

Gospel Herald

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October 19, 2003 will long be remembered as a special day in the history of the Owen Sound Church of Christ as they celebrated their 50th anniversary. At least 100 people attended with eight congregations, Meaford, Barrie, Sundridge, Waterloo, Bramalea, Vandaleur, Newmarket, and St. Catherines represented. Also, five individuals from the community attended the services. Keith Thompson and Walter Hart, former preachers there and the present preacher, Brian Thompson, were the speakers. The theme for the day was "Come Celebrate With Us."

The Genres of Scripture (part 3, Parable & Apocalyptic)

Thayer Salisbury

The parables of Jesus are among the most widely recognised stories in the world. Sadly, they are also among the most abused stories in the world. Sometimes the very preachers and teachers who ought to be treating the parables with reverence are abusing them.

Jesus did not use parables so that we could make whatever we want to out of his teaching. The text, and context, should control us. We are not to take control of the text and make of it what we choose. The parables should be read naturally. The conclusions drawn should be such that any reasonable person can see the connection between the parable, the context, and the conclusions. Fanciful, allegorical interpretations of the parables often impress people, but they are wrong. The teacher who favours such may have an imagination, but the teaching of Jesus is obscured by such teaching. The person teaching in this way promotes himself rather than the gospel.

Context

We must respect the context of a parable. Some preachers totally ignore

the context. They are so eager to find a meaning that is useful to them. They discover, or invent, all kinds of meanings unrelated to the original context.

The classic example of this is the allegorical interpretation of the Good Samaritan. In one fanciful reinvention of the story, Jerusalem is heaven, Jericho is the sinful world, the robbers are the devil and his angels, the inn is the church. This handling of the parable makes it irrelevant to the question Jesus is trying to answer. To show proper respect to the words of Jesus we must deal with them in their inspired context. This is often neglected when studying parables.

The Main Point

When we make a comparison we do not mean that every detail of the comparison is valid. A preacher might say, "Life is like a football match, only those who try hard will win." The point of intended comparison is in regard to effort. The preacher does not mean that life is like football in every way. There is no "off sides" rule in life. No one sounds a whistle when life ends. Those who are the best at running and kicking are not always the best at life. If we take the comparison in its limited sense, it is true. If we overextend the comparison, it is false.

The parables are similar. We must be careful to focus on the points of intended comparison. We must not overextend the comparisons. The context will normally guide us to the main points of comparison. If we try to seek many points of comparison, we will go wrong.

Our first goal in Bible study is to understand what the text was intended to mean to its original readers. If we keep this in mind, we will do better in our study. It is when we get in too big a hurry that we go wrong. The person who asks, "What did this text mean?" and then asks, "How does that meaning apply to me?" will do well. The person that immediately asks, "What does this mean to me?" will ignore the context, over press the figures, and encounter many difficulties in the study of parables.

Apocalyptic

It is also important that we give consideration to the apocalyptic genre. This is not a prominent genre in the Bible, but many false and dangerous ideas have been spread among Christians because of a failure to study the special characteristics of apocalyptic literature.

The Revelation is the only biblical book that is almost completely apocalyptic. Its first word in Greek is apocalypse (apokalupsij) which means revelation. Other biblical books that contain apocalyptic sections are Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, the synoptic gospels, and Second Thessalonians.

What are the special characteristics of apocalyptic writing?

Crisis

Most apocalyptic writing is produced because of a crisis. The exile was a terrible crisis in Judaism. This crisis gave rise to the books of Ezekiel and Daniel. The persecution of Jews under Antiochus in the second century BC gave rise to non-canonical apocalypses. So did the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The persecution of Christians by Roman authorities led to the writing of the Revelation.

Apocalyptic literature is often an attempt to defend the justice of God in such a crisis. The hidden reasons behind the crisis are revealed. God's plans are revealed. The persecuted are comforted with the knowledge that God has a special purpose for them even in the midst of their suffering.

The use of strange symbols in apocalyptic literature is related to this crisis situation. Ezekiel could not openly speak his mind about the Babylonians. John could not speak openly of the Roman empire. These authorities would suppress the books if the downfall of the government had been openly stated. Each apocalyptic writer uses figures of speech which would have been understood by the intended audience. The figures were intended to be confusing to the current authorities.

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Decommissioning the Great Commission

Steve Hasbrouck, Sr.

In reading brotherhood papers and books, one gets a feeling that somehow we have done it all wrong over the past two centuries. There seems to be a sense that the Restoration Movement was just the building of another denomination and that we should either apologize for being a part of it, denounce it for being less than perfect, or discard it as a failed enterprise. Personally, I think that the problem is not only a Restoration Movement problem, but that Western Europe and North America have lost sight of what the Gospel of Jesus and the church He built really is. Immigrants from Mainland China tell me that they have been steeped in decades of materialism, so they know nothing about Jesus Christ. I believe we could say the same for Western culture.

Some have chosen to belittle the way we have traditionally had worship services, claiming that most of our rules and regulations in the church are really about how we “do” worship. I won’t disagree with that, but it seems now that inordinate amounts of time, paper, and press are spent on somehow correcting the errors of the past. We have debated different aspects of worship until we are blue in the face and now we spend time trying to fix what we perceive as being misguided or wrong. The interesting thing is that if the early Restorationists and those that followed were wrong to speak where the Bible was silent about different aspects of worship, why do we think that this generation is somehow doing it right? We seem to have an awful lot to say about the same silent area of scripture. Again, a lot of time and energy are being expended on a subject that really has very little space in the pages of the New Testament.

Jesus remarked that the generation He worked with were like children. According to teachers like the late Richard Rogers, the children of

Jesus’ day played two games, wedding and funeral. Children, being childish, usually have a few who choose the game that all will play and Jesus said that was what the people were doing. They played and He didn’t dance, they mourned and He didn’t cry (weddings had dancing and funerals had crying). John the Baptist didn’t drink alcoholic beverages and was accused of having a demon. Jesus ate with tax collectors, and since the beverage for parties was fermented wine, He was accused of being a glutton and a drinker.

But Jesus knew the hearts of people and He refused to let them change His mission. He refused to be boxed into one of two different schools of thought on the question of divorce. He refused to build His Kingdom according to the desires and thoughts of those following Him. So why do we?

After healing many of the sick one evening, Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law. He spent the night in prayer and when Peter found Him, he was told: *“Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”* (Mark 1:38 NIV). It is clear that Jesus didn’t come on a faith-healing mission. He healed people to show that He indeed was the promised Messiah and to fulfill prophecies by doing so. But His message never changed. He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). He sent out his followers to proclaim that the Kingdom was near. And it came crashing in on the religiously, politically correct Jews and Romans fifty-one days after He was put to death for not dancing to their music.

We decry the deaf ears of our government leaders, continuing to expect them to keep our marriages safe, our homes safe, our children educated, etc., etc., while we have abandoned the task that Jesus gave us in the first place. Our churches are emptying out and fine-tuning the worship will

not bring people back or into them. Prettier, fancier buildings haven’t worked, bus ministries didn’t save congregations that tried that, and no new scheme will pull the churches, whether they be Restoration or some other group, out of the fire!

Visit our churches, watch pastors and preachers on TV and look at the audiences. You will see a “sea of grey” because we haven’t continued to battle the world for Jesus’ sake. The Lord taught adults, played with children, attracting old and young alike. Why was his message convincing? Because it was clear and unequivocal: “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

Have we taught our families how to love one another in the home? Have we taught our children the ethics of keeping commitments and promises, including marriage vows and repayment of credit debts? Have we taught our friends and neighbours that they are lost without Jesus Christ? Have we believed that the gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation?”* (Romans 1:16) Or do we believe that “church” is a good place for people to go so that they will have a good week at work? We decry the breakup of homes, the political games about what constitutes a marriage, abortion, etc., but have we taken the full gospel to the same world that we are angry with for making all of the changes?

