

The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2010



Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand gives sanctuary to tens of thousands of Christian Karen people fleeing Burma (Myanmar)

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath"

The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2010 Volume 62, No. 4 Issue 544

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Our Cover: Mae La Refugee Camp in Thailand. This camp houses many thousands of Christian Karen people who have fled from Burma (Myanmar) where the military government has vowed to wipe out all traces of Christianity.

(Photo: Karen Ministry (USA & International))

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The Preeminence of Christ, Part 4

The Book of Revelation



In our three previous installments of “The Preeminence of Christ” we have examined how Christ is viewed in the writings of the apostle Paul, primarily in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, in the book of Hebrews, and in the gospel of John. One thing that stands out in all New Testament writings is that the writers described Jesus in the most exalted terms. He is portrayed as Creator, Judge of the world, and eternal — all God-like qualities. As we begin our examination of the book of Revelation, we will see Jesus described in the same terms as we have seen in other writings.

The description of Christ in the book of Revelation differs from John’s portrayal in his gospel. In John’s gospel he allows Jesus to describe Himself. John permits us to listen in on Jesus’ conversations with Jewish leaders. Jesus is bold in presenting His God-like qualities to the people of His day. It was His description of Himself as God’s Son and “I am” that provoked the Jewish leaders to seek to kill Him.

In the book of Revelation the descriptions of Christ come in the form of visions of His exalted nature and glory. The apostle John is allowed to see in vision both things in heaven and events on earth that will bring Christ back to our planet to rule over the kingdoms of men. This is not the revelation of John; it is the revelation of Christ: “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants...” (Rev. 1:1).

In addressing “the seven churches which are in Asia,” John greets them in the name of Christ “who is and who was and who is to come” (1:4). He presents Christ as “...the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth...” (1:5). “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him... (1:7).

Compare John’s introduction in chapter one of Revelation to Zechariah’s vision in Zechariah 14, “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming.... Then the LORD [*Yahweh*] will go forth and fight against those nations.... And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives,...” (v. 1, 3, 4). “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth” (v. 9).

The apostle John makes it clear what he is referring to in verse 10 of chapter one. When he says, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day,” he was not referring to Sunday or Sabbath. He was referring to the Day of the

Lord. The comparisons he draws with Zechariah 14 make that fact evident.

The Vision of Christ

At this point in the introduction to the messages to the churches, Jesus begins to speak for Himself, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty” (v. 8). This is a very direct reference to Isaiah 41:4, “I, the LORD [*Yahweh*], am the first; and with the last I am He.” Jesus repeats this same comparison in verses 11 and 17. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last,...” (v. 11). “...Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (v. 17-18).

The comparison that Jesus draws between Himself and *Yahweh* of the Old Testament cannot be missed. This comparison is intentional so that we will have faith in Him as the Almighty. It is He as *Yahweh* who will return to earth to rescue mankind from destruction and set up His kingdom to rule all the nations of the earth. The wonderful thing that He offers us is a seat on His throne to rule with Him. The key for us as Christians is to realize that only Jesus has “the keys of Hades and of Death.” It is only through Him that we will triumph over death and the grave.

The Vision of God’s Throne

Chapter 4 contains a magnificent picture of our Heavenly Father’s throne. However, in this vision John’s description of the Father is very mysterious. “And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance...” (v. 3). We are not allowed to glimpse the Father’s face. We see only the overwhelming brilliance of His appearance. This is very much in keeping with Jesus’ statement in John’s gospel that “No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father” (John 6:46). However, Jesus also said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father...” (John 14:9).

In verses 10 and 11 of chapter 4 we see the 24 elders casting their crowns before the throne saying, “You are

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God's Boardroom (Part 1)

by *Kenneth Westby*



God is a master delegator as well as a master designer and creator. He has organized his vast heavenly realm as it pleases him. This diverse and awesome administration of heavenly beings is supremely functional; they have job descriptions and they do their jobs. Recall that the book of Revelation portrays twenty-four enthroned “elders” surrounding God’s heavenly throne. They are not there for looks. They offer advice and do things as do the four living creatures positioned even closer to God’s throne. This divine council ranks high among the “hosts of heaven.” God has not only delegated various and great authorities to these heavenly angelic powers, he has already begun to delegate far superior authorities to man.

It’s only logical. Would not the One who organized the complexity of all life forms, all matter, all the billions of stars and planets in the billions of galaxies in this limitless cosmos, be himself, organized? It seems so, and the Bible is not silent about his heavenly host of super-beings. But neither do the writers of Scripture obsess over mysterious angelic matters, knowing the sparseness of God’s revelation concerning the heavenly administration. Then what insight has God allowed us to have?

The prime focus of Scripture is God’s dealing with man; mankind has a limited need to know the inner workings of God’s angelic executives, warriors, administrators, protectors, messengers, and the myriad responsibilities shouldered by “many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand” (Rev. 5:11). Nevertheless, God want us to know they exist to serve him and to serve his creation—especially those created in his image. Our purpose should always be to know all we can know about God and his kingdom. Catching a glimpse of God’s glorious angelic kingdom will create awe and inspire worshipful admiration of His Majesty.

Here we carefully enter the Spirit World, an invisible, dynamic domain teeming with myriad mysteries, most beyond our discovery. We can only marvel that it exists and rest confident that it is under the control of its designer, Yahweh, Lord of Creation. But one need not look to the ether world of spirit to find and marvel at complex mysteries. Our living physical world abounds in mysteries in every scrap of its God-given genetic code. Appreciating that fact may help us accept the possibility of a spirit world that also defies all explanation.

The Mysteries of Physical Life

It is futile to search for a materialistic explanation for extra-human spirit creatures. In fact, it is proving futile

for the best of science to understand how material life diversifies, forms, and comes about. About 20 years ago hopes were high and science giddy that at hand was the key to understand it all: the Human Genome Project—the largest scientific enterprise in the history of mankind. Genomic science has been going wild sequencing genes and mapping the elegantly “simple” Double Helix confident of unlocking the secret of life and decoding the genetic instructions strung out along its intertwined strands and understand its programming.

Well, things have not turned out as expected. Instead of “knowing the secret of life” science is baffled. Each week, with new technology and thousands engaged in the process, genomic science generates megabytes of basic biological data. They have sequenced hundreds of genomes encompassing a full range of the diversity of life from bacteria to plants, to insects, to fish, to mammals including the chimpanzee and man. Yet genetic science now seems to know less about diverse life forms now than believed possible twenty years ago, and is more puzzled the more it discovers.

“The most obvious of those ‘puzzling questions’ ...is the ‘gene number dilemma’ epitomized by the most astonishing revelation of the Human Genome Project—that we have roughly the same number of genes, a modest 20,000 as the millimeter long worm, *C.elegans*, that is fashioned from just 1,000 cells (compared to our 60 trillion) in all, has neither a circulatory system nor internal skeleton and a life expectancy of just two weeks. Since then every newly sequenced genome has added its own further twist to this surprising lack of any correspondence between gene numbers and organismic complexity—where flies and chickens, it emerges have a third fewer genes than the diminutive *C.elegans* while, at the other extreme, plants such as rice and soya bean have twice as many.”¹

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Defeating the “Religious Spirit”

By Brian Knowles



I don't know about you, but I believe there is such a thing as a “religious spirit.” It can be a mere mentality or an actual spirit that manifests itself in obsessive fanaticism. The net effect of such a mentality is to turn others off to God and true faith. The religious spirit is not limited to Christianity — it can manifest itself in any religion. It can also find expression in political ideology, science, religious humanism or even medicine.

We've all known excessively religious Christians who indiscriminately follow television personalities as though they were in the place of God. This “follower” or “true believer” mentality encourages cults of personality that can wind up in a People's Temple Jim Jones style cult that proved fatal for hapless hundreds. In the latter half of the twentieth century, we saw a number of such cults arise — the “Moonies,” the People's Temple, the Branch Davidians and Heaven's Gate to name a few.

These groups were egregiously fanatical. Others are less overt but equally obsessive. Typically, they have circled the wagons around the teaching of some domineering leader upon whose every word they hang. All that drips from the glorious, self-important, leader's lip is viewed as Gospel. Followers accept his or her teaching as though it were straight from God himself.

The leaders of such groups will often claim that their teaching comes directly from God. To challenge them is to challenge God. Followers are cowed into cringing submission. The noose of cultic rules is drawn ever tighter. The faithful are forbidden to have contact with “outsiders” — even if they happen to be family members. Leaders take charge of their followers' money, their time and their activities. Most importantly, they commandeer the *minds* of the faithful.

This excessively religious spirit of blind fanaticism can be seen in ardent environmentalists (i.e. eco-terrorists), save-the-whales people, animal rights activists, Islamic terrorists, neo-Nazis, left-wing socialists, health food

fanatics, fanatical communists and other nut case groups. It is natural for people to want to rally around a cause — but what if that cause is destructive and evil? Evil is as evil does.

There are scientists who have made a religion out of atheism. There are doctors who play God with people's lives. There are “climate change” loonies who would bring the world's most powerful economy down to third world status in the name of reducing our carbon footprint.

