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from

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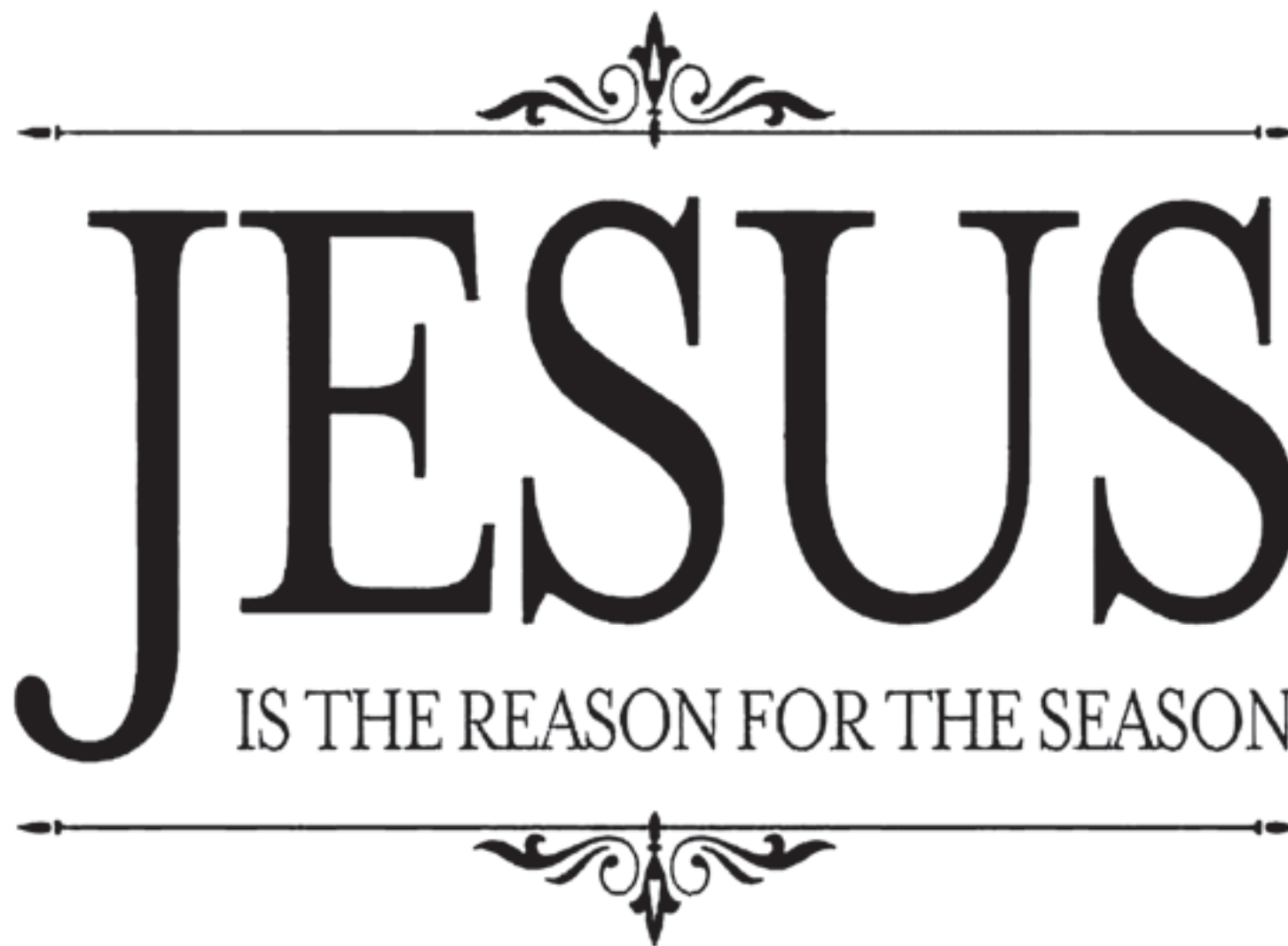
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Why do we celebrate Christmas?

(Reprinted by permission from GotQuestions.org)

Christians the world over celebrate Christmas in honor of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. Various Christmas traditions have been associated with the celebration of Christmas, and different cultures celebrate different ways. The unifying factor is the historical fact that Jesus was born, c. 5 BC. The angel who appeared to the shepherds the night of Jesus' birth said, "I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11).

We celebrate Christmas because, as the angel said, the birth of Jesus Christ is "good news." Good news is meant to be celebrated. In fact, the angel said the news of Jesus' birth would cause "great joy" and would be "for all the people"—the joyful celebration would be universal. People around the globe would be glad for this occasion.

We celebrate Christmas because, as the angel said, "A Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord." The three titles the angel applies to Jesus are important. Jesus is the Savior who delivers us from sin and death (Matthew 1:21). He is the human Messiah (or Christ) who fulfills the Law and the Prophets, showing that God is faithful (see Matthew 5:17). And He is the divine Lord who has entered our world: the Almighty has taken on human flesh; God and man have been fused together in an indivisible, eternal bond; God is truly with us (see Matthew 1:23).

In celebrating Christmas, we celebrate the Savior, because we needed deliverance. We celebrate the Christ in whom all of God's promises are "Yes" and "Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). We celebrate the Lord who in humility took on "the very nature of a servant" for our sakes (see Philippians 2:6–8).

We celebrate Christmas with gift-giving because of the "incredible gift" that God gave to us (2 Corinthians 9:15). We

celebrate Christmas by stringing lights because the Light of the world has come to us (John 1:4; Isaiah 9:2). We celebrate Christmas with carols and choirs because they are expressive of joy and follow the examples of Mary and Zacharias and Simeon and the angels, all of whom extolled the Lord in poetry (Luke 1–2). We celebrate Christmas by decorating evergreen trees with stars and angels and tinsel because of the eternal life Jesus brings (John 4:14)—and stars and angels and beauty were all associated with Jesus' birth.

In celebrating Christmas, we celebrate the love and condescension of God. In Texas in 1987, a toddler by the name of Jessica McClure fell into an eight-inch well casing. Down she went, becoming stuck twenty-two feet below ground. Once people discovered that "Baby Jessica" was in the well, they took immediate action. They didn't tell her to find a way to climb back up, and they didn't just shout happy thoughts to encourage her. No, they went down to where she was and got her. They did whatever it took. Rescuers worked nonstop for fifty-eight hours to free her.

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve fell. Down they went, dragging all humanity with them into the darkness and death of sin. And what did God do? He did not tell us to find our own way out of the mess we were in, and He did more than shout down happy thoughts to us from heaven. No, He came down to where we were and got us. That's what Christmas is all about—God's coming down to rescue us, to do whatever it took to deliver us from sure death.

When even one person is in a life-threatening situation, we understand what has to be done. When God looked down at our sinful planet, He saw a whole world of people in mortal danger. We celebrate Christmas because it was at Christmastime that the Rescuer of all mankind came to save us from the hopeless situation we were in. God did not stay in heaven; He came down to where we are.

Judeo—Christian Heritage—Series #2

Capital Punishment—Leviticus 24:17



By **DR. JOHN M. ADAMS**

Moral Action Executive Director

According to scripture, the Bible favors the death penalty. Capital punishment not only deters crime; it is the ultimate and greatest deterrent because the murdering criminal knows that from the imposition of the sentence there will be no probation, no parole. Society, according to God's law, has a right to defend itself, that is to take the life of those who commit murder with premeditation and planning.

IT IS TAUGHT IN THE SCRIPTURE.

Genesis 9:4-6 teaches that life is preciously made in God's divine image. Murder strikes at the God who created man. God requires in verse 5 the life of the murderer.

The laws and ordinances of Exodus again remind us, Exodus 21:12-15, of the sacredness of life. James 1:14-15 describes the corruptibility of sin bringing forth eventual death. It is the people's right to impose capital punishment for murder offenses.

Other scripture references declare with attention God's intentions toward life. They are Exodus 20:13, Exodus 21:23-25, Numbers 34:31-34, Romans 13:3-5, and Acts 25:10-12.

IT IS MISSING FROM OUR GOVERNMENTAL LAWS.

In the case of *Furman versus Georgia*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5 to 4 that capital punishment was unconstitutional. This nullified the existing death penalty statutes in 40 states and the sentences of the then 629 death-row inmates.

On July 2, 1976, the Supreme Court ruled seven to two in the *Gregg versus Georgia* case that the death penalty, at least for the crime of murder, is not a cruel or unusual punishment. So presently, 32 state legislatures have passed death penalty statutes, yet there is no federal death penalty legislation on the books. Because of this lethargic position of our governments and the long appeals in the courts, we now have 2,843 death row inmates.

After World War II, death penalty executions became less popular. Newsweek states, there were 82 in 1950, 49 in 1959, and two in 1967. Much of the decline in carrying out the death penalty resulted after legal battles were waged against it by the A.C.L.U. (American Civil Liberties Union). The nationally scheduled executions for 2017 will be 14.

IT IS FRIGHTENING OUR SOCIETY.

But according to a Gallup poll, 60 percent of Americans now favor capital punishment, up from 57 percent. Most people believe it is an effective public deterrent to murder and a permanent deterrent in preventing the murderer from committing additional murders inside or outside of prison.

At least one study by Dr. David Phillips, a sociologist at the University of California at San Diego, confirms that capital punishment acts as a deterrent to murder for at least two weeks after a highly publicized execution. "On the average, homicides decrease by 35.7 percent," Dr. Phillips explained.

