

# The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2012



## India

Ripe for the Gospel

**BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association**

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

# The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2012 Volume 64, No. 4 Issue 556

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### Our Cover:

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35).

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Donations are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible in the United States. Those who choose to voluntarily support this international work to promote the Sabbath and proclaim gospel of the kingdom of God are welcomed as contributors.

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# No Other Option

How many ways are there to God?

Does the New Age really have anything to offer? How about making a trek to a Navajo sweat lodge? We live as if there were many ways to God. The society around us has a great influence on how we look at God, and how we see ourselves in relation to God. Is there any good in all these different approaches to God?

From every corner we hear people say: Don't judge; be tolerant; Christians are bigoted. How does all this talk about tolerance and the bigotry of Christians affect you? Do you concede quickly to all this negative talk so that others will not think badly of you?

When you stop to think about it, these same people who are being critical of you and other Christians are passing their own judgment on you, on Christianity in general, and on Christ in particular. The truth is, no one can live without making moral judgments, even today's militant atheists who condemn religion in general, and Christianity in particular. Every day we spend much of our thought and time making judgments — moral judgments. It is impossible to live without making moral judgments. People just don't like it when we notice their moral shortcomings, and that's the problem.

The Church in the Western world is in serious trouble today because we have conformed to the demands of society and wish to live without condemnation for the many stupid and sinful things we do, and the Church is reaping a whirlwind instead of good fruit which we should be sharing with our dying world.

What's worse is that we pass some of the harshest judgments on those Christians who do not think as we do. Yes, there are standards, but we often place ourselves in Christ's position as Head of the Church instead of allowing Him to gently nurture people along in the faith. The Christian-on-Christian judgment ranges far and wide, from how one group keeps the Sabbath to how women should dress. If there is a church board,

people want power, no matter how small the congregation is. There are too many Christians whose objective is to *make* others toe the line to what they think is most important, instead of waiting for Christ to teach and lead others they might disagree with. All in all, we are pretty harsh with each other.

## The Blood Covenants

There are two blood covenants in the Bible. The first one was with Abram (before he became Abraham). The second one was, of course, the one we have with Christ through His shed blood.

When Abram was ninety years old the Lord appeared to him commanding him to walk before the Lord perfectly, and gave him the promises of the covenant:

- You shall be the father of many nations.
- Your name will be changed to Abraham.
- You will be exceedingly fruitful.
- Kings shall come out of your lineage.

What is the most overlooked point of both of these blood covenants?

Let's look at Genesis, chapter 15, verses 9 through 21:

"So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

"Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great

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# To the Heart

*By Kenneth Westby*



Let's get to the heart of the matter: What does God really want out of us? Are there clear statements in Scripture that hit the bull's eye of God's expectations for us as individuals? There certainly are, and many of them, but centuries of religious obfuscation, traditions, incense, stained glass, and theological fog blowers have all but hidden them. Getting to the heart of God's desire for us is probably our most important responsibility.

The other day I opened the box of a simple electronic device I had purchased. There was an abundance of printed material I was expected to read. I waded through page after page of disclaimers and warnings—all the usual boilerplate stuff to ward off lawsuits—anxious to find the simple instructions on how to make this gadget do the job. Finally, many pages later, I get to the heart of the matter, which is all I wanted from the start. I didn't really care reading about all the manufacturer's worries, warnings, requirements, and lawsuit-avoidance mumbo jumbo; I just wanted to get the thing to work properly.

People seeking to learn more of God and answer questions about their eternal future usually link up with a ministry or church for help and guidance. Sometimes they receive good help, but often they find themselves simply enmeshed in the business of church and religion. Their original seeking after the big questions is assumed to be met by involvement in the social life and work of a particular religious group. The new member learns the doctrines and expectations of the group, assuming these are all biblical and God-generated, and settles into the business of being a Christian, as he has learned in church. I must wonder, how many church goers have really gotten to the heart of the matter ... biblically? How many have become lost in religious "paperwork," paging through company (church) material fully content that the preacher will tell them what it all means and what God expects of them?

Should the basis for your eternal future be subcontracted out to a preacher or religious group? It's not critical that a religious leader knows what God requires, it's critical that you and I know for ourselves. Let's not get lost in religious do's and do not's, ancient church creeds, and denominational expectations; let's get to the point of what God wants of us, which may not be the same thing.

## No Mystery

I bring no new doctrine or hidden passage just discovered. God has from the beginning put what is most important in his dynamic relationship with us squarely in front of our eyes. He has made it number one, served it up first and foremost. Why then has it been so difficult for people to focus on what is number one? Our Creator laments,

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

Man's religious inclination easily leads him to do sacrifice and offerings. They are external and religious and the thought is that they should make God happy and merit his blessings. Yet God has never sought religious performance as an end, whether law obedience, liturgical rites, or good works. He has always laid claim to the whole man, to personal commitment, to interior conversion.

Knowledge of Yahweh and mercy invite a profoundly inward fellowship of love and trust with Him, which then determines life in its totality. This is possible to the man who is ready for interior conversion; it has nothing to do with indulging oneself in pious feelings and "being religious."

The prophet Micah confirms that Yahweh is not thrilled by offerings of thousands of rams and rivers of oil. These are to be but symbols of an inward offering of ones' heart and soul to God. Typically, people miss the point and do the easy thing and ignore the real thing.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does Yahweh require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).

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# Notes on Zephaniah

by Brian Knowles



Zephaniah was the great-great grandson of king Hezekiah (715-697 BC) of Judah. His name means “treasured of YHVH.” He is listed ninth among the “minor” prophets in the TaNaKh (Old Testament), but he is by no means minor in status. It is only the books that are shorter than the “major” prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah & Ezekiel - that are classified as “minor.” In his time, Zephaniah was a powerful voice speaking on behalf of God. His book contains messages for both Jew and gentile alike.

Zephaniah’s prophecies took place at a time when the barbaric Scythians were invading the land now known as Palestine (630-625 BC). In Judah, Josiah was on the throne.

At the time, Judah had descended into idolatry. Pagan priests in full regalia could be seen plying the streets of Jerusalem. They worshiped the usual suspects: Baal, Molech and the stars (Zephaniah 1:4-5). The way of the true God had atrophied almost out of existence. The people of God seldom, if ever, consulted God about anything (Zephaniah 1:6). The leaders wore foreign garb to show solidarity with pagans (verse 8b).

In verse 9 we find a peculiar statement: “On that day I will punish,” says God, “all who avoid stepping on the threshold...” What does this mean? Apparently, a superstition had arisen in which people believed that demonic spirits lived above and under thresholds of houses — so they leaped over the threshold to avoid making contact. A similar superstition had arisen earlier in history in connection with the false god, Dagon. You can read about it in I Samuel 5:1-5.

## The Business Community

A major business center in Jerusalem was located in the vicinity of the fish gate. The prophet warns the merchants, “Wail, you who live in the market district; all your merchants will be wiped out, all who trade with silver will be ruined...” (Zephaniah 1:11). Why economic collapse? What is their offense? Complacency (Verse 12)! These money changers don’t take God’s warning through his prophet seriously. They are deluded into thinking, “The Lord will do nothing, either good or bad” (verse 12b).

This is similar to the mentality of those about whom Peter wrote, “First of all, you must understand that in

the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this “coming” he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation,’ (2 Peter 3:3-4).

If divine action doesn’t immediately follow divine warning, people grow complacent. They become skeptical, doubting the veracity of the message. Yet, between the warning and the action, God often allows time for repentance. God told the ancient Judeans more than 2500 years ago that the “day of the Lord” was coming and that “Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them,” (Zephaniah 1:18). The same may be true for our time. Many are buying and hoarding gold, silver and diamonds in hopes they will “make it through” the hard times that are coming. “Apocalyptic survivalists” are frantically storing food, building underground bunkers and arming themselves to the teeth as a means of surviving end time scenarios. It may or may not work.

## Who Will Survive?

In Zephaniah’s day, God singled out a particular kind of people for favor while the rest were destined for punishment: “Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger,” (Zephaniah 2:3).

There were no guarantees. The prophet said “perhaps” the humble would be spared. The point is those who humbled themselves and lived by God’s standards stood a better chance of surviving than the rest. In Luke’s Gospel, we find a warning for the end times. Jesus tells us, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will come upon you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all who live upon the face of the earth. Be always on the watch and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man,” (Luke 21:34-36).