As Brother Abe Lincoln said in his “Book of Acts” class at Sunset, “The Great Commission is not the Great Permission. It is marching orders for the people of God, every generation, every Christian.” Minimally, Peter cautioned long before him: *“be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you.”* (I Peter 3:15)

The government will not save marriages. The government will not reverse the decision about abortion.

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The Non-Institutional Church

Wayne Turner



For most people, the word “church” brings thoughts of buildings, organizations, rituals, traditions, and clergy. For them, religion has become like the mega-corporations of big business, as churches have become highly organized, seemingly impersonal institutions. Even those of us who seek to be non-denominational may find ourselves representing ourselves in our communities in ways that appear to be as institutional as our denominational neighbours. Outsiders may find we have more emphasis on our corporate identity and name, our formal organizational structure and the preacher as our representative in the community. How would someone unfamiliar with the New Testament church be able to distinguish these from denominational names, organizations, hierarchical structures and clergy? Without compromising the Biblical concepts of the church of Christ and its distinctive character, like the leadership roles and responsibilities of elders, deacons and preachers, we also need to remember the larger picture of what the “church” is really all about.

The word “church” comes from Greek. We are not talking about the word ekklesia which is translated as church. Rather, the English word itself has its origin in Greek. It comes from the root word kuriokos, which means “belonging to the Lord” (which obviously comes from the word “Lord”). Ekklesia (literally the “called out”) refers to an assembly, as the word is used of the rioting crowd gathered in Ephesus. There appears to be nothing in either word that suggests either a building or institution.

The first use of the word “church” comes from Jesus in Matthew 16 who promised to “build my church.” The imagery is certainly one of a building, since it is to be built on a rock. However, the image is to show how His church will stand up against the gates of Hades (Matthew 16:18). In His other use of the word “church”, Jesus speaks of telling the church about the unrepentant sinner (Matthew 18:17). Obviously, neither a building nor an institution fit.

We need only look at the other images which are associated with the church to understand what Jesus really intends it to be. Words like family, flock, household, body, and kingdom are used. As we look at these images, we can quickly see that what Jesus intends is for the church, as an assembly, to be a community. This is further seen in the opening chapters of Acts. Despite the clear portrayal of a community of believers in the earlier chapters, they are not called a church until Acts 5:11. What makes this community unique is that it is created and defined by Christ and His cross.

Today many sources are telling us that people in the post-modern era do not trust institutions. George Barna notes that they are “skeptical of institutions.” (Grow Your Church from the Outside, Regal, 2002). The more institutional a religious body or group seems to be, the less likely it will be to be able to reach out and attract the unchurched people of the world

around them. If that is the case, why would those representing non-denominational Christianity want to project institutional images of the church? In our defense, we should point out that circumstances, government (i.e., the increasing necessity of incorporation), even a need to establish credibility may be more responsible for this than carelessness or a lack of understanding. However, these should not change the fundamental nature of what we are as a church – how we act and function as a community.

In their book *Lost in America* (Group, 2001), Tom Clegg and Warren Bird identify the three things they believe that people are searching for today: transcendence (a connection with the supernatural), significance (meaning and purpose in life) and community. Modifying the old aphorism, they note “It takes a village to become fully human.” People can survive without material things. But, everyone needs people. Barna writes that the unchurched “need to see a group of people who care about each other and those in need” in a way that is “convincing and consistent.”

This sense of community is interwoven in the fabric of the New Testament. As Christians, we belong to Christ, and to one another. We are members of His body, and members of one another. We have fellowship with God, and therefore have fellowship with one another. The clear picture is that we cannot be in the right relationship with Christ if we are not in the right relationship with one another, as His community. The simplicity of this interrelationship is seen when the Apostles were released after being threatened by the Sanhedrin. Luke says that they went back to their own. They were a family, a community.

When outsiders, turned off by impersonal religious institutions, begin looking for God, where will they turn? They are not looking to join another organization. They want to be part of an authentic community where they can be in relationship with others who are following Christ. We need to ensure that they see in us the living community of Christ as well as the Biblical patterns of the organization and practice of the church.

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Getting the Most Out of the Year Ahead

Since you are reading this you have made it through 2003 and are into 2004. What ups or downs are before us in this year, we do not know. However, there is one thing we can do that will help make the best of each day. We can learn that we do not live completely to ourselves. We have a responsibility to be concerned for and helpful to others.

It is easy to develop a selfish attitude and lifestyle as there are many examples and suggestions of it to be seen daily. Some of those who are looked on as "heroes" in society are people who live a very self centred life. Advertising often carries the idea that whatever the subject of the advertisement, regardless of the cost, is necessary for happiness and is deserved if desired. The idea of joy for another's success or concern for another's trials is far from the mind of many individuals.

Recently on one of the main highways through the city of Toronto, a trucker lost control of his rig and plunged off an overhead road onto the road below. The result was that the cab of the truck was on the lower road and the back of the trailer was on the road above resulting in both highways being partially closed for several hours. The next day or so there was an article in one of the Toronto newspapers in which the writer talked about the accident and lamented the fact that for many, when they heard the news about the accident, their first thought was not, "I hope the driver, or any one else, was not badly hurt" but rather, "I wonder how this is going mess up my plans today!" Regrettably, for many that would not only be their first thought, but their only

thought. It is reasonable for a person who is on his or her way to work, school, etc. to be concerned about being held up when there is a deadline to meet. However, the compassionate and Christian thing would be to give prayerful thought and concern for those who may be suffering because of that which may be ONLY an inconvenience for those not directly involved.

What is, hopefully, an extreme example of a lack of concern for others is found in the account of the first murder recorded in Genesis 4. God's being pleased with the sacrifice of Abel and not with that of Cain brought a vicious reaction from Cain. This leads

to his striking Abel down in a fit of anger. When asked about his brother he responds in verse 9, "...Am I my brother's keeper?" The implications of that question are great!

Often the easy way is to think only of what is pleasant and of benefit to oneself. Compassion is an emotion that is missing from the character of many in the world today. Even the Christian faces the danger of losing sensitivity to the needs of others. Yet, the New Testament is clear in stating the responsibilities of Christians to others. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34, 35 ESV). (Jesus repeats this command in John 15:12, 17).

Several other New Testament references could be noted that emphasize the need to love and serve others. Paul, for example, says, "*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law*" (Romans 13:8 ESV). [Note also 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5.]

Easier said than done sometimes!

Romans chapters 14 and 15 are challenging to one who truly desires to be the person Christ has called Christians to be. In these chapters there is a real emphasis on the attitude and effort needed to be this kind of person. Reminding his readers that they must each give an account of their actions to God, Paul goes on to say, "*Therefore let us not pass judgement on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother... So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding*" (14:13,19 ESV).

Using Jesus as the example, Paul speaks in chapter 15 of the Christian's obligation to "...bear with the failing of the weak..." (v. 1). This will call for determination and commitment. It is very easy
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Love the Brotherhood

Tim Johnson

John watched in amazement the vision of the holy city descending in the sky out of heaven. This was the bride of Christ, God's people after winning the victory (Rev. 21). The city looked so peaceful and beautiful to this apostle after viewing the horrors of Revelation's visions: immoral Babylon, the gaudy and drunk harlot, the blood-thirsty dragon, a grotesque sea beast and its cohort, the land beast.