But still death penalty executions are so slow in being carried out that many are beginning to complain. "I feel the same way the majority of people in the United States

feel about the death penalty," stated Texas Judge Michael McSpadden recently. "Enough is enough of these appeals. It's time to enforce the laws."

Former California Gov. George Deukmejian probably brought the delay issue more into focus than anyone in recent times when he complained that of the 150 men on the California Death Row, the state Supreme Court has reviewed the cases of only 23 and of that number, the death penalty convictions of only three have been upheld.

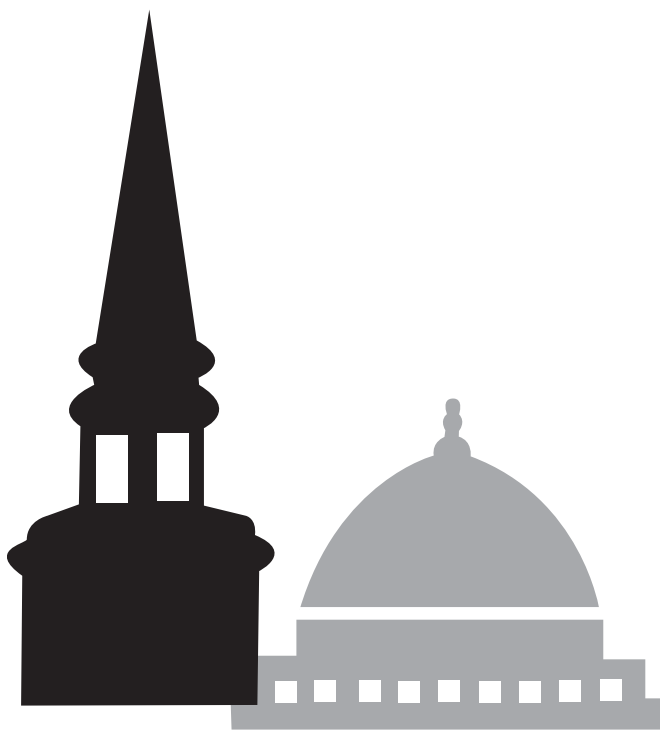
"The time is long overdue," said Deukmejian, "for us to implement the death penalty in California. In the last years, there has been just one state execution of a convicted killer, while more than 30,000 innocent Californians have been murdered..."

Former U. S. Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D. Ariz.), writing in the *American Legion* magazine, put the use of capital punishment into its correct perspective:

"If we in this country are to administer a successful criminal justice system, we must first consider what qualifies as justice. Obviously, the more simple and direct form of justice is restitution-compensative to one who has been wronged.

"But in reality, restitution often is not possible. When an innocent human life has been lost, restitution is not among the options from which blind justice can choose. Punishment becomes the alternative. It logically follows that the more severe the crime, the more severe the punishment applied."

"We have, in this nation, admirably adhered to the protection of individual rights; yet, we should not in that process, forsake our responsibility to protect the rights of society as a whole. And, in these cases (murder cases where the murderer was sane and represented a threat to society)... capital punishment emerges as the only vehicle for ensuring those rights." More information can be obtained via the internet at the Death Penalty Information Center.



A SOLDIER'S Christmas IN KOREA

By **COY QUESENBURY**

One year in Korea changed my life. In July 1959 our troop ship arrived at Inchon harbor and we traveled north of Seoul where we joined the 23rd Transportation Battalion, First Cavalry Division of the Eighth U. S. Army. I was assigned as assistant to Chaplain 1st Lt. Richard Nybro, a capable, dedicated man with a bright personality and a generous heart.

Because of the Korean War, there was a serious problem with homeless children. The Shin Mong Orphanage, located near our battalion, was home to about 45 children, with few adult workers. Living conditions were poor with bare necessities but the managers, Mr. and Mrs. Lee, worked hard to provide basic needs.

Chaplain Nybro invited the men of our battalion to help the orphans and many responded each pay day. Once a month I took our donations and Mr. Lee shopping in Seoul where he bought mostly food, but also some clothing and school supplies.

On a hot day in July, the Chaplain began planning a Christmas party for them. Every man was given a letter to send home requesting a generous cash gift to buy toys for the children. To my surprise, the money rolled in, and we went to work. Mr. Lee supplied the name, age and gender of each child and appropriate toys were ordered from the states. What fun as the toys began to arrive! And what a Christmas wrapping party we had, being sure every name was spelled correctly and attached to the right gift!

Finally Christmas Day arrived and the children and workers came to our mess hall for a traditional Christmas dinner: Turkey, Ham and all the trimmings! It was a delicious meal for the soldiers, but for these children who were accustomed to only a small amount of chicken or pork about twice a month, it was a feast! After lunch we moved to the chapel where we sang carols and listened as the Christmas story was read from the Bible in English and Korean.

Then Santa Claus arrived and we could hardly wait to see the children's response. However, they had no idea the gifts under the big Christmas tree were for them. When the first child's name was called, he didn't move. Finally, Mr. Lee explained the gift was his to keep and coaxed him to open the box. After that, excitement and anticipation grew, and eyes filled with wonder as each child received a toy unlike anything he or she had ever seen or imagined.

Many of the soldiers were visibly moved. So was I. Today I have children and grandchildren and enjoy celebrating this holy season with my family. But my mind often reverts to the dusty roads, the rice fields and the children of the Shin Mong Orphanage in Korea on that long ago Christmas Day. The toys they received from our 23rd Transportation Battalion are long since forgotten, but I pray the story from God's Word lives on in their hearts and has changed their lives. I know I was changed. This was truly my most memorable Christmas ever!

Pat Quesenbury has been active in ladies' ministry for years. She is a pastor's wife, mother and active member of the Women's Missionary Auxiliary. Contact her at pquesenbury@gmail.com.



BMA of america



Senior Adult Conference like a family reunion

By **SCOTT ATTEBERY**

This year's Senior Adult Conference was a time of worship and relaxation as members of churches from various states gathered in a family atmosphere. Speaker Don Chandler, pastor of Central, Conway, Arkansas, delivered three messages entitled, "Defeating Your Goliath," which related the story of David and Goliath to the giants we face in life.

"David Attebery and Neil Dumas led worship, and I received countless comments on how good they were at leading," said DiscipleGuide Conference Director Thomas Mobly.

Conference goers also attended the Miracle of Christmas at the Sight and Sound Theater. The musical was a favorite due to a top of the line performance, as well as the heartening presentation of the Christmas story. The CBC Singers also graced attendees with a performance, and Steve Green delivered an inspiring concert.

In addition to the time of family fellowship and worship, gave an offering for Daniel Springs Baptist Camp. They raised \$7,000 to help renovate one of the dorms into a retreat center.

The 2017 Senior Adult Conference was a success! Next year it will be held in Branson again Nov. 12-14. Stay tuned for more details.

Dr. Scott Attebery is the executive director of DiscipleGuide Church Resources. Contact him by email at scott@discipleguide.org, on Facebook: Scott Attebery or Twitter @scottattebery. Visit www.DiscipleGuide.org.



Ministers Resource Services need assistance

Ministers Resource Services is asking for your assistance in locating participants with open accounts, whom we have lost contact with over the past few years. The names are listed below and if you or anyone you know can be of help, please contact our office in Texarkana. Our hours are Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The phone number is 870-774-2654, or email us at Jane@mrsbmaa.com with any information you may have.

We appreciate any help you may give us.

Ted Dorton
Joe Ponder
Tanya Withrow
Sandra Kay Remsing
Charles E. Brown
A.F. Whitehead
Charles H. Southard
Gary Brewer

Compass Classic to be offered in spring quarter

Does your church prefer the traditional format of Compass literature, without the blanks and questions?

Beginning spring 2018, DiscipleGuide will offer Compass Classic, the traditional format of literature. In order to receive copies for your church, pre-order Compass Classic by December 10. Compass Classic can be ordered online at discipleguide.org/classic, by calling 1-800-333-1442, or emailing info@discipleguide.org.

Because DiscipleGuide will now offer both Compass and Compass Classic, every adult class in your local church will be able to choose the format they prefer while all studying the same lesson. Samples of Compass Classic will be placed in each shipment of DiscipleGuide curriculum this winter so that every church can get a preview. If your church needs additional samples of Compass Classic, contact DiscipleGuide today!

BMA Seminary to offer FREE course in Spring 2018

Introduction to Christian Ethics

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ethics deal with the process of determining what is right and wrong morally. This course surveys the scope of ethics and emphasizes Christian ethics formulated from God's Word. The course gives attention to contemporary ethical issues, historical ethical writings, and the comparison or contrasts of Christian ethics with opposing ethical views.

TEXTBOOK: Choosing the Good by Dennis P. Hollinger, Baker Academic, ISBN 0-8010-2563

The course will begin February 5, 2018. Interested students should go online to register or contact the seminary.

To apply go to www.bmats.edu/free

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BMA of america



December Lifeword training in Romania

By **HOLLY MERIWEATHER**

Lifeword

For eight years, Drom de Romangue, Lifeword's 30-minute gypsy broadcast, has aired on Saturday nights to gypsies all over Europe and beyond. Bogdan Bilav is Lifeword's visionary leaders (and BMA missionary) in Romania maintains that broadcast and ministers to its listeners. Now that ministry will expand even further thanks to a recent media training involving Bro. Bogdan, Lifeword Programming Director Rick Russell, and a group of enthusiastic gypsies.

The first week in December, Rick and I, along with BMA Missions' Mati Spencer and missionary-elect Bryan Risner, traveled to Romania to witness a historic broadcast created by gypsies for gypsies: Rick to train them and me to witness and record this long-anticipated event. On the first day of training, Bro. Bogdan and the team met these men at a church in Nusfalau, not far from where he lives in Simlieu-Sylvanei.