For a godly person, there’s no room for “business as usual.” There is no place for complacency. We can’t af-

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# The Altar of Incense

## Time, Place, and Space for Daily Worship



*By Terril D. Littrell, Ph.D.*

The Golden Altar or the Altar of Incense was also called the Altar of the Lord. It was located in the holy place which was the first compartment (Room) of the Tabernacle (Exodus 30:27). It held a central position directly in line with the Brazen Altar to its east and the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat to its west. It stood just before the veil of the Holy of Holies, which was the second compartment of the Tabernacle, or the throne room. On the south side of the Altar of Incense was the Menorah (golden lampstand) and on the north side was the Table of the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 30:6).

There were two distinct altars connected with the Tabernacle of Witness: the Altar of Sacrifice (the brazen altar) and the Altar of Incense (the golden altar). Both were made of acacia wood and were covered with brass and gold respectively.

As the priest went each morning to dress the lamps of the menorah, his path lay by the Golden Altar, signifying that he met the light first in his entrance into the sanctuary. He then moved to the Altar of Incense and sprinkled the horns of that altar seven times with the blood of the sin offering of the Altar of Sacrifice, purifying it from his sins and the sins of the people (Leviticus 4:6-7; 16:18).

On each corner of the altar was a protruding golden horn extending in such a way that each side of the altar included the four camps of Israel: Judah to the East, Reuben to the South, Ephraim to the West, and Dan to the North. (The horns pointed northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest.) The incense from the summit of the altar had equal reference its value, power, and strength to each camp of the hosts of the Lord, all of whom were sheltered under one fragrant cloud of incense. All alike were accepted as the chosen people of God.

### **A Place of Worship**

It was a grand exhibition of the meeting place between a holy God and his sinful people. While all Israel had access to the Brazen Altar of Sacrifice, only the priest could approach the Altar of Incense to minister before the Lord on behalf of the people and to the people on behalf of God. No sacrificial victims were

offered on the Golden Altar, for only the fragrance of sweet incense constantly ascended from that altar to the presence of God.

The need for priestly intercession was constant for the priests were daily defiled by constant contact with the earth upon which they walked. Since there was no floor in the Tabernacle, the priests constantly needed to be washed in the brazen laver. They also needed continuous confession and intercession at the Golden Altar. The incense rising before the veil was a constant reminder to the priest that he still needed intercession and the work at the Altar of Incense. Indeed, incense is a common biblical symbol for prayer and intercession on the part of all the people of God. David said, "Let my prayer be sent forth before you as incense" (Psalm 141:2).

The Altar of Incense was small in size compared to the Brazen Altar of Sacrifice. It was four square with each side measuring 18 inches, and it was three feet high. Thus, it was the smallest piece of furniture in the Tabernacle of Witness. Its summit rose higher than the mercy seat (Exodus 30:2; 25:22).

### **A Time of Worship**

God commanded the priests to burn incense at specific times, twice a day, at the time of evening and the morning sacrifices on the Brazen Altar. The incense was burned before Yahweh a total of over 700 times each year. It was thrown in the fire morning and evening so it burned "regularly" before the Lord (Exodus 30:7-8).

When the priest entered the Holy Place with the incense, all the people were removed to the Outer Court (Luke 1:10). A period of silence was observed in awe and reverence (Revelation 8:1), and at the signal from the prefect, the priest cast the incense on the fire, bowing reverently toward the Holy of Holies, then retiring backward.

### **The Incense of the Altar**

The holy incense employed in the service of divine worship of the Tabernacle was compounded of equal parts of three rare and very costly spices: stacte, onycha, and galbanum, which were mixed with frankincense and tempered with salt. Stacte was a powder



from the hardened drops of the fragrant resin in the bark of the myrrh bush. Onycha was a powder from the horny shell cover of a clam, like the mollusk found in the Red Sea. Galbanum was a brownish, pungent resin that exuded from the lower part of the stem of the ferula plant that had thick stalks, yellow flowers, and fernlike green foliage and was found near the Mediterranean Sea. Frankincense was milk-colored drops of resin from the lashed inner wood of the Boswellia tree grown in the mountains of Lebanon. It burned for a long time with a steady flame. Salt played a major role in both sacrifices and offering in the Tabernacle. It was considered to bind the people of God in a covenant relationship and was the seal upon that covenant with Yahweh.

The Israelites were commanded not to use this formula outside the Tabernacle or to make this perfume for their own use. Otherwise, they would be cut off from their covenant relationship with the people (Exodus 30:34-38).

### **Fire on the Altar of Incense**

The fire from the Brazen Altar that lit the coals was no ordinary fire as kindled by human beings: it was from heaven! Yahweh revealed himself in the fire of the burning bush at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 3:2-6). He guided His people through the wilderness with the fire of his presence that hung over the Tabernacle of Witness (Leviticus 9:24) and consumed both the sacrificial offering of the Brazen Altar and the incense offering of the Golden Altar

The fire was for purification and separation from the world (Numbers 31:23) as the fire of the silversmith and goldsmith purging the sons of Levi (Malachi 3:2-3). Fire for sacred purpose from anywhere but from the altar of God was considered "strange fire" and was unacceptable to God. Nadab and Abihu were punished by death of the fire of God when they dared to offer "strange fire" before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-12).

### **Accessories on the Altar of Incense**

On the Altar of Incense rested a golden bowl in which the coals of fire from the Brazen Altar were carried by the priest in a golden censor and placed on the Golden Altar. Incense was then poured upon the coals, thereby producing the fragrant smoke.

The Altar of Incense had a crown of gold around it, as did the Ark of the Covenant and the Table of Showbread. This crown was a ledge extending above the top of the altar, which served to prevent the coals of fire or incense from being displaced or scattered when the altar was moved to a different location. Two golden rings were placed under the crown for support of two golden staves that were borne by the priests in times of

transition (Exodus 30:4). The altar was covered with a blue cloth and badger skins for protection during the wilderness journey.

### **Symbolism in the Altar of Incense**

Symbols remind the people of God of what God has done, is doing, and promises to do. They have played key roles in Jewish and Christian worship throughout the histories of these two communities. Our heavenly Father recognizes all too well our need for such symbolic representation of His presence, power, providence, promises, and peace. Symbols point to what can be experienced but not fully comprehended. They take over where words cannot go. They are the language of surprise, sorrow, wonder, pain, joy, and mystery. Since they are simple, they cause us to listen and respond with our whole being, not just with our intellect.

Symbols serve as pictures. One object represents another because the two objects have the same meaning. They serve as avenues of instruction through which divine light and understanding shines through upon our lives and helps us to experience God's self-disclosure. Symbols point to a reality, but they are not the reality. They have no power of their own. Rather, they point to a higher power, making the message of God come alive to His people.

The Tabernacle of Witness was a place of education (as well as of feasts, sacrifices, prayer) and pilgrimage. Each of the seven pieces of furniture in the tabernacle speak symbolic language primarily about God's salvific act through the coming of the Messiah and, secondarily, about the people of God, both Jew and Gentile.

Liturgical actions use symbols because we, as human beings, rely on all our five senses to receive knowledge, including the knowledge of God. We encounter God through sensible signs that point to Jesus as the most decisive sign of God's presence. Symbolism, therefore, is a part of our heritage. Fresh insight and understanding are based in Holy Scripture and stir our imagination, helping us to participate in the rich meaning of the symbols and their illuminating concepts. These symbols call us to understand more fully what it means to be connected to the early apostolic church and our Jewish roots.

The symbolic application of the Altar of Incense is that of the prayer of intercession, the highest form of prayer both in heaven and on earth. The Altar of Incense brings us to the very heart of the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). It is at the altar that God desires to teach us about the ministry of prayer.

Christ, our great high priest, has entered the Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary to make intercession for us. The incense upon the altar is symbolic of his

prayers that never cease. "He ever lives to make intercession for us" (Hebrews 7:25). We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The fire on the altar is symbolic of the presence of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit which Christ brought to believers (Matthew 3:11). When our prayers are saturated with the fire of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26-27), and we are lifted into "heavenly places" in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). By him we offer our sacrifice of the fruit of our lips in praise to God continually (Hebrews 13:15). We offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:1).

