

#### The Sabbath Sentinel May-June 2019

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#### CGOM-A Heart For Service to God's Children

Your editor had the distinct honor of being invited, and the pleasure of attending, the CGOM (Churches of God Outreach Ministries) Elders and Stewards Conference this year. That Conference convened March 23rd through 25th at the Tulsa Church of God facility in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The Conference was attended by people from around the United States and from Canada. Participants who could not be present from around the world submitted their ideas related to the purpose of the Conference. The main focus of that conference was "Where does CGOM go from here?"

A bit of historical review would be in order to understand the context of the Conference. CGOM was established with the mission of providing "leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

To reach the goal of their Mission Statement, CGOM organized as a voluntary association of independent local assemblies—not a church, but a support organization to assist local congregations with the goal of taking the Gospel message to those around them.

CGOM, under the early leadership of Pastor Lawrence Gregory, created its flagship magazine "New Horizons." It further published the CGOM Newsletter, the TODAY Newsletter, created or secured numerous documents designed to help local congregations with spreading the Gospel, and a bible correspondence course for people interested in learning more about the Bible. A website, CGOM.org, was commissioned and continues to be a relevant force in providing information about God's Way of life to all who request it.

CGOM has also sponsored sites for the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23) annual festival, celebrated in the Fall.

CGOM from the beginning has operated from the position that the early Church was not under the control of some remote corporate structure but that

each congregation handled its own affairs, selecting their own elders, teachers, deacons and others from among those who are already performing the duties, while making themselves available to support and serve brethren in other areas. There is certainly ample biblical support for this type of structure.

The Conference, the first one in many years, was convened to discuss the future of CGOM. As it opened the statement was made wondering whether CGOM had run its course due to declining access to the website and requests for information. However, we were to see the Hand of God moving on the group taking it to a new and more useful role in the Church before the Conference ended.

A part of the discussion during the opening night was to consider what would become of the magazine, New Horizons, when James McBride, editor, now in his 80s, is no longer able to put the magazine together. Would there even be a need for a hard copy magazine going forward? There were many serious questions about the future that needed answering.

The directive of the evening was to propose a question to the attendees for consideration and discussion at the next day's meeting. That question was "What would be the game plan for re-energizing CGOM?"

The following morning the Tulsa Church of God fed us before we were given a lot of facts by the leadership. CGOM now has sent information into 131 countries, including countries in Africa and India. Requests in the U.S.A. consist primarily of the elderly and those incarcerated. We were told about how the prison industry creates many hurdles to getting the information to prisoners who request it.

Finances were discussed and showed that CGOM is financially solvent but reserves are lower than they had been in the past. Credit was given to servants in the Tulsa Church of God for their labor of love supporting the CGOM efforts. Eventually, the question of the day arose: "What is the strategy for passing the

roles of service in CGOM on to the next generation?"

We were treated to a discussion by one local steward and another from Canada about the "mobile generation." By this term they meant that the younger generation works more from a smart phone than from a computer screen and that whatever is to be done needs to be done with that in mind.

The website has to become "mobile friendly." CGOM needs to develop an App (computer program designed to run on mobile platforms) to make it easier for this generation to not only access information but to make it a friendlier read for them, i.e., where the article, book or other information appears on their screen without needing manipulation to view.

To maximize the effort to get video messages out, CGOM needs to utilize current platforms that will store and play relevant videos with one tap of the screen.

Another idea to increase the outreach of CGOM was to cross congregational lines, i.e., to utilize the talents of the many brethren in various congregations to perform not only CGOM functions but to assist sister congregations as the needs may arise.

The new efforts to be made were characterized as "throwing the seed," an allusion to the parable of the sower and the seed. CGOM's renewed efforts would be to find better ways to deliver the seed to the fertile ground of the up and coming generations.

During the evening meeting after Sabbath it was decided that the leadership needed to be revamped to include members from different areas of the world. The final general meeting on Sunday morning brought consensus that CGOM would take a new

direction by utilizing the newer technologies available and suggested some newer leadership members who can bring that effort to fruition. It was recognized that this effort will not be something that happens in a few days but across months as the most effective methods were applied.

After the end of the Conference the new leadership team met to discuss exactly how the changes can be implemented. Digitization of all current materials into "html" format for phone screens seemed to be the first task needing accomplishing. Your editor, as representative from the BSA and Houston Church of God, offered to help turn the correspondence course into digital files for that purpose. The BSA is honored to be assisting CGOM it its renewed efforts to preach the good news.

The new leadership team for CGOM who attended the leadership meeting are: Richard Gawith, Jerry Schut, Marc Theriault, Matthew Steel, Steve Andrews and Jeff Henderson. Potential new members pending their agreement to take a role are: James McBride, Julian Cruz and Len Labunetz.

The Conference could easily be seen to be being guided by the Father and His Son because it went from wondering whether there would be a future role to play in the Church to being re-energized with a new and improved direction of service aimed at its continuing goal of supporting the association churches and at producing information in a way that the younger generations can, and will, access.

Your editor was encouraged for all of the Churches as he watched God's Spirit move among the brethren seeking to do His Will in a more effective way.



#### The President's Corner



## Did Constantine Influence the Sabbath?

Kelly McDonald

Among the more commonly held beliefs in the Sabbath community is that the Roman Emperor Constantine changed the Sabbath or passed laws prohibiting its observance. Those who hold this view typically claim that it occurred at the Council of Nicea in 325 or as a law passed in 321 AD.

Before we delve into this subject, it is important to understand how proper research is done.

When we undertake a scholarly review of a subject, it is best to start with the primary source material available to us. A primary source is a person or object that records historical facts about the time period being examined. If someone just writes a book or article and claims "Constantine changed the Sabbath" then that claim is only valid if it is supported by primary source evidence. Otherwise, hearsay becomes the basis for fact and no objective truth can be established.