With Bro. Bogdan translating, Rick welcomed them to with the following words: "For the very first time, there are two generations of men, young and old, that have grown up as believers. To me, it's just phenomenal, and I'm excited to be here and be part of it. Bogdan has been telling me how the gypsy community of believers is growing, and now we have the capability to reach beyond the villages. Since you all have the internet in your hand and can reach so many more, this week we are teaching you to share your faith through your phones. You will be the voice of the gypsy people."

Rick's first task for the men was to consider what their broadcast should include. First, he led them through a discussion of the best way to reach lost people. Their first suggestions for content were the obvious ones: sharing and preaching the gospel, Bible-reading, songs and testimonies. However, Rick explained, they were "thinking like Christians" instead of non-Christians. Once they began to think about their own cultural interests, skills and knowledge, they understood, as one man said, that Rick was not "here to tell us what is working in the States, but to get us to decide what can work for us."

At the end of Day One, they were given their homework: Create a one-and-a-half-minute broadcast without the "intros" and "outros." The app they use to create the broadcast is called "Spreaker" and comes complete with sound effects, music, and applause.

Day Two began with listening to those broadcasts and critiquing them. It concluded with an explanation of the different aspects and tools in Spreaker. Their homework for the next day was to create an entire broadcast except the intro and outro, then download music to include in it.

Day Three was spent "working out the bugs" in Spreaker

and solving the technical problems they had run into. Rick told them to tag their broadcasts "Romanes" (the common name of their language) so gypsies searching on the Internet can easily find it. Their assignment for the last day was to complete their broadcasts and upload to Spreaker and Facebook.

Finally, on Day Four of training, they created a two-hour live broadcast. Ten faithful men, young and old, gathered on Saturday morning to debut a program designed for their own people group, the most despised in Europe. While several men listened in Bogdan's van and others on their cell phones, the rest recorded short sermons and songs they've been practicing throughout the week. Their excitement and emotion was felt by everyone in that small church.

Bro. Bogdan's vision, which he has been praying about for many months, was to train and encourage a new generation to use the "internet in their hands" to tell gypsies everywhere about the unconditional love of Jesus. At the end of training, he praised the Lord for answered prayer and Lifeword training and support; but Rick, Mati, Bryan and I were the ones blessed to witness the culmination of this ministry dream.



▲ Missionary Bogdan Bilav (far left), Lifeword Programming Director Rick Russell (behind him) and Bryan Risner (missionary-elect to Romania, third from left) pose with the ten Romanian trainees and a helper in a Nusfalau, Salaj, Romania, church.

What does Lifeword do with Walk/Lifeword Sunday contributions?

By **DONNY PARRISH**

Lifeword's season of giving continues as BMA churches send in contributions from Walk fundraising and Lifeword Sunday offerings. Churches who registered for Lifeword Sunday and send in all or partial contributions by December 11 are entered to win two free passages on DiscipleGuide's Church Leaders Cruise January 13-18. If your church gives to Lifeword through LWS/Walk giving, make sure it is registered.

So where do churches' Walk/Lifeword Sunday offerings go? Since the first walk in October of 1980, church contributions from Lifeword's flagship fundraiser have accounted for one third of the annual budget. The remaining two thirds comes from generous supporters: BMA churches, auxiliaries, groups, and individuals.

Lifeword Chief Financial Officer Steve Crawley says, "While there is no separate fund balance for Lifeword Sunday or Walk funds, 100% of contributions marked

'Walk' or 'Lifeword Sunday' go directly to the field: gospel broadcasts in 40 languages and 121 countries."

As BMA churches continue to keep Bro. Steve and Ellen Siler (fund accountant) busy during this time of year, we want to give a sincere "Thank you!" to our "boots on the ground," our Team Lifeword leaders who plan and implement fundraising on our behalf. We do not take for granted the generous churches and church members who partner with us.

Call Holly at 501-205-1127 or email holly@lifeword.org if you have any questions.

Donny Parrish is the executive director of Lifeword Media Ministries. Contact him at P.O. Box P.O. Box 6, Conway, AR 72033, 501-329-6891, or Donny@lifeword.org. For more information, visit lifeword.org.



Church health

Lessons from the shepherds

By **LARRY BARKER**

At Christmas we are once again introduced to programs, cantatas, and musicals that have all the familiar characters of shepherds, magi and the manger. We are used to seeing boys dressed up in a bathrobe with a towel wrapped around their head, and holding a staff in one of their hands. They are absolutely adorable but they are far from what the shepherds were actually like at the time of Jesus' birth. The shepherds were hardened men who lived lonely, obscure lives and were scorned by most people of that day.

The shepherds were the people group who were given the privilege of being the first to know about and be told the good news of Jesus' birth. They were very uneducated, untrained and unskilled laborers. They were smelly, rough characters and probably the most unlikely people of that day to be invited to the party. These shepherds offered a meager but necessary service of watching over the flocks believed to contain the sacrificial lambs being raised for the temple and the Passover.

Shepherds were not trusted by very many people back then. They were not allowed to testify in court even if they were eyewitnesses. It is quite ironic that the very men who were not permitted to testify in court are chosen by God to be the first to testify of the virgin birth. Yet, when the Pharisees referred to the tax collectors and the sinners the shepherds were most likely at the top of their sinner list. Wow, what a God that announces the birth of His Son to the poor, uneducated, despised shepherds.

What can we learn from these shepherds and their involvement in the birth of the Savior?

First, this Bible story makes it very clear that God loves the outcast. God always reaches out to those who will come to Him no matter what society may say or think of them. Those who the world sees as the least important are the first that God seems to be interested in. Even the religious elite of the day wrote shepherds off as unclean and pagan but God chose to reveal the truth of Christ's birth to them.

Secondly, God reminds us that following Him requires sacrifice. Jesus did not come to just make slight alterations to our lifestyles but has called us to live for a completely different Kingdom. We are commanded by Him to die daily and to take up our cross and follow Him. The shepherds knew what it meant to sacrifice for their sheep as they cared for them day by day. They understood that the sacrificial lambs they helped care for were a picture of the coming Messiah, the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

Third, the shepherds and the manger scene remind us to



never interpret God's love based on our circumstances. Jesus was not born in a palace with a silver spoon in His mouth but rather of the humblest beginnings. You would think the creator of the universe should have made sure that Joseph and Mary had a reservation for a room in the inn but they didn't. Just because God does not provide for us the way we think He should does not mean He does not love us and have our best in mind.

Fourth, the manger and the cross settle forever how God feels about you. He loves you and you should never doubt that truth. Whenever your circumstances make you wonder where God is you must remember that He has already proven how much He loves you by dying for you. Even when He does not answer every prayer request the way you think He should you should be very careful of ever trying to use Jesus to get what you want more than you love Him for who He is. As the good shepherd He always has your best in mind.

Fifth, the shepherds teach us that Jesus invites all to come to Him. He invites those who are poor, uneducated, despised and outcasts like the shepherds. He also invites the rich educated, respected and well thought of like the Magi. John 3:16 and Romans 10:13 reminds us of God's invitation to everyone because "whoever believes will have eternal life" and "whoever calls on His name will be saved." Whether they are outcasts or the uppity ups Jesus invites all to come to Him.

The shepherds teach a lot about the heart of God for the

lost, the last and the least. Most people of that day were unaware of the shepherd's existence because they did not see them nor were they around them. They never gave shepherds a thought nor would they have given them the time of day. They had no desire to get to know them personally; but God did! Isn't that just like Him? He pursued a relationship with them and sent angels to invite them to worship Him.

The shepherds show us the heart of God. He takes the initiative to invite those considered last on the social ladder to be first on the heavenly invitation list. J.D. Greear in his gospel prayer says, "As I pray, I'll measure Your compassion by the cross and your power by the resurrection." The shepherds teach us that God's love is not based on our earning it or deserving it but rather totally based on who He is; a God of love. Oh, that we would learn first hand with this truth the shepherds experienced that first Christmas morning.

May we testify of his greatness as they did of His in Luke 2:20, "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told."

Larry Barker is the pastor of Cornerstone, Jacksonville. He also serves as the operations director for North American Missions. For more information or to contact him, visit www.bmamissions.org.





A word about the pastor's children

By **DR. ALLEN TILLEY**

Pastors' children see the best and the worst of the church. Having raised my children in church, I can assure you that churches possess the power either to encourage the pastor's children or to embitter them. What can a congregation do to encourage the pastor's children?

Show grace to the pastor's children, especially on Sundays. Sometimes, your pastor's children have arrived at the church building before the first service and won't get to leave until long after the last service. Even if the children go home in between those times, the children spend their day without easy access to their father. They see their father, but his focus cannot be on them.

If you have a concern about the children's behavior, set up a time to talk to the pastor privately about it. Don't talk about it in your Sunday School class or small group, and don't unleash your concerns between services when your pastor is trying to focus his energy on proclaiming God's Word to the people.

Be lavish in your praise. When you see the pastor's children do what's right, say so. Plenty of people will point out what they do wrong; few will mention or even notice what they do well.

Don't involve the pastor's children in the church's problems. Even if your pastor and his wife try not to mention problems around their children, the children sense when there are tensions. Don't make it worse with snide comments and complaints in the children's presence.

Be bold and rebuke the critics. The best way to develop a culture of grace toward your pastor's children is to refuse to allow backbiting to continue unchecked.

