibn Marwan was constructed in the existing temple mount. The temple mount to Moslems is the sight from which their prophet Mohammed traditionally ascended to heaven.

By A.D. 1100 the European Crusader-Christians had taken Jerusalem—but lost it once again to the Moslems less than a century later.

Early in the 1500s the Ottoman Turks captured Jerusalem. Under the administration of the Turks, additional Jews, many of whom were being persecuted in other nations, were permitted to emigrate to Jerusalem once again. By the late 1800s Jews formed the largest ethnic population in Jerusalem—but it was still under Turkish government.

Turkey chose to ally with Imperial Germany during World War I. In 1917 under General Edmund Allenby, the British took control of what was then called Palestine. For a period of time, the British ruled Palestine under a mandate.

In 1947 the United Nations approved the establishment of a Jewish state. The modern nation Israel was born. Following the decision, war broke out between Arabs and Jews and Jerusalem became a divided city. Jordan controlled the east portion—Old Jerusalem—and the territories on the West Bank of the Jordan River. The Israelis controlled modern Jerusalem in addition to its original territory.

In 1967 war once again broke out between Israelis and Arabs. During this Six Day War the Israelis recaptured all of East Jerusalem, the West Bank territories, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai. Jerusalem was united and the entire city thus became the capital of the state of Israel.

Jerusalem of the Future

More important than the 4,000-year history of Jerusalem is the future of this great city in relation to the world.

When the ancient nation of Judah went astray from God, God said, *“I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I have said, My name shall be there”* (II Kings 23:27).

Through the prophet Zechariah, God has promised, *“Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem”* (Zech. 1:17).

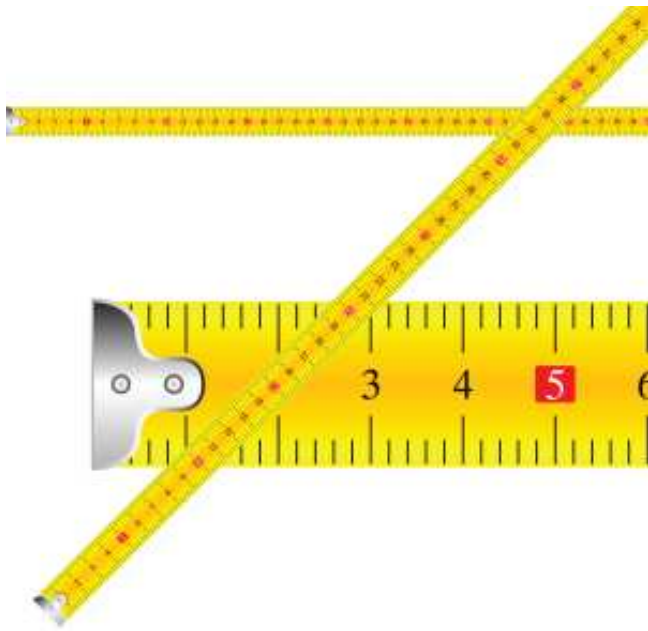
God did not cast off Jerusalem forever. Jerusalem shall become this time the world capital never to be cast off again—permanently and forever the headquarters of the government of God.

Isaiah prophesied, *“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young”* (Isa. 40:1-2, 10-11).

Yet another of God’s prophets foretold the wonders to come, *“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow into it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”* (Mic. 4:1-2).

Notice what Zechariah saw for the near future, *“And his [Jesus Christ’s] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. . . And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one”* (Zech. 14:4-5, 8-9).

We are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6). God speed the day when Jerusalem really is **THE CITY OF PEACE** and the whole world will enjoy the peace and prosperity in the age to come.



How Do We Measure Our Efforts?

By Joe Myers

The time was approximately 9:45 on a Monday. It could have been any evening, however. The sales desk was preparing to call it a night, when the expected and usual phone call to the dealership was transferred to the sales desk. It was “Mr. B” just checking in to see how the day had gone. Translation: how many cars were sold and what kind of profit was made? After receiving an answer, the call was transferred to the finance department where the same question would be asked. This ritual has been a part of the system for as long as I can remember. I worked for the company for 14 years. It rarely varied. Each Thursday, during our weekly sales meeting, the managers were expected to project the sales for the weekend. Each month the results were reviewed, as were the results for each quarter and each year end. The owner of one of the largest Ford dealerships in the country would consistently want to know “the numbers”. It was his way of tracking the success of his business. For “Mr. B” results were the name of the game, and, to know the results, it was necessary to count.

