

The Sabbath Sentinel

January-February 2016



**“You have made summer
... and winter.”**

BSA—The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”

The Sabbath Sentinel January-February 2016

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IS THE CHURCH SUPPOSED TO BE DOING GREAT MIRACLES, SIGNS OR WONDERS?

I've heard it preached by some, and believed by more than a few, that the Church should be doing or looking for great miracles, signs and wonders in the Church.

The reason that some have felt that way is stated to be found in John 14:10-12. In those scriptures, Jesus is saying that the Church would do greater works than He did. But, did He really mean that to be greater miracles, or signs, or wonders? Viewing that scripture out of context it certainly appears that way.

However, let us consider the verse in context first in order to gain an understanding of what the Jesus and the Father have in mind.

In John 14:10—12, we read in context that Jesus did not speak His own words. Instead, He indicated that the Father dwelt in Him and that the words He spoke were those of the Father. After that, Jesus makes the statement that those who believe in Him would do greater works than His because He, Jesus, was going to the Father. This, then, is a clear statement that we, or at least the Apostles, would do greater works.

Was Jesus saying that the Father said that those who believe in Him would produce greater signs, do greater miracles, or perform greater wonders? If He was saying that, then He didn't know what He was talking about, at best, or not speaking truthfully, at worst—neither of which would be indicative that the Father was speaking through Jesus. The most plausible alternative is that we have not under-

stood what He meant.

We know for a fact that Paul stated that God cannot lie. Paul wrote that in Titus 1:2. We read in Num. 23:19 that God is not a man who can (and often does) lie. Finally in John 8:44 we read that the father of lies is Satan, not the Father who Jesus quoted. It is clear from the scriptures that God can't lie.

If the Father can't lie, then Jesus who spoke only what the Father directed Him to speak, also could not have lied. In light of this, what was Jesus talking about when He mentioned the disciples' doing of greater works?

Notice that the context of John 14 was that Jesus was speaking words of the Father. That was the Works He was talking about. "Works" equated to words in Vs 10—11.

Notice that John 14:12 does not say greater miracles, but rather greater works (*miezon ergon*). The word "greater" in that instance is the Greek word "miezon" which means "larger" in English. It could be literally or figuratively. (*Interpretation of Greek words into English are courtesy of Strong's Exhaustive Concordance.*)

Where Jesus says "the works I do" the word "works" is translated from the Greek "ergon." It means to work; toil as an effort or occupation; an act of labor.

Jesus was saying that the disciples, or apostles, and if we allow for extension, the Church, will labor

Continued on page 10, "Signs."

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT (PART 2 OF 2)

In the second part of this series, we will finish examining the Fruits of the Spirit and their importance in our lives today. As mentioned in part one, our culture can negatively influence our view of these fruits. This will be just as true, if not more true, as we examine the last five Fruits of the Spirit.

The fifth spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 is translated as kindness in the NIV. It can also be translated as gentleness or moral integrity. This word has a connotation of usefulness, being employed, or benevolence. Kindness is the character that God has built into a person so that they are useful for His Kingdom.

Once a believer has character built within them, they can now be employed for Kingdom matters. This shows us that a believer should go through the first four phases of the fruits before they are ordained to an office of the church. The Greek word for kindness is *chrestos*. In ancient Greece, this word was used of valuable citizens (McGlew). Being recognized for work and credentialed makes one *chrestos*. Joy is a realization that you have value to God's kingdom. When you are used by God, your value becomes actualized. You can now manifest God's kindness, which was employed in our lives when we were lead to repentance (Romans 2:4).

The next fruit is goodness. Like kindness, it has a connotation of usefulness and excellence. In the Bible, it is often used of people performing good works. This not only means doing the right thing, but also the manner in which something is carried out. A believer operating in the fruit of goodness will display honor and excellence in carrying out the work of God. He or she will also display uprightness in dealing with others. This requires a level of zeal that may not be present when a person is only operating in the fruit of kindness. A believer exhibiting the fruit of goodness will fight and stand for what is good, even if it means disciplining or correcting oth-



ers. Christ demonstrated this when He drove the money changers out of the Temple (see also Matthew 25:21-23, Luke 6:45). Kindness and Goodness paired together show a progression of usefulness to zeal for God's work.

The seventh fruit is translated as faithfulness or faith. There is a common faith we must all have to be saved (Romans 10:9-11). This fruit manifests as continued confidence in the promises and leading of God. Moreover, it pertains to faithfulness in the work of God with diligence and persistence. Faith without works is dead (James 2). In other words, this fruit reflects the character of an individual who is reliable and consistent. Jesus said, "...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Christ posed the question as to whether or not people would really be dependable in doing God's work in the last days. We must be reliable, or our useful zeal goes to waste.

The next fruit is Gentleness. It can also be translated as meekness or humility. This is another fruit where our cultural perception can corrupt our view of God's Word. Gentleness is typically confused with a lowly countenance, being soft-hearted or even mar-

Continued on page 14, "Fruits."



NINEVEH'S RESURRECTION

There is much to consider about the ancient city of Nineveh, which was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It was known as “that exceedingly great city.”

In its day it was the metropolis of the world, filled with palaces, gardens, and libraries with books made of stone and clay. There were gigantic sculptures of human headed figures and of winged monsters. All indications are that Nineveh had a high degree of culture in literature, science, and art.

Located in modern day Iraq, below the infamous city of Mosul, along the shores of the Tigris River, the land was extremely fertile, productive and beautiful.

In spite of these positive attributes, the city was home to many sins. God moved and called as Prophets Nahum and Zephaniah more than 700 years before the time of Jesus Christ to proclaim the fate of Nineveh to the world.

“Woe to the bloody city! it is full of lies and robbery. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the

mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth the nations through her whoredoms and families through her witchcrafts.” (Nahum 3:1-4 KJV).

The ancient historian Diodrus Siculus said that the King of Nineveh knew the prophecy and also how a river would destroy the city. When the calamity came, he gave up in despair and burned his own palace. This too was predicted in prophecies.

“The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars” (Nahum 3:13).

“The gates of the river shall be opened and the palace shall be dissolved [melted].” (Nahum 2:6).

“I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and I will set thee as a gazing stock” (Nahum 3:6).

“I show all the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame” (Nahum 3:5).

“For he shall uncover the cedar work” (Zephaniah 2:14).

Continued on page 16, “Nineveh.”