The Book of Revelation pictures the prayers of the "saints" rising to God's heavenly altar (Revelation 8:3-4). When the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire from the heavenly altar and cast it down on the earth, it perfectly expressed the relation between our earthly worship and that of heaven.

### **Our Christian Aroma**

The prayers of intercession of our resurrected and living Lord cause our prayers of intercession to be acceptable to God. When our prayers are united with his prayer and our lives are reunited with his life, death, and resurrection, "we are the fragrance of Christ among those who are saved, and in those who perish. To one we are the savor of death unto death, and to the other the savor of life unto life" (2 Corinthians 2:14-15). We are so closely related to Christ that we smell like him to others. The fragrance of incense reminds us by analogy of the fragrance of virtue and by contrast of the evil odor of sin.

When we faithfully show the love of Christ through our words and actions, we are to God "a sweet smelling savor of Christ." To others, we are a strong smell that permeates the room. To those who receive the good news, we are "a pleasing fragrance." To those who reject the gospel, we are the 'savor of death.'

Because Jesus has called us to be his presence on the earth, we must smell like him to others. Whether reminding unbelievers of the judgment of God or reminding believers of the love of God, we must be the aroma of Jesus to the world.

May we pray this prayer: "Heavenly Father, accept my offering of myself to you. Keep me close to you through your son Jesus Christ that I may take on his heavenly fragrance and spread it to a dying world, shedding forth your love to both believers and unbelievers. Amen."

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*Dr. Terril Littrell, Ph. D., is a retired pastor with over 40 years of experience in teaching, writing, and ministry. He is also a former board member of the BSA. He and his wife Chloe live in Cleveland, Tennessee.*

## **"Just the Facts" with Richard Rives**

In the year 1517, the Protestant Reformation is known to have been initiated, when the German monk Martin Luther, nailed his 95 thesis to the door of Wittenberg church. It is commonly thought that the basis of the reformation was "sola scriptura" or scripture only, the authority of scripture, over that of church councils and the concept of Papal infallibility.

Even so, today while calling themselves Protestants, mainstream Christianity continues to adhere to pre-reformation church tradition that is in direct opposition to scripture. While reformation did occur in the 16th century, the proclamation of it as being "sola scriptura" or scripture only in nature is a tall tale of theology.

When those who wrote the New Testament spoke of scripture they were referring to The Old Testament, yet Luther taught that the writings of Moses do not concern Christians. He enjoyed graven images and did not want to rest on the seventh day. Because of that he had to set aside two of our Creator's Ten Commandments.

Let's take a look at what Luther had to say:

"...It is not true that there is no ceremonial or judicial law in the Ten Commandments. Such laws are in the Decalogue, depend on it and belong there. And to indicate this, God Himself has expressly introduced two ceremonial laws, namely concerning images and the Sabbath. We can show that these two parts are ceremonial laws which are also each in its own way abrogated in the New Testament. Now then let us get to the bottom of it all and say that these teachers of sin and Mosaic prophets are not to confuse us with Moses. We don't want to see or hear Moses. How do you like that my dear rebels? We say further, that all such mosaic teachers deny the gospel, banish Christ and annul the whole New Testament. Now I speak as a Christian for Christians. For Moses is given to the Jewish people alone and does not concern us Gentiles and Christians. We have our gospel and the New Testament. If they can prove from them that images must be put away, we will gladly follow them."

Do we really believe the words of the Bible — sola scriptura — scripture only? If so, the writings of Moses should not be overlooked. Christians living in the first century did not have the New Testament. They read the words of Moses in the synagogues every Sabbath day.

We have heard the words of Luther. Now let us hear the words of our Savior: "...had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:46, 47).

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Westby: "To the Heart." cont. from page 4.

To *act* (man must *act* in response to God's love) *justly* means to practice righteousness personally and toward others. To *love mercy* describes a core virtue of personality/character that is akin to God's nature. Mercy (Hebrew, *hesed*) is a powerful word with a complex of meanings including kindness and contains an element of reciprocity—if you receive it you must show it in return, much like the principle of forgiveness. To *walk humbly* with your God is to walk/live circumspectly, or wisely, being careful to follow His will. Life is a walk with God that involves knowing him and willingly surrendering one's will to a relationship of love and trust.

## First is First

The first and greatest commandment is such because God declared it so. It is not hidden but brightly lighted like a giant blinking neon sign on the highest building in town. It reads:

Love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deut 6:5).

It is prefaced with the powerful command to sit up and hear this!

Hear [Heb. Shema], O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.

When Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment he did not stutter or ponder for an answer. He spoke directly using the wording from Deuteronomy:

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:29-30).

The King James Version (and many others) rightly employ the legal idiom "Thou shalt" in the first commandment to love God to drive home the basic claim of God which is greater than all law. It emphasizes in a way impossible to ignore that God's aim is to influence the will and decision of the individual person. God is after the center of our being. He established Torah as a practical guide for the man who wishes to set God up as the supreme director of his whole being.

Any legalistic misunderstanding of the command to love God is countered by the great biblical stress laid on the demonstration of God's love for man. God chose to love man before man loved God. He chose individuals as his beloved and chose an enslaved nation to be his people before they responded with righteous actions. He gave tiny Israel his Torah as a token of their special position of favor. To obey the law thus is man's response of love to Yahweh's act of election.

The demands of God—his Torah which is the path of godly living—can never be considered as something foreign to man's love for God. That is why Jesus was able to use the same form of words, "Thou shalt," to express the ultimate decision demanded of him (and us) by God. The second greatest commandment echoes the all-embracing concept of love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18).

These love commands, framed in legal phraseology, should rid us of the idea of law as a rigid definition of limits upon social relations. Instead, law (Torah, God's instructions) has the role of a guide, giving detailed, concrete directions for a far higher level of moral life rising to the level of the very heart of God. There has been a perverting of law into an external legalism, a practice the prophets of God attacked. The law, according to Scripture, is to be understood as the application and practice in real-life situations of the primary command of love.

The heart of the matter is the motivation of love; the path that love takes is defined by Torah. God wants you to share his heart of love and by your freewill and decisions lived by his righteous standards.

## To God's Heart

My favorite passages of Scripture are the ones where God's heart is described, sometimes in his own words. Why favorites? Clearly my future is in his hands and my hope rests in him. It is critical that I know what he is like, what is his heart and attitude toward me. God leaves us without doubt in this matter.

This is what Yahweh says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understand and knows me, that I am Yahweh, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares Yahweh (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Here God tells us that the greatest achievement worth boasting about in one's entire life should be knowing and understanding God. In this God reveals his heart which governs all he does; a heart motivated by kindness, justice, and righteousness. He delights in these virtues of character and wants them to be internalized by his sons and daughters made in his image.

I've composed a little mantra that I say to myself to help keep my focus for life. It goes like this:

To know God is to love him. To love him is to desire to become like him.

Our efforts should be toward knowing God and understanding how we can become in his image.

Some are surprised that the Old Testament (OT) contains spiritual, moral, social, and ethical commands and

not just external, legalistic rules. They shouldn't be, for the New Testament (NT) is inspired by the same Spirit of God that worked with people in the OT.

This is what Yahweh Almighty says: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor, in your hearts do not think evil of each other" (Zechariah 7:9-10).

True religion has always been a heart religion. Jesus chastised the religious hypocrites for complying with the niggling details of certain aspects of the law but missing its heart and purpose—like fussing over how to fold the napkins but never serving the meal. He said,

"You have neglected the more important matters of the law [Torah]—justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matthew 23:23).

God's intent from the get-go has been to give his image-bearers his heart, his character, his love. But for that to happen his son and his daughter must want it to happen as a matter of decision and will. God will then fashion and form in them his character. This is a miracle and the most important work on God's agenda. He expresses it in "New Covenant" terminology.

Then the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares the Sovereign Lord when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws...you will be my people, and I will be your God (Ezekiel 36:23, 26-28).

God's intent for Israel, besides their conversion, was to be his example to the world of how a righteous people should live before their God—a light to the world. Well, for the most part they disappointed God and didn't live up to their calling. But the plan of God is still on track and will in the end flourish. Why? Because it is right, good, and God and his Son are working it.