Give your pastor space to deal with their children's hearts. Yes, God has called pastors to have their "children under control with all dignity" (1 Timothy 3:5). But guiding children to this point takes time. Some days the pastor will be more successful at this than others. Focus on the long-term fruit, not the short-term failures.

Hold your pastor accountable to make time to care for his family. I will always be thankful for a particular deacon who called me to account in this area of my life. I clearly remember him leaning over a lunch table and saying to me, "You take care of the church, and then you take care of your family. But Scripture does not support such a split in responsibilities, and neither should you." Be certain that your church provides your pastor with days off, free evenings, and vacation time to invest in his family.

Dr. Allen Tilley is pastor of First Baptist Church of Carthage, Texas. He has over 30 years of pastoral experience, and God has continually blessed his ministry with dynamic spiritual and numerical growth. Contact him at allen@firstbaptistcarthage.com.



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By HEITH MITCHELL

A WORD FROM YOUR MISSION OFFICE:

It's important, as churches and as an association, that we stay focused on the right things. It is equally important that together we celebrate the right things. One of the things worthy of celebration is the establishment of new, self-sustained, Bible believing, BMA churches with a heart to reach the lost and make disciples. This month a BMA of Texas mission takes their first independent steps. Praise the Lord! I can only imagine how thrilling and scary a moment this is



▲ Heith Mitchell

We are appreciative for the leadership that Heith Mitchell has provided. We are grateful to Clinton Everitt for his coaching and being the project's pastor. We want to thank Beacon, Bryan for being our mother church.

This past year has been awesome—we have seen 16 salvations and 14 baptisms. We have a membership of 43. We have 3 Home Group meetings that average 42 and a Sunday morning service average of 44.

Please keep us in your prayers asking God to assist us with growth in all areas. Stop in and see us anytime!



▲ Gary Southard

Brothers, certainly the longing of my heart, and my prayer to God for Israel (Nacogdoches) is for salvation.

What I am asking is that we unite more and more in prayer and ministerial effort so that these mere as an association will be carried to happy terms and Jehovah will do what seems good to him. Amen.

**MATTHEW PRATHER—
THE BRIDGE MISSION, MIDLOTHIAN/WAXAHACHIE**

Six months ago we launched The Bridge. It is hard to believe it has already been six months. Time is flying by and we will soon be starting 2018. God continues to bless and we are looking forward to what God has in store for 2018. December is full of opportunities to serve our community in many



▲ Matthew Prather

different ways. Please keep us in prayer as we serve in many different ways this month. We are asking you to join us in prayer as we look forward into 2018. Here are some ways you can be praying for us this year. 1. That we would see at least 25 people come to know the Lord as Savior in 2018. 2. That we would find a new location to meet and that would meet our needs. 3. That we would continue to reach the hurting and broken and have the wisdom to minister to them. 4. That more leaders would be raised up out of The Bridge. Thank you for your continued prayers and support.

**CHRISTIAN MARTINEZ—
NEW MISSION, LUBBOCK**

We are here in Lubbock! Things begin to be much more clear now that we live among the people that we plan to reach. The biblical foundation of our vision remains the same but we are learning how is it going to look in this area. Our vision is based on Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17. After time of prayer, God led me to this chapter of Scripture. It is a glorious passage. What a better place to find God's vision for the church than the very place where Jesus, who is in perfect unity with the Father, expresses His desire for His present and future disciples.



▲ Christian Martinez

Our vision is "to be a community of followers of Jesus that proclaim and display God's greatness." John 17 makes clear that Jesus disciples must reflect the greatness of the Trinity so that God would be glorified



in the life of this congregation.

You have been an important part of The Church at Valley Ranch reaching this milestone. Will you help them mark and celebrate it? You could send them a card, or a written prayer, or a gift, or a lot of cards. I ask you to take the time to celebrate this victory with them.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (Romans 12:15)

The Church at Valley Ranch—Pastor Gary Southard
PO Box 1730,
Porter, TX 77365

Merry Christmas
FROM YOUR BMA OF TEXAS MISSIONS!

A WORD FROM YOUR MISSIONARIES:

**GARY SOUTHARD—
THE CHURCH AT VALLEY RANCH MISSION, NEW CANEY**

The Church at Valley Ranch wants to thank the BMA of Texas Missions Department, the BMA churches across Texas, and the local associations that took us as their personal project. Thank you for your support, finances and prayers in our behalf. As a result of our cooperative work, God has seen fit to establish a new church in the Porter/New Caney area.

**JAIME GARCIA—
IGLESIA BAUTISTA NUEVA VIDA MISSION, SPLENDORA**

Always, as a pastor, my longing is to seek souls to be saved and to take care of them in one way or another. It requires an extra effort to bring good news to every creature without fainting on Sunday preach about the work of God precisely. In Nehemiah's book, we see the opposition we face as servants of the Lord but we also see the promise of God. The work is big and I cannot stop going because the work would cease (Nehemiah 6: 3). Let us not abandon the work even though the opposition is always manifested in mind that God is the one who is facing us as a powerful giant ... the leadership of Nehemiah is exemplary and is Christ-centered by not giving up even in danger of death. Blessings .

**NEPTALY MOLINA—
IGLESIA BAUTISTA
MISSION, NACOGDOCHES**

I feel blessed by God, by his love, by his care. Our net is to establish a church in Nacogdoches and my prayer is as Paul said in Romans 10: 1



▲ Jaime Garcia



▲ Neptaly Molina



Ministers Resource Services Board Nominates Crawley

The Ministers Resource Services (MRS) Board of Trustees has announced the nomination of Dr. Steve Crawley for the position of executive director. He will be recommended at the 2018 BMA national meeting, as the current director, Bro. Ron Chesser, announced his retirement effective May 31, 2018.

Crawley's occupational background includes working 13 years in corporate finance and accounting, as well as working 13 years for Lifeword as chief financial officer and executive director. He has also served BMA LLC as financial team leader.

His educational background includes a BSBA, MBA, MAR, and PhD. He is a member of Antioch, Conway,

Arkansas and resides in Conway.

"I'm thankful to be nominated by the board for this position. I'm also thankful for the work of Bro. Ron and his staff—Alice, Jane and Sharon. They, along with others before them, have laid a solid foundation. If approved by the churches, I pray God will bless our efforts to build on this foundation as we strive to serve BMA ministers and their families."



▲ Dr. Steve Crawley

An expression of everlasting love

Many of our friends choose to honor or remember a family member, a friend or an associate with a gift for the children of the Baptist Home. Texas Baptist Home, in turn, notifies the appropriate person. Listed in capital letters are those honored or remembered from Nov. 1, 2017—Nov. 30, 2017.

ENDOWMENTS

E ANN PACE: Karl & Martha Pace
MYRA STOKES: Bill Stokes

HONORARIUMS

ALL THE CHILDREN AT TBHC: Earlene Crenshaw
ALL TBHC STAFF: Bea Conn
GARY HERRON: Jessica Grissom
OUR SERVICE MEN AND THEIR FAMILIES: Roy & Elizabeth Talbot
OUR 4 ADOPTED CHILDREN: Duane & Charlotte Turner
ALEX & ANDI YOUNT: Danny & Dianne Yount

MEMORIALS

LLOYD W. ADAMS: Ione Adams
J.P. ALSBROOKS: L.C. & Jennetta Whitehead
JUANITA BARNETT: New Hope Baptist Church
W.C. BARGER: Patricia Cothran
SCOTT BAXTER: L.C. & Jennetta Whitehead
WALTER BECKER: Dennis & Ilona Myrice
TOMMY O. BLAKLEY: Betty Blakley
SONYA BROOKSHIRE: Inet Archer
LORENE BURNS: Jan Holcomb
RYDER CHANEY: Glen & Carolyn Saxon
GRADY CHAPMAN: Brenda Bull
RANDAL EUGENE CLARK: Charles & Edith Turner
VERNEN & DORIS CREASY: Harold & Jean Jacobs
MASON DAY: Marlene Day
SONNY & JANIE DUNAVANT: Margaret Wolf
WILMA EASON: Jerry & Kaye Christian
DON FENNEL: Charles & Charlotte Johnson
TYLER FORD: Travis & Brenda Floyd
PAULINE & AUBREY GANDY: Jerry & Virginia Gandy
LOIS AND HESTER GIBSON: Janice Dore
HEATH GREEN: Jimmy & Cynthia Green
BILLY JACK HAMMONDS: Patsy Bishop
SALLY HUDSON: Travis & Brenda Floyd
BECKY JONES: Linda Lewis
BILLY KING: Margaret King
BILLY HOWARD KING: Margaret King
ADAM LANDRUM: Gary & Jean Landrum
JACKIE LANDRUM: Gary & Jean Landrum
ELVIN LAWSON: Alva Stinson
ROY L. LEWIS: Linda Lewis
JEFFERY DON MARSHALL: Joelene Schermann
DOROTHY & STOKES MARSHALL: Nancy Greer
RICHARD MCCALLUM: Fred Robinson
CHARLIE MCCOOL: Jerry & Judy Pilcher
HOMER & MARIE MCKINNON: Georgia Menough
CHARLES MITCHELL: Gay Mitchell
PAUL & JEARLENE MIZE: Jerry & Sheree Mize
SUE & BILLY MUCKLEROY: Jerry & Kaye Christian
JEAN GASTON NEWSOM: Charles & Charlotte Johnson; Brenda Ray
BERTIE NICKERSON: Joe & Lana Shaddix
BOBBIE SUE NUGENT: Charles & Charlotte Johnson
DESSIE OWENS: New Hope Baptist Church
GLADYS PFEFFER: Red Springs Missionary Baptist Church, Tyler; Jerry Null
REED PIERCE: Fred Robinson
LATRICIA RIGGS: Charles & Charlotte Johnson
DOROTHY & ROLAND ROGERS: Morris & Glenda Pevehouse
DON ROUSE: Concha Rouse
CHARLES ROUSE: Concha Rouse
PEGGY SANDIFER: Joe & Linda Dodson; Brenda & John Davidson; Lainey & Mitch West; Clyde & Velma Shelton
EVELYN SPEGELHAUER: Charles & Charlotte Johnson
JIMMY TANKERSLEY: Margaret Tankersley
BESSIE WADLE: James & Karen Lively
IRIS WEBB: Eunice Class @ South Park Baptist Church
SAM & JO WHITE: Jerry & Sheree Mize
CLOVIS WHITEHEAD: L.C. & Jennetta Whitehead
BILL WOOD: Raymond & Claynell Dennis



Don't forget to fill out the Annual Church Survey!