OUR NATIONAL Obsession WITH GAMBLING

In a few short days we will be voting on whether to allow casino-style gaming on our county. I plan to vote "no." How would you vote?

There is a lot of ambivalence among Christians about gambling. Some say that gambling "in moderation" is fine while others declare that gambling in any form is a sin. I do not intend to present a lengthy theological argument against gambling, but I will make the case that Christians should think twice before plunking down their money on the craps table or at the roulette wheel.

The National Gambling Impact Study Commission Report

In June of 1999 the Federal Government issued a report on the effects of legalized gambling in the United States. The final report had some startling conclusions. In summarizing these conclusions, the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church released the following report:

Americans now wager about \$600 billion a year, which is more than is spent on groceries! In 1992, it was \$329 billion a year. In 1974, it was just \$17 billion. That is a staggering increase of 3,500 percent over 25 years! And the gambling commission noted in its report that "with little stretch of the imagination, it is conceivable that, some day, gambling enterprises may be franchised and, at least, in parts of the country, become as common as fast food outlets are today." Gambling today is not simply harmless family entertainment, as advertising for commercial and state-sponsored gambling seems to indicate. Millions of people have become addicted to gambling and have brought untold suffering on themselves and their families.

We now know some very real and troubling facts about gambling and addiction. According to the gambling commission report: "in 1997 ... the Harvard Medical School Division on Addictions ... estimated at that time that there were 7.5 million American adult problem and pathological gamblers and 7.9 million American adolescent problem and pathological gamblers."

That is more than 15 million people having difficulty with gambling and more than half of them are children. This means that our nation's youth is disproportionately impacted by gambling.

Or, to put it another way, there are currently more adult and adolescent problem and pathological gamblers in America than people residing in New York City. There are six times as many adolescent problem or pathological gamblers in America than men and women actively serving in our combined armed forces—the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

Even though the National Report is several years old, it is indicative of what we can expect as gambling proliferates and politicians sell government-sponsored

Continued on page 17, "Gambling."

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

"...There is no one righteous, not even one."

It is one of the hardest things for the natural human mind to comprehend that our own righteousness is not righteous enough for God. Humanly, we reason that if we do "good deeds," they are "good" and "righteous" – why would that not be good enough?

But as we see in Romans 3:10, the apostle Paul makes it clear that no one is righteous of themselves. He continues to make it clear that he is not just talking about the fact that we have all sinned, but that even when we do righteous deeds, they are still not good enough for God. Paul contends that the only real righteousness we can have comes from God himself:

"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:20-22).

If that were not clear, that God does not accept human righteousness as good enough, Paul drives the point home a few chapters later:

"Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Romans 10:3).

WHEN GOOD ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH

The book of Isaiah shows that human righteousness – while it might seem good – may sometimes even be offensive to God: "... all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

So why is it that our righteousness is not good enough, and what does that mean for our Christian lives and our efforts to obey God? The Bible indicates there are actually a number of reasons why human righteousness does not measure up to God's perfect standard, and it is imperative that as Christians we understand them. Although there are more, we will look at four examples here that make the point.

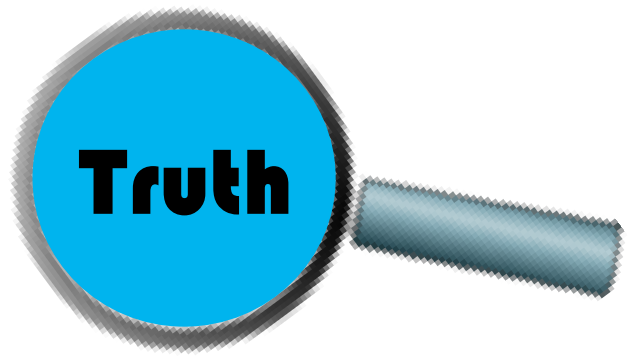
WE DO RIGHT... IN THE WRONG WAY

As early as the Bible's story of the "First Family," we find Cain and Abel both sacrificing to God, yet Cain's sacrifice – his "good deed" – was not accepted: "... The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor..." (Genesis 4:4-5). Genesis makes it clear that Cain's offering was not of the right form, was not given as it should have been, but Cain was indignant and angry. He doubtless felt his good deed was as good as that of his brother, but God did not think so. Throughout the Old Testament we find many stories of right things been done the wrong way and the fact that God was not pleased with this kind of human "righteousness." In our own lives we may not exhibit right done the wrong way in such an extreme manner, but how many of us as parents, for example, always discipline our children perfectly?

We do right at the wrong time:

Humanly we may think that if actions or behavior are good, they are good at any time, but the story of

Continued on page 20, "Righteousness."



WHAT IS TRUTH?

— Robert L. Goulding

When Christ said to Pilate "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice," Pilate's response was, famously, "What is truth?"

In the 1600's French mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal said "Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that unless we love the truth, we cannot know it."

In ancient Greece, hundreds of years before Christ, there was a school of rhetoric (training in debate, argument) whose motto was "Let the lesser argument defeat the greater." In other words, just win; it doesn't matter who is right or where the truth may lie.

All three of the examples treat truth as real, as a standard to which one would at least give lip service, even if only to subvert it. That seems to no longer be the case today.

Many people today seek not to directly subvert or attack truth so much as to sidestep it. This is done by denying its existence, especially as a standard of reference, and seeking to make the subjective have the same cachet as the objective—which it never can, no matter how people see it.

The very meaning of truth is polluted and adulterated by such and its power co-opted to represent "How I see it" as somehow having achieved objectivity. People thereby give their own subjective and personal points of view the power of objective reality—at least in their own minds and the minds

of like-thinkers—and that does affect reality.

Shared delusion can have power, even if not by actually changing what is, if it changes how people see and relate to the world. The problem with this is, of course, that if truth is no more objective than truth is no more truth, but merely viewpoint.

The danger is that whatever anyone believes is a sufficient basis for action. All I need for action is how I see it. Instead of at least trying to base "How I see it" on reality, "how I see it" becomes reality in terms of how I will then act. This is immensely dangerous.

.When people's subjective viewpoints become their "reality" they become their own reference points and the possibility of reasoning with them grows even smaller than when they were just convinced they were right! Now, by definition, whatever they think IS right. They become their own references. "Wise in their own eyes, right in their own eyes." We call this "Moral Relativism."

One of the problems with this is that it sets people up for "Group-Think" in an unprecedented way because there is no chance of any outside referential check. The dangers are limitless when internal points of view, alone, guide individual and/or mass actions. Anything, at all, can happen. People can do anything they want and see it as "Right."