"The time is coming," declares Yahweh, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.... This is the covenant I will make ... I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know Yahweh,' because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest.... For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34).

We may be on the brink of that new age, but as a world, we are not there yet. However, as individuals we can be there! It remains God's plan to use his sons

and daughters, who have experienced interior conversion and who manifest his Divine Nature, to lead the world to him. In this mission we follow the example of God's firstborn, Jesus, by turning the hearts of men toward God.

In this we must first understand for ourselves the basic desire and demand of the Divine Will is the surrender of the whole person to God. This is the counsel of the love of God who has ordered all things for the sake of his people's salvation and eternal fellowship with him. God accepts no keeping of the commandment just for the commandment's sake, desiring rather to see in each fulfillment of the law the living effect of a single-minded profession of love for God and neighbor.

## You in God's History

You have a history; God has a history. God's is the history of his actions that tell us about him that he is both Creator and Redeemer. We know him by his fruits, by what he has done through his mighty works. In this we can trust him that he has the power to give us eternal life, and the loving heart to want to do so.

God is not static but is active and engaged in bringing about his Grand Plan, of which you and I are somehow a part. Somewhere we fit. Right now we are living and sharing God's life. Before we were born, we didn't share life with God, and after we are dead we will be part of God's history, safely waiting to be made live again.

I find it helpful to see that we are part of God's life, and for a brief span of human existence we share his history. God is not actively thinking about or working with Abraham or David or Peter, for they are dead—"sleeping" being the term Paul uses, for their awakening is pending. Jesus said that God is not the God of the dead but the living<sup>1</sup>. He was discussing the resurrection and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who are clearly dead in human reality, but not in God's reality. For he has already promised them eternal life and so in God's reality, which is the only reality that ultimately matters, these patriarchs are alive forever more; they just need to be awakened by a resurrection. These patriarchs all entered the life of God almost four millennia ago and are part of God's history, then, just as you and I are presently. In fact, God welcomes being identified with his past servants as he expressed to Moses in the burning bush:

"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

God has a history and the most important aspects of it involve his beloved servants. Peter updates God's time line of history by the event of Jesus' resurrection to eternal life.

“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus...[and] raised him from the dead.”<sup>2</sup>

God is not outside space (creation, location) and time as some philosophers postulate. They think that a dynamic God active in time and space somehow limits or diminishes him. Well, maybe their metaphysical image of God is diminished, but I suggest they have an erroneous image. God is time, that is, time is nothing more than the ongoing life of God against which all events are measured and have their place. He inhabits space which he made and starts the clock of man’s involvement in his life/time with seven numbered days in Genesis the first chapter. Time is not a limiting factor to God, his life is what gives time relevance and upon which are marked the events of his history with man.

Scripture represents God as having a history. The literal truth of Scripture’s representation of God pictures him having a history of dealings here below. A historical God is a real God, not of myth, but of fact and history. The Bible represents God as having a history of action, knowledge and response. To these we can place dates: Creation, flood, calling of Abraham, deliverance from Egypt, David’s kingdom, national captivities to Assyria and Babylon, the birth and ministry of Jesus, the acts of the apostles—the effects of their ministry continuing to the present. You and I enter God’s life when we are born; we join his time line for a brief 40, 60, 80, or a few more years. It is precious time in God’s ongoing life that we must not squander.

During this short life we have the privilege of coming to know him and becoming like him in his righteous character and heart of love. This should be our number one focus for life...which is why God identified it as the First Commandment.

Why shouldn’t we put ourselves, mentally and emotionally, in God’s history? He is alive and active now and is after you...all of you. This is our time. This is our day of salvation. This is our wondrous opportunity to fulfill the First Commandment, to get to the heart of the matter, to answer the big question of why we exist and what God wants out of us. He wants to add your name to that of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

## Becoming One with God

Jesus prayed to his “Holy Father” that his disciples would come to have the same relationship he enjoyed with his Father. That, of course, would mean that they have come to love God with all their mind, heart, and strength.

I pray for them, I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given, for they are yours....So that they may be one as we are one....I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world

know that you sent me and have loved them, even as you loved me.”<sup>3</sup>

What should Christians unite around? If not the First Commandment, then what? Sects, cults, denominations, independent groups will never unite around a list of doctrines or practices, however good and noble they may be. History should teach us that. However, at the heart of things we all stand as individuals before God’s face. He reveals to us that he expects us to become like him, to take on his Divine Nature<sup>4</sup>, to live the First and Greatest Commandment.

From his walk with his first son and daughter in Eden, to his walk with you, to his walk with redeemed mankind in New Jerusalem, he has always desired the same thing.

“Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God” (Rev 21:3).

The heart of the matter is to make God the exalted master and Father of your life, to become like him in loving character and action. In short: the divine-human relationship means the surrender of the whole man which is so perfectly described in the Greatest Commandment. Let the godly life start there.

### End Notes

1. Mat 22:32
2. Acts 3:13, 15
3. John 17:9, 11, 23
4. 2 Peter 1:4

*Ken Westby is a board member emeritus of the BSA, and founder and director of the Association for Christian Development and the Virtual Church ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)).*

## Michigan Stepping up for Religious Students

*Bob Kellogg - OneNewsNow - 6/22/2012 3:50:00 AM*

The Michigan House has passed a bill named after an Eastern Michigan University (EMU) student who was kicked out of the school's counseling program because of her faith.

In 2009, Julea Ward was expelled from the university's counseling program because of her Christian beliefs, particularly against homosexuality. But earlier this year, the Sixth U.S. Circuit of Appeals sided with the student, ruling that “a reasonable jury would conclude that Ward's professors ejected her from the counseling program because of hostility toward her speech and faith ...” That opinion reversed an earlier district court decision in favor of the university.

Now, the “Julea Ward Freedom of Conscience Act” has been proposed and approved by the House. It prohibits religious discrimination against college students studying counseling, social work, and psychology.



*In this issue we are featuring Kardias Ministries*

## Hebron Home Has Filled Our Hearts

*Posted on May 23, 2012 by invar (India)*

If there ever was a place to fill your hearts with absolute joy, it is with the Sagar Jalli family and ministry at Hebron Home.

If there was ever a place to fill your hearts with heart-wrenching sadness, it is having to say goodbye to brethren, family and children at Hebron whom fill your hearts beyond what you would expect in such a very short time.

The five days at Hebron Home have been the most uplifting, busy and inspiring start to a mission trip since Kardias began them in 2008. Hebron left such an impact, Rienne and Marissa are discussing coming back to Hebron again perhaps within a year to stay for a month to serve the orphans and ministry here.

At our arrival, we were greeted with a hero's welcome, the energy from the children who are all excited to tell you their names and expect you to remember it, was a small glimpse into the full schedule we would participate in during our stay at Hebron.

The orphans at Hebron are well taught in the scriptures as their day begins in prayer and Bible classes, so it was a delight for us to expand on their biblical understanding with our theme of the Fiery Furnace.

We had combined with VBS in India to create a MEGA-CAMP with literally a thousand children from the local area to hear about Jesus Christ and participated in a closing ceremony for the large activity that lasted a full week at Hebron.

The children at Hebron were delighted that we came to play with them, and several games of soccer and a near-tournament volleyball game caused loud cheers as Rienne and Marissa battled each other on opposite teams for a win. Saturday night began with just some singing, but evolved into a dance party as the orphans taught us songs and dances, and Rienne and Marissa shared some line dancing from songs on their iPods hooked up to the amplifiers.

On Sunday, Brian and Michael met with twenty pastors who head nearly thirty congregations in four districts of a thousand brethren. Some traveled great distances to meet with us. As God always does, the messages from Brian and Michael ended up complimenting one another on nearly the same subject to edify and build up the Church of God in India. Hopefully the admonitions will help them avoid many of the same issues that have plagued the church in the USA.

The many questions from the pastors to Brian and Michael were inspiring, as the biblical acumen of these pastors was indeed on a level that showcased to us that the spirit of God is very much present in these men and their congregations. Iron sharpened iron, and Sagar Jalli thanked us for the very uplifting and motivating messages and explanations during our question and answer time.