Last week I went to the doctor for a physical exam. It had been too long and I knew it was past time to check my numbers. The doctor listened to my heart, checked my temperature, took my blood pressure, drew blood, did a urine test, and yes, had me bend over. As I write this, I am waiting for a call from the doctor’s office for the results of the blood work. You know, we want to see the numbers of my cholesterol, my triglycerides, my psa, and any other reading of significance. Tomorrow I am scheduled for an echocardiogram; in two weeks I’ll have a stress test. All of these procedures are for the purpose of checking my numbers to see how my health is.

Tomorrow is the Iowa caucus. For weeks, polls have been taken. Pundits have shared their opinions on who will walk away as winners and losers of the caucus as they move on to New Hampshire. Who will win? The one with the most votes. How will we know who that is? Someone is just going to have to count.

The same is true in sports. We often ask, “What was the final score?” The same is true in the military. How many casualties? It even holds true in our grocery shopping, miles per gallon, weather; birthdays.....the list is endless.

Then why does the church have such an aversion to counting? Those who do count have been all too often chastised as not being “spiritual” enough. One cannot “count” spirituality. And in one sense that is hard to argue. Numbers by themselves do not tell the entire story. But certainly they do tell part of the story, do they not? What church does not count when it comes to establishing the annual budget? When voting on the hiring of a pastor? When trying to reduce utility costs? When determining whether or not to support a missions field. Oh to be sure, churches count a great deal of items, just not when it comes to counting numbers. And I suspect one reason the number of attendees or members are not regularly counted, is because we understand that we would not like the results.

It’s time to take a look at what the Scriptures say when it comes to the subjects of counting and results. Some of this may be difficult to consider, but nonetheless, I believe that it is important to do so.

Let’s start in Luke chapter 15. This chapter is the familiar passage dealing with the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Jesus begins by sharing about the shepherd who had 100 sheep and all but one was accounted for. How did he know he was missing one of his sheep? He must have counted. Why did he count? It was his business to know. It was because each sheep was important. He counted because his livelihood and the welfare of the sheep were at stake. I imagine he counted every day. And perhaps, he even knew which sheep was missing.

The poor widow had but 10 silver coins. One commentator noted that Palestinian women received ten silver coins as a wedding gift. Besides their monetary value, these coins held sentimental value like that of a wedding ring, and to lose one would be extremely distressing. (Life Application Bible). Again we ask the question, “How did she know a coin was missing?” The answer is obvious. She counted. The final parable in this trilogy is the parable of the lost son. More than the other two parables, this one depicts for us the value of a single person. Yes, some think this is as much a teaching about the attitude of the older brother, probably representing the self satisfied Jewish leaders, but doesn’t it also show us the value of one? Of course it does.



The business people and the military are also used as an example by Jesus on the importance of counting and knowing our position when it comes to building or going to war. “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, “This man began to build and was not able to finish.” Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possession.” (Luke 14: 28-33).

Now it’s time to look at agriculture and the farming business. “And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell

among the thorns and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matt. 13:3-9). What are we to be listening for? Well, to be sure, we must understand that our message will not be accepted by all who hear. Some will not listen at all; some will be very short-term in their acceptance. Others will hang in for a while until the concerns of the world over take them. But finally, we can have confidence in knowing that all our sowing will not be for naught. You see, some of our efforts will yield 30 fold. Some will yield 60 fold. Some will even yield a 100 fold. How do we know how much will be yielded? How do we know? We just have to count. And that is precisely what our farmers do today. They still count. How many bushels are produced per acre? How much milk do the cows produce? How many cattle will go to market this year, and how much do they weigh? Farmers count. They have to count.