People have always tended to think they are "sinned against but never sinning," that they

Continued on page 22, "Truth."

The Bible Sabbath Association membership announces the new Board of Directors & their vision for the BSA future.

KELLY MCDONALD



Kelly will engage in a greater usage of social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, blogging, YouTube and/or periscope, other media platforms where they are found, and will work together with the other Board members to accomplish these goals.

PRESIDENT

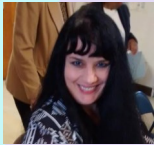
CALVIN BURRELL



Calvin will continue to work toward greater fellowship and collaboration among the diverse group of Christians, including attracting higher interest from the historic "Seventh Day" denominations--Adventists and Baptists.

SECRETARY

JUNE NARBER



June will coordinate BSA social media, network the international areas, try to help people see past pastors and organization to realize that God is working in many sabbatarian groups, and continue to monitor harmful world trends affecting Sabbath believers.

VICE PRESIDENT

BRYAN BURRELL



Bryan will continue to strengthen our Sabbath connections through his service as treasurer, being aware of the responsibility of managing the funds entrusted to us, structuring and implementing plans for moving forward in the electronic digital age.

TREASURER

JOHN MERRITT



John will advocate dialogue among the various Messianic communities, bring his experiences on many corporate, university, hospital and other boards to the BSA, and to more fully work toward the goals of the BSA.

MARSHA BASNER



Marsha will continue to promote the God's Sabbath to everyone, translate key Sabbatarian literature into at least 3 major languages and create service programs to improve the lives and health of Sabbatarians.

ROYCE MITCHELL



Royce will continue to seek out contributors from the many Sabbatarian groups to The Sabbath Sentinel, develop more news relative to the needs and concerns of Sabbath keepers internationally, and work toward updating the look and feel of the magazine.

greater in degree using the words of the Father. Jesus' saying "greater works than these" appears to mean that the apostles—and the rest of the Church—would carry the gospel, good news, of the Kingdom, farther than He did.

Why did Jesus not mean signs? The reason is because there is a different word used for signs than works (see Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1; Mark 8:11; Luke 11:16; 23:8; John 2:11, 18, 23; Acts 6:8, etc.).

Looking for signs represents a mixed bag for the Church. In Matt. 12:38—39 we read that it is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. The Greek word for "sign" is not the same as the word for "works." "Sign" is derived from the Greek word, "semeion" which means, "an indication, especially ceremonially or supernaturally: - miracle, sign, token, wonder." We ought to be very clear about the "why" if we intend to look for signs.

How about great "wonders?" The same problem exists when one believes that we are to be doing or looking for wonders as a matter of faith. A different word is used for "wonders" (Acts 2:19) than "works."

In Acts 2:18-19, citing Joel 2:28, God says that He will give wonders in the heaven and miracles on the earth. It is pretty clear that those "wonders" will be done by God, not by any of us.

The word translated "wonder" is the Greek "terata" and it means "a prodigy or omen." Still, a different word is used for "mighty works" than the one for works—miracles performed by a superhuman power (Acts 2:22; Rom. 15:19; 2 Thess. 2:9). However, what's important to take from this comparison is that God says that it is He who does the works, not that the Church would do great works.

When Paul speaks of the "power of miracles" in Rom. 15:18-19, he indicates that he would not discuss the things that Christ did NOT work out through him by the power of miracles. Paul admits that it was Christ performing the miracles.

The word for "miracles" is the Greek "dunamis" which means a "force or specific miraculous power." Paul never said that the Church ought to be doing those miracles or looking for those who can do those miracles as a sign of something.

Another Greek word used to quote Jesus' statement is recorded as being "erga." In essentially the same scenario as John 14:10-12, that different word, "erga," is used by that writer. We can read that in John 5:20, 36.

Erga or Ergon is derived from the Greek "erg" which means to toil. Therefore, to use John 14:12, and claim we will do greater works meaning miracles, signs or wonders is to completely divorce the verse from its context and intent.

What Jesus does not say we will do in John 14:12 is greater signs (miezon semeion). Jesus does not say we will do greater miracles (miezon dunamis). Jesus does not say that we will do greater wonders (miezon teras). Jesus does say greater works (miezon ergon).

As we saw, the context in John 14 indicated that the "works" had to do with "words" the Father gave Him to speak. John 14:10. What did His words mainly consist of?

We read in Mark 1:14:15 that Jesus went into Galilee proclaiming the good news (gospel) of the Kingdom of God and admonishing all who heard to repent. This, then is the "work" of the "words" of the

Father that Jesus passed on to us, telling us that His Work would be surpassed by the "greater" works of the disciples or apostles.

Jesus' saying "greater works than these" meant that the disciples would do a more widespread ministry, that they would spread the Words of God far beyond what Jesus did.

That prophecy has become abundantly true, beginning in the years immediately following the death of Jesus, to which was testified by the writers in the New Testament. However, the words of the Father have been spread mightily by a number of ministries through the centuries. It has been spread to millions today!

This is not to say that the brethren won't do great miracles, signs or wonders. Indeed, Paul said of the brethren in 1Co 12:28 that God set some to be apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of power; that some would heal, some would be gifted in languages, both speaking and interpreting. But, are all of the brethren gifted with such talents? If we look around us at the church today, modesty must move us to admission that many of these gifts are missing in the Church, although some do exhibit one or another of these miracles or wonders. But, they are not things to which we should look as guiding us to a person of the "one true church."

Leaving the context of that verse, let us ask "Which of us, or even the apostles or brethren in the early church, took 5 loaves and two fish and fed 5000 men plus women and children?" In Matt 14:15-21 we read that such is exactly what Jesus did.

Or, how about Matt 14:23-25, when Jesus, after He had been praying on the mountain, followed after the disciples by walking on the sea? Has that mira-

cle or sign been exceeded by any in the Church to this day?

We see in John 11 that Jesus, without having seen Lazarus, knew that he had died. We see further that Lazarus had been dead four days when Jesus called him forth from the tomb. Which apostle or disciple had a greater work than this, if that was what Jesus was talking about in John 14? The answer is clear that the works that Jesus did have never been surpassed by the apostles or disciples to this day—with one exception. That one exception was that those disciples carried the Word of God in the form of the good news to all of the world as it is still being done today.