Sunday night afforded the Mission Team a chance to share our talents with the children. Prasad and Anusha led the children in songs and dancing. That was followed by a skit with Prasad, Michael and Rienne — who used some Nerf Swords to demonstrate the bible as the Sword of Truth against Satan and temptation. Rienne battling "Satan" and dispatching him with skill was applauded and cheered.

Afterward, we treated all the children to a bonfire and roasted marshmallows for them which they have never had before. Soon more songs and dancing began. The Mission Team belted out an a capella rendition of "Prince of Peace," and then the entire assembly marched around in a circle and sang songs.

Monday was a presentation of medical and sports equipment to Hebron from the brethren in the USA. We also presented high quality vitamins to the staff for the orphans that Tyler Kincaid provided for these children.

Each team member was invited to say farewell, and both Rienne and Ericka were full of tears. Saying goodbye to these children who grew on our hearts was very difficult for all of us.

Mission India 2012 began with a bang and a fast sprint that gobbled up our time in fun and laughter. Before we knew it, time had gone and the first half of our mission trip had come to an end.

Sagar Jalli and staff arranged for our transportation to Rajupalem for the second half of our Mission trip, and to our delight, both he and Prakash came with us for the 2.5 hour journey from Palakol to the House of God. To our surprise, Sagar is planning to pick us up and escort us with Chitti and Prasad Gampala to Vishakapatnum next Monday afternoon for our flight to Hyderabad and the end of Mission India 2012.

We cannot say thank you enough to Sagar Jalli, his staff and the children at Hebron for making our first week in India, a week that will live in our hearts forever.

Saying goodbye is never easy, but for us — saying goodbye to these children was especially touching.

*(If you would like to see a video of the good byes at Hebron Home, go to the following YouTube video:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuOuMzj2RZQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuOuMzj2RZQ&feature=player_embedded))*

*Photos Supplied by Kardias Ministries*



*Welcome to Hebron House*



*Sabbath Service at Hebron House*



*Farewell to Hebron House*

*Knowles: "Notes on Zephaniah" cont. from page 5.*

ford to slip back into carnality and self-indulgence. We must walk in humility and obedience before God on whom our salvation depends. Even then, we may or may not be spared the pain that will come upon the world.

## Indicting the Nations

The next section of Zephaniah indicts the nations and peoples that are close to Judea. Coastal kingdoms like Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron are warned, "I will destroy you and none will be left," (Zephaniah 2:5b). He speaks also to the Kerethites (also spelled "Cherethites") in Canaan (5a). Their land will be given to the remnant of Judah when God restores their fortunes (2:6-7).

Moab and Ammon are also excoriated. They were guilty of taunting and insulting the Jews (2:8). Like the Arabs and Iranians of today, they "made threats" against the chosen people. Their lands would therefore go to "the survivors of my nation," says God (verse 9b). Today's nations should think twice about mocking, insulting and threatening God's Israelite people (verse 10). Long ago, God had promised Abraham, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse," (Genesis 12:3). Many other biblical passages support that promise including Acts 7:7; Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Isaiah 43:10-12; Obadiah 15 and Joel 3:4 & 19. To oppose Israel is to oppose Israel's God.

Next Zephaniah prophesies against the Cushites (possibly Ethiopians) and against Assyria (then in decline). Then the prophet returns to his indictment of Jerusalem and Judea.

## Jerusalem's Problem

Jerusalem's problem — that is her leader's problem — is that "she obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to her God," (Zephaniah 3:2). The religious leaders, prophets and priests, are treacherous and cavalier about Torah. They are brazen in their misconduct, knowing no shame (verses 4-5).

Therefore punishment must come. After the storm, the light breaks through. The relative few, who have humbled themselves in obedience to God, even in captivity, will provide the seed of redemption. "But I will leave within you the meek and the humble who trust in the name of the Lord," (Zephaniah 3:12). God will again gather his people and return them to his land (verse 14-end).

In our time, God may be bringing our nations down. If he is doing so, all the gold and guns in the world won't save us. No matter how ingenious our hiding places, and no matter how much food and water we have stored, if God wants to take us down, we'll go down. We all need to turn to God whether we are Arabs, Turks, Iranians, Americans or Israelis. God is sovereign over all the na-

tions and their kings. The words of a humbled Nebuchadnezzar ring down through the centuries:

"His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: 'What have you done?' ...those who walk in pride he is able to humble," (Daniel 4:34, 35, 37 excerpts).

Nebuchadnezzar had to learn one vital lesson: "... that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes," (Daniel 4:32b). That principle is no less true today than it was in ancient times.

Zephaniah's prophecies were written more than two and a half millennia in the past in another language and in the context of a very different world than our own. Yet, his words contain valuable object lessons for our day. God has not changed. He still looks for humility in those who worship him. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word," (Isaiah 66:2).

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## Abortion Clinics Arrange Illegal Sex-Selection Abortions

*by Steven Ertelt, Phoenix, AZ, LifeNews.com*

A third video in a series devoted to exposing how the abortion industry is willing to arrange sex-selection abortions for women who seek them shows two National Abortion Federation-affiliated clinics in Arizona agreeing to break state law and perform an illegal sex-selective abortion.

Live Action has released the third video in the series after two other videos exposed how staff at Planned Parenthood abortion centers agreed to facilitate sex-selection abortions.

The new footage shows two NAF members, Camelback Family Planning in Phoenix and the Tucson Women's Center in Tucson, promising to ignore the law and perform a sex-selective abortion and coaching a woman to lie on official paperwork to conceal the illegal abortion.

When the woman purportedly seeking to abort her girl and try again for a boy explains this at the Camelback abortion clinic, a counselor named Barb advises, "Don't tell us that, because we don't want to know." Referring to the clinic's abortion doctor, Gabrielle Goodrick, Barb says, "You can tell her, she's gonna tell you the same thing, just: Don't let it be down! She's really good about that. You'll like that about her."

Sex-selective abortion is a felony in Arizona.



possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.'

"And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying:

'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates — the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hitites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.'"

Do you see what God is doing here? What does it mean when the verse says, "...behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces?" The whole point of this is to show us that God was performing the rituals of these covenants by Himself. Man was observing, but God was performing. Abram only participated vicariously from a distance. God did all the work, and is this not also true of the covenant that we have with the Father through the shedding of Jesus' blood? This leads us to some profound conclusions:

- God has provided us a way to come to Him; it's up to us to follow that way.
- There is only one way to God — His way through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- God is seeking a relationship with every man and woman.
- There are rules to any relationship, and we have rules to our relationship with God.

Now let's look at Jonah's approach to Nineveh. God told Jonah to go east to Nineveh; Jonah instead went west to Tarshish. Jesus compares Himself to Jonah. He says that He is like Jonah in that He was sent to an evil and adulterous generation, and like Jonah, He would spend three days and nights in the heart of the earth, just as Jonah was three days and nights in the belly of the whale (the great fish).

What is God's lesson for Jonah and for us? "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left—and much livestock?" (Jonah 4:11).

Jesus said, "If you will not forgive others, your heavenly Father will not forgive you." I think the central point of Jesus' ministry was that, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Forgiveness and reconciliation are central to the gospel. The "gospel of the kingdom" is

not just that Jesus will establish God's kingdom on earth some day; it is understanding how we get into that kingdom. Jonah knew that Nineveh and the Assyrians were a serious threat to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and he wanted God to condemn them and destroy them, but that is not how God thinks. He wants a relationship with all people He has created in His image — even the Assyrians of ancient times.

Our mandate to take the gospel to the world (Matthew 28:19-20) is for the purpose of converting Muslims, Hindus, communists, Buddhists, and every other religion to Christ so that God can have fellowship with these people. God's desire is to exclude no one from His kingdom, but first, each has to give up his false gods and be willing to be led by Christ to the Father. My question for every Christian is, how willing are you to give up our own "sins that so easily beset us?"

There is only one person that we have to satisfy — God. There are no other options. Either we are willing to accept Christ's sacrifice and walk in His righteousness, or at the Judgment we will cease to exist. Modern spirituality does not have another way to God. Nor can we work our way into fellowship with Him through our "good" works. Jesus did all the work necessary to restore mankind's broken relationship with God. We can do nothing to gain acceptance with God. We just need to be willing to accept the work that God did through Christ and walk justly before Him. It's that simple. The hard part is to accept the idea that we have no answer for our condition — no way out other than His way. We can say nothing nor can we do anything to redeem ourselves. Our only option is to do it God's way. The Lord's objective from the very beginning of creation has been to save every human being that has ever lived and to enjoy fellowship with them all in His kingdom. Can you think of a better plan than this?