The spirit of irrational fanaticism is omnipresent in today's world. It can manifest itself in the most sincere Christian who lives in a constant posture of looking upward and mouthing spiritual utterances, to the most murderous wild-eyed jihadist who is obsessed with filling the world with indiscriminate death and destruction.

Throughout history, there have always been obsessively religious fanatics who have wreaked havoc on the civilized parts of society. Instead of advancing mankind, or emancipating it, they have plunged it into dark ages of superstition, torture, unjust imprisonment, the illegal confiscation of property and untimely death. Helen Ellerbe writes: “The dark side of Christian history has been, and continues to be about the domination and control of spirituality and human freedom. Orthodox Christians built an organization that from its inception encouraged not freedom and self-determination, but obedience and conformity. To that end, any means was justified. Grounded in the belief in a singular, authoritarian and punishing God, orthodox Christians demanded singular authority and punished those who disobeyed,” — *The Dark Side of Christian History*, p. 185.

Every religion, including the secular ones, has its dark side. Every one can lead to an obsessive religious spirit and mindless fanaticism. Follow the money, follow the power and study the control freaks of the world and you'll soon see what's happening. Here are some scriptural guidelines for avoiding possession by, or involvement with, the religious spirit.

Keys to Avoiding the Religious Spirit

1. Is it idolatrous?

Any movement that puts anyone or anything ahead of God is idolatrous — avoid it. God says, “I am the Lord [YHVH]; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols,” (Isaiah 42:8). True faith is centered on God, Yeshua and divine instruction — not on human personalities, movements, ideologies and cults — environmental or religious.

2. Does it tend to freedom or bondage?

“To the Jews who believed in him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,’” (John 8:31-32). If something is truth, it does not bring you into bondage. Jesus came to “set the captives free” — not to enslave them to anything or anyone. If we are Jesus’ disciples (*talmidim*) then we are his “bond slaves” and no other’s. “Don’t you know,” wrote Paul, “that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey...?” (Romans 8:15). If we submit to no bondage but Christ’s, then we will be free indeed.

3. What are the fruits?

Said Jesus, “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit,” (Matthew 7:18). Whether something is good or bad can be determined by what it produces (Matthew 7:20). If a leader, a movement, an ideology or even an idea, produces bad fruit, avoid him, her or it. If it produces death, destruction, bondage, loss of freedom, enslavement, economic collapse, pollution, the destruction of the traditional family, Ponzi schemes, etc. etc. avoid it. In fact, if you have the means, actively oppose it.

4. Beware of isolation

Many religious cults seek to isolate their members from the world. It is true that Paul warns against unhealthy alliances with unbelievers. He cites Isaiah 52:11 to make his point (II Corinthians 6:14-17). But Paul’s instructions are qualified by Jesus’ own teaching: “My prayer is not that you should take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified,” (John 17:15-19 NIV).

Jesus did not want his followers physically separated from the world. Rather, he sent them into the world to preach the Gospel and to be light and salt. In Greek, there is a play on words here: “I do not make request that you should *take them out of the world, but that you should take them out of the evil,*” (cf. *The Englishman’s Greek New Testament*).

As Christians, we do not participate in Satan’s domain or the evil that it produces. In our lifestyle, we are separate, but physically we live in the world — not in an isolated compound near the Dead Sea, or Guyana. The word translated “sanctify” is *hagiazō* in the Greek. It means to “make holy, consecrate, sanctify,” (Bauer’s Lexicon, p. 8). Bauer’s says the last sentence of verse 19 could be translated “I dedicate myself for them [the disciples].”

Jesus lived in the world and he fully participated in it occupationally as a carpenter, socially as a Jew, and spiritually as a rabbi. He engaged people at every level. He had done so from childhood. His Father did not hate the world — he loved it, so much so that he gave Jesus as a sacrificial gift to save it (John 3:16).

It is our possession of the truth of God that sets us apart. We march to the beat of a different drummer. We take our cues from heaven, not from the spiritual darkness of this world. We are here collectively to preach the Gospel, live Kingdom values, and to set a Christlike example. We do not hide our light under a bushel. We do not cringe in a corner, geographically separated from those to whom we are called to serve. Jesus again explains his relationship with the world in Mark 2:15-17: “While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the ‘sinners’ and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?’ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.’”

The classes of people mentioned in this story are interesting in their own right: tax collectors, sinners, the sick, physicians and Pharisees. There is a chapter in Joachim Jeremias’ book *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* entitled “Despised Trades and Jewish Slaves.” It contains several lists of “despised trades.” Included were physicians, tax collectors and publicans. Also on the list were tanners (Acts 9:43) and sellers of purple (Acts 16:14). Jesus came to minister to the sick, the broken, those in bondage, the demon possessed and sinners of all stripes. The church that grew up around his disciples grew up around

just such people — “not many mighty, not many noble” were called. Jesus and his disciples did not isolate themselves from these people; they freely mixed with them and ministered to them. It was of such people, and worse, that the church was made up (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Summing up

The religious spirit is a plague in the world. It is destructive, isolating, fanatical, off balance, crazy-making, alienating, distorting and it invites the “darkness of this world” to express itself. It manifests itself in Christian cults, fanatical Catholics and Protestants, in all of the world’s religions, in the global warming and environmental movements, in animal and gay rights movements, in feminism, in Neo-Nazi groups, in evangelistic communism, in terrorism, in the natural health movement, in political ideologies, in science, in the medical profession *ad nauseum*.

It represents a loss of balance — a closing off of any other possibility. It is exclusivist and isolating. It says, “my way or the highway.” It is “zeal, but not according to knowledge.” It is obsessive and fanatical, closed minded and bigoted. It needs to be fought and defeated at every turn.

Brian Knowles is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website (www.godward.org).

“I’m spiritual, but not religious?”

In a recent CNN article writer John Blake examines the trend among young people who believe that they don’t need organized religion to live a life of faith.

However, James Martin, a Catholic priest, believes that this trend is essentially egotism. “Religion is hard,” he says. “Sometimes it’s just too much work. People don’t feel like it. I have better things to do with my time. It’s plain old laziness.”

Jennifer Walters, dean of religious life at Smith College in Massachusetts, says there’s a lot of good in old-time religion.

“Religious communities excel at caring for members in difficult times, encouraging members to serve others and teaching religious practices that have been tested and wrestled with for centuries,” Walters says.

“Hymn-singing, forms of prayer and worship, teachings about social justice and forgiveness — all these things are valuable elements of religious wisdom,” Walters says. “Piecing it together by yourself can be done, but with great difficulty.”

To read this article in its entirety, go to the following link: <http://www.cnn.com/2010/LIVING/personal/6/03/spiritual.but.not.religious/index.html>

Biblical Christianity: Just the Facts

by Richard Rives

U.S. Supreme Court Ruling: Sabbath observance a religious duty of the Christian faith.

Today we are hearing a great deal about the Supreme Court, the judicial branch of our government having power extending to all cases arising under the Constitution.

In 1963 the Supreme Court ruled that the reading of the Lord’s Prayer or of the Bible in the classroom of a public school by the teacher was unconstitutional—later even striking down laws which set aside a period of silence for private prayer.

In 1992 it was ruled that religious officials could not conduct religious exercises at public occasions even if attendance was not strictly compulsory; and in the year 2000 it was decided that the vote of a student body could not authorize student led prayer prior to school events.

All of these are now the law of the land from a court which is conducted from a building where Moses holds the tables of stone as the central figure of its facade. For many years now I have been making the case that Christians should rest on the Sabbath day. In 1980 the Supreme Court of the United States came to the same conclusion. That’s right! The Supreme Court ruled that “The Ten Commandments are undeniably a sacred text in the Jewish and Christian faiths, and no legislative recitation of a supposed secular purpose can blind us to that fact.”

Now if the purposefully secular Supreme Court cannot be blinded to that fact, how is it that many of today’s Christian leaders cannot see it? In the Book of Matthew Chapter 15 we find that Jesus described the religious leaders of His day as blind leaders leading the blind. He said that if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Many of today’s theologians would lead us to believe that the fourth commandment no longer applies to believers—that one has been done away with while the other nine are still binding. Just as the religious leaders of Jesus’ day, they have been blinded by their own traditions. We must not follow them into the ditch.

The Supreme Court ruled that it is the religious duty of believers to keep the Ten Commandments—specifically mentioning Sabbath observance. Let us remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. For Christians, it’s the law of the land, and that’s one law that will be upheld by an even higher judge: the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing.

*Richard Rives is a regular contributor to WorldNetDaily and presents a weekly commentary online at WorldNetDaily.com. Richard is the author of the popular book, **Too Long in the Sun**, and the five-part DVD and book set titled, **Time is the Ally of Deceit**. You may contact Richard at www.toolong.com.*

Reclaiming The Healing Ministry of Jesus

by Terril D. Littrel, Ph.D



The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news brought to them.” (Matthew 11:5)

Reading the New Testament is like reading a document on healing. Nearly one fifth of the Gospels is devoted to Jesus’ healing ministry. Other portions of the New Testament, especially Acts, highlight the healing activities of Christ’s body, the church.

Jesus, the Divine Healer, is the central focus of all that the Scriptures teach about healing. The people followed after Him in droves so that they might touch His garment and be healed (Mark 3:10). The crowds stood in awe of His healing power and spoke of Him as a “prophet” (Luke 5:26, 7:16). Every disease fell before Him including organic and functional pathologies and even demon-possession (Luke 6:6-10, 13:10-13, 4:38-41).