From primary sources, we are able to draw a degree of certainty about events that happened in a specific time period. The more primary sources we have, the greater degree of certainty that can be achieved. When it comes to Constantine, the primary sources are plenteous and are broken down into three categories: 1) the laws of the time period, 2) preserved writings about the council of Nicea, and 3) contemporary writers who recorded Constantine's reign.

The primary sources regarding laws passed during the reign of Constantine are chiefly contained in two annals of Roman Law. The first is called the Codex Theodosianus, and it was issued by Theodosius II in 438. The second is the Codex Justinianus, which was issued by Justinian in the 530s. These codices are compilations of Roman laws categorized by subject

matter. English versions of them are available (I have access to both). Among the laws issued by Constantine, not a single law mentioned the Sabbath.

The Council of Nicea is the second primary source usually cited in regards to this subject. To view the proceedings of this council in Latin (with some notes in Greek), one must view volume 2 of Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection edited by Joannes Dominicus Mansi in 1759. It is listed under the title "Sanctum Concilium Nicaenum Primum Generale" starting on page 635. To review details from this council in English, read A history of the Christian Councils from the Original Documents by Charles Joseph Hefele, translated into English by William R Clark, second edition from 1883. The historical background starts on page 231, but the canons (with commentary) are found on pages 375-435. Not a single canon from Nicea referenced the Sabbath.

A third source for Constantine's reign is the historians who lived in his time period. The historian Eusebius wrote a brief history about Constantine's life and reign called "The Life of Constantine". Another man named Lactantius, who was the personal tutor for Constantine's son Crispus, also recorded some events. These two primary sources do not allude to the Sabbath as it relates to Constantine.

#### **Setting the Record Straight**

Let's set the record straight. Firstly, no one can change the Sabbath. Think about that assertion for a moment. The Sabbath has been and ALWAYS will be Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. No one can change that eternal truth. Secondly, primary sources

from the time period indicate that Constantine did not attempt to ban or forbid Sabbath observance. How did confusion arise concerning this subject? There's misunderstanding about this subject because Constantine took actions that indirectly affected the Sabbath. Let's explore this further.

On March 7, 321 AD, he approved the "day of the sun" as a rest day for the empire. Translated into English, the first part of this law reads: "All judges, city dwellers, skill workers, and the offices of all should honor the venerable day of the sun and rest. However, those placed in the country freely serve the fields of culture…" (CJ.3.12.2: Imperator Constantinus).

In the Latin manuscript, the phrase translated as "venerable day of the sun" is venerabilis dies solis. Constantine's decree was based upon his admiration for the celestial body we call the sun. People in the country (farmers) were still required to work on the day. Notice that no worship is mentioned in the law. The decree did not mention God or Jesus Christ. In fact, the day after this Sun-day law, he enacted a law which allowed pagan soothsayers to enter buildings where lightning had struck (CT: 16.10.1). This decree upheld the ancient Roman custom.

On July 3 of the same year, he issued a second law which freed slaves from labor on Sunday and suspended certain legal proceedings. Sometime after these Sun-day laws, he ruled that the marketplaces were to be open when the special Roman market days (called nundinae) occurred on Sundays (Orelli, Inscriptionum Latinarum, 140).

Many people are not aware that Constantine called for the Council of Nicea to be held. He oversaw its proceedings. During it he pronounced that Christians should not keep Passover like the Jewish people. Instead, he conveyed that people should follow the custom of the Roman Church, who celebrated Passover on Sunday (Euseb. Life of Constantine, 3:17-18, Socrates, Church History, 1:9; Theodoret, Church History, 1:9). The Roman Church used this yearly worship on Sunday as the reasoning to push

Sunday rest every week. Despite this decree, significant numbers of Christians still honored Passover in the Biblically prescribed way (see John Chrysostom's work Eight Homilies Against the Jews).

Lastly, the historian Eusebius wrote that Constantine required all his troops to pray on Sunday (which he called the 'Lord's Day' – Life of Const, bk 4:18-19). We have no corroborating evidence to verify this claim by the writer. Constantine continued to honor others gods decades into his reign and he was not baptized until just before his death. Moreover, Eusebius was an ardent opponent of the Sabbath (Odom, "Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity", 292). When put together, these details make it difficult to conclude that Constantine would force anyone to pray to one God on Sunday.

Constantine's two Sun-day laws created a government-mandated imitation day of rest beside the true Sabbath, which was still being observed. Thus, an entire generation of Christians grew up honoring the seventh-day Sabbath because of the Bible but also resting on Sunday because it was an enforced civil law. In other words, people were socialized to rest on Sunday.

Another important development during his reign was the interweaving of the Roman Empire with the Roman Catholic Church. These events opened the door for more stringent Sunday laws with supposed Christian significance starting with the reign of Theodosius I from 379 to 395 (we reviewed this in the Jan-Feb edition of TSS). Despite these influences, most Christians continued to honor the True Sabbath into the 400s AD (see Augustine, Letters 36 and 82 and Socrates, Church History, book 5, chapter 22).

We can conclude that Constantine did not attempt to ban Sabbath observance. Some of his decrees and political activity indirectly impacted the Sabbath over a long period of time. He laid the foundation for later Roman Sunday laws supported by the Roman Church. As the Roman Church became more influential in the political realm, they persuaded temporal authorities to war against Sabbatarians. This process took place over a number of centuries.

# **BSA Fellowship Meeting!**

When? May 24th through 26th

Where? Church of God Big Sandy,

**Big Sandy, Texas** 

Theme: Sabbath History:

**Our Past, Present and Future** 

**Some Featured Speakers** 

\* Phil Arnold \* John Merritt

\*Royce Mitchell \* Bryan Burrell

If you would like to come and join in the fellowship, please RSVP to:

sabbathmeeting@gmail.com.