God's people are a wonderful, refreshing change from the sickening horrors Satan works into the world. Peter told us bluntly, "Love the brotherhood" (1 Pet. 2:17). It's the bride of Christ, lovely and pure. God chose its members and bestowed them with royalty and holiness, which allows us to "proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9).

"But wait!" one will say. "The church has so many problems it doesn't seem much better than the rest of the world. How can we love it so easily?" Sadly, the church often seems so. We often hear of complaining and all manner of poor attitudes. It seems sometimes that God's people have no backbone and are just drifting with society's whims. We mourn over brethren who

turn their backs on one another and head different directions. How can we love a brotherhood that seems so full of troubles?

The church was full of troubles in Peter and John's day too. The brethren weren't what they should be, and some didn't even know what they could be. Many were doing a poor job of "proclaiming the excellencies of Him who has called you.."

The Corinthian church was famously riddled with worldly ways. Yet Paul never gave up on them. His two major letters to Corinth reveal his struggles to make them more mature, holier, purer, more loving, and to pay attention to God's will about attitudes, works, example, and worship. He loved this church anyway, and all the brotherhood of his day.

And so should we.

God chooses to see us as chosen, holy and royal. He didn't ignore our sins as if they didn't matter. He paid for them with a frightful price. He bought us out of the world with the precious blood of His innocent Son. The apostle John heard the new song in heaven offered in praise to that Son, the Lamb. "Worthy art Thou ... for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth" Rev 5:9-10. None of us deserves such privilege, and there are times when we don't act like we appreciate it. But we are to love Christ's people as He does.

We would do well to remember the good and honourable things among us, instead of concentrating only on our troubles. In pointing out the serious deficiencies of each of the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 2-3), Jesus included a word of commendation

for the strengths of each. There are so many among us who care for constructive things, for good works, men and women who sacrifice to help the faithful in what they are doing. We have many strong young people among us who are preparing themselves for service to the Lord, aiming to take the gospel to new areas. How many elderly Christians grace the church with their sweet attitudes, their cards and letters of encouragement, and for the way they give financially over and over again out of meagre pensions and savings? Let's appreciate the preachers and elders among us who serve tirelessly to lead God's people into greater service and numbers. Let's think of all the women in the church who take our children week after week and teach them principles from the scriptures in classrooms with makeshift equipment using their own homemade materials. They serve without complaint. We have great men among us who labour all week to support their families, and bring some of their wages to give to the Lord when their non-Christian co-workers only spend it on themselves. God sees such sacrifices and is very pleased.

Our Canadian brotherhood may seem small, scattered and isolated. Some must meet in temporary facilities owned by others, or in humble, substandard church buildings that are hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Our great cities seem to have too few congregations, sometimes tiny groups struggling along. These things are not disadvantages to God, nor should they be to us. We are Christ's church, His royal priesthood, a people he purchased with His own blood. Despite our disadvantages, discouragements and problems, He loves us.

Love the brotherhood!

Moncton, NB

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The Best Question

Roger Lansdell

If someone would come up to you today, and ask you, "What do you want to do with your life?" Would you be able to answer this question without any hesitation? Have you taken the time to plan out your future? Most people have hopes and dreams but do you have plans for your future – plans that will enable you to fulfill your hopes and dreams?

Many have plans for their future and I'm sure if we took a survey we would see that all of us have different plans for our futures. However, there are those that don't have full blown plans but they do have desires. Some people may see these desires as selfish while others may think they are okay. These desires are things that we'd like to do for no other reason than that it's a desire we have.

We could spend hours pondering these questions but there is one question that we all need to ask ourselves. A question, that is the most important question we could ask ourselves. A question that is both temporal and eternal in magnitude. That question is, "What does God want to do in your life?" What would be your answer to this question if someone asked you today? Would you be able to answer this, without any doubts and without any hesitation?

Regarding these thoughts and questions, the New Living Translation renders Ephesians 5:17, "*Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do.*"

Sadly, a lot of Christians live their lives without following this biblical advice. Why? Often, we don't want to go to the trouble of finding out what God wants us to do. Sometimes, we are obsessed with what we want or what others say they want us to do. Or, if we already know what God wants, we simply choose to ignore it because our thinking is twisted. But understanding and doing God's will is the best thing that can happen to us even though doing it creates a constant tension of choice.

Growing up, our parents told us vegetables were good for us. We didn't believe them. Leann Birch, a developmental psychologist at Penn State University, ran

an experiment in which she took a large group of kids and fed them a big lunch. Then, she turned them loose in a room with lots of junk food. She reports, "We see that some kids eat almost nothing. But other kids really chow down, and one of the things that predicts how much they eat is the extent to which parents have restricted their access to high fat, high sugar food in the past: the more kids have been restricted, the more they eat." Birch's study also discovered one reason this happened: the children on restricted diets believed the junk food tasted good primarily because they had been told that junk food was bad for them!

What does God want to do in your life?

We adults don't eat junk food anymore because we know it's bad for us. Right? Wrong. We still eat junk food, sometimes even though we know its not good for us.... its quick and easy and tastes good. However, most of us have enough sense to know that in the long run, junk food

ruins our health. We know that it is the good food that is good for us.

Discovering what God wants is like that. No, it's not always easy at first. If we have felt restricted, the tendency is to gorge ourselves on our wants and ignore what we need. Often, then, doing what God wants can actually be the most difficult. In fact, from my experience I have discovered that what God wants is usually the most difficult, the thing I least want and has the greatest amount of uncertainty about it. Like Daniel in ancient Babylon or Peter in front of the Jewish council, there will be risks doing the will of God. But, in the long run, its like eating our veggies.... it's good for us. And after a while, we realize that vegetables actually taste good!

Doing what God wants may be an "acquired taste" but it satisfies and meets our spiritual needs. Our spiritual health is strengthened by doing what God wants us to do. The Bible doesn't teach us to be people pleasers (ourselves or others). It teaches us to be God pleasers, and by so doing we become a blessing to others!

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Suicide

T. Pierce Brown

Besides what we wrote for etoughtalk.com website, we have never written anything significant about suicide. That article was primarily directed toward those who might be contemplating suicide, but I know of none that are directed toward those who are suffering because a loved one has committed suicide and they feel hopeless. One reason they may feel hopeless is that they have heard preachers or others say, "It is evident that a person who commits suicide has committed self murder, and had no time to repent, so there is no doubt that they will suffer in hell." Such a statement is wrong for at least two reasons. First, it is possible for a person to commit suicide and still have time to repent before he/she dies. We do not need to confuse ourselves and others by thinking of Judas who repented and went out and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5), for his repentance is not what is involved in salvation. It is a different word than the one used in Acts 2:38.

Second, for any person to make a statement about a specific person's final destiny is contrary to God's word. We may quote a scripture that shows that "All thieves have their part in the

lake of fire" (1 Corinthians 6:10), but whether that applies to a little hungry eight year old boy who stole a loaf of bread because he and his family were starving, you do not know. The basic reason is that God judges a person in terms of his ability, responsibility (response ability), knowledge, opportunity and various other factors. Most of us probably understand that a little child has not reached what we commonly call "the age of accountability," but you do not know when that is.

So, when we look at the case of a person who commits suicide, we do not know whether or not that person was responsible at the time of the act. That person might have a tumor of the brain that caused temporary or permanent insanity. How God will look upon it you do not know, and God did not give you the responsibility of making that decision. If the person was a Christian, you may have a right to assume that the act was not a rational act of sin, but whatever you may assume, you have no right to pass your assumptions off as God's revealed word.