Jesus also healed with compassion uncharacteristic of His day. He reached out to the sorrow-filled and the disease-stricken as One who understood their pain (Mark 1:40-41). All who came to Him found love, hope, and forgiveness. “He healed them all” (Matt. 8:16).

Jesus referred to His healing activities as a sign that the kingdom of God had come to earth (Matt. 12:28). The spiritual outcasts then — the lepers, blind, and lame — were especially invited to share the blessings of God’s new order (Luke 14:21). Gentiles as well were included in the Kingdom’s benefits of healing and wholeness; some of Jesus’ most dramatic healing episodes include them (Mark 7:24-30, Matt. 8:5-11). Significantly, when asked whether He was the Messiah, Jesus responded by pointing directly to His healing works (Matt. 11:4-5).

The New Testament clearly shows that Jesus’ preaching and His healing ministry are not separate and distinct. Rather they should be seen as an integrated whole in His mission of redemption (Matt. 4:23, 9:35).

When Jesus came, He brought life and health. The Greek word for “salvation” means, “to make whole” (Mark 5:34; John 10:10).

Jesus routed all the forces of sin and sickness, which had brought disorder to God’s created world. He was hostile to sickness; He rebuked disease (Luke 4:39).

Matthew relates Jesus’ healing ministry to Isaiah’s important Suffering Servant prophecy (Matt. 8:17, Is.

53:4). Thus, the healing power Jesus bestowed on the sick is related to the healing power of His cross, the central healing event of the Scriptures (Is. 53:5, Rom 5:6-8). Christ’s entire healing mission was for the purpose of redemption.

The manner in which Jesus healed is noteworthy. Sometimes He would lay on hands (Mark 6:5), which has come down to us as the “laying-on-of-hands.” At other times He would simply speak a word (John 4:50) or use material elements (Mark 8:23). Quite often He would engage the person in conversation before He healed (Mark 9:20-27). These methods should not be twisted into a formula but rather demonstrate how Jesus dealt with each person uniquely.

Luke declares to us the Good News that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has come to heal us. He heals us in body, soul, and spirit so that our loving relationships with one another can be restored. Perhaps because of his training as a physician, Luke, in both his Gospel account and his Acts of the Apostles, pays a lot of attention to how Jesus and the apostles healed the sick, cast out evil spirits, and raised the dead to life. In Luke’s Gospel account, we read that healing was very much a part of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:40-41; 5:15-16; 6:17-19; 7:18-23).

The Journey toward Wholeness

Everywhere Jesus went, he taught and healed. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, the ability to walk to the lame. He also forgave the sinner, fed the hungry, released the possessed, raised the dead (Mark 2:10-11, Luke 7:47-50).

This unique, loving approach completely characterizes the Great Physician’s ministry. In a way we call holistic, Jesus showed concern for the total person: body, mind, and spirit. He restored broken relationships. He especially probed into the root problems of the spirit which so frequently cause illness (John 5:14). His healing restoration included peace or true wholeness (Luke 7:50, 8:48).

Holistic Healing

Luke shows us that for Jesus healing was a holistic ministry. It was about the whole person and community.

When I am physically sick, even with a sinus infection, my mind and spirit suffer, too. And so do my relationships with family members, with church members and friends. When I am emotionally sick, say with depression, my body and spirit suffer too, and so do my relationships. Likewise, when I suffer spiritually — say with doubt or anger, or pride or apathy. I also suffer physically and mentally and my relationships also suffer. So, when God heals me in body, soul, or spirit, my relationships are also healed and restored.

Jesus' healing ministry is ultimately about our relationships, restoring and healing our relationships with God and each other. For example, in the gospel of Luke when Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, her relationships are restored with those around her and she gets up and begins serving Jesus and his disciples. And when Jesus raises a dead man back to life, Luke writes that Jesus gives the man back to his mother— their relationships were healed and restored (Luke 4:38-39).

What did our Lord accomplish by his death and resurrection if not a healing of the relationship between God and all of humanity. For Jesus, healing is holistic. It's not just about curing a physical disease and ignoring the person's soul, spirit, and relationships. It's about healing the whole person in body, soul, and spirit so that the person can once again be in living relationships with family and friends and even strangers.

Healing in the New Testament Church

It is the desire and will of a loving God who created us in His own image and likeness to bring healing and wholeness to the crown of His creation. God is able to heal and to make whole, and is determined to do so by His sovereign will because of His love and faithfulness to us. God promises to bring healing and wholeness to us either in this life or in the life to come (Exodus 15:25, 26; 2 Peter 1:3).

Jesus was the expression of the Father's will. In the New Testament a total of 27 individual miracles of healing were credited to the ministry of our blessed Lord. Jesus extended His healing ministry to His disciples, giving them authority to do as He did (Matthew 10: 1-8; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 10: 1-9; 18-20).

After his death, burial, resurrection and ascension, Jesus continued His healing ministry through His church—the Body of Christ (Acts 3:6; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:5-8; 9:32-35; 9:36-42; 14:8-10; 16:16-18; 19:11-12; 20:7-12; 28:8-9).

Church history attests to the fact that healing by the direct power of God has continued through the church for almost 2000 years. Forgiveness of sin and the healing of disease are related to each other (Psalms 103:3; Isaiah 33:34; James 5:15).



El Greco's famous painting of Jesus healing the blind man

Healing in the Church Today

Jesus continues His ministry of healing today. He continues his ministry of healing in and through us, the members of His body, His church. Our Lord wants us to be a whole, healthy people, a whole and healthy body of His people. He wants our relationships to be restored, to be right and harmonious, loving, and peaceful.

As in the days of the early church spiritual healing is probably the greatest point of contact the Christian church can have with masses of people today. The gospel of Christ means the whole gospel to the whole world.

Physicians with all their knowledge and dedication are still baffled by afflictions and diseases. God has not changed or altered His will concerning His desire for us to be healed and made whole. The Bible says that "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The Living Christ working through His Body, the Church, is the true picture of Christian ministry today. Nothing has changed as far as God's provision for the needs of humankind is concerned. The ravages of sin and its dire results are still manifest in our world today.

Physical Healing

God the Father and Jesus His Son are One. Mankind is body, soul, and spirit, yet one person. The physical body is adversely affected when the mind is not at peace and the human spirit is cluttered with anger, fear, guilt, resentment, hate, anxiety, and worry. Proper physical exercise, diet, and discipline gives us spiritual vigor, and spiritual vitality contributes to physical health.

The Gospels often refer to members of the health professions (Matt. 9:12; Luke 4:23) and of the value of medications (Luke 10:34). Luke, who perhaps was a Hippocratic doctor, is called the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).

God wants us to utilize competent medical resources to help keep the chemistry of the body balanced so that we are not subject to emotional fears and depressions. God created medicine and directs physicians. God reveals new truth and knowledge to medical doctors and through the revelation they are performing miracles of healing (Apocrypha: Ecclesiasticus 38:1-14).

There is hope for physical healing even when medical science has given up all hope of recovery. Physicians are not God; they are the servants of God. Physicians do not have control over if or when a disease takes over the body. God is greater than all sickness. Physical healing through prayer does happen even if mainline liberal Protestant theology and fundamentalist dispensationalism don't allow for it.

God has demonstrated His power. He can and does heal today. He also chooses not to heal all people in this life of all diseases or else we would never die.

The physical body will eventually wear out and die. This should happen only after it has fulfilled its destiny. God alone knows when that is; therefore, we should glorify God in our bodies as long as we can.

All physical healing, which is a symbol of God's grace, is temporary and only postpones death. It is only in eternal life in the world to come that we will know complete redemption and wholeness. We look forward to a greater miracle of healing, the miracle of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:21-26).

Mental Healing

Some who think that they need physical healing indeed need to be healed emotionally. Some physical illnesses are caused by disturbances of the mind and emotions. While prayer is no substitute for what God provides for us through medical science, prayer is a means whereby we receive mental or emotional healing which sometimes leads to physical healing.

Through contemplative meditation and prayer a person goes back to their past with Jesus for healing of emotional traumas and hurts. The unconscious mind is like a deep, dark cellar where we human beings dump all our rubbish that clutters our spiritual well being. Psychologists call this the libido (Latin: meaning desire or urge). Our libido needs redeeming and healing, not burying and repressing. Only by regular and deeper mediation on God's promises and love, and by prayer can our unconscious become completely cleansed and healed (Psalms 38; 3-8; Hebrews 4:15).

As inner healing takes place, we are set free from feelings of resentment, rejections, self-pity, depression, guilt, fear, sorrow, hatred, inferiority, condemnation, and low self-esteem. In the prayer for healing of memories, Jesus walks back into our past and heals every hurt. He takes a spiritual eraser and wipes away

every painful memory. He may not blot out the memory completely, but He removes the hurt and deep sting. Psychologists and psychiatrists may find the root cause of an emotional sickness, but only Dr. Jesus can heal the broken hearted, bind up their wounds, and give them a sound mind! (Psalms 147:3; Luke 4:18-19; 1 Timothy 1:7).