There is also no greater work done than Jesus' dying for our sins. The apostles could never have done a greater work than Jesus if miracles, signs and wonders is the standard of measure.

Remember, that John said this of the things that Jesus did: John 21:25 "And there are also many things, whatever Jesus did, which, if they should be written singly, I suppose the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

There is no record of the apostles doing the kind and volume of works that Jesus did—although we know that they did perform miracles, just as we see from time to time in the Church.

Certainly, we have not seen the kind and volumes of miracles, signs and wonders in the Church that John indicates Jesus did.

Therefore, not only does the context indicate Jesus could not have been talking about our doing miracles but also history denies that the Church ever did, from the apostles until today.

Now we recognize that Jesus was talking about the Words of God and how He proclaimed them boldly throughout Judea and Galilee. What did He proclaim? Mark 16:14-16 and Matt 24:14 indicate clearly that the word the Father gave Jesus was to preach the good news (gospel) of the Kingdom of God.

The works Jesus meant that we would do was to take God's Word to the world with greater power than He did. He gave to the apostles, and by extension to us today, the commission and authority to preach the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. The "greater" in quantity is in reference to the preaching of the gospel.

Paul showed himself to be following the admonition of Christ to be preaching that good news. We read in Rom 1:16 and 16:28-27 that Paul was not ashamed of that gospel and that it was being made known to all nations. Remember, Jesus said that He was sent only to the Tribes of Israel. Certainly, the job of preaching the Father's words by the disciples has become a far greater work than Jesus ever did.

There are those who are apostles; they are made known NOT by their ability to create corporations to replace the brethren in the work assigned to the brethren. There are signs that one is an apostle as seen in 2 Cor. 12: 11-12.

Apostles have as signs patience, miracles, wonders and works of power. Those things appear to be assigned to apostles. But the witnessing of the Kingdom of God is the greater work we are all to be doing.

Signs and wonders are not indicators that we are following an apostle or Jesus. We read in 2 Thess 2:7-10 that Satan demonstrates powers, signs and

lying wonders.

What should we be doing if not praying for and looking for great signs and wonders? The same work Jesus did but, as the Church, even greater that He did!

In Mat 5:14-16 Jesus tells us that we are the "light of the world," and to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." These are the kinds of works we need to be looking for—not in the actions of others but in our own actions.

And when they see that light, what then? Peter writes in 1 Pet 3:14-16 that we need not fear or be troubled but that we need to be ready to give an answer of the hope in us, meekly, fearfully and with a good conscience.

We ought to be careful that we are seeking God's will for the Church and ourselves. Signs and wonders can be great things, but they can be lies sent to deceive not only us but the world.

Can there be signs, wonders and miracles in the Church? Of course there can! The Bible tells us without any doubt that these things will occur. But, this article revolves around what our greater work is, which is not to demonstrate the more spectacular gifts that the Father gives to some.

When Jesus said that we would do greater works, He was talking about our spreading the Gospel message farther and with greater power than He did. And, that has certainly happened. The gospel has spread nearly the whole world over and soon it will culminate with the entire world hearing the gospel for 3 ½ years from God's Two Witnesses who will perform great miracles, signs and wonders.

Continued from page 12, "Signs."

But, our job is to be a witness to the nations of the Gospel of the Kingdom, not necessarily with our words, but certainly by our actions that cause others to give praise to God. However, when we are ASKED, then it is time to share what gives rise to the blessed hope within us—the coming Kingdom of God.

In order to do that, we must first be living a life that would cause others to give praise to God, that might lead others to ask why we are living that way. We need to have the kind of knowledge of what the Kingdom is about in order that we CAN speak the words of God, to do HIS work.

That work is on us. Nobody can do it for us. As Jesus once said He needed to do, we also need to be about our Father's business.

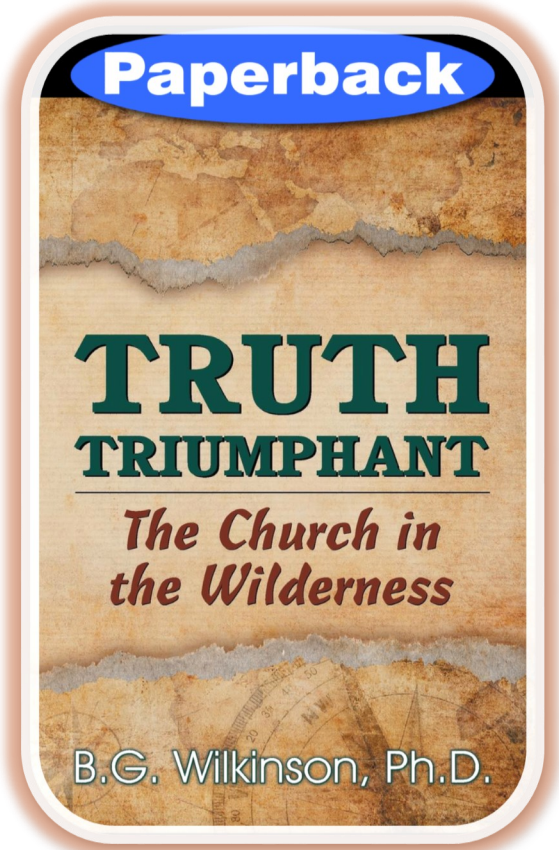
If we are looking for great signs, miracles and wonders, we are looking for the wrong thing.



Dr. Royce Mitchell is a founding member of the Houston Church of God. He is a past editor of this magazine as well as the current editor. He was recently elected to serve the brethren as a member of the Board of Directors of the Bible Sabbath Association.

Royce and his wife, Susan, have been married 39 years, have 5 children, 21 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

They are both part of the founding membership of the Houston Church of God. Royce can be contacted at royce.mitchell@rocketmail.com.



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tyrdom. The Greek word is *prautes*. In ancient Greece, it was used of an animal that once was wild, but became tame (Barclay). Meekness is not weakness. It is being strong in the Lord, but refusing to flaunt such power and authority. This fruit is visible when we choose the right time and situation to exercise God's power. Jesus had the opportunity to call forth twelve legions of angels to rescue Him, but He refrained. He was meek and humble. This fruit might be better translated as self-restraint. It is a further level of trusting God because we are allowing Him to manifest the emotions and manner of actions we should exercise in a given situation. To this end, we must display gentleness or meekness in how we treat people who are struggling or overcoming sin. We may have victory in an area of God's Word where others are weak, but we should be meek in how we treat them (because we could fall into the same sin – see Galatians 6:1). Moses was called the meekest man on the earth (Numbers 12:3). Consider the tremendous power God gave him. God told Moses that He was willing to wipe out all of the Israelites to start a new, stronger nation through him. Rather than exercise this opportunity, he chose restraint.