So, if you are trying to comfort a person who has a loved one who committed suicide, you can at least tell

them these truths of which you can be sure. First, God loves that person more than you ever could. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9), so if there is any way that He can justly save that person He will do so. The "bottom line" is that God will always do what is right, regardless of what you may suppose. Since all our suppositions will not change anything about the final destiny of a person, we can put our hope in God who is more merciful and gracious than any of us can grasp. This does not mean we should lie and teach that God's grace is promised to those who do not obey the gospel and are impenitent. It does mean that the exact nature of any person's destiny is not in our hands, but God's.

It may also be of some value to be aware that the Bible teaches that there are degrees of reward or punishment (Luke 12:47-48). Even from what we think we know, and we can therefore have no hope that God has promised salvation to any specific person, we can know that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11) and that He will give each of us the best He can justly give.

Cookeville, TN

continued from page 5

to overlook weakness in self but not tolerate it in others. Especially, when dealing with the person who seems to be no-grow, or at the very least, slow-grow, when it comes to developing Christian characteristics. It reminds us of the words of James in 5: "Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord" (7a). *While patience is a need for all who are waiting for the return of the Lord, the real challenge of one's patience is in dealing with others. Therefore, James goes on the say, "Do not grumble against one another, brothers..."* (9a). The person who can live up to these instructions, is the person who will be a blessing to all they meet.

This active expression of love is seen in the forgiveness that is freely given, bringing one into the likeness of Christ

himself. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Christians are anxious to forgive and encourage those who have been overcome by sin. Brothers and sisters in Christ have been strengthened by experiencing the forgiveness of loving brethren. The other side of that coin is that brothers and sisters have been destroyed by the unforgiving.

Paul even carries this responsibility further by saying, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS, AND SO FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST" (Galatians 6:1, 2). It is not enough to simply forgive, but Christians must help carry each other

through the difficult places.

If you want to make the most of the year ahead, make it a personal goal to become more concerned about others and do the hard work that is sometimes required to live that lifestyle. Speaking for myself, I would like to come to December 31, 2004 and have someone write me what Paul wrote to Philemon: "I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you" (4-7). How about you?

Symbolic

All language is symbolic. In all forms of literature we find figures of speech. But in apocalyptic literature the figures are extreme and must be approached with care. In apocalyptic literature, animals, stones and numbers are given spiritual and political meaning. Many people go astray because they insist on taking these figures literally. It sounds safe to say, "I always interpret the Bible literally!" but really it is not.

We should interpret the Bible naturally. We should realise that the natural meaning is not always the literal one (Schilling 27-30). When Jesus says that he is the "door of the sheepfold" it is certainly unnatural to take this statement literally. When Revelation 7:14 says that God's people have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," we are not dealing with literal robes, literal whiteness, or a literal washing in blood. The natural sense here is the figurative. It is very unnatural to take this literally.

This concern for the natural meaning is important in all parts of the Bible, but it is especially important when reading apocalyptic literature. In other genres we meet figurative language occasionally. In apocalyptic we meet figures constantly and some of the figures are extreme. If we try to force these figures into an unnatural literalism we will constantly go wrong.

A Different Ethical Concern

Some writers have suggested that apocalyptic literature has no ethical concern. These writers make a sharp contrast between prophetic writing and apocalyptic. They say that the prophets were calling on people to repent, and that the apocalyptic writers promised a bright future without rebuking people for their sins. There is an element of truth in this observation, but it overlooks important facts.

Apocalyptic books were written for the faithful few in a time of persecution. They are not addressed to people in great need of repentance. There is an ethical concern in the canonical apocalyptic books, but it is expressed in a very different way. When the righteous are being mistreated and the unrighteous are in power, there is a danger that people will conclude that God does not really care about justice. They might even join in doing wrong. The righteous, in this situation, do not need a call to repentance. They need reassurance that God will seek justice. The wrath of God is a theme too often neglected in modern times. The apocalyptic writers answer the question of the saints in Revelation 6:10, "How long before you avenge our blood?" This question may offend some modern Christians, but it is a question which must be addressed.

Predictive

Many people think of prophecy as the predicting of the future. This is an inaccurate idea. Most of the prophetic books are more concerned with pres-

ent behaviour than with the distant future. Prophecy is more often 'forth telling' the message of God than it is 'foretelling' the future. It is really only in apocalyptic that the predictive element becomes the main emphasis. Because of the special ethical concern of apocalyptic it must have this strong future emphasis. Apocalyptic predicts punishment for the unjust and blessings for God's faithful people.

This does not mean that we should expect apocalyptic literature to be predicting the future from our point of view. Some of the things predicted were future from the writer's perspective but are now past from our perspective. Some would even claim that most of the predictions of the apocalyptic writers have already been fulfilled.

A New Age

Apocalyptic is not predicting a future slightly different from the present. Apocalyptic literature looks forward to a "New Age." It looks forward to a time when things will be radically different. Daniel does not envision a revising of the Mosaic covenant. He does not expect yet another kingdom like the kingdoms of the past. The vision of apocalyptic is of a whole new order.

An Important Consideration

Discussion of hermeneutics in churches of Christ has normally centred around the role of example. As mentioned in the first in this series, that is an important consideration. But we must give greater attention to the matter of genre. The question of example cannot be properly addressed without considering the genre, and there are many other hermeneutic difficulties that are related to the genre. Consideration of the genre will not solve all of our interpretative problems, but it will lead us to a deeper understanding of the text, and from there to a clearer understanding of our God.

Regina, SK

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by Walter R. Straker
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E-mail: bramaleacofc@bellnet.ca

NEW BRUNSWICK

Moncton: The brethren have completed their church building construction and have 23 parking spots with lighting. Several new children are attending, enabling them to create 2 new Sunday school classes. Two very interesting Bible studies are ongoing. On October 13 the congregation traveled to Mill Village to spend the day with David Hallett. On October 17-18, four of the men went to the men's retreat in Kentville, Nova Scotia. On November 9, 24 brethren joined the brethren at Saint John for a service with the small congregation there.

ONTARIO

Beamsville: David Shuttleworth, a producer who participates in a morning talk show on CKTB 610, St. Catharines, was baptized November 9. On December 9, Ronald Morrish, teacher, author, behaviour specialist and consultant, gave a special talk at GLCC on "The Secrets of Discipline" for parents, educators, youth leaders, coaches, and other interested individuals. The congregation planned a meeting on December 14 to plan activities, and the budget, for 2004. Community care baskets were to be delivered December 14.

Bramalea: Dominic Dos Santos visited for two weeks in November and presented three sermons and four classes. His visa to come to Canada, as Bramalea's pulpit minister, is still just "in process." May Romphf prepared a delicious vegetarian buffet on November 17 for Ladies' Night Out. A potluck lunch and birthday party was held December 7 for Walter Straker, who turned 70 years old on December 6. Mark Knutson and Audra Kent are making plans for 2004 young people's activities.

Brantford: November 8 Martha Wells invited the ladies to her home for a brunch. The Youth Night continues each Friday p.m. at the building for an evening of fellowship and fun. Every fifth Sunday of the month an extra offering is taken up for mission work. A congregational meeting and potluck was to be held November 23.

Fenwick: Sandra Sweitzer, who was baptized three months ago was in a serious car accident and needs our prayers.

Grimby: The brethren sang at the Bethesda Home on November 30. A ladies' Christmas get-together took place on December 4. The 2nd annual community

Christmas dinner was planned for December 13 at the church building. The young people planned a "bowling in the dark" night in December.

Hamilton (West Hamilton): Brittany Henley, Christine Page, Stella Akimo and Sylvie Boyer were recently baptized.