We want to be sure to have plenty of accommodations in place for everyone attending. All of the Sabbath keeping brethren—and those who would like to know more—are invited to join us!

# ELDERS OF THE SCATTERED CHURCH

Part 1

Darl E. Arbogast

Everyone who has read the Bible knows that God has 24 elders around His throne, and that Moses appointed 70 elders over the tribes of Israel and their families. The Sanhedrin consisted of three parts, the chief priests, elders, and the scribes. Also in Jewish society older experienced men who were village or city managers were called elders.

It is clear from New Testament scriptures that the church should have elders. But what is an elder? How many of the Church of God congregations today know where a true elder is, or who a true elder is? How many brethren from the many groups of God's Church know the scriptural procedures for "recognizing" one, then calling on elders in every church?

Scriptural instruction to a believer is clear, call for the elders of the church, and let them lay hands on them, anoint them with oil, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick. James 5:14 NKJ "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

This is a service that is vitally needed in God's church congregations today, but several problems have gotten in the way. An important set of questions is "who is an elder; where are they, and how do you find them?" Is someone an elder because a faraway minister who barely knows him decided to 'anoint' him as an elder? Does God honor such actions?

In the first century church, elders, by virtue of their maturity and spiritual experience were appointed by the brethren to have the spiritual care of, and to exercise oversight over the church congregations; it was not done by a far-off minister.

The elders were appointed according to the visible

evidence of their already having the spiritual qualifications. More than one of these, if possible, were to be appointed in each local congregation.

Elders were to be, what we call today, a senior citizen—a man of mature age and experience, a man who is blameless, husband of one wife, faithful submissive children, a faithful steward of God, not self-willed, not easily angered, not an abuser of alcohol, not prone to violence, or under handed dealings. An elder must be a lover of hospitality, an associate of good respectable men, always sober, fair, gracious, and temperate. He must be holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught.

A valid question naturally arises from all of this.

How can anyone know all these things about someone unless they have regular and consistent contact with them?

Only the local people who live nearby and worship with and fellowship with such a person would be qualified to judge his character to this extent.

There is no way any corporate church leader, living in a different state many, many miles away, and who is barely even acquainted with his local following could know someone to this degree.

This leaves a wide area of service unattended in a lot of the local churches today. Those corporate church leaders should not appoint elders, they are not qualified to do so except on the word of others who may make a recommendation. According to scripture that is the way it is to be done. So it is that this whole area of service is largely ignored.

What has led to this problem and what is the solution?

Following is a synopsis of the cause and recommendations for a remedy that will get God's Holy Spirit flowing in the churches and allow Him to turn loose

the gifts that are still being stifled by hierarchical bondage.

#### **CHURCH ELDERS**

Today it is apparent that most of the members of the various congregations of Seventh Day Church of God groups share an assumption concerning elders of the church that long ago was adopted straight from the practices and procedures of the Roman Catholic Church by the Worldwide Church of God. The King James Bible uses selected phraseology, which can be slanted to make this possible.

It is true that first century congregations of the Church of God were Sabbath keepers, and that succeeding generations of the Church of God spread far and wide around the world observing the Sabbath.

Apparently the Waldenses from the mountains and valleys of Europe during the middle ages retained a firm belief in a Seventh Day Sabbath, the Christian Passover and taught them vigorously to their children.

Also it is apparent from the writings of several authors, that following the Protestant reformation, a group of Protestants got together and rebaptized each other as their final act of protest against their former affiliation, the Roman Catholic Church.

Also it is recorded that of these people a number which previously had Sunday worship forced on them for centuries and who were now known as (Ana-Baptists), (rebaptized) or "Baptists" were friends and acquaintances, possibly even relatives, of some of the Waldenses whose numbers were then in decline.

These Sabbath keeping Waldenses taught the truth of the Sabbath to some of the Baptist Protestants. Stephen Munford who early on, in about 1664, came to America was the Pastor of the Bell Lane Seventh Day Baptist Church in London, England, prior to moving to America.

All those "rebaptized" now dubbed as Ana Baptists did not however convert to the seventh day Sabbath. So it was that when Stephen Munford arrived here in America he met quite a number of Sunday

observing Baptist people.

He began teaching them the truth of the Sabbath and in a short while he persuaded a number of them and began the foundation for the Seventh Day Baptists in America.

#### THE ASSUMPTION

It is widely assumed and taught by leaders of several Church of God congregations today that a church elder is a job title and a rank in a line of authority in the church.

It had been taught for over half a century in the Worldwide Church of God that an elder must be ordained to that "assumed" office by someone who was himself ordained, by another who was ordained, in a continuous line all the way back to Herbert W. Armstrong who founded the Worldwide Church of God.

This is a very erroneous concept and is taken right out of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the Worldwide Church of God taught and practiced what was called "Apostolic Succession," many of those successor groups today carelessly assume and go along with it as well. This error is still very much alive and practiced today by some of the corporate Church of God groups. They assume that God's Holy Spirit is always passed from hand to head, by installing or ordaining or elevating as they call it. They assume this puts someone into an "office" of their congregation, or corporation. Assumed to be God's stamp of approval on it (again, through the Holy Spirit which is assumed to be passed from hand to head) in this continuous line from the Apostles all the way through the Waldenses, to Herbert Armstrong, and on down to the church today is also assumed!

Several things are wrong in this picture! Herbert Armstrong, by his own admission was baptized by a Baptist minister, who was probably a Sunday observing minister. In his autobiography he did not specify this; he didn't mention laying on of hands to receive God's Holy Spirit at his baptism, either.