Their lives and livelihood and those whom they love depend on the farmer’s ability to know and understand what their efforts have yielded. Why should the church be any different? Do you recall what Jesus did to the fig tree which did not produce any figs? That’s right. He cursed it. That should tell us something, especially if you are a fig tree!

Now let’s look at the book of Acts. “So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.” (2:41). “....And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (2:47). “But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.” (4:4). “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number.” (5:14). “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number,....” (6:1). “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized men and women alike.” (8:12).....It is abundantly clear, that the early church counted. Yes they did. And they used these numbers to validate the working and moving of the Holy Spirit in the church. Why do we not do the same today? Indeed, I believe we should.

Whether we like it or not, whether something should or shouldn’t be, the reality is, numbers count. And they should because each number is so much more than a digit. Each number represents an individual. Some one who is hurting, some one who is missing; some one who needs help, someone who needs the gospel. For you see it’s not the number, it’s the individual that the number represents. We will never be able to fully and effectively carry out the ministry of serving and caring unless we know to whom and how many we serve.

I propose that if we are to be wise, that we take a clue from business, military, politics, schools, agriculture and most of all our Lord Jesus, and we once again begin to count. Painful as it may be, or exciting as it might be, it needs to be done.

News From the Mission Work in the Philipppianes

By Larry Rankin

Report from Socorro Mindoro

Greetings from Socorro, Mindoro oriental, Philippines. I took my flight from the United States on November 24 and arrived in Japan on the 25th. I journeyed by bus to Tokorazawa where I spent four days with my long time friend Michiko Saito and her family. It had been four years since my last visit and the three children had grown up a lot. Kaede is 16, Wakaba 13, and Yoho 10. I traveled with Katashi, Michiko's husband, to see sights south of Tokyo and spent considerable time with the family. Takashi and the two girls are learning to understand quite a bit of English. It was a wonderful occasion and near the end Michiko asked me why I spend such an amount of time in the Philipppianes. I had told her before that I do Bible teaching and she did not pursue the topic. So, this time I answered her that I would show her a diagram to explain it. She produced paper and pen and I drew out a chart of God's plan of the ages. She is not religious in any way and laughs at her husband for his small rituals that he performs before the Shinto Idols. But as I explained the process of God's plan showing how many years between each main event. She listened carefully. After completing the sketch I told her that the Bible gives us this information.

That the Bible is God's word and we know that because the things that the Bible said would happen have happened and therefore the things that the Bible says will happen will also happen. Now, since we know what is going to happen to the world we know also to prepare for those events. So, I spend my time and money for sharing this information with the people who want to know about it that they might save themselves from disaster. I do this as an act of love for their wellbeing. I told her that I have wanted also to share it with her because of the disasters that God has planned for those who do not know and believe his word and that if she had questions about it I would be glad to help her answer them. She thanked me and said she would think about it. She did ask a few questions and kept the sketch and other written materials that I offered her. May God guide her to increased interest.

On the evening of November 29 I flew to Manila and arrived in San Jose, Nueva Ecija in the Philippines by 5 am on the 30th. I stayed three days in San Jose, visiting the Church families and encouraging them. Sister Juvy Mina came from Minagbag Church in Isabela and I shared some energy and items of help with her. Annie Sagwil came from Bontoc to visit and study in preparation for her Baptism. Juvy and I hiked to a nearby village to visit Michelle and Melanie with their families. They are from the Ladignon Church family in Mindanao and have both married in this place. Lyn Macatiag hosted us in her home for the three days. Her brother Jun Ducay was also there and helping her to operate her small store. He had been there for about two months. He was very helpful and appeared free of vices that have plagued him for years. He has a 13 year old daughter who is dying of Leukemia and since my visit he plans to bring her there for the remainder of her life. Lyn is hoping to have time to teach her about the gospel before her death. We pray for her interest to develop.

The last evening there was a gathering of the interesting including Jane (daughter of Gemma Cumbaas) and Annie. Since the two of them are planning baptism we devoted the study time to preparatory subjects. Annie is planning to help with my trip in March and April. I traveled back to Manila and on to Apalit, Pampanga to meet with the Mojeca family. Sister Remy Mojeca has been operated and treated with chemo therapy for nearly a year. She suffered uterine cancer and is not expected to live too long. She has become too weak to sustain the chemo therapy and is resting at her daughters home. Maricel

and her husband were gracious hosts and we shared old videos from the 1980's and 90's by using my laptop. The singing of hymns was very comforting to Sister Remy. We held a Bible study in the evening on the topic of "Jehovah" the name of God and it's story. This led into related topics as well.