Kingston: Gord Gibson reports the baptism of Christine Malachowski on November 14. Several studies with non-members are continuing.

Meaford: Grace Jackson was baptized into Christ on Wednesday, September 10. The ladies raised \$335 for Brian and Bonnie Cox's work in Wunnumin Lake, and \$100 at an Alzheimer Community Coffee Break. Merv and Grace Risk were married on October 11 and hosted a congregational open house on November 30. The ladies are studying the book, "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World". Ken Gilmore passed away October 22. His funeral was held October 25. A Junior Young People's Fall Fest was held October 24. Brian Thompson and family traveled to Meaford, and Randy and Lois Morritt were in Owen Sound, in the last scheduled Georgia Bay preacher exchange. Meaford hosted the Georgian Bay area singing on November 9. GLCC's chorus made a presentation on November 16.

Owen Sound: On October 19, 100 people attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the congregation, with 8 congregations represented along with a number of visitors from the community. Norm and Rose Coach celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on November 26. Recently the church conducted services at the Lee Manor Nursing Home. On November 30, ten friends came to the congregation's "Bring a Friend" church service. Scott Kennedy leads the young people in bi-weekly activities. The GLCC chorus presented its program there on November 16.

Selkirk: A group knocked doors for their gospel meeting in November. Forty-five individuals took a Bible correspondence course. Seven Bible studies were set up and one person was baptized.

Stratford: The ladies had a special breakfast at the Stone Crock in Elmira on November 22 before their monthly ladies' class.

St. Catharines: The congregation sponsored a family for Christmas this year and provided them with dinner as well as gifts for the whole family. A New Year's Eve party was planned at the church after a song service on December 31. Some of the families that came to the congregation's coat drive will be enrolled in the congregation's "FriendSpeak Conversational English Program" in the New Year. Shirley Straker will conduct a FriendSpeak training seminar on Saturday, January 17. In November Roy Merritt was sideswiped by a van and knocked out of one shoe! He is doing well, although he suffered bruises to his shoulder and side.

St. Thomas: In June, the congregation had a worship and potluck dinner to which they invited family and friends. Seven adult

visitors came. In September-October, Will Maddeux presented four seminars on relationship skills. Six visitors from the community attended.

Sudbury: Roy Chapados, Don Stringer, and Wes Bailey were appointed elders here in June. This is a giant step forward for the congregation. Plans are now underway to appoint deacons as well. Since our last report Brain Landry, Kyleen Robertson, Ryan Seguin, Tanis Wright, and Melissa Spielmann have been baptized. Kelly Jackson placed membership here as well. - Bethel W. Bailey

Tintern: The congregation recently completed the elders' selection process and its new set of elders includes Jim Book, Rick McBay, Wayford Smith, Doug Tallman, and Lawrence Whitfield. In November a fantastic "Fun Friday" with a western theme was held for grades 1-8. Greg Whitfield received a scholarship from the congregation to attend Great Lakes Bible College. Dr. Philip Slate preached for the congregation on Sunday morning, November 2, after teaching a short course at Great Lakes Bible College.

Toronto (Harding Ave): On Monday evenings, Santiago Molina is conducting meetings in the Harding building with west Toronto Spanish people.

Toronto (Scarborough): Carlos and Cassandra Campbell and Caroline Smith have placed membership with Scarborough. On Friday, December 6, the Ladies Class of the Church visited the Anduhyaum Shelter at 106 Spadina Road, bringing personal items for the young ladies at the shelter. The first annual "Ladies Christmas Fellowship" was scheduled for December 19 at the home of Jo-Ann Ebanks. The children's year end party was planned for December 27 at the YMCA.

Toronto (Strathmore Blvd.): Jean Volcy and his family are in Haiti until January 7 to work with the congregation that was established there in December 2002, in Jean's home town. Jean led the campaign to begin this work and it has continued to grow in the last 12 months. The congregation has been blessed to help with the support of this effort and appreciate other congregations and individuals who have supported this outreach.

Waterloo: The Keenagers had a devotional potluck fellowship on November 21. On November 29, the brethren held their annual skating party followed by a potluck and devotional. Eighteen teenagers attended the GLBC College Day November 22. Geoff Ellis spoke November 30 on "The Holy Spirit."

Windsor (West Side): The congregation conducted a clothing giveaway at the end of November and worked through five different schools this year. Plymouth church of Christ donated many carloads of clothing as well. On December 21, the fellowship groups planned to meet for a holiday dinner and get-together. The men planned to see the movie "The Gospel of John" on December 19. The benevolence committee collected money to help needy families during the holiday season.



by Marion Waugh
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(The help of Barbara Lewis in gathering news is appreciated.)

ALBERTA

Calgary: Billy and Deista McMillan have moved back to Calgary. Andrew Medvedev, Jonathan Burkinshaw and Kevin Bonde were recently baptized. November 23, the elders gave a church planting update. "How to connect your kids to God" is a workshop being held on Dec 3. We will be learning about family-based youth ministry and specifically how parents can connect their children to God from Mark Devries. Jay Don and Mary Lee Rogers (missionaries from the Ukraine) will be visiting December 14.

Edmonton: Personal Evangelism I was taught Sunday mornings as an alternative class to the main auditorium adult Bible class. Thirty-three faithful attendees committed themselves to learning how to teach 9 basic evangelistic lessons designed to lead a non-Christian to the decision to be baptized into Christ. The class time also involved some role-playing of one-on-one study situations and also role-playing how to invite your waiter, or a cashier to visit worship or attend a Bible Talk with you. September 19-21 the annual congregational camp and Picnic was held. It was a very enjoyable weekend of devotionals, singing, campfires and fellowship. Debbie Cook, Mindy Wilkinson, and Trish Logan all returned to Edmonton this autumn and placed their membership here. Norman Noble and his son Darryle have moved to Edmonton from Prince Rupert, B.C. Two ladies' Bible studies have begun, one meeting at the church building Thursday mornings and one meeting at Sandy Jones' home on Tuesdays. Joung Sook was baptized into Christ Monday, Sept. 29. She was walking by the church building one day last July and Catharine Carson invited her to come and join us for worship. Since then, she has studied the Bible for over a year with various ladies in the congregation. On October 19 Kyle and Kayla Walker, the 2 eldest children of Ryan and Kimberly, were baptized.. On November 12 Matthew Struth, son of Darrell and Ellie, was baptized. It is encouraging to see the teenage children of first-generation Christians now growing up in faithful Christian homes, developing their own faith, and accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord. Our congregation set a

goal of at least 18 baptisms for the year, and thus far the Lord has blessed us with the addition of 20 souls to the kingdom. In October our elders began meeting before Sunday worship to pray as a group for the congregation's prayer requests. At the same time the elders' wives meet together and pray. This has been a source of encouragement and comfort for many in the congregation. The congregation was saddened at the sudden passing of Ron Moes on Friday October 24. A memorial service was held on Monday, November 10 at the church building. Bob Norris, a graduate of Edmonton's preaching school, is currently preaching for the church in Carmen. Paul Hillier, a preaching intern in the Edmonton School of Evangelism, delivered his first sermon for the congregation on Sunday November 30.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Abbotsford (Central Valley): In spite of inclement weather on the opening night, the "Sharpening Your People Skills...God's Way" seminar from Nov. 28-30 was well attended. Danny Holmes, the Involvement Minister for the Monrovia church of Christ in Madison, Alabama, brought along his wife, Amy, and their two teen-agers, using his family frequently to illustrate the difference in characteristics that all of us possess, yet how we can compliment each other. In December, our Sunday School children completed their project of filling shoe boxes with small toys, socks, hair ribbons, toothbrushes, Bible story books, and other items to send to Fort Ware, B.C. Fourteen attend a Bible class conducted by two teachers who planned to be baptized while in Prince George before Christmas.