Please choose one of the following options to provide BMA America with the most accurate information for your church.

What Can My Church Do?

1. Visit bmaamerica.org to view and edit your church information. Once on the website, select the "BMA Churches" tab listed at the top, then click on "BMA Church Log In."
2. Fill out the pre-populated survey you received in the mail and mail to:
BMA America, PO Box 1188
Conway, AR 72033
3. Request an emailed copy of the survey by contacting Lauren Noland in the Information Services department at 501-358-4007 or lauren@bmaamerica.org

We're Ready for Spring!

Registration Week Jan. 8-12

Classes Begin January 29

bmats.edu



MEMORIALS - HONORARIUMS

Christmas Day: Let us now go to Bethlehem—Luke 2:15

By DR. O.S. HAWKINS

It was an amazing night. Frederick Speakman, in his book *The Salty Tang*, put it like this, “It was silent and yet there was music. It was dark and yet there was light.” Bethlehem almost missed it. No room! Many of us recall the moment of the birth of our first born. The trip to the hospital, the sterile environment, the presence of family and friends. But on the first Christmas a young pregnant Jewess found herself without the decency of even a clean sheet on a simple cot. In her hour of childbirth her bed was straw in a stable and when the baby was born, with trembling, yet thankful, fingers she wrapped the baby in cloths and laid him in a manger.

Down the hillside from the small village was a group of common shepherds. While the big event was transpiring unannounced in Bethlehem they had a surprise visit from heaven itself. After the angelic announcement of the Messiah’s birth and the praise song of the heavenly choir, the shepherds said one to another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us” (Luke 2:15). And they came. And they found Him. Then they “returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told them.” (Luke 2:20).

Nestled on the top of a Judean mountain about six miles south of Jerusalem, Bethlehem has had a long and memorable history. It is first mentioned in scripture when Rachel died there and her heartbroken husband Jacob buried her just outside the city (Gen. 35:19). It was Bethlehem where Ruth, the Moabitess, fell in love with Boaz, the Lord of the harvest (Ruth 1:22). It was in this same village that David as a boy tended the sheep of his father and where he was anointed king by the prophet Samuel (I Sam. 17:15). It was Bethlehem, centuries before the coming of Christ, that Micah foretold would be the birthplace of the coming Messiah (Mic. 5:2).

As we walk through Bethlehem today it is still a small village on the side of the same hill. Fifty thousand residents call this town on Israel’s Palestinian-controlled West Bank their home. Their tiny streets are invaded by over one million visitors each year. Each of these pilgrims is there to visit the cave which rests underneath a large Byzantine Greek Orthodox church which has stood since 530 A.D. and itself was built over the site of the structure built by Helena, Constantine’s mother, in about 325 A.D. Today Bethlehem is a troubled village, awaiting like every other city in the world the coming of the Prince of Peace. Our Lord was born into an environment in Bethlehem much like the one that prevails today. Both the Jews of Jesus’ day and the Palestinians of modern times are subservient to the economic interests of their richer and more powerful neighbors. Both were in refugee camps or small villages alongside a culture that was more modern and influential. Both were victims of disgust and discrimination. And, both groups had an element within them that was prone to calling for armed revolt and violence. It was into this environment that our Lord entered our world.

Let’s go to Bethlehem and while there ask ourselves a question — is my life a Bethlehem? What do we mean? Bethlehem is a place of potential. It is a place of providence. It is a place of privilege. Our Lord longs for each of us to become a Bethlehem in our own right. That is, a person of potential, providence and privilege.

BETHLEHEM IS A PLACE OF POTENTIAL

Think of it. Of all the places for Messiah to be born, God chose Bethlehem. In the words of Micah it was “little among

the thousands of Judah” (Mic. 5:2). One certainly would have expected Messiah to be born in Jerusalem or at least any of the scores of towns in the region larger and more prominent than Bethlehem. But God has a way of dwelling among the lowly. He said, “I dwell in the high and holy place, but with him who has a contrite and humble spirit” (Is. 57:15). Bethlehem reminds us that the small shall be great and the last shall be first, that God brings strength from weakness and brings the base things of the world to value and to nothing the things that are valued. Yes, Bethlehem is a place of potential. Perhaps you feel insignificant, little among those around you. You, like Bethlehem are just the person God can use. Bethlehem is a place of potential...and so are you! It may be that, like Bethlehem, you simply have not awakened to it yet.

As God looks upon us today He doesn’t see us for what we are but for what we could become, if and when we make room for Him. Do you remember Simon Peter’s first encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord looked at him and saw him not for who and what he was, but for who and what he had the potential to become. He said, “You are Simon (a small pebble) but you shall be called Cephas (a rock)” (John 1:42). Jesus saw the potential that was in his life. Three and a half years later, Peter reached that potential and became the undisputed leader of the Jerusalem church.

As the Lord looks into your life and my life He sees us not for what we are now, but for what we could become. That is part of the message of Bethlehem. It is a place of potential. It was “little among the villages of Judah” (Mic. 5:2) but what potential it held. Is your life a Bethlehem, a place of potential?

God did not come to Caesar’s palace to be born, nor to Herod’s court. But very quietly, almost unannounced and somewhat incognito, He arrived in a seemingly insignificant little town, but a place of tremendous potential.

God is reminding us today that, even though we may seem somewhat insignificant in the eyes of the world, in His eyes we have potential for greatness. Bethlehem is a place of potential. See yourself as a Bethlehem today. You, too, are a person of potential.

BETHLEHEM IS A PLACE OF PROVIDENCE

Long centuries before Christ’s birth, God foretold through His prophets that Bethlehem would be the birthplace of the promised Messiah of Israel. When reports spread of the “birth of a king,” Herod asked the chief priest the location of the King Messiah’s prophesied birthplace. He quickly replied, “in Bethlehem of Judea” (Matt. 2:5-6). But how could this be, since Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, 70 miles and several days journey to the north? Bethlehem is not simply a place of potential, it is also a place of providence. God still works in the affairs of men by His own design and sovereign will.

Luke begins the story of the Christmas narrative by saying, “And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered” (Luke 2:1). But in reality there is so much more behind that verse. The decree was not issued by Caesar but by God Himself! It was divine providence moving Caesar to issue that decree. Caesar was but a pawn in the hand of God. If there was ever a place of providence it was Bethlehem. God put the whole world in motion to fulfill His word. At just the right time He used a Roman decree to move Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

God is still at work in our world today. Daniel reminds us

that “the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men” (Dan. 4:17). Solomon says, “The King’s heart is in the hand of the Lord” (Prov. 21:1). God is moving behind the scenes in world affairs today. He is putting the whole world in motion to fulfill His word. There is tremendous euphoria over the unification of the European community especially in light of its common currency. Could it be that behind it all is the hand of God fulfilling His word as He moves our world toward the coming of a one-world government with an electrifying ruler who will emerge to offer world peace and will be followed by the masses?

Bethlehem is a place of providence even though the Jews of the first century world could not see it. Put yourself in their place. They were oppressed by an invading government to whom they despised paying taxes. They were inconvenienced and incurred unexpected expenses in order to travel to Bethlehem to register for the Roman tax. They must have wondered, “Where is God?” And all the while it was the hand of God’s providence behind the whole affair in order to get them to Bethlehem.

The same is true for us. Many things which may appear on the surface as problems may be nothing short of the hand of God getting us to our own Bethlehem. Perhaps you feel as inconvenienced as Mary must have felt. Talk about inconvenience, Mary had to journey 70 miles on the back of a donkey over the most rugged terrain imaginable while in her final trimester of pregnancy. And all the while God is moving behind the scenes, orchestrating by His providence your situation or circumstance and even allowing certain things to take place that do not appear to be of benefit to you. Why? In order to get you to Bethlehem so that you might see your potential and His providence. Is your life a Bethlehem?

Bethlehem reminds us that God fulfills His word. What He promises He performs no matter how insurmountable the obstacles may seem to be. If you begin to doubt some of the promises He has made to you, simply remember Bethlehem. It is a place of providence as well as potential.

BETHLEHEM IS A PLACE OF PRIVILEGE

What an awesome privilege to be the hand-picked city to cradle the Son of God. Out of all the cities in the world, why Bethlehem? Why not Jerusalem? It was the seat of religious power. But God was sending a message. The hope of the world is not in religion. Why not Rome? It was the center of political power. God wants everyone to know that the hope of the world is not in politics. What about Athens? It was the center of intellectual power. But the hope of the world is not in philosophy. God privileged the little town of Bethlehem because the hope of the world is in a Savior! Bethlehem is a place of privilege.