The next day I traveled back to Manila and met Brother Joey Yutangko. We bought some stock of Bibles and proceeded to Paranaque to the home of Sister Helen Diaz. She is of failing health having kidney dialysis twice a week and was only strong enough to endure a short Bible study on the name of God.

We traveled in the afternoon to Tanza, Cavite to meet with Sister Maricel Respondo and her family. Her husband has been taught by her and she needed some help with reviewing Bible topics. One neighbor also attended. The topics were basic and many as we simply answered any question with reading scripture.

After we left there Maricel notified me that her mother is failing in Cagayan province and we added her to our prayers. As the years progress the number of elder and sick brethren increases and I consider it a privilege to visit them and share a bible study and prayer. I plan to go to Cagayan in April to visit the believers there.

Next we traveled to central Manila to find to young members of the Church in Paco, where they are working as maids. Lynlyn Teodoro and Dayday Canja are members in Antique and have been helpers in my trips many times. It was a pleasure to spend a few hours with them and I hope to see them in a few weeks at the seminar in San Jose, Antique. We stayed one night in the home of Brother and Sister Butch and Estrella Macaraya in Baseco and shared old pictures and videos with them. They are continuing to have regular Bible studies each Sunday in their home.

Our next trip was to Bulacan province about two hours to the north to find the Bulawan family whom Brother Joey has been teaching on several occasions. Mr. Roberto Bulawan and his wife as well as niece, Shirley, entertained us and after eating we had a three hour series of Bible study. Shirley did the reading and Joey did the explaining of the verses. Topics centered around resurrection. When, How, and who?

Rod Bulawan arrived at 9 pm. He is blind and works in Manila to support the family as a massage therapist. We had two hours to study for his benefit and I conducted that in English so that we could cover more verses in the short time. Shirley listened as well. He is very well versed in the Bible and agrees with our teaching. He has learned considerable from Joey and others. He quotes scripture quite rapidly in English as well as tagalong language. He had not gotten full understanding of the kingdom of God. We taught him and he memorized the seven elements of a kingdom and supporting verses.

For those who don't know the seven elements of a kingdom are 1) King 2) Co rulers 3) Subjects 4) Throne 5) Capital city 6) Laws and 7) Territory. Without these important components you do not have a kingdom. All of these elements relative to the Kingdom of God are found in Scripture. We look forward to continuing the work with Rod and his family.

Going south again we passed through Manila and on to Paranaque to the home of Keenex and Liclic Abon. Keenex asked many questions. In the evening she asked for a topic on baptism, which she is preparing to undertake. We covered the stories of John the Baptist, the baptism of Jesus, The commandments for baptism, and the stories of the early Church and why baptism includes membership in God's Church. In the morning she asked more questions and by the time we left planned to have her baptism next February.

Then we continued on to Cavite Province. In Bulihan we went to the home of Sammy and Emmy Infante. We sat down with Sammy after lunch and offered him the chance to ask any questions. Due to the popularity of barley grass in some herbal food supplements he asked to know what the Bible says about barley. We did a concordance study and read every verse that has the word barley. Almost every time the word is connected to a major story in the Bible. So, as we read we told the stories. Like the story of Ruth, Gideon, and the feeding of the five thousand by Jesus. Sammy was quite inspired by this kind of study and confessed that he was quite confused about whether or not Jesus was God.

We shared a few Old Testament verses from Deuteronomy, Exodus, 1 Samuel, and Isaiah then read the stories of the conception and birth of Jesus from Matthew and Luke's accounts. He asked about the statement in John 10:30 "I and my father are one" We let him read the context and related text in John 17:3,20,21. Then he suddenly declared with a beaming smile. "Larry, you baptize me" He said that he had been looking for a simple way to understand the relationship of Jesus and God all of his life. And now he understood it. We continued to teach him about the natures of man, God, and of Christ as well as other topics relative to God's plan for salvation. He is also planning to have his baptism in February.