Burnaby: We continue to have former members of the ICOC place membership with us. A Ladies' Tea was planned and directed by Debrah Eddie the last Saturday in November to get acquainted with these newcomers and others. Rumiko Suzuki returned to her native Japan in early Dec. She came to Vancouver six months ago to study English, which she

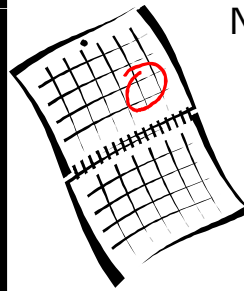
hoped to use to teach English Composition in a private school in Sendai. Rumiko was already acquainted with the two young men from Ontario who are working there as missionaries.

Delta: Jay Don and Mary Lee Rogers were in this area over the Christmas holidays. Jay Don spoke at both the Bible class and morning service on Dec. 21 about their second year of work in Donetsk, Ukraine. As the children's classes are growing, a new one was added this month. We continue to have two Chinese classes on Sundays.

Maple Ridge: We hosted a College Student Send-off on December 14, which was followed by a fellowship luncheon at the Brunner's.

Oakridge: Joyce Hooper's birthday was celebrated and a farewell to Ray and Elizabeth Sawyer given at our potluck dinner on Nov. 16. After being one of the original carpenters on the building when it was built some 40 years ago, Ray and Elizabeth have been members here ever since. So it is with sorrow that they were bid farewell as they moved to Nanaimo on Dec. 1 to spend their remaining years near their son and his family. Ray was an elder for many

continued on page 15



Mark your calendars!

Upcoming Great Lakes Events

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>January 13</i> | Open House |
| <i>March 5, 6</i> | Drama Production |
| <i>March 22</i> | Bible College Preachers' Day |
| <i>Mar. 29 - Apr. 2</i> | Bible College short course:
The Psalms in Personal and
Congregational Life |
| <i>April 23 - 25</i> | Youth Rally |
| <i>April 30</i> | Bible College Graduation and
Promotional Dinner |
| <i>May 4</i> | Community Service Day
(Work-a-thon) |

MISSION NEWS

Barbara Lewis
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China: Vast numbers of rural migrant workers are doing any kind of temporary work they can find in the cities. Sleeping on the street and often not having enough to eat, they are estimated to be in the 100 millions of the poorest in their villages. No one is taking the Gospel to them. Ming Paul Lee writes that he spent days reading and studying the Bible with a third year University student at Xian. Hope had never seen a Bible nor heard of Jesus. She now believes Jesus is the Son of God and wants to obey him in baptism. A small group of sisters in Christ, who meet regularly in a small apartment occupied by Nancy Buswell, are looking for a place to baptize her. (A new convert herself, Nancy, an American teaching English at the University, has ovarian cancer, and needs financial help to continue her treatments in the hospital.) The Wuhan Asia Heart Hospital is privately owned and operated with very high standards. The Agape Foundation from Nashville, TN., has signed an agreement to bring a Medical team from the USA each year to do free open heart surgeries for poor families. While at Wuhan Asia Heart Hospital, Ming Paul met the families and children that came each day, took them to see the doctors, to their rooms, and visited with them. He bought fresh fruit and gave each child a new toy – gifts made possible by Canadians. Of the 43 children who had open heart surgery, only two failed to survive. “There is a possibility that I may have an opportunity to fly to Xian. My Japanese friend, John Luch, who lives in Calgary, works for an airline that gives him low airfares. All I have to do is be his traveling companion when he is free to go.” – Ming Paul Lee

Papua New Guinea: “We had our year-end clinic party Nov. 29. There were about sixty people sitting on the floor eating supper in our ‘lounge’. It was literally wall to wall people. If I hadn’t been so busy it would have made a great picture (although I would have needed a very wide angle lens on my camera)! It’s very hot and humid here these days. The clinic will be closed at the end of next week for three weeks. Two of those weeks I will be attending two Bible camps (one for the youth and one for the local people in the Waria Valley). I’ll be flying in as I don’t think I’m in good enough shape any more for the four day walk in! But a group of about 40 youth, who are taking a ship from here to the province just south of us, will walk in, following the Waria River from the coast to Orouba where the two camps are being held. I’m sure looking forward to going.”

– Letter from Velma Forman

Donetsk, Ukraine: Jay Don and Mary Lee Rogers arrived in the States on Nov. 25 while the school is closed for several weeks. After visiting with her sister in Dallas, the Rogers spent most of December in Western Canada. They met with the Calgary church on Dec. 14, and were in Delta, BC the following Sunday. They will be returning to Ukraine sometime this month.

Haiti: With a \$1,000 donation from an American Christian, Raymond Fillion made an offer of \$1500 to a Pentecostal group to drill a well for the school compound he and Merle have established in the interior of this island. They accepted, in spite of the fact that they normally get \$2500 for a well. It will provide clean drinking water, not only for the nearly 500 children and staff who work in the compound, but also for all of the nearby villages. Since March, four new classrooms have been built for the kindergarten classes, an animal shelter was converted into a workshop for sewing, woodworking, etc., and several small houses were built for poor families. A fish pond was constructed and seeded with 25 fish, with the hope that it will eventually provide fresh fish. The bread dough project to feed the hungry children has been guaranteed for another year by a donor in the U. S. Forty-two young people graduated in June, and three more people were baptized, making a total of 15 by mid-summer.

Mactan Mission (Philippine Report) November 2003: Salvador Cariaga and his family, along with Dr. John and Rosalyn Bailey, arrived in Mactan, Cebu, the Philippines, on November 12. While Salvador and his family were re-settling, the Baileys were busy covering for them: meeting with co-workers, counselling, consulting, conducting seminars, visiting, etc. The Baileys returned by way of Manila the last week of November. John hopes to be back in May to conduct a DENTAL MISSION. If you wish to join him as a medical worker, evangelism volunteer, or helper in any capacity, please contact him at jcb2of3@aol.com.

Sendai: Open Doors: – God continues to open many doors through the team’s music ministry, which has included gospel concerts, performing for the “Culture Day” holiday at the Art Festival, and at a recent Gospel Singing Festival, singing to at least 80-90 people. Although not originally planned, this ministry is active and effective in making contacts and bringing an awareness of the Sendai church. – About 25 individuals from the LST summer program continue to study with Pam Keesee and the other team members. Celebrations: - The Sendai team and guests were treated to Canadian Thanksgiving dinner in October (prepared by Canadians Jon Straker and Joel Osborne), and to American Thanksgiving dinner in November (prepared by Americans Ben Berry, Crimsen Ruhnke, and Pam Keesee). – Also in November, Jon Straker and Michiko Umehara were honoured at an engagement

ceremony. On this occasion, they shared how they met, why they chose to marry, and asked friends and family for their blessing and prayers. The ceremony was followed by a tea and cake reception. The wedding is currently planned for April 10 in Sapporo, Michiko’s home on the island of Hokkaido. Language study: According to Sendai church members, the team’s Japanese is improving. Jon Straker reported that he recently “winged” his first all-Japanese Sunday evening lesson without having to write it out or use a translator. Other news items: Ben Berry’s father planned to spend Christmas with Ben and the team in Sendai. Other visitors included Andrea Muirhead from Western Christian College, who visited in November, and Moses Velasco, from the Strathmore congregation, who planned to visit the team at Christmas time. The team expressed fervent appreciation for the support – prayers, letters of encouragement, financial, and other – given them in their first year and a half of work. .