These two fruits continue the progression of God's power growing in our lives. As we mature in God's Spirit, we will demonstrate consistency and self-restraint or humility.

The final Fruit of the Spirit is self-control. It is sometimes translated as temperance. This virtue was held by the Greeks to be the foundational virtue. They considered it to be the moderation of human desires. Paul makes it the last virtue. He did this to emphasize that this fruit is not self-control brought about by human effort; it is self-control manifested by the Spirit of God. In Christ, human desires must be conquered through the first fruit of love. Gentleness was properly displaying power at the right time; self-control is when the Spirit of God turns a disadvantageous situation into your advantage. Weaknesses become strengths through God's inter-

vention. The Pharisees tried to trick Jesus many times, but God turned the situation from a disadvantage into Christ's favor. God masters the situation. It is the attitude a believer reaches when the devil no longer controls their actions. Hence, it is self-control. In the gospels, Jesus said, "I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me" (John 14:30). The devil had no hold on Christ; there was nothing in Him that Satan could manipulate, though he tempted Him many times. Satan's attempts to undercut Christ would be turned against him.

We can see a steady progression as we look at all nine fruits. It starts as we fall in love with our Savior. This continues as we experience Joy from being part of God's Plan. Our radically changed lifestyle brings conflict from others, but peace within. As we endure trials, we do not over react or lash out. Once we have passed these first four tests, our character is prepared for Kingdom work. At this point, we become useful to Him and others. As we are used by God, we develop a zeal for His holy things. Our zeal then becomes channeled into reliability. Reliability then grows into humility as God teaches us the proper way to respond to certain situations. Lastly, God turns disadvantages to advantages as He is in complete control. The first four Fruits prepare someone to enter into the ministry. They build the character of God within us so that we can serve God. The last five are attitudes and Godly character that increase the fruitfulness of an individual's life in the Work of God.

Jesus instructed us to produce fruit that will last (John 15:16). There will be Kingdom reward in store

Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments"...

Our commandment keeping will be a gauge of our reward in the Kingdom of God.

Continued on page 15, "Fruits."

for us as we allow these fruits to be displayed. When we yield, He will build. Your Kingdom reward will last forever (Matthew 6:19-21). For example, consider the fruit of love. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments". Our commandment keeping will be a gauge of our reward in the Kingdom of God (see Matthew 5:17-20). This foundational fruit opens up the way for greater, more fervent, and more effective labor for God. If we ever fail to see these fruits in our lives, then we need to repent and go back to love. Love is the foundation of all the fruits and binds all the virtues together (Colossians 3:14).

We can have spiritual gifts without fruits, but true spiritual fruit will always bring about the gifts (see Matthew 7:21-23, I Cor. 13). The Fruits of the Spirit ensure that the gifts we use build something that lasts. The spiritual gifts are meant to be an extension of the fruits. Jesus said that we are His disciples by the fruit we bear (Matthew 7:16, 12:33, Luke 6:44). These nine fruits allow the world to see the character of Christ in our modern world.

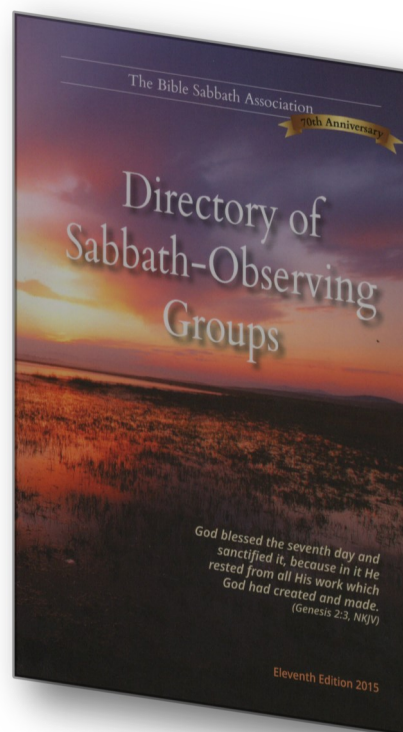
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Kelly McDonald, Jr., our recently elected Bible Association President, is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. Kelly has authored nine books and twenty booklets. He is the editor for the ministry's magazine, Pursuit. He received his bachelor's degree summa cum laude from Lambuth University. Kelly has been preaching since 2007, and is available to speak at other churches upon request. www.hungryheartsministry.com



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Lost to time, many thought that Nineveh was perhaps a mythical Bible legend. However, in a remarkable discovery, in 1840 Nineveh was rediscovered by a wandering English scholar name Austin Layard.

His discoveries revealed that Nineveh was a 3 days journey (as mentioned by Jonah), being 60 miles in circumference, with 20 miles being a days journey. Layard found that the city had been flooded over , after the levied walls of the Tigris River broke. The waters covered the city in silt and mud (filth) up to 30 feet deep. The city had remained hidden for 2,400 years.

In uncovering the dirt, calcined alabaster and charred cedar, Layard found that the royal palace had been destroyed by fire. After removing all of the rubbish, Layard discovered a large number of artifacts that are displayed today in both London and Paris museum. These museums are visited by millions of people each year.

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M. Wagstaff is a lifelong Seventh Day Sabbatarian, and currently resides in San Diego, California.



**Discovering the Lost Sabbath Truth
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Beginning in Genesis, through the Ten Commandments and Jesus' example, the brief pages of this pocketbook declares the veracity of the Sabbath. In Discovering the Lost Sabbath Truth, the murkiness gives way to the facts of human tradition and the church history of how leaders attempted to change God's law to fit their own way of thinking. The author parallels Christ's Sabbath rest once He finished the creation of this world to His Sabbath rest when He concluded His earthly work of salvation. Even in death, He rested on the Sabbath day. Since the Garden of Eden, man has wanted things his way. From the cross, Jesus pleaded with us to choose Him and His day.

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gaming to the public as an alternative to raising taxes. The simple fact is that as gambling increases, so do crime, prostitution, addiction, divorce, and domestic abuse. For example, in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where promoters and politicians sold the citizens on converting Atlantic City into the "Las Vegas of the East," crime rose 258% in the first 10 years.