—Kenneth Ryland

### **NYC principal bars students from singing "God Bless the USA" at graduation**

The New York *Post* reports that a New York City principal has pulled the plug on patriotism by preventing students from singing "God Bless the USA" at their graduation.

The decision has sparked fireworks at a school filled with proud immigrants.

Greta Hawkins, principal of PS 90, the Edna Cohen School, will not allow kindergarten students to belt out the beloved Lee Greenwood ballad, also known as "Proud to be an American," at their moving-up ceremony.

But Hawkins marched in on a recent rehearsal and ordered a CD playing the anthem to be shut off, staffers said. She told the teachers to drop the song from the program.

"We don't want to offend other cultures," they quoted her as explaining.

# The God I Know

by Terrell Perkins



It is a typical human endeavor to create labels for ourselves. We like to define things because we believe when we do we gain some kind of power over them. We give labels to everything. Just think of going to a doctor with some kind of health problem. The first thing we want to know is: what is it? Is there a name for what I have? If we can name it, then we must be able to do something about it. In a like manner we create idols, images of things the way we want them to be. We reduce things to images so that we can comprehend them. Sometimes we make our idols out of wood or stone or metal. But most of the time we create our idols in our minds. Think about when you've heard something about someone you'd never met. You probably created a mental image of that person only to find later, when you actually met, they didn't fit your mental image. We all do that to some degree. The problems arise when we react to our mental image, or idol, instead of reacting to the actual person. We may have heard that someone was a liar or thief or some other dark, nefarious type. When we met them, instead of meeting the real person in front of us, we reacted to the image we had of a liar or thief. Someone who themselves may have been the victim of a liar or a gossip. That's one reason why God tells us in His word not to gossip.

We do these things, create labels and images in our minds, of God too. If the labels or images we create in our minds are not those of the God revealed in the scriptures then we have created an idol. When we worship the image we have of our god, we are worshipping an idol. We can do this all on our own but we have to remember too that we have powerful enemies in the spirit realm. Satan and his demons are attempting to lead us away from the One True God. They encourage us to create false images of God with our hands and in our minds. They encourage us to worship that which is not God. The world is full of false gods that mankind worships. We hear about them every day. We can't just unconsciously allow such things in our minds or they can slowly change us too. We have to study the scriptures, pray and obey God to come to know Him. When we hear or read someone else's labels or images of God we need to consciously remind ourselves, That's NOT the God I know.

Here are just a few of the common misconceptions about Our Heavenly Father:

God is not "opposite-but-equal" to Satan. He is not at war with Satan. Satan has made war on God and lost: He will do so again...and lose again.

God is not desperately trying to save all of mankind. If he were He'd be losing. This is "A" day of salvation. God is not calling all of mankind now. The day will come when He will.

He doesn't punish people for breaking His commandments in the way many think. When someone touches a hot stove God doesn't send an angel down to burn their flesh. Sin, breaking God's law, brings it's own punishment just like a hot stove does it's own burning. Like a parent punishes a child for intentionally breaking a rule, God punishes those who willfully disobey Him.

God doesn't make "deals." He laid down His covenant, His *B'rith*, and we choose to follow it or not. He set before us life and death and He implores us to choose life.

God isn't in nature. He is apart from and outside of the universe. He cannot be reduced to any form in time, space, matter, energy or any other thing He created.

God doesn't absolve people from obeying Him for simply accepting Christ as their savior. Faith requires action. To Love God, to come to understand Him, we have to obey Him.

God doesn't automatically send someone who hasn't accepted Christ to hell. He wouldn't send a young child, or anyone else, to hell for never having heard of, or understood, Christ. He's not a vengeful old man waiting to punish sinners or unbelievers. He doesn't take any pleasure in punishing disobedient children. He wouldn't send, even a disobedient child, into an ever-burning hell fire. Those who consciously reject Him will be burned up and even their memory forgotten.

He doesn't love some of His children and hate others...He loves all His children.

He is not a part of some mysterious trinity. His Holy Spirit is His power that emanates from Him not some ethereal being, more powerful even than God the Father.

God is NOT "the goddess" or "our Higher Power" or "the deity" or any of our other euphemisms. God reveals Himself to us as our Heavenly Father. God will not be reduced to any form we can conceive. God's name is

hallowed. It is not to be taken casually or lightly. In a like way His son's name is not to be taken casually or lightly.

God cannot be defined. To define something is to categorize it; to group it with other like-things. There is only One God. There is nothing else in *that* category. Because we are mortal beings with three-pound brains our brains cannot contain or conceive of God in His totality. We can only come to know what He reveals of Himself. Because we are limited in our various languages He uses terms that we can understand to teach us.

Only the Scriptures reveal to us the One, True God. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of everything there is. He is righteous, just, patient, merciful, everlasting...and so much more... God is a spirit. We must worship Him in spirit and truth. God is Love and Love is ultimately how we come to know Him.

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*Terrell Perkins graduated from Ambassador College in 1981, and has been a Sabbath keeper for about 35 years. Terrell lives in Capitan, New Mexico, and works as an artist-blacksmith hand forging metal sculptures and architectural hardware and furniture. Terrell has been a freelance writer for over 20 years.*

In our previous issue of *The Sabbath Sentinel* (May-June 2012) we ran an article by our president, Calvin Burrell, titled, "**Divine Healing Today.**" Calvin invited our readers to comment on his article. One of our board members, Bryant Buck, has allowed us to publish his comments on his recent healing.

Here are Bryant's comments: "During a routine outpatient surgery in March I was diagnosed as having an irregular heartbeat. An EKG after the surgery confirmed this. So I had to go see a cardiologist before going home. He put me on an aspirin regimen. A few days before returning to see the cardiologist I experienced twinges across my chest. He felt that my condition was getting worse and put me on a blood thinner. I had severe side effects to this medication and stopped it after 10 days. But that was the Sabbath an elder from an associate fellowship came and laid hands on me according to Mark 16:17-18. Within 3 days all of the side effects of the blood thinner stopped. Then when I went to see my cardiologist later that week, he thoroughly checked me over and said that he could not find any evidence of the irregular heartbeat. In fact, he said that my heart was in normal sinus rhythm. It has now been over a month and I haven't had the slightest twinge across my chest. 1 Peter 2:24 concludes, 'by his stripes ye were healed.' And I thank the Lord!"

If you would like to comment on Calvin Burrell's article on healing, send us your thoughts.

## Paul Preaches on the Sabbath

**Acts 13:42-44:** "42 So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them **the next Sabbath**. 43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. 44 **On the next Sabbath** almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

**Acts 16:13:** "And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there." This is a great verse that **confirms that the apostles kept the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath** according to the Commandment and not the first day of the week. Paul goes out of the city to a quiet place by the riverside to pray on the Sabbath Day. He also meets some women there, who also retreated to this quiet place for the Sabbath.

**Acts 18:4:** "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." As we can see, Paul is not just going into the synagogue to reason with the Jews, he is also preaching to the Greeks (Gentiles) on the Sabbath Day!

### **Acts 25:7-8, Acts 28:17-18, 23-24**

"7 When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, 8 while he answered for himself, '**Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.**'"

"28:17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: 'Men and brethren, **though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, 18** who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. 19 But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.'

23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, **persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets**, from morning till evening. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved."



# The Raising and Loosing of Lazarus

by Daniel Botkin



The story of Lazarus is the story of every individual who has been saved and set free. "Now Yeshua loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was" (John 11:5f). Yeshua loved Lazarus, yet He allowed him to die. Yeshua loved us, yet He allowed us to become spiritually dead in our sins.

There are some sinners who consider themselves to be "spiritual." They describe themselves by saying, "I'm not religious, but *I am* spiritual." But unless they have been truly saved from their sins by Yeshua, they are not spiritual. They are spiritually dead. The Bible says that an unregenerate sinner is "dead in trespasses and sins" and "by nature children of wrath" and "dead in sins" (Ephesians 2:1-5).