Mission Focus Japan: Japan will be the mission field highlighted during the first-ever Mission Focus – a one-day workshop Wednesday, January 28, 2004, held in conjunction with Oklahoma Christian University’s annual lectureship. Featured speakers and panellists include: **Dwight Albright**, former Japanese missionary; **Akira Hirose**, elder at Mito, Japan, church of Christ; **Yuki Obata**, pulpit minister at Mito; **Naoyoshi Fukushima**, pulpit minister at Tachikawa, Japan, church of Christ; **Bob Waldron**, Executive Director, Missions Resource Network; **Mark Woodward**, Executive Director, Let’s Start Talking Ministry; **Joe McCormack**, former exchange professor from Oklahoma Christian to Ibaraki Christian; **Matt Huddleston**, Japanese missionary. For workshop or registration information, contact: John Osborne, Mission Focus Coordinator, john.osborne@oc.edu, or phone Oklahoma Christian University at 1-800-877-5010.

Holland: On Saturday, November 22nd, I taught the first in a series of lessons on preaching at the invitation of the church in Eindhoven, Holland. Seven men participated from Holland and Belgium. The study ran from 11 a.m. to 12:30. The first period dealt with Biblical principles (How shall they hear without a preacher; Preach the Word) and the second period dealt with practical matters (How to prepare a sermon; various types of sermons). From four to six subsequent sessions in the series are planned, Lord willing. The same morning, from 9 a.m. to 10:30, an introductory class in Koine Greek was begun. Eight men are taking part in this program of guided self-study. I will present material to the group about once each month, and give assignments that will require from two to four hours per week in study at home. The purpose of both studies is that we might grow in our understanding of the Word of God and in our ability to faithfully and forcefully communicate the Gospel to others.

Roy Davison

The key

Claude Cox

The other morning the kids and I went to the Rec Centre for the free swim. Since I had no lock for a locker, I took the extra car key and left all my other keys in the car. Put that extra key in a little pocket in my bathing suit. I've had one or two of those hotel door "cards" fall out of my bathing suit pocket, so I was somewhat concerned about losing the key.

That one key would unlock the car door. My other keys were in the car: front and back door housekeys, church entrance key; office door; door to Grove Park Home. In the house there are other keys: to the van and so on and so on. The thought that came to me was that this one key was the key to a lot of other keys. If a key represents the possibility of entry, opportunity, then that one key was the way into many other things.

Peter was told, at a crucial moment, that Jesus was going to give him the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," which would mean powers over aspects of both earth and heaven. "The kingdom of God" is at the heart of Jesus' teaching, so that was an awesome set of keys that Peter was given.

Jesus told his followers that, in the midst of many worries, they should seek first God's kingdom, that is, God's rule or, perhaps, as one recent German translation of the Bible puts it, "God's glorious future." To unlock the door of God's rule is to have opened up many opportunities and possibilities.

Let's see: there's forgiveness, purpose, direction, moral guidance, the community of believers; wisdom; a hope; lives of faith as examples; worship with a focus; rootedness in divine history; new eyes to see with; belonging to God now and forever.

And this is true to our experience. Our coming to faith, our baptism, our taking the key and opening that first door proved to be the un-locking of many other doors, some of them yet to come.

To complete the story, no, I didn't lose the key. I used it and it opened up other doors.

Barrie, ON

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Please help the Sendai team in God's work to make

THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN

A LAND OF THE RISEN SON

Joel Osborne and Jonathan Straker are still in need of support for the mission work in Sendai, Japan. If you would like to find out more about this work and how you can help, you can check out their website at www.sendaimissions.com, or contact the

Bramalea church of Christ:

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Christian, All Day, Every Day – A Study (2 Cor. 8:5)

Bill Craddock

INTRODUCTION

A. Being a child of God is a matter of all or nothing.

1. We can not be part time children of God.

B. Both the Old and New Testaments have statements about man's heart in relation to God (Prov. 23:26; 2 Cor. 8:5).

C. Too often we think of our relationship with God in view of the church building.

1. Someone said, "Too many Christians leave their Christianity in the foyer of the church building as they leave following worship on Sunday morning, never to bother with it again until they return for worship the next Sunday."

2. This certainly is not New Testament Christianity.

D. Proverbs and 2 Corinthians speak of how we conduct ourselves when God is truly first in our lives.

1. Effective discipleship is giving God our hearts and committing ourselves to Him and being willing to be guided by his will.

2. Unless this is true, heaven can never be our home.

E. God loves us and he expects us to love him in return, he is faithful in all things and he expects us to be faithful in all things.

F. An anxious mother decided to give some help to her son's romance with a young lady she especially liked. Knowing her son as she did, she assumed he would forget to buy a Valentine card for the girl, so she bought a card for him. It was gaudy, with lace trim and dripping with sentimental and romantic expressions – very much overstated. To appease his mother, the son took the card and agreed to give it to the young lady, but in signing it, he could not resist a P.S. which read, "I really don't care this much about you."

1. Is ours a discipleship of show with declarations of love in song, prayers and other forms of expression, both in and out of worship?

2. Is it genuine or a form of godliness which is empty of real meaning? (1 Timothy 3:5).

3. If we really care that much about God, then we must give him all our heart.

G. Our entire life must be governed by the will of God.

1. It is no longer my will, how I want to live my life, where I want to go, what I want to do, it is "Lord, how do you want me to live my life, where do you want me to go, what do you want me to do?"

WHAT WE CAN GIVE GOD AND WHAT HE WANTS FROM WHAT WE GIVE!

A. Too often we want to give God parts of ourselves without giving him all of ourselves – God is displeased with this.

B. We must give God all the members of our bodies as we strive to serve him with our talents.

1. We give God our tongues, used to spread the gospel of Christ, defend the truth from error, speak kind words of

encouragement to those who need them, etc.

a. This must be done from the heart, for lip service is displeasing to God.

b. God wants our tongues, but as a part of our total commitment. We can teach the truth, but not live the truth, and the Lord really wishes we would just be quite (Matt. 23:3).

2. We give God our ears with which we hear his truths that we might make them a part of our lives.

a. Ears which only hear but never translate into action are not acceptable (Acts 17:21).

b. Too many people hear the word of God, but fail to put what they have learned into action – this is true of both saint and sinner.

3. We can give God our hands and be busy in many good works.

a. Hands may help to comfort, reassure, support, etc.

b. God accepts our hands in his total scheme of things, the giving of the total person.

C. Discipleship involves the members of our body, but mostly it involves the heart. If we give our heart to God, all the other members will come along with it.

WHAT GOD EXPECTS AND REQUIRES!

A. The giving of our hearts to God must be in complete sincerity.

1. Hypocrisy is totally unacceptable to God.

2. God was upset with Israel in that their worship was often ritual, totally void of sincerity (Malachi 1:14).

3. We are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1).

B. We are to give God our undivided hearts.

1. God must be first in our lives (Matt. 6:33; 22:37-39).

2. Divided loyalties complicate our lives and make it impossible to be faithful to anyone.

C. God demands that our loyalties and service be voluntary and cheerful.

1. No matter what we do, if it is not cheerfully done, it is unacceptable (2 Cor. 9:7).

2. What we give and do must be with a willing mind (2 Cor. 8:12).

3. God never forces himself on anyone (Rev. 3:20).

D. Our hearts must be given to God for LIFE, not one day less.

1. We do not lend God our heart, we GIVE him our heart.

2. People can not be frightened into commitment to God, because fear will wear off.

3. Our commitment to God must be based on an educated decision.

4. Commitment is not an emotional, knee-jerk decision, but a well thought out, what is important, decision.

CONCLUSION

1. What is in it for me if I truly give God my heart?

a. God will bless me in this world.

b. Most of all, he will bless me in the world to come, heaven.