Gambling in the News

Recently a lot of professional football fans in the U.S. have been riveted to the news of a famous quarterback who has been indicted by a federal grand jury for housing and actively participating in a big-stakes dog fighting operating at his home. Many Americans were stunned and outraged by the callous cruelty to the dogs. Those that lost or didn't perform well were strangled, beaten to death, electrocuted, or drowned. Most American cannot even fathom such cruelty, but there is an entire subculture that thrives on activities such as these. Even though most Americans have been fixated on the horrifying cruelty committed against these dogs, the underlying theme of this subculture is high-stakes gambling. If there were no money on the line in these dog fights, this inhuman subculture would vanish overnight.

Then there is the case of the professional basketball referee. In the past few weeks it has come to light that the FBI has been investigating organized crime's involvement in illegal betting on sports. In the course of their investigation they discovered that one referee had lost large sums of money to the crime syndicate and, according to news accounts, had been making calls during games that would change the betting odds. This, of course, greatly increased the profits of the people controlling the betting.

Other celebrities that have made the news because of their gambling habits are Pete Rose, the all-time hits leader in professional baseball, Michael Jordan, perhaps the greatest basketball player ever to live, and Bill Bennett, former Secretary of Education, talk-show host, and author.

The fact is, gambling can be a serious problem for the rich and famous as well as for the poor and obscure. When gambling is involved, money changes hands, and it's usually your money. The odds are against you.

Here Is How I See It

The Holy Scriptures do not directly address the subject of gambling. There is no "Thou shalt not gamble." However, the Bible does have much to say about issues that relate to gambling, such as our work ethic, covetousness, greed, waste, and using our resources to advance the Kingdom of God.

Gambling is really the attempt to turn someone else's loss into our gain, and to do it against the odds. Gambling's main appeal is our own covetousness. It is our excitement at the possibility of possessing what we have not worked for that makes gambling appeal to us. When we compare the idea of working thirty years to accumulate a million dollars to possessing that same million dollars in 30 seconds by pulling the lever on a slot machine or purchasing the winning lottery ticket, the appeal is obvious.

I have heard many Christians rationalize their trips to Las Vegas or Atlantic City stating that they are simply vacations, and that they place a limit on the amount of money they can spend on gambling. When the money is gone, they are finished. I'm sure that is the case 99% of the time. For most people gambling does not involve compulsion or addiction. They look at it as a form of entertainment, and who knows? They might

"hit the big one" as they are entertaining themselves. But, what other reason is there to go to Las Vegas or Atlantic City rather than to, say, Hawaii for a vacation than the desire to "hit the big one"—to return home with more money in their pockets than when they left home. People certainly do not go to Las Vegas because of the natural beauty of the surroundings.

Several years ago when I was trying to decide whether it was all right for a Christian to buy a lottery ticket, I was confronted with one clear question: Was I going to trust God to be my provider, or was I going to trust "time and chance?" When I saw the issue of gambling in that light, the decision was simple. I could trust God, or I could put my trust in chance. I could not do both. Faith in God is the rejection of faith in random chance. If He is my inheritance, then I have to turn my back on all other forms of provision, and gambling is one of the most fickle and least reliable.

Conclusion

I can still hear some readers say, "It's just entertainment. What's the big deal? If I decide to blow 50 or 100 dollars at the local race track, it's my money and I'm not hurting anyone but myself." I cannot tell you that any type of gambling is sin. If you are a person who occasionally gambles and does not think gambling is an issue, please answer this question: What is there in you that makes gambling an attractive form of entertainment?

Kirby Anderson of Probe Ministries (www.probe.org) directly addresses this issue of gambling with this excellent summary.

Even though the Bible does not directly address gambling, we can derive a number of principles from Scripture.

First, gambling breeds a form of covetousness. The

Tenth Commandment admonishes us not to covet. Coveting, greed, and selfishness are the base emotions that entice us to gamble. I believe Christians should be concerned about gambling if for no other reason than the effect it has on the weaker brother and how it will affect the compulsive gambler. State-sponsored gambling makes it harder for the compulsive gambler to reform. Legalized gambling becomes an institutionalized form of greed.

Second, gambling destroys the work ethic. Two key biblical passages deal with the work ethic. In Colossians 3:23-24, the Apostle Paul says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving." And in 2 Thessalonians 3:7,10, he says, "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example.... For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

The Twentieth Century Fund research group commented, "Gambling's get-rich-quick appeal appears to mock capitalism's core values: disciplined work habits, thrift, prudence, adherence to routine, and the relationship between effort and reward." These core values of the work ethic are all part of the free enterprise system and are part of the Christian life. Gambling corrupts these values and replaces them with greed and selfishness. Rather than depending upon hard work, gamblers depend instead upon luck and chance.

Third, gambling destroys families. Gambling is a major cause of family neglect. Many of the social costs associated with gambling come from its mindset. As people get caught up in a gambling frenzy, they begin to neglect their families. Money spent on lottery tickets or at horse tracks is frequently not risk capital but is in-

come that should be spent on family needs. In 1 Timothy 5:8, Paul says that a person who refuses to care for his family is worse than an infidel. Parents must provide for their children (2 Corinthians 12:14) and eat the bread of their labors (2 Thessalonians 3:12). When gambling is legalized it tempts people to neglect their God-mandated responsibility to care for their families, and these families often end up on welfare.

Fourth, gambling is a form of state-sponsored greed. We read in Romans 13 that government is to be a minister of God. Government should provide order in society and promote public virtue. Legalized gambling undercuts government's role and subverts the moral fabric of society through greed and selfishness promoted by a state-sponsored vice.

Gambling is bad social policy; it is bad economic policy; and it is bad governmental policy. Moreover, it undermines the moral foundations of society and invites corruption in government. As Christians, I believe we must stand against society's attempts to legalize gambling.

Recently I heard an interview with a former IRS crime investigator. He was asked whether there was any possibility that having casino gambling in our area would bring in organized crime. He chuckled at the question. His answer was, "Of course. If you have casino-style gambling, organized crime will be involved with it at some level, no matter whether the gambling is controlled by the state government or by private business." He also stated, "It's a one-to-one ratio. If you have gambling, you will have organized crime."