To be overly generous one could surmise that perhaps that minister had been a Seventh Day Baptist,

and if that were the case, there is a very remote, but scant possibility he could have been in this line of "Apostolic succession." However, the overwhelming preponderance of the evidence we are given is against that thought.

In June 1931, with the assistance of a Seventh Day Adventist minister, Robert L. Taylor, Herbert Armstrong was officially ordained to the ministry, with all the Church of God members who were present laying their hands on him. They laid their hands on his head, shoulders, chest and back as he recalled it in his autobiography. (No church of God elders are mentioned. Only officers of the conference who may or may not have been ordained ministers, and probably were not, are mentioned.)

How much credibility would be given to a scenario such as this today? Just how gullible are we supposed to be?

Is it not God who calls? Is it not the creator who places certain inherent talents and abilities into people? Is it not He who gives His Holy Spirit to those He is commissioning or ordaining? Is it not He who does the "anointing" and opens the eyes and the mind to understanding? Herbert Armstrong's ordination was valid, apparently!

Is it not arrogance on the part of some of today's corporate church leaders to say God cannot commission or give recognition to someone as an elder in his congregation unless and until the corporate leader puts his stamp of approval on it? The scripture is plain, by their works and by their fruits you will know them! These men must be exhibiting the fruits of God's Holy Spirit! As they are serving their local congregation they are elder members of God's church, not a novice. The local people should make the recommendation and participate in any "recognition" ceremony, if one is conducted.

Certainly they should be "recognized," and people should be advised to consult them with their local problems and questions. This is an area of service, not an office to which one is installed by a corporate church leader. It is not a rank in a hierarchy of ministers: it is the church members who should lay on their hands and recognize these elders officially as

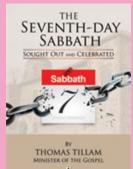
Testimony of the Fathers

By J.N. Andrews

In this book, originally published in 1873, J. N. Andrews presents unanswerable evidence that clearly shows that the change from the seventh day to the first day as Sabbath was not authorized by the Apostles, and much less by

God Himself. It was done by men, little little, until the whole world followed after this man-made commandment.

B259 \$10.00 + \$2 shipping



The Seventh-Day Sabbath Sought Out and Celebrated

J. N. Andrews

The Complete
Testimony of the Fathers

of the First Three Centuries Concerning the SABBATH and First Day

By Thomas Tillam

Originally published in 1657, "The Seventh-day Sabbath Sought Out and Celebrated" has been out of print for more than 350 years. Wilderness Publications has reprinted this important historical work for the benefit of all Christians.

Thomas Tillam explains that the final great controversy in these very last days will be between the Saints and the Man of Sin over the Seventh-day Sabbath.

B260—\$12.00 + \$3 shipping costs

servants of the congregation.

The concept of apostolic succession, the way it was practiced, is one of the most absurd beliefs ever to come out of the Worldwide Church of God. It seeks to impose limits, and put controls on the workings of God's Holy Spirit. It does quench and put limits on what God can do with His own people. When they are intimidated and told they are not to do these things without approval from "headquarters" this is a disservice to God and the various congregations of His people. Why would God give various ones the gift of healing for example, when they are not allowed to exercise these gifts under orders from some corporate church leader?

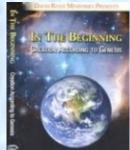
Some church leaders just naturally seem to want to control, rather than be content to lead and inspire and teach the Bible! God's Spirit is quenched and spiritual growth is stifled by such actions.

Some church leaders can never relax enough to understand that we don't have to fix a problem until we have one, if it's not broke don't fix it, and don't do damage control unless there is damage. The greatest fear is fear itself! Such church leaders are what is known today as control freaks.

Attempting to box up God's Holy Spirit in this fashion and dole it out personally prevents the free flow of services that could be rendered to a flock of God simply because there is not always a corporately ordained individual around to do counseling and anointing.

This is tantamount to neglect from the top down. Any converted Christian having God's Holy Spirit is qualified to, and should be encouraged to pray with and anoint a brother or sister who is sick. When a person is sick anointing, praying over, and laying on of hands are exercises of Christian love and duty.

In the early church, elders were older men who had been in service in the church a long time, men who had matured in spiritual experience. These were necessary then and are again today with so many of like mind scattered, and so few have a local minister.



# In the Beginning Creation According to Genesis

The Holy Bible contains a historical record of the

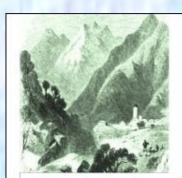
world from the time of creation.

That record begins in the book of Genesis, which in the Greek language means "Origins."

In the original Hebrew it is known as "B'reshit" — Beginning — and in the very first sentence, the foundation of the whole Bible, we learn that "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." So let's start at the VERY beginning.

\$15 + Shipping

Israel of the Alps



The Israel of the Alps: a history of the persec...

A stirring 3-part, 85 minute DVD, documenting the History of the Waldenses who for over a thousand years, through intense sufferings, clung to the Word of God, many losing their lives. Many early Waldenses were Sabbathkeepers. Filmed in the Alps.

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Local congregations seem to flourish and do better when there is an older spiritual brother in their locality and they can meet together at some central location with someone who is tried, and true, and faithful. Someone whom they have recognized and chosen as their local elder because he has proven over time to be faithful to Christ and the Church.

Members of a congregation should decide who it is to be and when it is to be before someone is brought before the congregation to have hands laid on him and be recognized officially as their elder. This is not a job title; it is a recognized area of service.

Every corporate church leader should send out word to his supporters in every state and ask them to look among themselves for a plurality of men such as this if any can be found, and then he should give his blessing and support to those who are chosen by the brethren to be their elders. (Seventeen times in the New Testament, elders in the plural are used of church elders.) The brethren should lay hands on them recognizing them as such. Perhaps

then we would see more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in evidence in the church congregations.