The form of prayer used in emotional healing creates constructive visualization. The practitioner of inner healing may say to a girl who was raped at age six: "Visualize that Jesus is holding you, washing you, cleansing you. All your guilt and shame are gone!" The purpose of visualization in prayer is not to create or recreate Jesus. He is always present with us. Picturing Jesus with us is merely to assist our faith in what God's word has already declared. It is a process of positive affirmation.

Spiritual Healing

Modern medicine and psychology have made great advances in the field of physical and mental healing, but only Jesus can heal the spirit. And spiritual healing is needed in order to have complete mental and physical healing, healing of the whole person. Spiritual healing is to experience peace, power, love and wisdom from God. We have our security in Him. Spiritual healing takes place only through the power of the Spirit and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

Anointing and Healing

The anointing of the sick is a concern of the whole congregation. Therefore, the pastor should give care in choosing assistants, not only on the basis of convenience, qualification, and the desire of the sick, but also for giving qualified laypersons and opportunity to participate.

In preparation for the healing services, we need to be willing to be used by the Spirit. We need to confess our faith in Jesus and in His power and authority to heal. And we need to ask for the gifts of the Spirit, not just some of the gifts, but all the gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

If the sick person is in a hospital, the pastor should enlist the cooperation of the nurse in charge in arranging for whatever privacy may be possible.

The anointing service may be carried out only in cooperation with the care of the best available professional healers—physicians, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, social worker, and counselors—though the service witnesses to a Spiritual Reality that moves beyond the most skillful human attention. Preparation for the service should be made in the knowledge that it is above all an occasion for repentance and confession before God, forgiveness and reconciliation between fellowmen, and acceptance of and dedication to God's will.

The anointing bears witness that we may experience wholeness only as our relationship to God is open and

without encumbrances. It expresses our faith that even when a person must bear illness or loss of bodily function, their open relation to God will sustain them. It recognizes that confession, forgiveness, and restoration of relationship are essential to wholeness (Mark 6:12-13; Acts 5:1-16; James 5:14-16).

The Prayer of Faith

What is the relationship of faith to healing? On many occasions Jesus commended the faith of those He healed (Luke 8:48; Mark 7:24; Matt 8:10). Today some sectarian groups have brought disrepute to "faith and healing." They distort biblical faith by admonishing, "If you had enough faith, you would be healed." Such an erroneous interpretation turns faith into a human work or power that causes healing to occur. This robs God of His glory and places a terrible burden on the sick person.

True biblical faith, on the other hand, rests completely on God's grace. We rightly understand faith and healing when we say that faith receives the healing grace of God in the same way it receives the power of salvation (Romans. 3:23-25, Eph. 2:8-9). Just as a child trusts that his father will give him good gifts, so faith lovingly clings to God's promise of sharing the blessing of His kingdom with us (Matt. 7:7-11).

We understand that faith is not frustrated even when physical healing is denied. Not everyone in the New Testament was healed (2 Tim. 4:20).

Many splendid Christian people have suffered and died without relief. Jesus and His twelve Apostles are examples of this. While God is no respecter of persons, He is a respecter of conditions. There are many mysteries and unanswered questions here. These we leave to God. His ways are perfect. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9).

If we trust God sincerely, accept His answer as an expression of His best in love for us, we rejoice in His greater knowledge and His perfect love.

The command of our blessed Lord to His disciples and church is to practice divine healing. We are committed to obedience even when we cannot admit to full understanding. The fact that God does not always bring physical healing does not mean that He does not love us; that the one prayed for or the one praying is at fault or lacks faith. God's purposes are served His way. He is Sovereign. He has everything under control. He knows what He is doing, and always has our best interest in mind even though we do not understand His ways.

He will never leave us nor forsake us. Our God reigns. Hallelujah!

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A Joy and Rejoicing

by Donald Mansell

"Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jeremiah 15:16)."

The evening of her graduation, Jane, a lovely young coed, attended a party at which one of the young professors gave her a graduation present. She accepted it graciously. That evening, before retiring, she opened the present and found that it was a book. One glance at the title on the cover showed that it dealt with engineering, a subject in which she had not the least bit of interest. Without further examination, she laid it on a shelf in her closet and dismissed it from her mind.

Some months later Jane and the young professor fell in love. Not long after, the young man proposed marriage and she accepted. One evening as the two lovers were discussing wedding plans, the groom-to-be asked his fiancée if she had read the book he had given her. The truth was that Jane had all but forgotten about his gift. Embarrassed, she acknowledged she had not read it, but then and there she promised herself to show better appreciation for her fiancée's gift.

At her first opportunity she took the book, opened it to the title page, and discovered that the author was the young professor. On the flyleaf he had written a delightful dedication to her.

That night Jane did not sleep much, not because she had insomnia, but because she became so captivated by the book her lover had written that she found it impossible to lay it down until she had read it from cover to cover. The book that a few months before had seemed dull and uninteresting had become positively gripping.

To many people, even some professed Christians, perhaps even you, the Bible is a boring book-but learning to love its Author does make a difference. How, though, does one learn to love someone he has never met? Here is how: Robert Browning fell in love with Elizabeth Barrett before he ever met her, simply by reading her poetry. Peter alludes to a similar experience of the recipients of his first epistle, when, speaking of Christ, he says concerning them, "Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Peter 1:8). This can happen to you.

Choose a good modern translation of the Bible and begin to read and study it prayerfully. Open your mind to the influence of the Holy Spirit and willingly respond to the Bible's message of love. As you do this, you will find yourself irresistibly drawn toward its Author. As you continue to read, your love for Him will grow, and soon you will find that your reading of God's Word has become, not a drudgery but a joy and a rejoicing.

*Donald Mansell, **New Every Morning**, page 15. Review & Herald Publishing Association. 1981.*

Believing In...

by Terrell Perkins



I'm not a gambler. I've never even bought a lottery ticket. It's not from any particular doctrinal belief. It's from thinking, "I have a dollar in my pocket now that I'm sure I have. Why should I give that away for a one in 25 million chance of winning more!?" I'm told it's a Scottish thing.

There is one thing I would gamble on though. I'd gamble on God's picks. Imagine that you were at a race-track and you knew God was there, incognito of course. Say you found out which horse He was betting on. Which one would you bet on? Do you see what I mean?

I know the Scriptures seem to be against gambling and my analogy of God coming down as a human being and picking out a specific horse to win a race may seem to some less than flattering, but you get my point.

From the beginning of my association with the people of God, I've wondered about the concept of God's 'Calling.' Who are the elect?

I've come to believe that being 'called' happens in degrees. If someone reads the Bible and God opens his mind to understand one thing, and that person goes away and lives that one thing as an act of worship because he believes God expects it of him, I think that is the first step. That person has been called to understand one thing. Whether the person is capable of more understanding or more obedience is for God to determine.

I expect, though I don't 'know,' that if God opens one's mind to understand one thing, and that person goes away and doesn't live it, his calling may end there. We will be judged by what we understand, and to give someone more understanding if he or she are not faithful in the little they know could greatly endanger them.

To whom much is given, much is expected. That's a scary scripture to me! We in the body of Christ believe we have been made privy to a correct understanding about quite a few things. It seems to me that whether we are correct or not, we are bound by what we believe we 'should' do. We've bound ourselves by what we accept as truth.

If, in fact, we are called, I think of it as being picked by God. The real "Good News" is that He believes in us! He's put His money down, so to speak, and the race is on!

I'm always moved by the power of belief in someone. King David had some pretty shady friends early on in his career. He let them know that he believed in them and it transformed them into "Mighty Men of Valor!"

I've seen children go through some dark periods in their lives when they thought no one believed in them, so they may as well continue on a downward spiral. When they met that one adult that saw something more in them they were transformed by that one person believing in them. If you let someone know you see integrity in them, many times they'll make every effort to become the person reflected in your eyes.

Believing in someone and letting them know it is a powerful thing! It can reclaim lost lives. It can turn around someone headed for destruction. It can uplift and redeem someone who's lost the power to believe in themselves. And it's a gift that all of us can give someone else.

If you understand something that you believe God expects, live it. To do so is an act of worship to the Most High.

He believes in You. That's His real gift to you. Now, whom would you bet on?

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Slouching towards Jihad

by Peter Heck

In Federalist #2, founder John Jay addressed the dangers of foreign force and influence. In the course of the essay, he celebrated, "With equal pleasure I have as often taken notice that Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people — a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs." Jay understood that perhaps America's greatest protection against the threat of foreign manipulation was our overriding sense of unity as a people.

That's why Jay and the other founders insisted that immigrants be willing to embrace and adopt our values and principles. George Washington wrote, "By an intermixture with our people, they, or their descendants, get assimilated to our customs, measures, laws: in a word soon become one people."

Unfortunately, in the name of political correctness, we are trampling this very notion of unity in deference to the sacred cow of "diversity." No clearer can this tragic reality be witnessed than in our developing societal embrace of Islam.

Unlike other religions, Islam is simultaneously a religious and a political order. It seeks a state-imposed caliphate...a theocratic regime that orders allegiance to Islamic law. Those are the expectations of anyone who follows the Koran.