If you are facing a vote on gambling in your state, county, or community, I hope you will give serious consideration to the issues presented in this article. You may not gamble, and you may not care personally

whether someone else gambles, but you should care about the social atmosphere that your children and grandchildren will grow up in. You have to ask yourself, what would Jesus say to me about the way I use the money that He has placed in my hands? There is certainly a place for entertainment in God's Kingdom, but is there any redeeming value in gambling as a source of entertainment?

Scriptures to Ponder

Proverbs 21:5, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty."

Proverbs 3:13-15, "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her."

Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust in much."



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He is a regular contributor to the Association for Christian Development Web site and ACD's New Millennium magazine.

ancient Israel's failure in this area is instructive. When God commanded Israel to take the Promised Land, the people balked in fear (Deuteronomy 1:31-40). It was only when they saw that they would then be punished that they said "...We have sinned against the Lord. We will go up and fight, as the Lord our God commanded us" (Deuteronomy 1:41). So the Israelites armed themselves and went out to do as they had been commanded, but it was too late – God was not with them and they were defeated (vs. 43-45). Once again, examples such as this may seem extreme compared to our own lives, but how many of us have put off doing something we know we should do till we finally accepted it or were ready to do it? Good deeds or righteousness done when convenient, when we are ready to do them, when we see an advantage or no further disadvantage, is no righteousness at all.

We do right to the wrong degree:

We can err in this way from one of two extremes. On the one hand we can do right but not sufficiently or without truly being committed to what we do. It is said of King Amaziah, of ancient Israel, that: "he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly" (2 Chronicles 25:2). Such unzealous "righteousness" is obviously lacking in God's eyes, but we can also fail in this way by being overly zealous! We have only to look at the history of Christianity to see the many evidently sincere individuals who felt that prayer and study were good so they spent their whole lives in these activities, not realizing that this kind of focus on one's own righteousness is not the kind of outgoing, giving and serving righteousness that God wants to see in our lives.

We do right for the wrong reasons:

The final reason we consider here is perhaps the most important of all. We see an example of the problem in the story of Ananias and Sapphira recorded in Acts 5 where this couple gave an amount to the Church as though it was the full amount they had received. Usually this story is viewed as an example of deception and lying to the Holy Spirit, which it is (Acts 5:7-8), but when we consider the underlying motivation involved in why Ananias and his wife did this, it is just as much an example of doing good to be seen by men – to be appreciated and approved by others. Jesus continually castigated the righteous Pharisees of his day for this same problem – doing good with an eye to being seen by others – saying "Everything they do is done for people to see" (Matthew 23:5) and warning his disciples: ""Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Have we ever "given at the office" because it was expected, or because we wanted to appear good? If we have done anything similar in our lives – if we have ever done anything thinking of an advantage or return from the act – we have discovered that we can and often do right for the wrong reasons.

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

Considering how difficult it is for human nature to do the right thing at the right time to the right degree and for the right reasons can be discouraging. If we examine our own lives carefully, we can all see failures in even what we may feel are even some of our best intentioned "good deeds." But is the answer to stop trying? To paraphrase the apostle Paul: "What then, should we not try to do good?" (Romans 6:15: "What then, shall we sin?")

Continued on page 21, "Righteousness."

Like Paul, we might answer "God forbid!"

The answer to the problem is found in understanding true righteousness. Romans 10:3 ("Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own") and Philippians 3:9 ("... not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.") make it clear that there really are two kinds of righteousness – ours and God's. Once we understand that our righteousness will never match the perfect, unstained righteousness of God, we come to see that just as God "imputes" Christ's death to us for the forgiveness of sins, so He imputes Christ's life of righteousness to us so that we then have access to Him. This is what Paul meant in writing: "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:3-4). But the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us goes beyond our standing with God and applies directly to our walking with Him.

WALKING WITH GOD

The apostle John tells us that "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6 NIV) and the ESV translates this verse "whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked." But if our righteousness cannot ever be good enough, how can we do that? The answer is that to the degree Christ is "in" us" (2 Corinthians 13:5), we will have the Spirit of God motivating and guiding our thoughts, words, and deeds (Ezekiel 36:26-27). It is through the Spirit of Christ and of God that the love of God – the chief "fruit of the Spirit" – flows through us and fulfills His law (Romans 13:10, Galatians 5:14).

Every Christian must come to realize that our own righteousness can never match the perfect standard that God sets. Christ himself said "Why do you call me good? ... No one is good--except God alone" (Mark 10:18). This truly puts things in perspective when we realize that even Christ's righteousness was based on God's power (John 5:19). The love of God that filled Christ did perfectly keep the law of God and it can accomplish true righteousness in our lives as it did in the life of Christ. But in our walk with God we need to keep close enough to Him to let that love be constantly present in our lives. New Christians sometimes ask me "How long should I pray?" and my answer is usually "until you are loving God and others to the full." It's not the answer they expect, but it's the result we should be looking for.

Only as we truly have the love God gives flowing through our lives do we have hope of true righteousness: "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). It is to the degree that we are walking with Him and His love is there that we find the Son of God does live in us and that through God's help we are able to do right the right way, at the right time, to the right degree, and for the right reasons.



R. Herbert (a pen name), Ph.D., served as an ordained pastor for a number of years and was also trained in the languages and cultures of the biblical world and the ancient Near East. He writes for a number of Christian publications and for his websites: www.TacticalChristianity.org and www.LivingWithFaith.org. You can download his free eBooks from his websites.

are in the right. Even when they know they are not they still argue from that perspective -- they pay homage to the truth even while denying it. They vindicate it in general even while denying it in any given self-serving instance.

Think about the change inherent in society when people no longer argue, (even wrongly), when they are accused of error but simply do not recognize the concept of right and wrong, when they are no longer even erroneously trying to defend their positions because their position is the sole determinant of right. "How I see it makes it so." Thus they take unto themselves the perquisites of Godhood.

Whatever God wants is right -- not because He only wants what is right but rather that because He wants it is what makes it right. He is the very source of "Rightness" in the universe.

Most people usually at least pay lip service to there being a right and wrong even when in error. That standard of measurement is changing, I believe, with Moral Relativism, from being an objective and external one to a dangerous internal and subjective one.

When the standard of reference changes from an immutable "out there" to an amorphous "inside of me," people will go from arguing that they are right to eventually not even understanding why the accusation of being wrong.

People will generally argue that they are right without regard to whether or not they actually are; even when, especially when, they know they are not. Many people will even edit reality (in their own minds) in order to make themselves right. But what happens when they equate their view with reality to start with? When they define "what is" by how

"PEOPLE WILL GENERALLY ARGUE THAT THEY ARE RIGHT WITHOUT REGARD TO WHETHER OR NOT THEY ACTUALLY ARE ..."

they see it?