Unfortunately, with all the paranoia that has swept through the Church of God groups, there does not seem to be that much trust and in many local congregations with confidence given to local church supporters by their corporate heads in our present era, many want the support but do not allow the local people to mature spiritually.

A Laodicean indifference has oozed in slowly like a glacier and there seems to be little spark or zeal in the vast majority of members, and no prod to wake them up on a local level; they come, do church, and then go home. That is about the extent of their involvement with God, so far as anyone can see. Repentance, however, needs to begin in our hearts, all the knowledge, all the books, all the writing can never take the place of putting Christianity into action.

Part 2 will continue in the June edition.

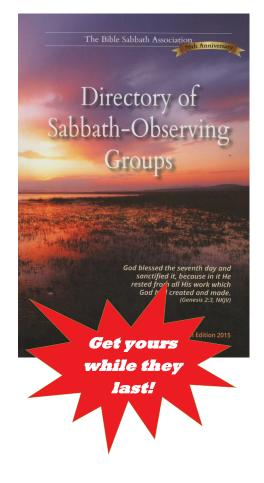
The Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups (2015 edition) gives locations and contact information for thousands of churches in North America plus these added values:

- Summaries of 7 classifications of Sabbath-keepers: Baptists, Adventists, Churches of God (and Worldwide successors), Sacred Names, Messianics (Hebrew Roots), and unaffiliated groups.
- Cross listings of congregations--by classification and by state.
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70th Anniversary Edition--with Sabbath-keepers pledge relating us to Christ (Messiah) and to one another.

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# IS KEEPING THE SABBATH ALL THAT MAKES US UNIQUE?



Paul Syltie

We are called to an impressive responsibility in this time of history, to be the people of God who are preparing to inherit all things (Revelation 21:7). As such we are called the elect (Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Romans 8:33; 11:7; Colossians 3:12; etc.), the firstfruits (Romans 23; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4), the ecclesia (I Timothy 3:15; Acts 11:26; 12:1; etc.), the called and chosen (Matthew 20:16; 22:14; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14), those written in the Lamb's book of life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12, 15), and brothers of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). Having God's spirit within us carries with it unique responsibilities that so few in this world possess:

- 1. The requirement to keep God's law, not just in the letter but in the spirit (Romans 7:6; 8:4).
- 2. The need to exercise the spiritual gifts that have been given to us through that spirit (I Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4-8; I Peter 4:10).
- 3. The fulfillment of God's will throughout our personal lives in terms of our servile work, prayer, study of His words, mediation, and fasting (II Timothy 2:15; 3:16; Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 4:11; 5:17; James 5:16; Ephesians 4:28; Psalm 1:2; 63:6; Philippians 4:8; Acts 13:2; 14:23).
- 4. A zeal to reach out and serve our fellow man in every way we can, first to the brethren but also to everyone we meet when expedient (Galatians 6:9-10), as ambassadors of a nation that has yet to arrive (II Corinthians 5;20), and as witnesses to that future Kingdom and the Eternal's way of life (Acts 14:3; 22:15; 26:22,) to practice "... pure religion, undefiled ..." (James 1:27).

That is a mighty calling, one not reserved for the faint of heart but for those whom God knows can

survive the rigors of Satan's and the world's assaults, and come through the fire not burned up, but instead refined and purified (I Peter 1:7; Revelation 3:18). No one who is lukewarm or hesitant of this calling could possibly survive the onslaughts of a world very unfriendly to the ways of the Creator and Sustainer (Luke 9:62).

#### The Sabbath — A Sign

All of us have come to recognize that, perhaps more than anything else, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days is a major — perhaps the major — thing that differentiates us from the Sunday-keeping world around us. Some would add our shunning of Christmas, Easter, Halloween, birthdays, and some other celebrations which are of pagan origin. Indeed, the Fourth Commandment has been termed the "test commandment," because keeping the day at the proper time and in the proper way separates a person from modern-day Sunday-keeping "churchianity." Oftentimes a Sabbath keeper is discriminated against by employees who want access to a person's work seven days a week. In countries that are predominantly Moslem, Buddist, Hindu, or of some other majority religion the problem can become even more serious, even life-threatening. In China, present-day leaders are exercising a vendetta against home fellowships, whether they be Sabbath or Sunday keeping, attempting to force the faithful to attend State-sanctioned fellowships for the sake of controlling the people. In countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, being a Sabbath keeper, much less a Christian of any persuasion, brings the risk of imprisonment, torture, and very possibly death.

Despite the threats from political and religious leaders, God's ecclesia understands well the calling they have received to be "... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (I Peter 2:9-10; see also Exodus 19:5-6). When God tells us to do something, we do it, as Christ did the will of the Father when He walked the earth (John 6:38). It is the doers of the law that are justified, not the hearers only (James 1:22; Romans 2:13).

#### The Torah tells us,

"Speak also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Truly my Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you; everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death, for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed'" (Exodus 31-17; see also Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 26:2; Deuteronomy 5:12).

The Sabbath is a sign [Hebrew ot, "sign, mark, symbol, signal or event that communicates"] between God and His people forever [Hebrew olam, "everlasting, forever, eternity"]. It is a signal that communicates to the world around us that the keepers of the day are special and singled out, whether the person recognizes this truth or not. A Sabbath keeper is different. He or she indeed stands out in this world, like a light shining brightly to all the world, as Christ said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your

good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16; see also Luke 11:33).

#### Yet, the Sabbath Is Just the Beginning

Notice what Jesus said in Mathew 5:16 above: "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works ...." Keeping the Sabbath is one of those signs, indeed, but is it the only sign? Not hardly! Immediately after this statement, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Then in verse 19 He makes the point that "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven."