When Dr. Daniel Shayesteh (the former co-founder of the Islamic terror group Hezbollah) appeared on my radio program, I asked him whether true adherents to Islam could peacefully assimilate into American culture and embrace constitutional law and order. He responded, "It is impossible for a person who follows Mohammed and says, 'I am a Muslim' and follows the instruction of the Koran to align himself with other laws and cultural values. That's impossible, because everything other than Islamic culture and principle is evil."

That chilling admission should set off warning bells. Yet, despite this plainly stated position, Americans continue to suffer the foolishness of political correctness that tells us we should celebrate the growth of Islam here in America. Let me ask a hypothetical ques-

tion: would you vote for someone who ran on the platform of obliterating U.S. sovereignty, discarding the U.S. Constitution, subjugating women, and executing homosexuals and all non-adherents to an established national religion?

Of course not. Then why do we consider it a feather in our cap as a people, and hail our virtuous diversity when practicing Muslims are elected to office? Because either professing Muslims like Andre Carson (D-IN) and Keith Ellison (D-MN) — both of whom serve in Congress — believe in those aforementioned principles, or they are not true adherents to Islam.

Don't believe me? Omar Ahmed, chairman of the supposedly moderate Council on American-Islamic Relations, reportedly told a group of California Muslims in 1998, "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Koran...should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on earth."

I know that addressing all this makes many people so uncomfortable that they choose not to pay attention. Perhaps that stems from our fear of violence if we do (see Comedy Central's recent capitulation to "Revolution Muslim"). But more likely it comes from our mounting cultural indoctrination in political correctness — the same garbage that infected Europe decades ago. What have been its fruits there? Entire regions of many modern European countries are now completely under the authority of local Muslim leaders who ignore national laws and impose their own Sharia law instead.

And here? The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently taken the side of Muslims who seek to uphold their cultural practice of female genital mutilation. Islam holds that women should not receive the same sexual pleasure that men do, and therefore many Muslims in the United States send their young daughters overseas to have those sensitive areas removed. Rather than stand against this barbaric act, the AAP has begun advocating for the U.S. to change its laws to allow this practice to occur here legally. We must be open-minded, you know.

And though the construction of Islamic mosques have historically been to signify dominance over

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There is an unseen complexity, a hidden code, or some mysterious something that orchestrates the same gene to form the fly's distinctive compound type eye and form the very different mammalian a camera type eye [Speaking of eyes, speculate on the living creatures "covered with eyes all around" that are continually posted at God's throne and travel with him on his moving throne/chariot²]. Humans share 99% of our genes with a mouse, yet what a difference. Scientists exclaim: "How so trivial a genetic difference can generate such diversity of form *defies all explanation*, other than to suppose it must be 'something to do' with gene regulation, 'the turning on and off of genes at different times and places in the course of development.'" But from where such regulating instructions might come is a profound mystery.

"The implications are clear enough. Biologists could sequence every living creature on the face of the planet and find only the same core set of genes that account for the nuts and bolts of the proteins and enzymes of the cell of which all living things are made. But beyond that is the really interesting question—that of form—what it is that so readily distinguishes the elephant from the octopus, fireflies from foxes would remain as elusive as ever. ...The more genomes that are sequenced, the more striking the *irresoluble discrepancy* between the similarity of the genetic instructions and the diversity of the living world."³

The genome exists, but how it does what it does is another matter. The secret is yet hidden. God would have us know that he presides over an invisible (to us) angelic kingdom that serves him and mankind. It too exists, but its secrets are hidden in God.

A Peek Behind the Curtain

It is perfectly logical to remain "puzzled" (as is genetic science with the genome) about how the vast spiritual kingdom God rules could exist and work. We can acknowledge it is outside our domain of knowing and its inscrutable profundity must await a future revelation from God. Nevertheless, we should consider *what* God has allowed us to see, as if taking a quick peek behind the curtain.

Before we begin we must acknowledge another part of the story: not all spirits in the angelic world are benign. Some are wicked and enemies to both God and man. Apparently in the primeval past some God-created angels exercised their God-given freedom and rebelled against their Maker. Their biblically recorded history is sketchy⁴ but the end results obvious and settled. The apostle Paul believed Christians needed to be aware of such evil spiritual powers.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:11-12, NIV).

While wanting Christians to be aware of evil powers, so as not to be blindsided through ignorance, he was quick to add that we need not fear them. All angelic and demonic powers and authorities are subject to God's Son who has been exalted over them (Eph. 1:21; 3:10). Jesus has been made "superior to the angels" when "he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven" (Heb. 1:3-4).

The apostles counsel us to "fear God" and "resist the devil."⁵ It is disappointing to observe that most people seem to *resist God* and his instructions while finding it quite normal to *fear ghosts* and supernatural evil—a favorite movie genre of Hollywood.

In this article we will keep our focus on God's righteous kingdom and the hosts of heaven that aid in its administration. Behind the curtain are some strange and marvelous sights.

The "President's" Cabinet

We more easily understand mysterious things if we compare them to known things. What would we call that group of beings that surround Yahweh's throne as described in many places by both OT and NT prophets? Most scholars refer to them as the "Divine Council," "Heavenly Court," or "Divine Assembly." Perhaps we can understand them in light of a cabinet of ministers, each entrusted with vast authority and huge departments of angelic workers to carry out assigned duties (In the USA the cabinet secretary over the Department of Health and Human Services manages 70,000 employees, the cabinet secretary over the Department of Defense, 700,000 civilian, 1,500,000 military). One can only guess at the specific authorities and staff size of these exalted members of the "heavenly cabinet."

The prophet/apostle John got a peek behind the curtain—actually a *door* in his case.

After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven....At once I was in the spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated upon them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads (Revelation 4:1-4).

The throne is a symbol of sovereignty and is a central feature of OT and NT conceptions of heaven. The "someone sitting upon it" is clearly a circumlocution for the name of God and the formula occurs twelve times with John in a variety of grammatical forms. John follows the current conventions in Judaism to avoid

overusing God's name though the context makes His identity obvious. God's throne is here surrounded by beautiful colors and Ezekiel's vision of the throne⁶ also speaks of the beautiful colors present.

Jasper is an opaque stone that tends to be red but is also found in yellow, green, and grayish blue. Since jasper is used as a simile for the appearance of God, it is used later in Revelation as in image for the overall appearance of New Jerusalem, which manifests the glory of God (21:11), and as the material from which its walls are constructed (21:18), as well as the first of its twelve foundations (21:19).

God is surrounded by stunning beauty. Ezekiel mentions several precious stones and metals—chrysolite, sapphire, gleaming bronze. When Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the seventy elders went up the mountain to eat a covenant meal before the God of Israel they saw under his feet in a sea of lapis lazuli (sapphire) crystal, blue and clear like the sky (Exodus 24:9-10). (Also revealed are yet more details of heavenly Eden, God's "mountain," the "ocean," biblical zodiac, the 24 courses of musicians and singers, a river, etc., which we'll discuss in Part 2) His angelic beings are striking in appearance and glory. Some can only be described as blazing, fiery torches (more on this in Part 2).

This mix of temple imagery, celestial symbolism, and color, music, thunder, lightning, and voices is too much to fully digest. But the sense of majesty, power, and beauty settles upon us. The words of praise sung by the seraphim (from Isaiah 6:3 and 2 Enoch 21:1) come to mind:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, Lord Sabaoth,
Heaven and earth are full of his glory

The context of Isaiah 6 is Isaiah's vision of the divine council where Yahweh in his throne-room is presiding over an assemblage of angelic beings.⁷

Our Giving God

Why does God delegate? What does it tell us about him? About his organizational skills? We see that God's character is manifestly full of love to overflowing with a passion to give, of wanting to bless and to share all he has and enjoys. Look what he gave to Jesus: "He has put everything under his feet,"⁸ and Jesus said: "All that belongs to the Father is mine." Jesus promises his followers "treasures in heaven" and rulership with him as kings and priests in his Father's kingdom: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."⁹

Both Father and Son want to share administration of the cosmos with us—delegate to us authority to rule in the Kingdom of God. That authority even extends, amazingly, to managing angels.¹⁰

Jesus told his twelve disciples that he's delegated to them authority over the twelve tribes of Israel, and in the Organizational Chart of the Universe he is now preparing, there are responsibilities galore to be delegated to those who reverence and follow God.¹¹ Somewhere he has a job, a crown of authority, a place planned for you.

But why does God want to share his power and delegate his authority? It is simply his nature and reflects his love for us and his desire to include us in his excitingly glorious existence. He wants our fellowship. He wants to be our God and wants us to be his people—his co-regents over all creation and participants in creative enterprises of God which so far have trillions of star and planet systems waiting for what is next in the Divine Plan: "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."¹² To know God is to love him; to love him is to want to become like him.

God delegates with purpose. He has an end in mind. He bestows honor, authority, power, and glory upon his servants for a reason—which is clearly visible in his heavenly court and entourage of angels, but especially in his Son, Jesus. For what? To provide loving service, instruction, help, healing, forgiveness, comfort, inspiration, joy, peace, happiness, and newness of life. All good and perfect gifts come "down from the Father of the heavenly lights"¹³ and his kingdom servants, you and I, will be continually giving such good and perfect gifts as well. God wants us to begin this process of doing good in the here and now, to be "an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work."¹⁴

Today men and women crave power. Ostensibly this quest for power, via armed coup or the ballot box, is claimed to be for "service," but in fact proves most often to be for enslavement of people, for personal gain, financial greed, and the egoistic aphrodisiac of power for the sake of power, to be "over" other people, to "rule" them as a better over an inferior. Such is much of modern politics. Jesus addressed this perverse penchant of human nature in a dress-down discussion with his disciples.