The Lord Jesus came on mission to Bethlehem and 33 years later that mission led Him to a cross outside the city walls of Jerusalem. But before the cross was a cradle and that cradle was divinely placed in the town of Bethlehem. But when the moment came, most of the village missed it. Divine moments come and go. How are you going to recognize them? Speakman says, “So often they show up like any other moment and so often when we are so occupied or so convinced something else we are doing is so important.” And the danger is we let the moment go and never know what could have become of it, much like the Bethlehem innkeeper.

This very chapter could be a Bethlehem moment for you!

CHRISTMAS DAY continued on p.11

BMA Texas Missions cont.

through His disciples. His disciples are to reflect God's holiness because God is holy; they are to reflect His love because of the perfect loving relationship between the Trinity; and they are to reflect His unity because The Father, The Son, and The Spirit are One. All of these things can be displayed in the context of the local church when the church lives in a way that reflects the character of God. Jesus said that when His followers live in such a way the world will know that Jesus was sent from God (Jn. 17:21, 23).

We desire to see these kind of community in the south of Lubbock and multiply in more churches in the small towns around us that will seek to be an answer to our Lord's prayer in John 17.

I encourage you to pray these things for your church. Also pray that God will use us to plant this kind of church here. Please pray specifically for Juan, Victoria, and their family. They are the first family that have open their home to study the Gospel of Mark together.

We thank God for your support in the expansion of His Kingdom.

JOHN HARRIS— FOUNDATION COMMUNITY MISSION, BENBROOK

We thank you all once again for supporting us as your missionaries in Benbrook! We are trying to get our schedule for the new year set up, so if you would be willing to have us come share about our work here please let me know! We would love to come see you!



▲ John Harris

CLIFF ROBERTSON— CARPENTER'S HOUSE MISSION - LAKE JACKSON/CLUTE

When you see God working in your midst it can be breathtaking. I am seeing lives changed by His power. I am also seeing all the training about systems begin to bear fruit as well. Often we face challenges when we are trying to do something new. But when there is a purpose and a plan behind it that people can get excited about, the resistance melts away pretty quick. Thanks BMA for all the training - it is paying off!



▲ Cliff Robertson

BRANDON DURHAM— REDEEMER'S LOVE MISSION, HOUSTON

November was hard, but hopeful. On a personal note, my wife was sicker than she's ever been with Rheumatoid Arthritis. The month was dominated by pain and trips to the doctor. By God's grace, in the midst of this, Amanda mustered the strength to share her Redemption Story with more than 60 people at our Thanksgiving Outreach Event. It was a tremendous



▲ Brandon Durham

turnout with many "seekers" who are interested in knowing more about Jesus. This month we'll follow up with these guests and invite them to further consider joining us on the journey of discipleship. Our leaders are getting some much needed rest in December before we gear up for an exciting start to 2018. Please pray: for Amanda's healing, for deep, gospel-believing rest for our church family and leaders, and for the Holy Spirit to move in power this January. Many Thanks & Merry Christmas!



PRAYER REQUESTS FROM THE FIELD

-Neptaly Molina asks you to pray for the direction of the Lord of the work so that he can reach more people and for the health of his wife Manuela because she had a heart attack but is recovering.

-Jaime Garcia asks you to pray for those who help in the work of the ministry, in the health of his wife, in his finances, and in his time management.

-Brandon Durham asks you to pray fervently for the health and healing of his wife.

-Cliff Robertson asks you to pray for continued outreach and spiritual Growth

-Pray for a ministry partner for our missionaries in need of help.

-Matthew Prather asks you to pray for wisdom and for salvations.

-Christian Martinez asks you to pray, "For clarity and good Spirit-driven planning for beginning the church planting work in Lubbock."

PRAISE REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

-Six salvations and five baptisms were reported this month!

-God continues to answer your prayers on behalf of your mission effort!

Heith Mitchell is the director of BMA of Texas Missions. Contact him at P.O. Box 73, Waxahachie, TX 75168, 972-923-0757 or hmitchell@bmatexas.org. For more information, visit www.bmatexasmissions.org.



Christmas Day: Let us now go to Bethlehem cont.

Like Bethlehem you too could awaken to a brand new world. The same Christ born in Bethlehem could be born again in you. Paul puts it this way, "My little children for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). If we think Bethlehem is privileged to be the birthplace of our Lord, what a greater privilege for Him to be born in us. When much of our world has never even heard His sweet name, what a privilege for Him to reside in us.

In my library I have an old antique book written by a man named Phillips Brooks. He was pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia in the nineteenth century. In 1865 he made a personal pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unlike the one I made recently, it took Brooks several weeks on board ship instead of several hours on board a jumbo jet. On Christmas Eve he made his way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem by horseback. The scene and experience were forever etched in his mind. Back home in Philadelphia during the Christmas season of 1868 his mind was flooded with memories of the earlier Bethlehem Christmas. He sat at his desk and the words began to flow from his pen to the paper. He penned the words that night that we believers have sung for over a century now known as "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Thinking of Bethlehem, Phillips Brooks put it this way — "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." Yes, the hopes and fears of all the years were met in Bethlehem that night. Christina Rossetti put "that night" in the following poetic language:

That night when shepherds heard the song of angelic hosts
caroling near,

A deaf man turned in slumbers spell and dreamed that he could hear.

That night when in the cattle stall slept mother and child in humble fold,

A cripple turned his twisted limbs and dreamed that he was whole.

That night when o'er the new born babe a tender mother rose to lean,

A loathsome leper smiled in sleep and dreamed that he was clean.

That night when to the mother's breast the little king was held secure,

A harlot slept a happy sleep and dreamed she was pure.

That night when in the manger lay the Holy One who came to save,

A man turned in the sleep of death and dreamed there was no grave.

What shall be our gift to him?

What shall I give him poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd I'd give him a lamb.

If I were a wise man I'd do my part.

What shall I give him?

I know...I'll give him my heart!

And when we do, we too, become a Bethlehem, a place of potential, providence, and privilege.

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Dr. O.S. Hawkins is the president and chief executive officer of GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. He served as senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, and senior pastor of three other churches. He is also the author of more than 25 books, including the best-selling *The Joshua Code*. Visit his website, www.OSHawkins.com.





auxiliaries

You were saved to shine

By SHARON COLE

The *You Were Saved To Shine* ladies' retreat was awesome! Rosewood, Gilmer did an excellent job of hosting the 135 ladies who attended the Friday night and Saturday morning activities Oct. 6-7. After registering, the activities began in the church's auditorium with welcomes, and a "taste" of Betty Gibbs' insights. Supper was served in the gym with a selection from 24 foot sandwiches cut in serving sizes.

For Friday night, the ladies were to choose any 2 of the 7 events (50 minute sessions) listed: Sunbeams/GMA/Galilean Workshop, Betty Gibbs moderated the Fellowship Roundtable, Jackie Ricks gave insights into publishing "your book," Shawna Blissett showed those interested in Bible journaling, Kelly Laminack guided those who attended her session on creating a "masterpiece," and Johnnie Ross taught how to crochet a Granny Square. Also, the movie, *Miracles From Heaven* was shown in the old chapel which is based on the true story of the Beam family. After the events, the Texas WMA officers met to discuss business. Then, goodnight everyone!

Saturday morning, the ladies were "Shining for Jesus!" Sherry Decker, Texas WMA President and Johnnie Ross, Liberty District WMA president, welcomed everyone and Second Vice President Glenda Chamberlain introduced the retreat theme. Diana Morris, project promoter, spoke on behalf of our project, Daniel Springs Baptist Encampment, with the promotion of the T-shirts she had available for sale. Door prizes were distributed to winners by Charlotte Johnson and Denise Gaston. Rosewood Baptist Church's Praise Team led us in worship. Then Debi Powers and Denise Gaston gave their testimonies of how God had brought them through difficult times in their lives and they were still shining for Jesus! Jennifer Barton sang a special in song before the guest speaker, Christy Beam, came and told her life's story of how her daughter, Anna, had been healed from a rare, incurable disease through a freak accident that was an extraordinary miracle in itself.

The church served a wonderful lunch of chicken spaghetti or Italian spaghetti, salad, garlic toast and a variety of dessert slices to choose from. After a filling lunch and back in the auditorium, we were entertained (but yet made to think about the subject) by three ladies who were "fishing!" Glenda Chamberlain, Charlotte Price and Peggy Thornton from Enon, Gilmer, performed a skit on "fishing" for Jesus. Diana Morris promoted the project as her "dressed-up" other half. Glenda introduced the special music by Tissha Harris and the Praise Team sang praises to the Lord. Betty Gibbs encouraged us again as she spoke from her heart. Charlotte Johnson closed the meeting by having each of the ladies hold a lighted candle representing the light of Jesus in each of us and how we

should be showing that light to the world so that they may know Jesus as their Christ.

TEXAS WMA 2017-2018 PROJECT

We want to introduce to you an opportunity to really help the expansion of our church planting efforts across the state. At the start of each new Hispanic mission that is begun, neighborhoods are canvassed and people are invited. One of the most effective ways this is done is to invite people to a block party with Hispanic music, food, games and a gospel presentation.