Therefore, while keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days identifies us as God's people, that is only one part of the light which shines from us to the world. It is the entire law — the Ten Commandments — that comprise this light that beams forth from us. Let us look closely at these wonderful laws of living that make us what we are.

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Honor



your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. Your shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:2-17).

These words were etched in tablets of stone at Mt. Sinai, but once the spirit of God enters a person these very laws are then etched into one's very heart.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 8:8-12; see also Jeremiah 31:31-34).

This is the law within our hearts that turns us from evil and enables our entire being — our body,

mind, and spirit — to "... be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 5:23). It is the law which we are to do and teach, and thus "... be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Jesus summarized these commandments as two "great commandments":

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40; see also Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18).

Then, in a sweeping statement, Jesus gave a "new commandment" in John 13:34-35, "... that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." The Greek word for new in John 13:34 is kainos, meaning "new in character or mode," not that the law is removed or done away, nor has our love for one another changed, but with the spirit of God within us, and with Christ's examples of love, we can now practice agape love in a more profound and proper way.

Agape love as a "new commandment" is emphasized in Scripture in different ways, such as in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25:31-46, where those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took in strangers, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and those in prison actually did these good deeds unto the Father Himself. True religion which is undefiled is "... to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). We see here a pattern of selfless service to those in need, especially to those who are helpless, an attitude of reaching out beyond the self and considering others to be better than oneself, as is Jesus Christ's and the Father's very nature (Philippians 2:1-5). It is the very substance of the fruits of the spirit spelled out in Galatians 5:21-22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Part 2 will appear in the July edition.

MRACLE AT HIROSHIMA

#### Bill Lussenheide

I'm going to share an amazing story for those of us in the Sabbath Keeping community, that I'm willing to bet you have never heard before! An article by Ryoko Suzuki posted in the Adventist World Magazine inspired me to write about this.

On August the 6th, 1945, the first atomic bomb ever used in combat was dropped by a four engine B29 superfortress named the Enola Gay, and piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbetts and his crew.

Not well known at all, there were Christian believers in Hiroshima during World War 2, although in Japan, Shintoism and Buddhism are the primarily religions, and all other Christian Denominations only account for 0.7 percent of the population even now in the present day.

Nonetheless, on August 6th, 1945, there were 20 Keepers of the Sabbatarian Faith, living in Hiroshima on that important historical day.

All twenty of the Sabbath Observing Christians, members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church who were in Hiroshima, Japan, were miraculously saved from the atomic bomb which exploded there on August 6, 1945.

#### Here is some of the back story...

Asako Furunako, a professional news reporter interviewed many of these miraculous survivors. Not one was injured in the slightest, nor suffered the effects of radiation. They all lived less than just ONE mile away from the central impact of the bomb.

The Atomic Bomb destroyed everything within a 1.2-mile radius: the temperature of the ground reached an unimaginable 11,000 degrees!

Everyone within a 2.5 mile radius was burned to death. A tremendous wind, at the speed of 1000 miles per hour, greater than even the speed of sound, was generated, causing cement buildings to collapse and broken glass to fly up



to 10 miles away.

The radiation from the bomb was unbelievably strong, causing those exposed to it to lose all bodily functions and their cells to undergo a kind of cellular suicide. Between the blast itself, the resulting fires throughout the city, and the radiation burns, some estimate that upwards to 100,000 citizens of Hiroshima lost their lives.

#### But...

...In the midst of all this devastation, was it really possible that not one Sabbatarian Brother or Sister, even the one living within just six tenths of a mile of where the bomb hit, was killed, or even hurt?

During her investigation the journalist heard the testimony of church member Mrs. Hiroko Kainou, who, surprised by the sudden fierce wind, fell to her knees and prayed. Though every piece of glass in the house blew out, she came away without a single scratch. All of the other 20 brethren in Hiroshima were also kept alive and safe. Though six of them have since passed away from old age, at the time of the interview, all of them still alive were still faithful.

Iwa Kuwamoto, was within .62 miles of the bomb site when the bomb fell. When she crawled out from under the fallen buildings, she witnessed the giant mushroom cloud that was obscuring the sun and shrouding the land in darkness. She tried desperately to help her husband, an unbeliever at the time, to get out from under the fallout, but the raging fires were threatening to close in on them. Taking her husband's hand and crying, she said, "The fire will be here soon. I can't do anything more, so let's die here together. God knows everything. Please believe in Jesus Christ. I cannot save you!" But her husband said, "No. I will die here, but you must escape for our children's sake. You must somehow get to safety and find the children. Do it for the children!"



Once again she said, "No, there is no way I can escape from this fire. I will die here with you." But her husband would not listen to her. He said, "No! I'll be OK here. For a long time I rebelled against my mother and you, and I wouldn't believe in God. But now I do believe in God's salvation, so we can see each other again. Please, please go and find the children. Please, just go!" So, with burning tears and a breaking heart, she left her husband there, and, pouring water over herself along the way, she escaped the flames, and was eventually reunited with her children.

Tomiko Kihara was a doctor with her own clinic at the time. She had been on night duty the evening before and had arrived home at 2:00 a.m.; she was sleeping when the bomb fell. Although she was less than one half mile from the center, nothing fell on her, and she was not hurt in any way. Shocked by the blast, she ran outside to see what was

# Did you know...?

that you can aid the BSA effort to promote the Sabbath and a Spirit of brother-hood among all who keep God's Sabbath by becoming a **BRIDGE BUILDER or a PILLAR** with the BSA? Besides the monthly or annual membership dues which you can find inside the front cover, you can also help with various functions designed to help bring a fellowship of brethren across denominational lines. Some of the opportunities are: Advise and/or consult with the BSA Board of Directors; visiting and interacting with other Sabbatarian fellowships; speaking on behalf of the BSA; Promotion and/or distribution of BSA materials and services; and assisting with this magazine, the BSA Facebook page, Twitter and other social media on projects defined by the Board of Directors.

happening, but all she could see was the burned and blackened ground. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, she ran to a hospital on the edge of town, and there for one week without rest or sleep she worked for the victims as one of the very few doctors still alive in the city after the blast. In the weeks and months following the tragedy, she continued to use everything she had to help the victims, and was able to witness to many in this way.