The mother of the "sons of thunder," James and John, took Jesus aside and on her knees pleaded that he would make her boys chiefs in his coming kingdom: "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom" (Matthew 20:21). We must admire the realistic understanding this devoted mother held of the Kingdom. To her it was sure, real, down to earth, and she wanted her boys right up at the top. One suspects that her boys may have encouraged her to make this proposal. Jesus had a soft spot for mothers. But there were things she didn't understand, considerations of which Jesus kindly enlightened her.

Jesus reminded the entire group of twelve that typical political governance such as is found in this present world will not be a part of his kingdom. The motivation and spirit of "rulership" will be entirely different. A new attitude must be internalized by all who aspire to eternal life. Authority is granted by God for the purpose of service.

"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." (vv. 25-28).

We can also be assured that the celestial kingdom of righteous angels share that attitude of service on our behalf. They are called "ministering spirits:"

"Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"¹⁵

A Picture for Prayer

How can knowing this business of God's heavenly court benefit us, his earth-bound servants? First, it is truth about God and his kingdom, including his heavenly court. Truth is important for it should form our understanding of the God to whom we pray. Yahweh has allowed us a glimpse of his power and authority; to see him enthroned over an assembly of sentient, living super-beings of immense abilities, knowledge and power, who serve to dispense Yahweh's decrees, messages, and manage and protect his vast creation. This picture of God's court gives substance and depth to an important name of God: Yahweh *Sebaot* (hosts, armies, forces).

Second, this picture of an enthroned God, incomparably superior to and ruling over an administration of lesser divine beings and millions of angels, should inspire in us awe, reverence, and trust. If so mighty a God be for us, who can be against us?¹⁶ Can any power defeat us or separate us from the love of Christ and our God?¹⁷ Seeing more clearly the majesty of God and his angelic entourage should affect how we pray. The writer of Hebrews speaks of our coming before God's throne in heavenly Jerusalem, before the company of "thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly," and to the book of life, to Jesus, and to the living God himself, "the judge of all men."¹⁸

Holding this biblically revealed picture in mind should put some starch and substance into our prayers and meditations. It does for me. Our God is an awesome God.

Coming in Part Two:

A most amazing scene is provided in Psalm 82 where the angelic retinue is called into account. The "council of gods" is being judged. God, as we've seen, delegates duties and authority to do them, but he does not dele-

gate ultimate responsibility. That responsibility is his and he will reward and punish depending on how his delegated authority has been used or misused. Some "angels" who have done injustice will be condemned, "you will die like mere men." There is much more to the story of the Host of Heaven, the Boardroom of God, including Satan's role and access to it.

End Notes

- ¹ Le Fanu, James, *The Last Days of the Facade of Knowing*, Discovery Institute, Evolution News & Views, June, 2010 (www.evolutionnews.org).
- ² Revelation 4:8; Ezekiel 1:15-18
- ³ *op. cit.* Le Fanu, James.
- ⁴ Jude 6 "angels who abandoned their assigned authorities." Presumably becoming the devil and his angels or demons. See also 2 Peter 2:4 "angels sinned," and Gen 6:1-4.
- ⁵ James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Matthew 10:28.
- ⁶ Ezekiel 1 & 10
- ⁷ See also: 1 Kings 22:19-23; Jeremiah 23:18; Job 1-2; 15:8; Psalm 82 and 89:7
- ⁸ Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:27
- ⁹ Mark 10:21; Revelation 5:10; 3:21;
- ¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:3
- ¹¹ Luke 22:29-30; John 14:2-3
- ¹² Revelation 21:7
- ¹³ James 1:17
- ¹⁴ 2 Timothy 2:21
- ¹⁵ Hebrews 1:14
- ¹⁶ Romans 8:31
- ¹⁷ Romans 8:35
- ¹⁸ Hebrews 12:22-24

Heck: "Slouching towards Jihad" cont. from page 13.

conquered foes, the New York community board and NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg are okaying plans to construct not one, but two mosques at the site of the World Trade Center attacks. Another triumph for diversity!

This is a matter of self-preservation. The more we loosen our grip on our founders' insistence on assimilation and unity for those who make America their home, the quicker we hasten our march towards cultural oblivion...or the jihadists' paradise.

Reprinted by permission of the author from OneNewsNow.com. Peter Heck (peter@peterheck.com) hosts a two-hour, daily call-in radio program on WIOU (1350 AM) in Kokomo, Indiana. "The Peter Heck Show" comments on social and political issues—and doesn't shy away from recognizing how faith influences politics. This column is printed with permission.

The Last Days

(A Short Story)

by Lori Godfrey



“How do you know we will get there safely?” Dave asked.

“I know we will,” I assured him.

“And we still have several hours of daylight,” Thomas said.

“All right, but I can’t help having an awful feeling. We should have stayed home instead of running off into the woods,” I replied.

The trees seemed not to touch the sky. The birds were singing as if it were their last day on earth.

“Dave, look over there, in the thicket!” Thomas exclaimed. “A doe and her fawn.”

“I see her,” Dave said.

“She won’t be there long. With hunting season the bullets will be flying,” I replied looking over my shoulder one last time.

“Come on, Dave, you were the one who was nervous about the time,” Thomas said.

“Yeah, I hear you, Thomas.”

“Why did we come out here?” I asked.

“To find the fishing hole I’ve been hearing about,” Thomas answered.

“Fishing hole and no poles,” Dave morosely replied.

“Why bring them if we can’t find it?” Thomas questioned.

“That would be a waste of energy carrying bait, tackle, and poles,” I supposed.

The day wore on and twilight approached. I couldn’t help but think we had made a wrong decision in our adventure. It was 1969, but even still, I envisioned dangers from the old days behind every rock and tree. I should have listened to my conscience. My parents always tried to teach me right from wrong.

“How do you know we are going in the right direction?” I asked Thomas.

“I know,” he said. “My Dad and I went squirrel hunting, and we were fine.”

“If you say so,” I told him, not very convinced.

“We’ll be home before you know,” he said.

“Do your folks ever talk about God?” I asked.

“Sure they do; don’t most families?” Thomas replied.

“Well, I’m not sure if all families do,” I answered.

“Why? You thinking about God?” Thomas asked.

“Sort of,” I told him.

“We go to church occasionally,” Thomas said. “Not every Sunday. I hear if you want to meet a nice girl, church is the place to go.”

“Well, I don’t think God would be very pleased if the only reason we went to church was to spy out girls,” I told him.

I thought about what my friend had said as we walked along the beaten path, kicking rocks and eating berries. How displeased would God be if our motives for attending church were to check out the girls? My thoughts went back to a preacher I once heard. “I remember a preacher on television talking about the Last Days. I started thinking about what I would not want to do when Jesus returned.”

“You know how they say He could return any moment,” Dave said.

“I know, I have thought the same,” I said.

“Besides,” Thomas said, “I don’t think He’s ready to return. Remember, God is waiting for people to repent.”

“Oh, I know, Thomas, but you never know,” I replied.

“Well, think about something else. We should be home soon,” he said.

The sun would set soon, and I felt we made no progress in finding our way home. The surroundings were looking dismal, leaving us no alternative except to pray.

I knew Thomas would take my lack of faith to get us home as a weakness of my character, so praying would have to be silent. “Lord, you know we should have stayed home today, seeing the time that we have left to find our way home. It is beginning to look as if we are lost. We really need your help, and you know how determined my friend is to get us home”

“Dave, I see the pond! See it?” Thomas exclaimed.

“Yes, I see it,” he said.

“How does that help us in finding our way home?” I asked him.

“Well, I’m not sure, but at least I know where the pond is,” Thomas chuckled.

I struck him on the side of the head, and he then lit out for the pond. Through briars and weeds he went. I knew he would jump in to relieve the heat of the day. “You two joining me?”

“Oh, why not,” I replied.

Here we were, eleven-year-olds, swimming in a pond we knew nothing about—almost dark and still uncertain how we would get home.

“Thomas, how are we getting home? You don’t know the way,” I said.

“I do too. That way!” he pointed.

“Suppose you are wrong,” Dave replied.

“If I am wrong, my folks will have the dogs looking for us,” he said.

“Not only that, Thomas, but our hides as well,” I said, throwing a rock into the pond.

“We’ll see. We may be home before you know it,” my friend replied.

I looked up to see the stars were starting to glitter. The sound of the forest would begin soon and night would be upon us. I was positive a search party would begin. As Thomas said, his folks would have the dogs out. He lived closer to the woods, so his family was more familiar with the dangers the woods presented. I could only wish that a reality.

My thoughts went back to the preacher talking about the Last Days. I had to ask myself the question: What would I be doing when the Lord returned? Would I be out lost in the woods where only animals are? Would I be doing something wrong when He returned and miss His appearance?