Our next trip brought us to Batangas City, Batangas. We searched out and found Brother Carlos who was baptized two years ago and is from Ilocos Sur. He was very excited to see us and we shared about the doctrine and tried to share with different members of his son-in-law's family. We will see if any seeds will grow.

Yesterday we crossed the water to Mindoro Island and traveled to Soccoro to visit Sisters Patring and Reggie Guerrero. Reggie has married recently and we were hosted in both homes. In Patring's home last night her daughter, Burnadette, a college student and 19 years old asked many questions relative to committing your life to God and having a good relationship with him. Joey contributed many verses and explanations.

Today we met at Reggie's in town for a Bible study. I reviewed with reading the covenant chapter in Joshua 24, then we went on to read some of the stories of the judges and why Israel suffered at times and was blessed at others. Burnadette stayed on after the Bible study to read the words of the New Testament which encourage us to learn from the examples of Israel. Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 10, and Hebrews 4 among them.

After that Brother Joey said goodbye and took his trip home to Queson City near Manila. He was wonderful help and a great traveling companion. We will try to do this again when he has time.

Tonight I will travel to Panay Island by boat and tomorrow join Sister Elizabeth Madorable in Igang, Valderama in working with the progressing Church of God Believers in Antique Province. Thanks to all for your prayers and also to those who contributed to our Bible funds. So far we have purchased five Bibles at a cost of about \$9.00 each. Two were left in San Jose, one with brother Carlos in Batangas one with the two girls in Paco, and one here in Mindoro.

In Christian Love,
Larry Rankin

Report from Antique

Greetings from Antique, Since last report I traveled overnight from Mindoro by bus and boat to Caticlan, Kalibo on Panay Island. Then by bus to Valderama, Antique. Started breaking in my mountain muscles after meeting Sister Beth Madorable in the market. We climbed the short but steep hill to Igang where many of the brethren gathered to greet me. I discussed my plans for my work in Antique with the brethren and informed those who would participate. Since Antique is a rugged mountain Province, we need good hikers to participate. And we would have to carry even our rice this year as the harvest is late and most places do not have enough. So, I was very glad that Ronel Fransisco, 24, and Gege Fransisco, 19, volunteered. Ten adults and 25 kids gathered for the evening Bible study. I began to rebuild my Ilongo and Caray-a dialect by teaching the story of Israel from Psalms 25. Then we reviewed John 6 and the relationship of Jesus to the leaders of Israel in his day. Followed by an understanding of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

The next morning I wrote out over 350 questions for the stories in the book of Genesis to help guide Cheche and Meme in teaching the children here in Igang. I received a call that one of the members in Manila had been injured by accident on his motorcycle and arranged for a small amount of help to be sent to him. In the evening I challenged the kids in Bible drills for two hours. The following day we had to shop for supplies and prepare for the hike. I shared with brother Mauricio about European and American history and how it affected God's people. In the evening I taught the story of Moab then the stories of the Judges from Othniel to Jethro.

On the morning of the 15th of December with Ronel, Gege, Meme Ignacio, and Bebe Dubrei, I made the four hour ascent to cross the mountain range into the top of the San Remegio valley. Our first stop was Danao. We were received well in the house of the local official. Two women dropped by and asked if we would be having a Bible study later and we sent them out to inform people that we would be offering an open forum, accepting any Bible question. About 8:00 pm about 50 people gathered in the small house to listen. We open with teaching about the "Soul". Questions brought us to most of the major doctrines including, Spirit, Death, Gospel, Kingdom, Resurrection, the Plan of the ages (chart), Inheritance, and the destruction of the wicked. There was an overwhelming invitation to return, and we gave tracts to several of them however there are no Bibles among them yet.

The next morning we hiked on up to Tigatay, where we met Moving Cabaya and family. Last year she met us in Tiblaga at her father's home and invited us to return to Tigatay, where we had a Bible study in her home once in 2003. Right away we shared with her the supporting verses for understanding the one true God and the nature of Christ. Her sister visited us later in the day and we covered the basic doctrines for her also. I assigned my companions a project of memorizing the chart of the ages, and in the evening we held a Bible study for the small community of three families on the Abrahamic promises.