A child of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, is not "spiritual." Such a man cannot make himself be spiritually alive, no more than Lazarus could have raised himself from the dead. It took an act of God to raise Lazarus from the dead, and it takes an act of God to raise a sinner from his spiritually dead condition. This is the reason Paul writes, "And you hath He quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1).

Think of Lazarus lying in his dark tomb. He had been stone-cold dead for four days. There was absolutely nothing he could do to make himself come alive again, because he was a mere corpse. His case was hopeless until Yeshua showed up. And a sinner's case is likewise hopeless until Yeshua shows up.

The corpse of Lazarus did indeed come alive. And what was it that imparted life to that dead body? It was the voice of his loving Friend Yeshua calling with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" So powerful was that life-giving Voice that some say all the dead within range of that Voice would have risen from their graves if He had only said "Come forth!" and not specified Lazarus by name.

The Voice of Yeshua calls out to individual sinners. It is the sound of that voice that awakens the sinner from his state of spiritual deadness, and makes him spiritually alive. However, this does not happen in a vacuum. Before Yeshua speaks, there is something that we who are spiritually alive must do for those who are spiritually dead. We have to do the preparatory work before Yeshua speaks to awaken the sinner. What is that preparatory work? Before Yeshua called Lazarus forth from death to life, the friends of Lazarus had to do something: "Take ye away the stone," Yeshua said (John 11:39).

It is Yeshua's job to impart life to spiritually dead sinners, but it is our job to take away the stones before Yeshua speaks. We are the ones who have to remove stumbling stones, the obstacles which hinder sinners from hearing the Voice of Yeshua. The stones we have to remove from the sinner's mind are things like skepticism, misunderstandings, unbelief, self-righteousness, vain imaginations, rationalization of sins, etc. — in short, any objection that the sinner has to receiving truth.

Sometimes we meet a sinner who is so spiritually dead in his trespasses and sins that we think there is no way he can ever be saved. We think that there is no reason to bother removing the stone from *his* grave. Like Martha, we say, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days." Lord, people who are that spiritually dead for that many years just don't get saved. But the Lord says to remove the stone. If you can remove the stone, you will see the glory of God.

Removing stones is often hard work. It requires spiritual strength, discernment, determination, and perseverance. Some people's hearts are so stubborn and hard that they seem impenetrable and unbreakable.

If you have ever had the difficult task of breaking up hard, thick concrete with a sledge hammer, you have some idea what it is like to get a hardened sinner to

listen for the Voice of Yeshua. The hammer that we use is the Word of God, for the Lord says that His Word is "like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jeremiah 23:29). The first time you swing a sledge hammer and smite the concrete, the hammer just bounces off the surface. It appears to have had no effect whatsoever. It can be very disheartening. So it is the first time we strike the heart of a hardened sinner with the hammer of God's Word. It just seems to bounce off his heart and makes no impression on him. So it is with the second, the third, and the fourth blows of the hammer.

A sledge hammer striking concrete long enough and hard enough indeed "breaketh the rock in pieces." But the concrete first begins to weaken and crack on the unseen bottom, not on the visible outer surface. Even though it is not apparent on the outside, each blow weakens the unseen, inner part of the concrete. Eventually a crack will appear on the outer surface. That means the concrete is now cracked all the way through, from the inside to the outside. Then it only takes another blow or two, and the rock breaketh in pieces.

The hammer of God's Word works the same way on a hardened sinner's heart. We may see no apparent outward effect, but the hammer blows are breaking down the sinner's resistance from the inside. When a big enough crack finally appears, it lets in the Voice of Yeshua and the light of the gospel. The sinner may at first hear Yeshua's voice as only a muffled whisper, and he may see only a small ray of light penetrating his tomb. But after just one or two more blows from the hammer of God's Word, the rock breaketh in pieces. Then the sinner hears Yeshua loudly and clearly enough to be fully awakened, and the light floods his grave like it flooded the grave of Lazarus when the stone was taken away. The removal of the stone makes an open door for him to emerge from his tomb, and Yeshua calls him forth and gives him new life.

In addition to removing gravestones, we have been given another task: removing grave clothes. "And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Yeshua saith unto them, 'Loose him, and let him go'" (John 11:44).

When a sinner is first called from death to life, he is still bound up in his grave clothes. He is forgiven and saved and spiritually alive, but he is still in bondage to many of his old ways. We loose him by making him into a disciple. Just as Lazarus' friends had to unwrap

the grave clothes off Lazarus, so we have to help the new brother unlearn his old ways and learn the ways of the One who quickened him. Until someone does this, the brother remains in bondage, and the stench of death still remains on him.

Lazarus was bound hand and foot, and could not set himself free. He needed friends to help him out of his grave clothes. Could you imagine Lazarus saying to his friends, "That's okay, I don't need help. These grave clothes are fine; I don't need to change. I'll just wear what I have on." Lazarus would have remained in bondage, and the stench of death would have remained on him.

It is ridiculous to imagine Lazarus saying that, yet there are some professing believers who express that very attitude. They do not want to be loosed from their old ways. They do not want to change. They want to remain in bondage to the bad habits which kept them bound up when they were dead in their sins. They want to remain in spiritual garments which are suitable only for the dead. (And some immodestly-dressed women want to remain in physical garments which are suitable only for the spiritually dead.) They look and smell like the walking dead, with the stench of death upon them. They could be described as "Christian Zombies."

Have such people really been made spiritually alive, or are they deceiving themselves? Did they really hear the Voice of Yeshua calling them from death to life, or are they just pretending? Or did they just imagine that they heard His voice?

It is not my job to judge the authenticity of any particular individual's profession of faith. But if a professing believer wants to remain bound up in his grave clothes, if he is not bothered by his bondage and by the stench of his grave clothes, there's not much I can do for him. So I try to focus on those individuals who exhibit a sincere desire and passion for discipleship.

"Loose him, and let him go," Yeshua said. That, in a nutshell, is our job. To loose young brothers and sisters by making them into disciples, and then let them go, so they can go forth and make others into disciples.

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*Reprinted from "Gates of Eden," Nov-Dec 2007, p. 10. "Gates of Eden" is a bimonthly newsletter produced by Gates of Eden, a messianic Jewish ministry. Write to Gates of Eden, P.O. Box 2257, East Peoria, IL, 61611-0257. Gates of Eden is on the Internet at [www.gatesofeden.org](http://www.gatesofeden.org).*

# Jesus Reinterprets the Scriptures

By Bryant Buck



There are many who claim that the apostle Paul reinterpreted the Old Testament Scriptures, but that Jesus Himself did not do so. The vast majority who hold this position believe that Paul erred to some degree in his reinterpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. But if we do indeed show that Jesus Himself reinterpreted the Scriptures, then we have found a gaping hole in this position. Moreover, if we show that the Lord Yeshua committed principles of reinterpretation to His apostles, then we have no further need to give any serious consideration to the idea that Paul or any other apostle was unqualified to reinterpret the Old Testament Scriptures.

Those who take the position that Jesus Christ did not reinterpret the Scriptures love to quote passages such as Matthew 5:17-19 (NAS): "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Basically, those who hold to the position that Yeshua did not reinterpret the Old Testament use texts such as Matthew 5:17-19 to support their position. Now look closely at Matthew 5:17. Yeshua said that He did not come to abolish the law; so the law cannot be done away. But Yeshua added that He came to fulfill the law. According to Webster's Dictionary, "fulfill" means to "carry out" or "satisfy." If the law was the complete revelation of Yahweh, there would no need for Jesus to "satisfy" the law.

In Luke 18:18-21 (NAS) we read these words: "A ruler questioned Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" And he said, 'All these things I have kept from my youth.'"

If this passage had stopped here, it would sound as if Yeshua were confirming the commandments just as he did in Matthew 5:17-19. However, the passage continues: "When Jesus heard this, He said to him, 'One thing you still lack; sell all you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me'" (Luke 18:22 NAS). Think about this: If keeping the commandments alone were enough to secure eternal life, Jesus would never have spoken the words

that He spoke in Luke 18:22. But Jesus in effect told the ruler that keeping the commandments alone was not enough to obtain eternal life. In the case of the ruler, he had first to sell his many possessions and distribute the proceeds to the poor, and second, he had to follow Jesus. Whether we like it or not, Yeshua has just reinterpreted the Scriptures here. Beyond keeping the commandments, we must give up whatever is most dear to our hearts, and we must follow Yeshua. There is no Old Testament Scripture that declares you must follow Yeshua in order to obtain eternal life.