When sincerity defines reality people will cease to understand when someone else brings a different viewpoint to the table. They must needs see other people as at least misguided and wrong if not insane. When I am my own reference there will be no grounds for argument or even polite disagreement.

A new age practitioner of my acquaintance once, many years ago, was absolutely convinced that all of my objections would simply dissolve if I would just come to understand that she was sincere! There was no possibility that she could be sincerely wrong, (and my sincerity of belief didn't matter), her sincerity trumped. I had to be misguided. In her mind there was no other possibility. How she saw it determined reality for her -- and she tried, very hard, to make it do so for me as well.

What happened when she no longer saw that disagreement was even possible? Instead of trying to convince me she just dismissed me as a crank, a fool or a crazy person.

The time is coming when Christian argument will not be allowed or tolerated simply because it claims truth to objective, absolute and embodied in Christ. We will be dismissed as cranks, enemies of the State, haters and fools who are old fashioned and out of touch with reality. There is a certain amount of irony in being accused of being out of touch with reality by those who have completely abandoned it.





Letters to the Editor

Greetings to you from Kachinland; a very beautiful & small country in Southeast Asia.

On September 11, 2015 evening, I have gladly received a parcel from you. And I have noticed that this parcel was missent to Cambodia Post. When I opened it, I was really surprised to receive a copy of Directory of Sabbath—Observing groups, the eleventh edition 2015.

I cannot express you how I was glad and happy for receiving this precious book. And also, I thank you so much that brother Dixon Cartwright (*publisher of the Journal of the Churches of God—Ed.*) of Texas has very kindly paid for the enclosed items for me. The materials arrived here in good condition and it is a very special blessing to me.

Please convey to Dixon & Linda Cartwright that I have already received it joyfully, and I thank you so much for his kindness, generosity, help, and brotherly love.

Here, I enclosed a sketch map of Kachinland. Maybe some of our brothers and sisters have never heard about our small country.

Kachinland is largely a mountainous and land—locked country with abundant natural beauty, located in the South—western end of Yunnan Province, China. After British Colony came to South—east Asia, Kachin People's territory was divided into three parts.

Eastern part was belonged to China. Western part was belonged to India. Middle part was become State Burma.

Many hundred years ago, our ancestors were Animism. In 1875, an European man, Mr. Eugenio Cancid had seen this strange people on the first time. On that time, some of our ancestors were living in the red place area. Because, the earth is red on that area. When Mr. Eugenio Cancid asked them "Who are You?" they replied that "we are red place people," By their own language Ga Nkeng So he remarked as "Ga Nkeng."

When he arrived Culcatta, India, he reported to the British Governer about Ga Nkeng People. Then, the British Governer also sent a message to Queen Victoria



about the people. But, Queen Victoria could not pronounce it, and she read it Kachin. Since then, this news was widely spread around the world.

In 1876, the Roman Catholic missionary reached. In 1877, the American Baptist missionary reached Kachinland. So that, Kachinland has two major churches today now.

In 1964, the Sabbath message reached Kachinland. After a few years later, some Kachin indigenous people accepted the sabbath of God. In 1969, I brought this sabbath message to Lake Indawgyi Region. And I published Sabbath Tract in Jingpho language on the first time. Later, I publish it in several languages, and I spread it around the country. A few years later, I have had many many responses from various areas, and Groups are scattered around the country.

I am not an educated person, and also my family is very poor. I am not a salary worker, but I am a full—time worker of God here. God has chosen me, and God has elected me to spread the true sabbath of God among my own people until today.

The people of Kachinland, are of Tibet—Mogoloid origin, and there are totally 16 ethnic groups. All the Kachin people are very warm—hearted and hospitable.

May God bless you and give you more wisdoms very prosperously. With a lot of thanks and hopes!

Pastor Lazum Brang, Frontier Evangelist Sabbath—Observing Groups KACHINLAND

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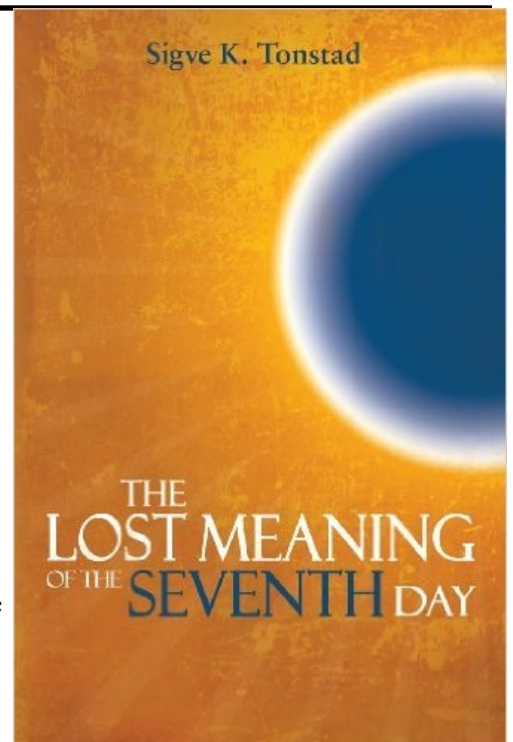
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The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day

by Sigve K. Tonstad

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Sigve K. Tonstad recovers the profound and foundational understanding of God that can be experienced in the seventh day. He shows that Scripture has consistently asserted that the Sabbath of Creation is the Sabbath of the whole story of how God makes right what has gone wrong in the world. Tonstad argues that the seventh day is the symbol of God's faithfulness precisely when God's presence seems to be in doubt. He demonstrates how God, through the seventh day, seeks the benefit of all creation. Inevitably, this leads to an investigation of how this universal symbol became obscured. This sweeping work of biblical theology and historical analysis traces the seventh day as it is woven throughout Scripture and the history of Christianity. Its twenty-seven chapters consider, among other things, the relationship of the seventh day to freedom, to social conscience, to the "greatest commandment," and to the enigmatic "rest that remains." Tonstad engages the move away from the seventh day in early Christian history, the mindset in medieval Christianity, and the sobering long-term implications leading all the way to the Holocaust and the ecological crises in our time. [The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day](#) will engage, illuminate, provoke, and ultimately inspire readers who enjoy a serious work presented in a style that is "luminous" and a "delight to read."



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