We hiked another 12 KMs to Banbanan in the rain, and stayed in the home of Brother Domingo Fransisco. A few hours were consumed with him in comparing the faiths of several different organizations. We also shared with him the story of the Church of God in the Philippines. We taught the stories of the life of Jacob from birth till the birth of Benjamin for the young people. In the evening Bible study we were asked if drunkards will be saved? And "will going to worship on Sunday save you?" A follow-up question was "can the sins of the deceased be repented of by the family and therefore forgiven?" On Sunday I asked each of the ten young people who were hiking with us for the rest of the trip to prepare and teach a story. Ronel Fransisco taught the story of David and Goliath and set a good example for the others. Next Bebe Dubreia taught the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Micah Salvador taught Cain and Abel. Meme Ignacio taught the story of Ruth, Gege Fransisco taught the story of Shadrack, Mesheck, and

Abednego, Rayray Ignacio the story of the Axe that swam, Janice Mariano the Tower of Babel, and Bonna Mariano "Esau sells his birthright. This is to help them practice teaching so that they will teach their younger siblings in future years. My follow-up topic was how God guides us by our talent to do his work and how he blesses us for doing it. We closed with prayer for the work that we all are chosen to do.

In the afternoon we visited the home of Bro and Sister Casiano Fransisco and Sister Diday asked for more story of the Church of God in America and in the Philippines. This topic included the reasons why individuals left their former faiths to stand for the one true faith. In the evening Bible study Diday asked "Does God have a house in Heaven?" We also taught for the youth the stories of Solomon, Rehoboam, Elijah, and Elisha.

Our next hike was over the high mountain into the southern half of the San Remegio Valley. It took about six hours to reach Nadsadan. Our hosts were former contacts but had not entertained our Bible studies. Our Bible study with them included the basic explanation of death and salvation with an eternal inheritance on the earth according to the Abrahamic promises. The response was very positive and the invitation to return was very well backed up with hospitality. They even provided us with rice for the next three days of travel.

From Nadsadan we hiked up, up, and farther up to Tiblaga to meet with Abel Cabaya and his family. Abel was the preacher who taught Bible as a Baptist for many years all through the mountains of Antique. He is 80 years old now and blind. His elder brother came and the two of them asked many questions about the Millennium, Resurrection, and eternal age. Abel and I spent the afternoon cruising through many Bible topics. He wants to learn as much as he can. His daughter, Bebe, hosted us. I shared the story of the conversions of many of his relatives from orthodox belief to understanding the true faith. He expressed great desire to attend our planned seminar, but due to the blindness could not make the 25 mile hike. In the morning we continued with other Bible topics till 10 am. We left with prayer and tears.

We stayed one night in Culabao where we visited old friends from former years who seem not so interested to have Bible study; however we took advantage of every opportunity to teach tidbits that will help them. The Pastor of the Christian Church asked some questions and I shared with him the story of the origin of his faith parallel to the progress of the true faith in America. In the evening we were invited to hold a Bible study in the home of Juvy (Fransisco) Cabaya. We covered the nature of man and related topics, however a drunken man attended and the interruptions were sufficient to force us to stop early. We planned to continue the following night.

The next day we hiked without our bags up the mountain to Maoray, a village near the boundary of Iloilo Province to assess whether or not a previous visit had caused interest. We barely arrived and were invited into a home where they insisted that many people in the village were excitedly waiting our return and that we had to provide an evening of Bible study for them. So, some of the group hiked back to Culabao to retrieve our bags.

We held a short study of the story of Abraham in the afternoon and in the evening we were invited to use one of the local chapels. We taught the story of the promises to Abraham and the gospel message that those promises are for the whole world. When we showed that the righteous would inherit the world as an eternal inheritance, we met some opposition. Some of the people were very interested and others tried to derail the topic. As we left the chapel, two men approached me and said that they believed our teaching because it was biblical. As we walked to the house to sleep another asked us to be sure to return. One of the young people joined our hiking party the following morning to attend the seminar.