Each of our English missions hold outreach events where they rent inflatables and purchase supplies that are hard for them to store. In order for this to be more reproducible, we would like to have a trailer loaded with block party supplies that could be used as a launch and outreach tool by each of our Texas mission points. This trailer needs to be a 16 feet box trailer with a drop-down ramp door. This size trailer needs to be equipped with the following: Propane grill with bottle; 2-crock pots; popcorn machine; snow cone machine; cotton candy machine, utility carts; 2-ice chests; 2-32 gallon trash barrels; griddle; electric skillet; 2 to 5 gallon drink coolers; 6-plastic totes; 4-light folding plastic tables; 30-folding chairs; extension cords; power strips; tarps; 2-pop up canopies; first aid kit; fire extinguisher; tool box with tools, floor jack; upright dolly(hand truck). Games: 2-inflatables (jump house, slide, etc.) w/blowers; 12-carnival games, (bean bag toss; ladder toss, etc.) footballs, soccer balls, frisbees.

Sound: Portable sound system; 2-speaker stands; 2-microphones with stands and cables..If you would like to receive a blessing by supporting your state missionaries, please call the BMAT office at 972-923-0757 or email: david@bmatexas.org for more detailed information. To reach our Texas WMA Project goal of \$15,000 please send your offerings to: Texas WMA Project, Jo Strong, 149 NW Suzanne Terrace, Burleson, Texas, 76028, 817-480-0888, jokenstrong@juno.com. Ladies, we exceeded our goal of \$15,000 for 90 percent Daniel Springs and 10 percent Youth Fund project for 2016-2017: total offerings given were \$17,367.64. Of this total, \$16,238.13 went to Daniel Springs and \$1,129.51 went to the Youth Fund. Praise the Lord, we went over the amount \$434 more than last year. Let's do it again this year with our new project!

IN THE POTTER'S HANDS

In the Potter's Hands is the Texas WMA theme for next year. "We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand." Isaiah 64:8. God's hands form us. He wants to spiritually fashion us into vessels fit for His use,

molded as images of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows how to skillfully apply pressure, how to relax His grip, how to score our lives with His fingernail, how to squeeze and nudge, all of it designed to make us a vessel fit for His use. Our Heavenly Father uses events we encounter each day as tools with which to shape and sculpt us into His image. He wants to deepen our faith, to develop within us the quality of perseverance and to make us watertight containers of His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Today make it your prayer to become malleable clay in the Master's Hands, to be crafted into vessels of honor, fit for the Master's use. Ask God to have His own way in your life as He forms and re-forms you into His wonderful image. "Have thine own way, Lord, have Thine own way. Thou art the Potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy Will, While I am waiting, yielded and still.

Sharon Cole is the editor for the Texas WMA. Contact her at S9Co@aol.com. For more information on the Texas WMA, visit www.texaswma.com.





Upcoming
EVENTS

SPRING TERM 2018
Classes run January 16 through May 9
Registration January 10-11 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Placement Testing January 10-11 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Visit www.jacksonville-college.edu for a list of course offerings

HOMECOMING 2018
February 9-10
Register online at
www.jacksonville-college.edu/alumni
Look for details in the January issue of the Baptist Progress!

JC CAMPUS PREVIEW DAY
Saturday, February 24

events

125TH ANNIVERSARY

DATE: November 19, 2017

PLACE: Glenfawn Baptist Church, Cushing, TX
The celebration begins at 11 a.m. with singing, church history, and a message brought by former pastor, David Willis. A traditional Thanksgiving lunch will follow worship service. After lunch, special music by Living Proof will be enjoyed. Plan to come help us celebrate our church's anniversary.

BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION 117TH ANNUAL SESSION

DATE: November 6-7, 2017

PLACE: New Harmony Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas

CHURCH LEADERS CRUISE

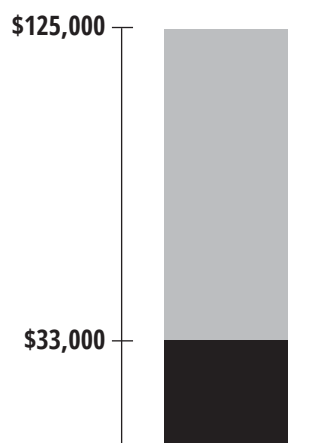
DATE: January 13-18, 2017

PLACE: 5-day Caribbean Cruise
DiscipleGuide.org

pastor & staff changes

MICHAEL MIZE is the new pastor of New Hope, Mineola.

UNITED THANKSGIVING OFFERING CONTRIBUTIONS ARE COMING IN



Churches across Texas participated in the United Thanksgiving Offering in November. So far, \$33,000 has been received toward our overall goal of \$125,000. If your church has not yet mailed in your offering, please do so to BMA of Texas, P.O. Box 73, Waxahachie, Texas 75168.

personnel & positions

AVAILABLE MINISTER

SCOTT SCHULLE is available to serve as a bivocational pastor within 50 miles of Rusk. He is a member of First, Maydelle. Contact him at 903-795-3886 (home) or 903-948-0058 (cell). 2/18

AVAILABLE POSITIONS

ASSOCIATE PASTOR/WORSHIP LEADER—Union Hill, Brownsboro is seeking a full-time Associate Pastor/Worship Leader. Send resume to Steve Goodrich, PO Box 316, Brownsboro, TX 75756 or email to uhbc@embarqmail.com. 1/18

YOUTH & FAMILY OUTREACH DIRECTOR—Calvary, Vidalia, LA is seeking a bivocational Youth & Family Outreach Director. Send resume to office@calvaryvidalia.com or 2001 Murray Drive, Vidalia, LA 71373. 1/18

PASTOR—First of Providence, Livingston is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resume to John Henderson, 307 Red Oak St., Livingston, Texas 77351-4327, henderson2@livingston.net, or call 936-327-9228. 12/17

PASTOR—Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resume to Pastor Search Committee, Pilgrim Rest #2 Baptist Church PO Box 99 Golden, TX 75444 or pr2bcsec@gmail.com. 2/18

PASTOR—Union Hill, Brownsboro is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resume and recorded sermon to Steve Goodrich at uhbc@embarqmail.com or PO Box 316, Brownsboro, TX 75756. 1/18

MUSIC—Craft, Jacksonville is seeking bivocational music minister. Send resume to James Dorman, PO Box 1644, Jacksonville, Texas 75766, james@craftjacksonville.com, or call 903-752-6610. 12/17

PASTOR—Mount Pisgah, Mineola is seeking a pastor. Bivocational is an option. Send resume to dmvaughn@peoplescom.net or mail to Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, 4995 FM 49, Mineola, Texas 75773. TFN

YOUTH PASTOR—Davis Street, Sulphur Springs is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Send resume to dennis@davisstreetbaptist.org. TFN

OUTREACH DIRECTOR—Farley Street, Waxahachie is seeking a bivocational outreach director. Send resume to resume@farleystreet.com.

PASTOR—Hill Creek, Whitehouse is seeking a pastor. Send resume and recorded sermon to Hill Creek Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1287, Whitehouse, Texas 75791.

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churches in review

NOVEMBER 19, 2017

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
First, Blooming Grove	207		2 by baptism
First, Palmer	61	93	1 by letter
Glade Creek, Gilmer	14	41	
Jackson, Joaquin	66	132	
New Harmony, Tyler	280	334	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		64	1 by statement
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	33	40	
Rosewood, Gilmer	130	204	
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	43	68	

NOVEMBER 26, 2017

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
Anthony Drive, Ennis	46	101	
First, Blooming Grove	202		1 by baptism
First, Omen		58	
First, Palmer	46	53	1 by letter
Glade Creek, Gilmer	13	34	
Jackson, Joaquin	77	126	
Little Flock, Lufkin	50	100	
New Harmony, Tyler	278	304	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		53	
Rosewood, Gilmer	113	212	1 by letter
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	45	62	
Security Calvary, Cleveland	21	47	
Simmons Hill, Diana	8	22	

DECEMBER 3, 2017

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
First, Blooming Grove	212		
First, Omen		48	1 by baptism
First, Palmer	52	83	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	20	40	
Jackson, Joaquin	84	137	
Little Flock, Lufkin	50	75	
New Harmony, Tyler	324	395	
New Hope, Mineola	45	98	
Oak Hill, Gilmer		51	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	37	49	
Pine Brook, Tyler	25	52	
Rosewood, Gilmer	141	245	
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	45	61	1 by letter

DECEMBER 10, 2017

CHURCH	SS	WORSHIP	ADDITIONS
First, Omen	34	71	
First, Palmer	64	169	
Glade Creek, Gilmer	17	54	
Jackson, Joaquin	84	137	
Little Flock, Lufkin	73	74	
New Harmony, Tyler	286	347	
New Hope, Mineola	49	120	
Olde Tyme, White Oak		54	
Pilgrim Rest #2, Golden	30	34	
Rosewood, Gilmer	131	209	2 by letter
Sand Flat, Grand Saline	52	65	
Simmons Hill, Diana	14	28	
Yellowpine Macedonia, Hemphill	22	25	

Sunday School Lessons

I'll be back

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

DATE: January 7, 2018

TEXT: Matthew 24:36-51

Jesus delivers His description of His second coming to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, which was near the temple in Jerusalem.

1. The time of Christ's second coming is known only by the Father in Heaven. verse 36
2. The world condition in that day will be similar to the

days of Noah—verse 37-38. Mankind was vile during Noah's day. For 120 years, he worked diligently building the Ark and warning men of coming judgement.

3. Sudden judgement will come upon those who reject Christ just as it did when Noah's prophecy was ignored. verse 39

4. The catching away of the saints. verses 40-41 Two men working in the field; two women grinding at the hand mill: The

believer in Christ will be caught away—the lost will be left behind. First Corinthians 15 corroborates this truth (The dead in Christ shall rise first) First Thessalonians 4:17 tells us that those of us who are alive and remain shall be caught up.