This is a truly remarkable story; I'm sure you must agree—bordering on the miraculous! Nearly one half the population of Hiroshima died that day and from radiation in the months that followed. Yet out of 20 Sabbath Observers not one died during or after.

I did the math for this and the odds of 20 being not affected when ½ of a population are , is far greater than ONE THOUSAND TO ONE. I just do not believe it was random luck.

Some worry what may befall us should the end times come upon us. Is there a place of safety? Can God protect us where we are at? Some kind of Rapture?

We are given this admonition in Luke 21:36

"Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."

#### BUT SHOULD WE BE UNNECESSARILY FEARFUL?

Luke 12:31-32 tells us:

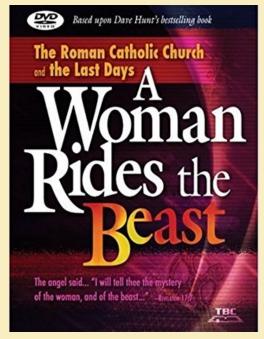
"But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added unto you. Do not be afraid, little flock, ..."

Psalm 91:7,8

"A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look..."

Keep the faith, remember the Sabbath Day, and always trust that the Good Shepherd knows and watches over his sheep!

Bill Lussenheide attends with the Sabbath observing United Church of God in Redlands, California and is a regular presenter there.



A 58 minute DVD based upon Dave Hunt's book. In Revelation 17, the Apostle John describes in great detail the characteristics of a false church that will be the partner of the Antichrist. Was he describing the Roman Catholic Church? To answer that question, Dave Hunt spent years gathering research and indisputable historical documentation (*primarily Catholic sources*) and providing information not generally available.

Ask for A Woman Rides the Beast — \$20.00 Contact BSA home office to order.

# The Rest of the Story

#### Aubrey Duncan

The Christmas season provides us a great opportunity to shine for God. At that time of the year, people tend to be more receptive to spiritual things. Not that they are particularly more spiritual; but rather, simply because of the name of Jesus is mentioned and the world-wide celebration of His birth, hearts are open to spiritual things. People are so much nicer and kinder. They are in the spirit of gift-giving and receiving. If you offer them the gift of a Truth filled book, they will happily accept it.

This is not a time to debate the merits of whether He was born on December 25th, or to confront others on the pagan origins of the day; but rather to take full advantage of the opportunity to let men and women know of His love for them, for their need to give their lives to Him, and to accept Him as their Lord and Savior from sin. The devil may have intended this season for evil and to serve him; but I thank God that He has made it for good in that it provides so much opportunity for men and women to come to know Him. Whatever each of us may do is a matter of conscience between us and our God. I simply would like to share the rest of the story with you.

The apostle Paul teaches that whosoever preaches the Gospel, in whatever manner, and for whatever reason it is preached, it is profitable and effective. He declares, "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea,

and will rejoice" (Philippians 1:15-18). I rejoice with the Apostle Paul and with the whole world that the Savior was born, who is Christ the Lord. Even those who do not call themselves Christians are rejoicing and celebrating His birth. No one can escape the sentiment of the season as the name of Jesus is lifted up at Christmas time of the year.



I thank God for His birth. I thank God that he is no longer a babe in His mother's arms. I rejoice in the fact that the Babe of Bethlehem is God's supreme gift to the human family. I rejoice that He grew up to live a sinless life and left it as an example for us to follow His steps. I praise God that He paid the ultimate price, His life as a ransom, for my sins and yours that we may have a right back to the tree of life. I am excited that He has given me the blessed hope of eternal life in His resurrection from the tomb on the third day. I praise God for Him being my heavenly High Priest that I can come to Him with my joys, sorrows, and petitions. I look forward with joyous anticipation to His soon return as Lord of Lords and King of kings.

The Bible gives us the only accurate account of the origins and history of humanity. It teaches us that

our Creator gave us our perfect, wonderful world with all its unspeakable beauty which He created by His word out of nothingness. He created our first parents in His own image. He then gave them His Sabbath rest as a reminder of who He is...theirs and our Creator. Then something most tragic happened. The Bible says that our first parents disobeyed God's command. This is called sin and it separates us from our Creator. The apostle John writes: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). The apostle Paul gives us the remedy: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

So, four thousand years after sin entered the picture, the gift was presented. The apostle Matthew records: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him" (Matthew 2:1-2).

Who were these wise men of the east? Most scholars agree that they had come from Babylon. Babylon was perhaps the greatest empire of the ancient world. It was a place of wealth, knowledge, and magnificence. It had a highly developed culture. They were well versed in Science, Mathematics, Philosophy, Astronomy, Art, Architecture, and all the other known disciplines of the human experience. The wise men were also learned in the Hebrew Scriptures, having studied them from God's people who were captives in their land for more than seventy years. They discovered from those Scriptures that: "There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17).

On that memorable night some two thousand years ago, having studied both the Hebrew Scriptures and the movements of the heavenly bodies, the wise men followed what they believed to be that star that would lead to the promised Messiah. The star led them to the Babe in Bethlehem. Not only did they find Him; but Matthew records that they brought precious gifts to honor Him. Says he: "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped

him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11).

Those were no arbitrary gifts. They were prophesies of who the receiver was and what He would do on our behalf to ransom and reunite us back to God. In them we find the rest of the story. They gifts were figures of God's plan of Redemption for our wretched souls. The entire Plan of Salvation was wrapped in those precious gifts.