Salvation is personal to every human being and also something that is hard to understand. God’s grace is a part of Him that human beings have a difficult time grasping. Only the Holy Spirit can help us understand the mystery of God.

That May evening many years ago brought Thomas and me to a clearer understanding of ourselves and God. He was correct; his folks did bring out the dogs and we were found. Thank God for hunting dogs. I really was not looking forward to sleeping in the woods.

We escaped punishment only because our parents were so glad to find us. A lecture ensued and without a doubt, should we pursue another walk to the pond without parents’ approval and many hours of daylight, we would forfeit our days of freedom until further notice.

Thomas grew up and became a doctor, and we remain close. I went into the ministry, met my wife in the church that Thomas and I attended on occasion. Dave moved away the following year; his dad took a job with the Forest Service. How ironic given our wandering trek in the forest that day!

As I think back to the year I met my wife, I still remember the attitude I had about spying out girls in church. In fact, Cornerstone, the church Thomas and I attended, is where I met her... unexpectedly I might add. Do I find people questioning the Lord’s return? Yes, more so now than ever. Yet time moves forward in these last days we are now living as we await our Lord’s return. As it was then, so it is now with one exception; we are just that much closer.

Lori Godfrey is a Christian freelance writer reaching out to those who are searching for godly answers to life’s problems. Her websites are www.writingforhim.net and www.bibletruths.us. E-mail Lori at lgodfrey@writingforhim.net. Lori lives with her family in the Midwest.

Revelation

by Kelly McDonald



In each of our lives there are times when we need a special word of encouragement to help us in our times of need. Either we are at a place in our walk with God where we feel like we are going through the motions or we are going through a valley or dark place in our lives, and we need something out of the ordinary to spur us to action. We need a revelation. Paul says in Galatians 1:11-12, “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.”

Paul says that the gospel is not something that is made up. Instead, it is something received through revelation. In the Greek language, this word for revelation is *apokalupsis*, and it means an unveiling or manifestation. In other words, the gospel was not something Paul could make manifest on his own. The gospel was something that God had to literally reveal or manifest to him. This *apokalupsis* or unveiling changed Paul’s life forever. Paul was instantly changed from a man that persecuted the church of the living God into someone who promoted the church of Jesus Christ.

This revelation from God was so powerful that Paul was willing to risk his life over and over again. You see, in our lives we need revelation from God because it moves us to action and changes our lives forever. Paul was then able to help change other people’s lives as well. Think about the countless people that have been touched the past two thousand years because of the revelation given to Paul. This revelation was so strong that it outlived Paul and will reach into the future as long as the gospel is preached.

In Deuteronomy 29:29 God says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.” Revelation is something that provokes us to obey God’s law. It expands our understanding of the law to motivate us to act. For instance, let’s say that you have been a Sabbath keeper your entire life. You have never worked on the Sabbath, and you have always gone to church on the Sabbath. But one day, while reading your Bible, you discover that God says in Exodus 31:16 to celebrate the Sabbath.

You may have read over that verse a hundred times, but this one time it especially stuck with you. This revelation will change your life and change the lives of others around you. It requires that you change your nor-

mal routine and adopt something unfamiliar, just as the revelation Paul received radically changed his life. When God reveals something to us, we typically have two responses: One, we can ignore it, or two, we can change. Often a revelation requires us to change something about our habits that are deeply engrained.

In the example above a person who has kept the Sabbath his entire life may be accustomed to a quiet Sabbath with church and family, but the revelation requires him to change. That person must now celebrate the Sabbath. This change is so radically different from the normal routine that this person has to step out on faith to obey the revelation. Revelation requires us to exercise our faith just as our physical body requires us to be physically active. Few of us like to exercise physically, and in the same way, few of us like to be moved out of our normal spiritual routine.

When Paul first received the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, it required him to change his life. He went from persecuting Jesus Christ on a large scale to promoting Jesus Christ on a scale that few in history have ever done. Paul had to minister to the very people that he was persecuting! Revelation from God often makes us do things that we cannot imagine ourselves doing. God does this to get us out of our comfort zone so that we will rely on him and not on our own understanding (Proverbs 3:5-6). When we reject or ignore a revelation, we miss an opportunity to gain insight into God's mind. Understanding how God views the world is important in understanding how God views our everyday lives. If we never knew that celebrating the Sabbath was important to God, then we would never know to celebrate the Sabbath.

While revelation is something that we cannot force or make happen on our own, what can we do? First, we can help ourselves by being aware that we can receive revelation. We have to realize and accept that God still speaks to us today, but that He speaks to each of us in a unique way matching who He made us to be. God pricks some people's hearts to move them to change while others may receive a deep conviction from God, have God speak to them through thoughts, or have God speak to them through a life experience.

In Jeremiah 33:3, God says, "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know." Jesus said in Luke 11:9-10, "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." If we seek God, He will speak to us. It may not be in the way that he speaks to others, but it will be in a way where we cannot deny that God is trying to get our attention. The second thing that you and I can do is be ready to change when the revelation manifests. It may take several days, weeks, or years for a revelation from God to

manifest, but you will realize that God is speaking to you. God then gives you certain period of time to make the necessary changes. God spoke to the Israelites for hundreds of years through the prophets. The prophets gave the Israelites revelation after revelation from God to show them how they needed to change. The problem is that they did not change.

Why is it so important for us to understand revelation? When God made humans, He made us out of clay. As my Pastor says, that means we are made out of matter and we can change. Perhaps more importantly, that means we need to change. When we stay in a stagnant situation spiritually, we begin to lose restraint because God made us with the capacity to change. God also made us with the desire for Him. Proverbs 29:18 says, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law." Revelation is God's way of speaking to mankind to show him how to change. Because we were made to change, we are made to receive revelation. Revelation is what we need to help us in our times of distress and stagnant spiritual situations. Revelation is given by God so that we can be more like Him.

Kelly McDonald, Jr. is a deacon and featured speaker at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, Tennessee. Kelly recently graduated summa cum laude from Lambuth University in Jackson, Tennessee, where he earned a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Political Science and Sociology and a minor in Legal Studies. Kelly considers the work of the Kingdom of God to be the single most important goal to which his life is dedicated.

Court Battle with Boy Scouts over Gays and Rent

Jury selection is under way in a gay-rights case involving the Boy Scouts and the city of Philadelphia.

At issue is whether the local scouting council can stay in its city-owned headquarters essentially rent-free.

Because of the Boy Scouts' policy of banning gays, Philadelphia says that policy violates city nondiscrimination rules.

The Cradle of Liberty Council of the BSA has occupied the downtown building since 1928, a building which the Scouts built and paid for and later turned over to the city.

Mayor Michael Nutter says the group must renounce the national organization's gay-exclusion policies to keep the rent-free space. The Cradle of Liberty Council's lawsuit contends the mayor's ultimatum violates their First Amendment rights.

The Bruce Marks Scout Resource Center in Philadelphia was built in 1929. The building was turned over to the city with the understanding that the Scouts would be allowed to remain in it rent-free "in perpetuity." The first copy of the R. Tait McKenzie sculpture, *The Ideal Scout*, stands outside the building.

Editorial: "Preeminence—Part 4" cont. from page 3.

worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created." To this praise of the Father we can say, "Like Father, like Son." In the following chapter we see the same praise heaped on the Son, the Lamb of God, as He is the only one worthy to loose the seals of the scroll: "Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb..." (v. 8).

It should also be noted that the description of the Father as Creator is almost identical to the description of Christ as Creator in Colossians 1:16, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him."

Worthy is the Lamb

Chapter 5 gives us a good description of how Jesus, the Lamb of God, is worshipped in heaven. The picture that John gives us is Christ being praised in the same manner as the Father. Starting in verse 11 we read,

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength, and honor and glory and blessing!' And I heard every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, saying, 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!' And the four living beings said, 'Amen.' And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped Him that lives for ever and ever" (5:11-14).

We human beings rarely give the same respect to the Father and the Son that the beings in heaven give them. Maybe we should keep fresh in our minds the picture that John gives us of how the elders and angelic powers in heaven honor and praise both the Father and His Son. If we did that, we would probably be less inclined to assume their good wishes toward our every whim and folly and sin we commit with the thought of "that's just the way I am; God will understand."

Jesus Reigns

Since our purpose is not to interpret the prophecies of Revelation but to see how this prophetic book portrays the exalted nature of Christ, we will skip to chapter 11. At the sound of the seventh trumpet the proclamation from heaven rings out, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (v. 15).

Jesus, no longer the Suffering Servant, returns to judge and make war against those who refuse to yield their power to God's Son who made them and whose right it is to rule their kingdoms. The kingdoms of this world belong to Him.

The blessing for every Christian is that at the sound of the last trumpet, we will be raised from the dead (Matthew 24:31 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-52) and join our Savior in ruling over the kingdoms of this earth (Revelation 5:10). The scourge of every nation is that the corrupt and unjust gain power over the lives of the people and lay unbearable burdens on their backs. We will have our part in breaking the yoke off the necks of mothers, fathers, and children in all parts of this world, and in allowing them finally to enjoy the blessings and the peace of God.

Chapter 19 continues the theme of the coming of Christ. Starting in verse 11 we read,

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ... He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (v. 11-16).