We hiked across another pass and down to Walker where we were entertained very well by Merly Cabaya Gomez (the daughter of Abel) and her husband. We met the group of Brother Shane Davis there (ten also) and shared our stories with them. They were also hiking a different route through the mountains. In the evening I asked Ronal and Meme to repeat the stories they had taught a week earlier without reading the Bible. This forces them to memorize the stories and makes the teaching more interesting to the listener. Teodorico Gomez and family came. He asked, "Is it important to have communion?" We let him read the verses in Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11 after which he concluded it is. In the afternoon we held a Bible study for several neighbors. Teodorico and Nary Cabaya asked the questions mostly about the nature of God and the Nature of Christ. In the evening a new listener attended and so we covered the basic plan for Salvation and Gospel of the Kingdom.

The next morning Shane's group went on to the city to prepare for the seminar. Each of the young people repeated the stories they had been assigned in the morning. Two young ladies that had been with Shane joined our group also. And we asked them to make presentations that they had prepared. Rayray Soberano presented the "nature of man." Jesa Ortega told the story of the flood. Eduardo Cabaya who had attended the previous night returned to ask for more follow-up on the nature of God. He was having trouble because of the mistranslation in the Illongo Bible of Titus 2:13, which says that Jesus our savior is the great God. He also was convinced by John 10:30 that Jesus is also God. Hopefully our discussion provided him with a clear understanding. He was very appreciative and returned for the evening lesson. Maryjane Balinia came and asked, "How can we learn the Bible?" We told her with maps the story of Abraham and tried to build some foundation for study. She plans to attend the seminar.

Bong Mariano came and asked a variety of questions mostly about the Kingdom of God. In the evening Merly and a young man named Randy sat with me to ask many questions that required the use of the chart to understand. We also covered the Prophecies of Daniel 2 and Matthew 24, with support from Luke 21. Merly was very interested to learn about the signs of the coming of Jesus. Last we read Ezekiel 38 and a few other verses about Armageddon. Later Bong returned with four young men and they asked me to explain the nature of man and the soul.

The next day we said goodbye and hiked four hours to Lapac to the home of Saling Fransisco. It was December 25 so we had to tolerate the activities of the community, but we shared with several individuals and in the evening the little house could not hold those who came to listen. Saling was able to help with explaining the Kingdom and the Judgment. We covered the basic Gospel and God's plan for salvation. Several of them planned to attend the seminar.

The next morning we left at the crack of dawn to hike to Bugo (about two hours) where we caught the ride to San Jose to attend the Seminar in Barrio house resort where we had a real bed to sleep in and more than a thousand calories per meal. I suffered with a cold during the entire 10 days of hiking, but God blessed us with a tremendous amount of interest in his word.

The seminar is three days and there are nine lessons being taught about the topic of Salvation. About 100 persons are attending. Teachers include Shane Davis, Bobong Calambro, Cyrus Catanus, Mauricio Canja, Alex Fransisco, Basilio Mariano, and Nonoy Ignacio. We are using these opportunities to encourage the people here to practice and become teachers of the Word. Our prayer is that they will realize each and every one of them that they are chosen servants of God to preach the gospel to their neighbors. Two baptisms are planned for the conclusion of the seminar also. Thank you to all those who have prayed for our success. We feel that God's blessing is upon the work.

In Christian Love,
Larry Rankin

Christian Workers' Seminar

Equipping The Church For The End Times

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

April 15-20, 2012

We certainly hope you can join us during our annual Christian Workers' Seminar. It is a wonderful opportunity to see spring rise in the beautiful Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. It is a great time to be away from your normal life routine to renew old friendships and to build new friendships. It is a chance to learn and grow together in our ability to serve others through local church ministry.