In John 14:6 (KJV) Yeshua declares: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In this one very simple statement Yeshua makes a resounding reinterpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures. Under the Old Testament the law was the way; now it's Yeshua. Under the Old Testament Scriptures the law was the truth; now it's Yeshua. Under the Old Testament Scriptures the law was the law of life; now it's Yeshua. In consequence, the apostle Paul's assertion in Galatians 3:21 is based on what Jesus declared in John 14:6. "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (Galatians 3:21 KJV). But the law couldn't give life; only Jesus could do that.

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus is instructing His disciples in how to behave if they as brothers sin against one another. In verse 17 (NAS) He states: "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." "The Church"? Find "the church" in the Old Testament.

The expression "the church" is not used until the New Testament. Yeshua has just introduced a whole new entity here: the church. Not only has He introduced the church here, but also He has made it the final authority for disputes between brethren. In effect, Jesus introduced the church to replace the synagogue in Matthew 18:17.

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:19-20).

Here Yeshua reaffirms the Old Testament concept of repentance, but then introduces a concept found nowhere in the Old Testament. He talks about Himself coming inside a person who repents and invites Him in. Of



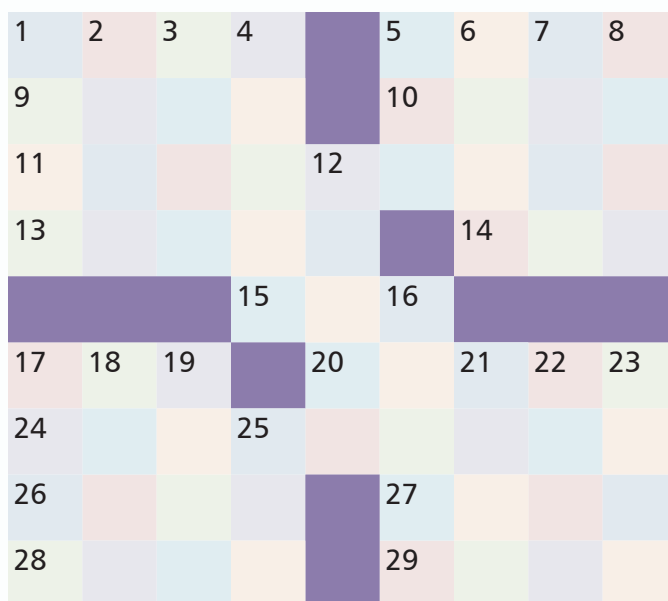
course, He doesn't come in as a physical person. Second Corinthians 5:16 teaches us that we no longer know Christ after the flesh. Instead, we learn from 1 Corinthians 6:17 (NAS) that "the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him." Now we know Yeshua Messiah in the spirit; now Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. (See Ephesians 3:17 and Colossians 1:27.) Furthermore, Yeshua committed to His apostles the reinterpretation of the Scriptures.

In Luke 24:44-45 (NAS) we read these words: "Now He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.'" Basically, this text in Luke teaches us two things. First, we don't understand the scriptures unless Yeshua opens our minds to understand the Scriptures. (In other words, the Scriptures are revealed by Yahweh — not analyzed by men.) Second, Yeshua explained the Scriptures to the apostles that He had ordained, thus committing to them the reinterpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures that would continue throughout the New Testament Scriptures after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

In closing this article, let's look at the passage in John 6:66-68. In John chapter 6 Yeshua gives the message in which He tells the Jews to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. The Jews reject His message because it flies in the face of a number of their traditions as well as the Old Testament commandment not to eat blood. (See Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:10.) They miss what Yeshua declares at the end of His message when He says "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63 NAS). In other words, Yeshua tells the Jews that His message in John chapter 6 is not to be taken literally. But what I want to bring out is what happens after Jesus finishes His message. "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, 'You do not want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life'" (John 6:66-68 NAS). Neither Moses nor the prophets had the words of eternal life; only Jesus has those words. And Peter recognized that Jesus has those words. So Peter recognized that Jesus is the reinterpreter of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is no possibility of interpreting the Scriptures correctly without taking into account Yeshua's reinterpretation of the Scriptures.

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*Bryant, a BSA board member, is the founder and leader of Solid Rock Home Fellowship in Freeport, Illinois. After retiring from a career selling life and health insurance, Bryant has gone on to pursue his love of writing. He now has two published books: **The Prayer Warrior** and **My First Christian ABC Book**.*



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### ACROSS

1. \_\_\_ I say
5. Duo
9. Dextrous lead-in
10. Beige
11. Prophet slain  
between the temple and  
the altar
13. Where Saul sought a  
familiar spirit
14. Med. Order
15. Fan or can closer
17. Priest in Shiloh
20. Ineffectual intellectuals
24. He prophesied "The  
great day of the LORD is  
near."
26. Demolish (alt. spell-  
ing)
27. Random number
28. Soon
29. Summers, in France

### DOWN

1. In a \_\_\_; out of it
2. Sign
3. Alphabet run
4. Amorite king
5. Cent or mission  
starter
6. Like sour grapes
7. Persia
8. German district
12. Gladiator milieu
16. Slow
17. Post-Babylonian  
scribe
18. Depend
19. \_\_\_ facto
21. Disorderly strike
22. Title of nobility
23. \_\_\_ the one
25. Chicken

# The Church in the World



**Harvest Field Church of Christ devastated by a bomb blast carried out by Muslim extremists in Bauchi, Nigeria.**

**Injuries Severe after Bauchi, Nigeria Suicide Bomb Attack**  
*Islamic extremist bombing, alleged military shooting, kill 21.*

*By Abdias Pasoville*

**BAUCHI, Nigeria, June 7** (*Compass Direct News*) – Amid allegations that soldiers were responsible for at least eight of 21 deaths after the suicide bombing of two churches here on Sunday (June 3), sources told *Compass* that most of those injured from the blast and alleged military shooting were in critical condition. A statement reportedly from the Muslim extremist Boko Haram sect claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing of the Living Faith church in Yelwa, a Christian settlement on the outskirts of the northern Nigerian city of Bauchi.

The blast also collapsed a wall of the nearby Harvest Field Church of Christ, leaving three people in critical condition. Of 61 people taken to Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital Bauchi after the blast, 38 were in critical condition, a staff member told *Compass* on condition of anonymity; the other 23 have been treated and sent home. Church leaders said at a press conference on Monday (June 4) that 45 Christians were considered injured. “Twenty-five out of these were injured by the bomb blast, while 20 sustained various degrees of injuries from the gunshots by soldiers,” said the Rev. Lawi Pokti, chairman of the Bauchi chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria, who said the military shot eight Christians to death.

The Nigerian military has yet to respond to the allegations. In similar church attacks in Nigeria, Christians angry that their brethren were killed in the presence of security agencies have been shot for refusing military orders to leave. Johnson Elogva, associate pastor at Living Faith, said most of the injuries were severe. “Most of our members are critically ill in the hospitals,” he said. “Some with first degree, second degree burns.”

## **Suicide Bombing Hits Another Church in Jos, Nigeria**

*Boko Haram Islamic extremist finds weak link in military security chain.*

*By Abdias Pasoville*

**JOS, Nigeria, June 10** (*Compass Direct News*) — An Islamic extremist ran a car full of explosives at a church in this Plateau state city this morning, killing at least two Christians and injuring more than 40 others, military and police officials said.

In Borno state also today, gunmen reportedly killed at least two Christians during church worship. The Boko Haram Islamic sect reportedly took responsibility for both assaults.

The attack in Jos on Christ’s Chosen Church of God was the second suicide bombing of a church in two Sundays and the third church bombing in Jos in six months. The explosion, which hit after a service had ended and church leaders and some children remained in the building, collapsed the roof of the sanctuary, witnesses said. The death toll was expected to increase as injuries were severe.



**Christ’s Chosen Church of God in Jos, Nigeria**

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*A Bi-monthly Publication of*

*The Bible Sabbath Association*

*802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA*

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