2. This can not be true unless I truly give God my heart, my all.

Plantation, Florida

NOTICE REGARDING 2003 INDEX: In the back of this issue is the index for the Volume 68 (2003) of the Gospel Herald. Usually this would have appeared in the December, 2003 issue, however, the editor who was supposed to see this was done (MEC) forgot. Sorry for the inconvenience of having the index in a month late. Will try to do better with Volume 69.

BOOK REVIEWS

Books to be reviewed in this column should be sent to
Keith Thompson, Editor, 348 Dixon Blvd., Newmarket, ON L3Y 5C4
(Books may be ordered from the Gospel Herald)
email:bookreviews@gospelherald.org



***My Brother, My Lord* by Michael Tackett Publishing Designs, Inc. Huntsville, Alabama, 112 pages, \$10.95 Canadian**

Since he was 16 years of age, Mike Tackett has spent almost every Sunday in a pulpit. His love of preaching prompted his desire to use television to reach the masses. It was logical for him to complete National Broadcasting School, as well as Columbia Christian College and David Lipscomb University.

Mike has been the host and executive director of Key to the Kingdom television program since 1992. *My Brother, My Lord* results from listeners' requests to share in his research. Mike says, "The events of the Bible took place in a real-life practical setting. My goal was to convey a unique glimpse into the life of Jesus."

Mike reveals a new look at New Testament times in this close-up view of James, the brother of Jesus. Before the bright lights of Jewish leadership shined upon Jesus, James knew Him as the common man from Galilee, "the carpenter's son." This playmate and brother of the Lord grew into an unbeliever, but later became a church leader and New Testament contributor.

Regarding this work, Jimmy Jividen writes: "I recommend *My Brother, My Lord* as a fresh, practical, and easy-to-understand approach in discerning how 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Mike Tackett illustrates the nature of Jesus by

showing how it might have been to grow up in Nazareth with the divine—yet human—Son of God. Mike uses the accuracy of Scripture and the feasibility of human responses to enhance our understanding of the humanity of Jesus."

J.J. Turner says, "From the book of James, often referred to as the 'Gospel of Common Sense,' Mike Tackett has created interesting insights—insights that send you to your Bible to enjoy new thoughts and studies about our Master, the brother of James. As an author of a commentary on the book of James, I have enjoyed Mike's 'story behind the story' approach. *My Brother, My Lord* is well written; it will enrich your life and encourage your spiritual growth."

If you have a special love for the book of James—and many Christians do—you will thoroughly enjoy *My Brother, My Lord*, and you will applaud Mike's work. His insight brings to the fore many implied events in the life of Christ, not readily available to the student, but readily understandable.

Mike invites you to join him in his work and expand your knowledge of God's Word. Submitted by James B. Andrews

Jesus M.D. by David Stevens, M. D. A Doctor examines the Great Physician, Zondervan, 255 pages, \$ 16.99 (Cdn.)

This book is recommended by many evangelical doctors. For example, Richard A.

Swenson, M.D., the author of five books says, "Jesus, M. D. is irresistible. Drawing upon a collection of fascinating medical stories, Dr. Stevens weaves the lessons that both challenge and inspire. This book contains something for everyone --just don't read it while eating a tuna sandwich." Dr. Paul Meier, M.D. writes that this book gives countless lessons of life that we all benefit from learning and applying them to our lives – no matter what career we find ourselves in."

Here are some of the chapter headings: "The Great Physician Understood the Power of Touch", (All the following begin with the words "The Great Physician") "Volunteered to be on call", "Didn't Require An Appointment, "Was a Superb Diagnostician" "Practiced Compassion", "Specialized in Impossible Cases.

The Conclusion asserts "The Great Physician Specializes in Impossible Cases." This book will be very beneficial to all readers.

Seven Snares of the Enemy, Breaking Free From the Devil's Grip by Erwin W. Lutzer, 213 pages, \$9.75 (Cdn).

The author is "Senior Pastor" at the Moody Church in Chicago" as well as a sought-after speaker at leadership and church conferences. We do not read in the Scriptures about such positions or churches named after men. In fact the Scriptures condemn such. However this is a powerful book dealing with other erroneous matters.

This book deals with the following "Seven Snares of the Devil: Greed, Gambling, Alcoholism, Pornography, The Sexual Affair, The Search for Pleasure, and Occultism. Lutzer forcefully applies the teachings of God's Word to these blatant errors.

OBITUARIES

Howard Waite

Howard Waite suffered a severe stroke the afternoon of November 30 after attending the morning service and potluck dinner at the Central Valley church. He was taken to the Chilliwack Hospital, but did not regain consciousness before his death the evening of December 5. Two of his four children were with him at the time. Funeral services were held on December 11 at the Valley View Memorial Gardens in Surrey, with Jim Hawkins officiating.

Originally from the Unity, SK. area, Howard and his first wife, Mary (Sinclair) moved to the Kerrisdale area of Vancouver in 1944. The following year he and Mary, along with Bob and Lillian Beamer, were baptized

by Claude Guild at the 12th Ave. church building. In 1947, they moved to Cyacuse on Cowichan Lake, Vancouver Island, where Howard served as electrician for the lumber mill in operation there. Over the years they sometimes attended church in Ladysmith, Nanaimo, and Victoria but frequently had their own service at home. In the early 80's, the family moved back to Vancouver, where they became active members of the Delta congregation.

Howard would have turned 97 this month. He leaves his wife of four years, Gladys (Courage); four children: Marilyn, Arden, Janine, and Chris; several grandchildren, and many friends.

Submitted by Barbara Lewis

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years, and Elizabeth was active in organizing and decorating for many of the social activities of the church.

Victoria: The Victoria church has now gone to two Sunday morning worship times with a traditional worship assembly at 9:00 a.m., and a contemporary service at 10:30. This seems to be satisfactory to both groups. A new preacher and his wife arrived in December to begin work with the church. They are Martin and Denise Moore, and expected to be in full-time ministry here after Jim Hawkins, who has served as interim minister for the past several months, spent his last Sunday with us on Dec. 14.

SASKATCHEWAN

Regina: Mayor Pat Fiocco was the guest speaker at a banquet on Western Christian's new campus. His topic: "I Love Regina"! The college's three choral groups also participated in the program.

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The government will not fill our churches. God will fill our churches when we take the Great Commission seriously, when every single Christian begins to understand that becoming a Christian means to be willing to die for the Savior. Read Luke 14:26-27. We must stop putting our lifestyles and our goods before our Savior and His demands on our lives. Until that happens, tweaking the worship system will not cause our churches to grow.

We have let the Great Commission be decommissioned. We sing "Who is

on the Lord's side? Master, here am I." Warning: don't sing this song unless you really mean it, and are willing to sacrifice your personal time, energy, and possessions to prove it.

God bless you as you work to reach the lost where you are. The gospel is powerful and it is sheer joy to teach a lost person about their peril and the good news that Jesus Christ wants to come to the rescue. Our God, He is alive. And He means business.

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Since Key is no longer on the Vision Network, and since there is no doubt that Key To The Kingdom has been a useful outreach in Canada, we have committed to a trial period of three months on the Miracle Channel. This will give sufficient time to evaluate the response and then decide to either continue the program or give a four week notice to terminate.

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