CWS attendees during a 2011 general session

Equipping The Church For The End Times

Class & Teacher List

Healthy Administration of the Church Joe James	The Strategy for Matthew 24:1-14 David Krogh
The Kingdom Message in Crisis Anthony Buzzard	Apologetics in Times of Apostasy Sean Finnegan
Equipping the Church Through Crisis Times Scott Ross	Christian Education from Home and Church Rebekah Martin
Equipping the Church For Tribulation Times Wally Winner	My Passion for Missions and People Kim Raper
Building Intentional Relationships in Troubled Times Andy Cisneros	Having Christ in Crisis Dan Gill
Healthy Churches in Hard Times Gary Burnham	Victory in Christ Vince Finnegan
	Historical Implications for the Future From the Past Kent Ross

Local Attractions:

*Dollywood
&
Dolly's Splash Country*

Dixie Stampede

*Ripley's Aquarium
of the Smokies*

Country Tonite Theater



*Enjoy a show and explore
the local attractions!*

Equipping The Church For The End Times

CWS April 15-20, 2012 ■ Daily Schedule

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
7:00 AM		Early Morning Bible Study Dan Gill	Early Morning Bible Study Dan Gill	Early Morning Bible Study Anthony Buzzard	Early Morning Bible Study Anthony Buzzard
8:00-8:50		Breakfast on your own	Breakfast on your own	Breakfast on your own	Breakfast on your own
9:00-9:25		Morning Devotions Joe Myers	Morning Devotions Joe Myers	Morning Devotions Joe Myers	Morning Devotions Joe Myers
9:30-10:20		1st Session	1st Session	1st Session	1st Session
10:20-10:30		Break	Break	Break	Break
10:30-11:20	Optional Worship Service	2nd Session	2nd Session	2nd Session	2nd Session
11:20-11:30	Optional Worship Service	Break	Break	Break	Break
11:30-12:20		3rd Session	3rd Session	3rd Session	3rd Session
12:30-1:30		Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:30-3:00		Sharing Time College & Conference	Sharing Time Missions	Evening Out! Dinner on your own	Sharing Time ABCKE
3:00-5:00	Registration in Convention Center	Free Time	Free Time		Free Time
6:00-7:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner		Dinner
7:30-9:00	Equipping and Training During Turmoil Vince Finnegan	Motivating during Madness Joe Myers	For And To The Next Generation Gary Burnham	OPTIONAL 7:30 PROGRAM The Crazy Church: Weird Ideas That May Work Wally Winner	Casting Vision Joe Martin

Childcare provided during morning classes (9:30-12:20) and evening service (7:30-9:00)

The 39th Annual Christian Workers' Seminar 2012

Equipping The Church For The End Times

April 15-20, 2012

Located at **Holiday Inn**
3230 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868

Registration Deadline is: 3/15/2012
Check in time is at 3 P.M.

Check In Date - 4/15/2012

Check Out Date - 4/20/2012

Do you give the Church of God General Conference permission to put your address, phone number and e-mail address in a CWS 2012 directory to be distributed to all attendees? **Please circle: Yes / No**

Last Name _____
First Name (s) _____ / _____

Children:

Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____

Room Occupant (1) Name _____

Room Occupant (2) Name _____

Room Occupant (3) Name _____

Room Occupant (4) Name _____

If you have special dietary requirements, please notify the college/conference staff and we will work with the hotel to try to accommodate you.

Prices

(housing, meals, program)

Children (in parent/guardian room)

0-2 No Cost

3-11 \$109.00 \$25.00 Deposit

12-18 \$179.00 \$25.00 Deposit

Adults

(PER PERSON RATES)

1 per room: \$559.00

2 per room: \$379.00

3 per room: \$315.00

4 per room: \$285.00

Saturday Night: \$130.00 (per room)
(car show weekend)

**\$50 deposit PER ADULT is due
at the time of registration
to receive early discount.**

Adults (x) _____	\$
Children (x) _____	\$
Saturday Night Stay	\$
Subtotal	\$
Any Discounts/Deposits	\$
Registrations Postmarked After 3/15/12 (add \$40 per adult / \$25 per child)	\$
Total due at Christian Workers Seminar	\$

★5 Easy Ways To Register★

1. E-mail: info@abc-coggc.org
2. Call toll free: 800.347.4261
3. Complete and mail registration to:
Atlanta Bible College
PO Box 2950
McDonough, GA 30253
4. Fax your registration form to:
678.833.1853
5. Web registration: www.abc-coggc.org
(click General Conference; then click Events)

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