Let us, first of all, take a look at the myrrh. In the book of John, chapter 3, the Bible tells us that a very respectable, important, and highly revered Jewish leader came to Jesus, in secrecy, in the darkness of the night, and engaged Jesus in a conversation about salvation. That man, Nicodemus, was stunned and astonished at Jesus' simple presentation of the doctrine of salvation. It defied his scholarly learning and belittled his philosophical presuppositions. Jesus' simple answer must have bewildered Nicodemus for not only its simplicity; but also for its profound impact upon his mind. Jesus told Nicodemus, and is telling us today that in order to enter God's kingdom, we must be born again.

At first, Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant. But now, 3 ½ years later, Nicodemus fully understands the plan of Salvation and embraces the Lamb that John talked about (John 1:29). He now comes openly, revealing to us the meaning of the myrrh that the wise men brought from the East. John records: "And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of MYRRH and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:39-40). Paul tells us: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The myrrh represented His sacrifice, the price that He would pay for our sins so that we can be reunited with Him. The wise men of the East were prophesying of this glorious event in the gift of myrrh to the Babe of Bethlehem.

Now let's take a look at the frankincense. The apos-

tle Paul, in trying to help his Hebrew brethren truly understand the meaning of the ancient Jewish sanctuary and sacrificial system, writes to them in the book of Hebrews. Having given them a thorough explanation of the symbols and types of the earthly sanctuary, the center piece of their economy, he then concludes: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2).

In that ancient system of rites and rituals, frankincense was the main ingredient with which other spices were mixed to form the incense that the high priest used in the services. And what did he use it for? Moses tells us in the book of Exodus, the 30th chapter, beginning at verse 7. He writes: "And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning" And what was that incense made of? Moses continues: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Take unto thee sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure FRANKINCENSE: of each shall there be a like weight" (Exodus 30:34). John the Revelator, in prophetic vision, tells us what he saw in the heavenly sanctuary which is the reality represented by the earthly tabernacle in ancient Israel: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne" (Revelation 8:3).

So, what does the frankincense represent? It represents the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ as our heavenly High Priest, not only to hear, but to answer our prayers. It represents the work of Jesus Christ, as He intercedes on our behalf in the work of sanctification that we may be ready to go home with Him when He comes. The apostle Paul encourages and consoles us: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace

to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

What about the gold? What was it prophesying about? Gold is the most precious and costly of metals. It over layered everything that was used in the ancient Jewish sanctuary. It covered the altars, the posts, the seven branch candlestick, and the mercy seat. The utensils were all gold. Everything in and about the ancient sanctuary was pointing to Jesus and His ministry for salvation for the human race. The gold represented his sovereignty over all creation.

In ancient times, gold was the gift that someone would give to a king in recognition of his position of power and ruler ship. For example, we read about the Queen of Sheba coming to visit King Solomon. The Bible declares: "And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much GOLD, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart" (2 Kings 10:2) Jesus, our Savior is the king of kings. That's what was prophesied by the gift of gold.

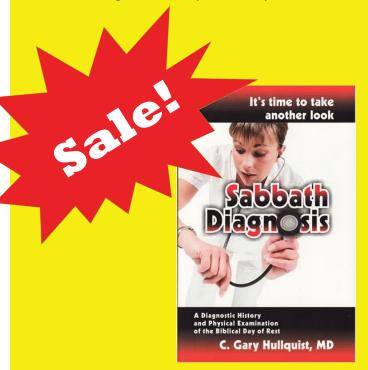
As you go through the unavoidable Christmas season annually, I say to you rejoice. Rejoice as you let somebody know that the Babe of Bethlehem has grown up, lived a sinless life as an example for us to follow. Let them know that as the wise men from the East had prophesied with the myrrh, that He gave His life as a ransom for you and for them. Let them know, that as the wise men from the East had foretold of His High Priestly ministry with the gift of the frankincense, they can come to Him and talk with Him about all their burdens and cares. Let somebody know that He is coming soon, as the wise men prophesied with their gift of gold, as King of kings and Lord of lords to take us home to spend eternity with Him in a place where there will be no more death, no more crying, nor sorrow, nor pain, for the former things would have passed away.

I plan on being there, what about you?

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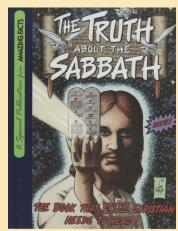


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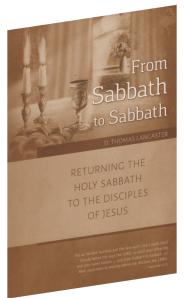
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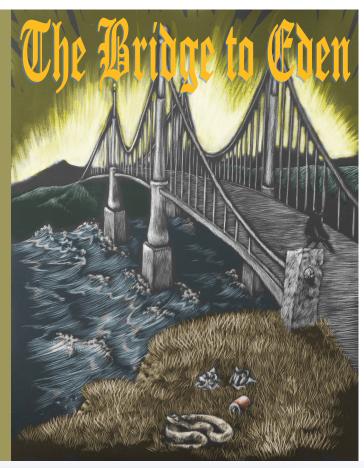
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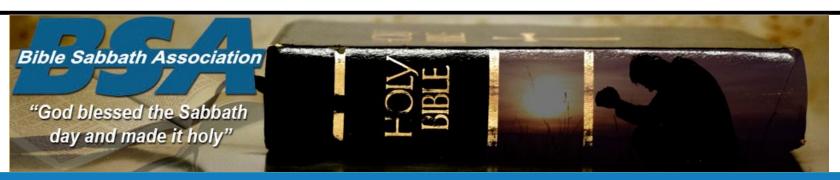
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