5. The rewards of the faithful follower of Christ will be realized in that final abode in glory. verse 45-47. At the Bema seat, the faithful shall receive a reward and shall have a place of authority in the Millennial Kingdom. 1 Corinthians 3:14.

Alive again

By **PAUL GAUNTT**

DATE: January 14, 2018

TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

The question raised in verse 35 of our text, is common to mortal man. Death, and resurrection, and the glorified body we shall inhabit in glory is a mystery.

THERE MUST BE DEATH BEFORE THERE CAN BE LIFE: verse 36. That principle applies in every facet of life. John 12:24 says if the "corn of wheat" is to bear fruit, it must first die and be cast into the ground. The farmer gives it up

to the earth. This death also is a metaphor for the Christian life—if one is to live abundantly in Christ, he or she must die to self, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:31; "... I die daily."

THERE IS A LIST OF CONTRASTS BETWEEN THE FLESHLY BODY AND GLORIFIED BODY: verses 40-49: The fleshly body is "perishable"—dishonorable, weak, natural, but is raised incorruptible, raised in honor, and in supernatural power. The first Adam was a man of dust—a fallen and sinful man—a man who brought condemnation

upon all his descendants. The "Second Adam, Christ our Savior, 'came down from Heaven—condescending to man, to provide everlasting life.

Verse 49 tells us we have borne the image of of Adam - who in turn, was created "in the image of God." Genesis 1:27. Because of the Second Adam, we have been made to bear the image of the heavenly. Paul tells us we shall be changed during that resurrection of the body. 1 Corinthians 15:52.

Obituaries

REV. IRVAN L. ANTHONY

Rev. Irvan L. Anthony, 91, faithful servant of God went home to meet his Savior on Tuesday, November 21, 2017 from Ennis, Texas. He was born on September 14, 1926 in Ensign, Texas to Vilas Lee "Bess" and Leona (Johnson) Anthony. He grew up in the Ennis area and graduated from Ennis High School in 1945. On June 13, 1948 he would marry the love of his life "Dolly" Ruth Hornbuckle. After their marriage they lived in Ennis. They also lived in Tool, Texas for 15 years before returning to Ennis. He surrendered his life to the service of his Lord in 1959. Irvan served his country proudly in the United States Army during WWII serving in the Pacific Theatre at the 7th Base Post Office in Japan.

He worked at the U.S. Post Office for 27 years as a letter carrier and served as pastor for the Providence Baptist Church of Tool for 32 years. He was a member of Anthony Drive, Ennis, where served as a Sunday School teacher for many years.

He and his wife, Ruth, were married for over 69 years. He is survived by his wife, Ruth Anthony; daughters: Vicky Gerron and husband, Les and Suzanne Hamm and husband, Ray; four grandchildren; Jason Chapman and wife, Sharon, Shannon Nizio and husband, Larry, Jarod Hamm and wife, Susan and Kyle Gerron and wife, Mary; nine great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; sister, Bess Johnson and a host of other family and friends.

Funeral services were held Nov. 25, 2017 at Anthony Drive, Ennis.



LUCILLE HAZELL

Dec. 3, 2017 Lucille "LuLu" Hazell, precious wife, mother, Nannie and friend went home to be with her Lord and Savior. Lulu age 84 is a longtime resident of Malakoff. Lulu was born May 8, 1933 in Houston to Charles Vincent Skero and Sally Rose Sedito Skero. She met the love of her life and soulmate Clayton Eugene "Buddy" Hazell in Houston. After three dates Buddy proposed to "The Love Of My Life" and Lulu accepted. They were married at All Saints Church, Houston on November 16, 1952. Momma Lulu is her name to many.

Bro. Buddy and Lulu came to Malakoff in 1973 when he first accepted the pastorate of Parkview Baptist Church. She faithfully served her role as a pastor's wife for 46 years, while being a wonderful mother and foster mother.

She is survived by her husband of 65 years, Bro. Buddy Hazell; son, Gene Hazell and wife, Debbie; daughter, Cheryl Briscoe, and husband, Mike; daughter, Barbara Monroe, and husband, Mike; son, Billy Hazell, and wife, Tammy; daughter, Angela Rodriguez, and husband, Jesse, and daughter, Natalie Hazell; sisters Mamie Travelbee and Natalie Willett. Her beautiful legacy continues with 18 grandchildren, 26 great-grandchildren, and 204 foster children.

Funeral services were Dec. 6. The family would like to thank Asana Hospice Group for all their love and care during Mrs. Lulu's illness. You were a blessing.



Sunday School Lessons

Payday someday

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: January 21, 2018

TEXT: Romans 14:10-12 Revelation 20:11-15

The title of this lesson was the title given, by Dr. R.G. Lee, who for 32 years, was pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn. It was said Dr. Lee preached the sermon over 5,000 times during his ministry, and has perhaps been the most widely published, and preached sermon in modern times. The sermon, which paints a vivid picture of eternal lostness of the degenerate, never failed to stir hearts toward conviction and an all-consuming reality of eternity without God.

On July 8, 1741 in Northampton, England, Jonathan Edwards preached his equally famous and soul-stirring message, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." Due to the power of the message, people reportedly fainted with conviction, and loudly shrieked, "What shall we do?"

In our text, it is noted that there will come a day when every knee will bow and acknowledge the Person, the

position and the power of Jesus Christ. (verse 11)

We shall all give an account for every deed—every word spoken, every thought, and every occasion that we ill-treated someone. Our lives will literally be an open book when we stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ.

Revelation 20 tells us that at the end of the thousand year millennial reign of Christ on earth, Satan will be "loosed" for a season, and will seek to deceive the nations, but God rains fire down from heaven and devoured Satan's entourage. The beast (antichrist), the false prophet and the devil himself meet their eternal doom in the torments of hell forever.

John sees a throng of people gathered in front of the White Throne of God. This is where the lost realize their doom, when their names are not found in the Lamb's Book of Life. What an unthinkable, awful time this will be for the eternally lost.

May every pupil in Sunday school realize the urgency of calling upon a loving Savior for mercy and grace

Reality of Hell

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: January 28, 2018

TEXT: Mark 9:43-50

In our text today, Mark draws the distinction between a man who lives a wicked life -- a life of worldly pleasure, totally devoid of conscience or conviction. He is ready and willing to fall into temptation --

Adrain Rogers once said, "A sinner leaps into sin and loves it -- a saint, lapses into sin and loathes it."

Mark is not advocating that one literally sever his own arm, or foot, or eye, in order to go to heaven. But he is emphasizing the fact that it is imperative to mortify the body on this earth in order to gain heavenly bliss one day.

All the body parts mentioned in Mark 9 are effective tools which satan can utilize to cause one to be drawn away and enticed. The hand is well able to create evil; the foot is able to transport one into an evil place; and the eye is the window which causes a man to assess opportunities for sin. (Remember the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? 1 John 2:16.)

It is better to live with pain and physical infirmity here for a season, than to live in the lap of luxury, human strength and indulgence in this life and miss eternal life, as in the case of the rich man.

In Luke 16:25, Abraham told the rich man who went to hell, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is

comforted, and thou art tormented."

Satan knows all too well how to draw one into a life of debauchery and can blind him to a desire for God.

James worded it this way: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away from his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." James 1:14-15.

This is not to say believers cannot be tempted, nor is it impossible for them to stumble. But when a man who loves God, sins against Him, the Holy Spirit is on hand to convict and draw him to a Godly sorrow. God's chastening hand is experienced.

"For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Hebrews 12:6

(Read David's penitent prayer in Psalm 51.)

Paul Gauntt is the pastor of First, Palmer. He served for a number of years as the BMA of Texas Department of Church Ministries director. He has served several churches as pastor, and is a correspondent and featured article writer for Baptist Progress Contact him at pop.gauntt@gmail.com.



GOD'S GIFT

HEAVEN IS A FREE GIFT!

It is not earned or deserved. No amount of effort or good works can earn a place for you in heaven. Why? Because . . .

MAN IS A SINNER.

"For all have sinned . . ." (Rom. 3:23) Because of this, man cannot save himself. GOD. On the one hand, God is merciful and does not want to punish us. Yet God is just and must punish sin. God solved this problem for us in the Person of . . .

JESUS CHRIST.

He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose from the grave to purchase a place for us in heaven—"the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

THE GIFT IS RECEIVED BY FAITH.

Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for eternal life. It means resting on Christ alone and what He has done, rather than what you or I have done to get us into heaven. "Believe on (or trust in) the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

SO MAY WE ASK . . .

Have you received God's free gift of eternal life? The Bible assures us in 1 John 5:13 that we can know we have eternal life.

Do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die? The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you are willing to repent (turn away from your sin and to the Lord Jesus) you can receive the free gift of eternal life by simply praying: Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins, and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept your free gift of eternal life.



JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE
WISHES YOU AND YOUR FAMILY
A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS

**JESUS
CHRIST**
is the reason for
the season...

Matthew 1:21-23



On November 30 at Jacksonville College, Dr. Jim Richards, SBTC Executive Director, taught through the book of I Peter. Attendees included almost fifty pastors and other guests from the BMA, SBTC, SBC, BGTC, ABA, and other denominations. Corresponding books and workbooks were provided for those attending.



"Go, Tell It on the Mountain!"

The JC Theater and Music Programs presented the annual Christmas show on November 30. JC faculty, administration, and friends also participated in the production.



Dalton Thomas sings "I'll Be Home for Christmas" in front of the CHRISTmas tree.



"Silent Night"



Lee and Marolyn Welch sing "Silver Bells."



"T'was the Night before Christmas"



Jaime Feaster performs "Oh Holy Night."