The Bible speaks of the coming era of Christ's rule as "the times of refreshing" (Acts 3:19). What started at Pentecost in the year of our Savior's perfect sacrifice will reach a crescendo at His return when He takes His great power and rules over the kingdoms of men (Revelation 11:17). This is the time of Christ. As the apostle Paul said in Colossians, all things were created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16). It is His right and His time to rule this earth. We humans have only been miserable caretakers of His domain. He has allowed us to stay here because He has been preparing a people to share His domain — something that He certainly did not have to do.

New Heaven and New Earth

Immediately after Satan is put away forever, there is a time often referred to as the "Great White Throne Judgment." These events are described in the last few verses of chapter 20. It is my opinion that this White Throne Judgment is the final judgment which is carried out by Christ, not the Father. First, Jesus returns to judge and make war. Second, Jesus is "King of kings and Lord of lords" for the entire millennial period. It is He who prepares the earth and mankind for the coming of the Father and the New Jerusalem.

Third, the Father and the New Jerusalem descend to earth so that the Father can dwell with mankind after the White Throne Judgment takes place.

Chapter 21 begins with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. The apostle John then sees the New Jerusalem descend from heaven to the earth. John then hears "a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself [the Father] will be with them and be their God'" (v. 3).

Then come the most comforting words to the apostle John from God, "Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful.' And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son'" (v. 5-7).

Concluding Thoughts on Revelation

Chapter 22 gives us some final admonitions and words of comfort as we reach the end of God's written revelation to mankind. Verses 3 and 4 tell us that "...the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it [the New Jerusalem], and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads." Throughout human history the Father's face has been hidden from mankind. For the first time we will be able to walk up to Him and talk to Him face to face. The Bible says that our sins have hidden His face from us. When the curse of sin has been banished from the universe, we will see Him face to face.

The exalted nature and God-like qualities of Jesus are apparent right to the end of the book of Revelation. This is very consistent with what we have seen in the writings of the apostle Paul, in the book of Hebrews,

and in the gospel of John. In verse 13 of chapter 22 Jesus uses the same words to describe Himself that we have seen used to describe the Father: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Jesus makes no apologies for describing Himself in the same terms used to describe the Father and to describe *Yahweh* in the Old Testament (e.g., Isaiah 41:4).

One of the conclusions that I have come away with as I have studied this subject of the preeminence of Christ is that Jesus, both before His human birth and after His resurrection, has always been of the same divine nature as God the Father. He is in every way God. He shares the name "*Yahweh*" with the Father. It is also clear that Jesus has never considered Himself to be equal to the Father in position or authority. We only see the Father face to face after Jesus has conquered all and put all things in subjection under His feet. As the apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28,

"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

This is a picture of Jesus, even in His divinity and heavenly authority, placing Himself in subjection to the Father.

I hope this series on the preeminence of Christ has caused you to think, pray, and study the Scriptures for yourself. I have attempted to allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves. May God bless your study of this subject. Amen.

—Kenneth Ryland

"Jesus" billboards an Issue in Bible Belt State

Charlie Butts — OneNewsNow — 6/17/2010

Kentucky is challenging roadside signs that call attention to Jesus.

Jimmy Harston, who lives near Scottsville, has put up signs along highways calling attention to Jesus in several states, but he has run into roadblocks only in his home state of Kentucky. Harston tells OneNewsNow he felt a call from heaven to put up the signs. As he points out, it was not his idea.

"Make no mistake about it, I'd rather have been out doing something else," says Harston, "but the Lord's been so good to me I had to do what he put upon my

heart. Anyone that's been led by the Lord knows exactly what I'm talking about."

Harston had the signs up for years under a previous Kentucky administration, but the new one filed a lawsuit over unconfirmed reports that the signs' presence might endanger federal road dollars for the Bluegrass State. But the signs are on private land (with the owners' permission) and are nonprofit.

"I've got signs in Ohio and Indiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee. They've not said anything," he shares. "It's only this area right here for some reason."

Harston believes he has free-speech guarantees as well as religious freedom and wants the signs to stay up. A bill was passed in the Kentucky House to protect the signs, but it died in the Senate after a false rumor that the state would lose federal highway money if the signs stayed up.

The Church in the World

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Maryam & Marzieh: Acquitted and Free!

By Michael Ireland

Chief Correspondent, ASSIST News Service

TEHRAN, IRAN (ANS)—Two Christian women who were arrested for their faith have been acquitted and freed from Tehran's notorious Evin prison and are now in a country outside Iran.



Maryam and Marzieh

Fourteen months after they were arrested for their Christian faith and activities, Maryam Rostampour and Marzieh Amirzadeh have been acquitted of all charges by the Iranian judicial authorities.

However, according to Elam Ministries, they were warned that any future Christian activity in Iran will be seriously dealt with.

Today, Saturday May 22, 2010, they left Iran and arrived safely in another country.

Sam and Lin Yeghnazar, founders of Elam Ministries and spiritual parents to Maryam and Marzieh, met them at the airport. It was a tearful reunion.

"It was very emotional when we first saw them," said Lin Yeghnazar, "Now, we want to see them rest and recover."

Maryam and Marzieh are eager to thank Christians who have been praying for them. "We are most grateful to everyone who prayed for us," Marzieh said, "I have no doubt that God heard the prayers of His people."

Maryam added, "I believe our arrest, imprisonment and subsequent release were in the timing and plan of God, and it was all for His glory. But the prayers of people encouraged and sustained us throughout this ordeal."

Elam Ministries says: "Both young women have shown exceptional courage, daring to tell an Islamic judge that they would never deny their faith in Christ."

According to a media update from Elam, when Sam Yeghnazar told them their example had encouraged countless people around the world, they were quick to respond, "We are frail human beings with many weaknesses. The honor and glory go to God who has kept and used us, although we don't know why He has chosen us. All the glory goes to Him."

Maryam and Marzieh were arrested in March 2009 because of their Christian faith and were repeatedly placed under great pressure to recant and deny Jesus Christ.

They faced repeated interrogations, weeks in solitary confinement, and unhealthy prison conditions. Both became seriously sick during their imprisonment and did not receive the treatment they needed which greatly increased their suffering. Senior judges and officials also intimidated them.

Despite this, they remained faithful to Jesus Christ and did not deny Him. After their conditional release from prison in November 2009, they have had a very trying six months waiting for their case to be heard in an Islamic court where they could have been sentenced to prison again.

"We have seen the Lord do miracles over and over again. He kept us and gave us favor in prison, and sustained us during a very difficult period of waiting for our final trial," said Marzieh.

Maryam and Marzieh have lived through many experiences during the last fourteen months. The days ahead are not certain. However, they are determined to serve the Lord and the Iranian church.

"We hope to eventually share some of what the Lord allowed us to go through to highlight the need and the opportunity for the church in Iran, but right now we will take time to pray and seek the Lord for His will," said Maryam.

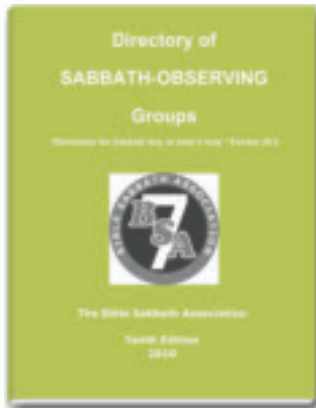
Please continue to pray for Maryam and Marzieh to fully recover and continue in fruitful ministry.

Elam Ministries says they look forward to providing continued updates on their situation.

Michael Ireland, Chief Correspondent of ANS, is an international British freelance journalist who was formerly a reporter with a London (United Kingdom) newspaper and has been a frequent contributor to UCB Europe, a British Christian radio station.

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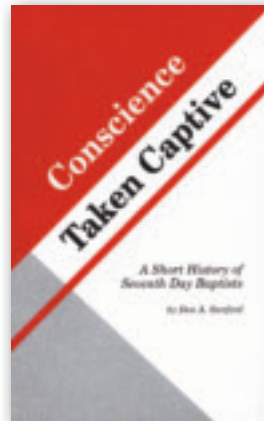
Here's how to order: Call our toll free number at 888-687-5191 or send a check to The Bible Sabbath Association at 802 NW 21st Avenue, Battle Ground, WA 98604.

Another way is by ordering directly from Amazon.com or on our Website at www.biblesabbath.org.

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Sorry, due to hundreds of requests, we cannot send the *Directory* free to prisoners.



The Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society presents this short history of Seventh Day Baptists to help celebrate the 75th anniversary of the incorporation of the Society.

It is envisioned that this short history will serve as an introduction to the nearly 350 years of Seventh Day Baptist history; that it will

be useful in understanding both the history and polity of the denomination; that it will be a tool in sharing this heritage with those unfamiliar with the Seventh Day Baptists; and that it will encourage further study and examination of the beliefs and practices of those Baptists who have accepted the seventh day of the week as the Biblical Sabbath.

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Year of the Lord, 2010

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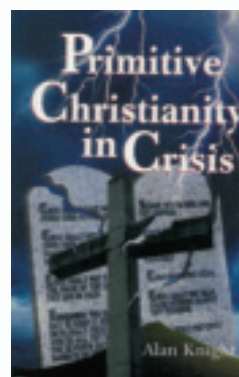
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