

February 2009 Issue No. 2

# Good News Unlimited

## CHURCH

'... they may be one  
even as we are one' -John 17:22

Is the Church a Hole  
in the Head?

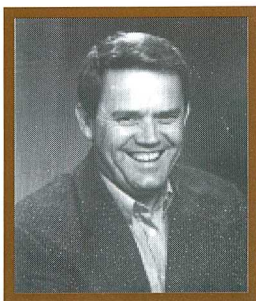
So You Don't  
Go To Church?

Tonsils and Temples

A City Without Walls

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

*'Not with silver or gold were you redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers; but with the precious blood of Christ; a lamb without blemish or defect'*

(1 Peter 1:18-19).

'Baby-boomers' know who the Beatles were. Their story began in Hamburg, Germany. There, as budding rock musicians, they gave themselves up to unrestrained hedonism. Later, they returned to their native Liverpool where they attracted the attention of the world with their music about love and desire.

When success came, their music changed in a way that showed hedonism had not satisfied. Now they looked for what was missing by taking drugs.

But the quest never ended there. They turned eastward and

soon their music was laced with the mantras of India's Gurus. While George Harrison was becoming the Maharishi's disciple, John Lennon was having dreams of ultimacy through eroticism. He had celebrated his 'love-in' with Yoko Ono; staying in bed with her for weeks on end. During that period he wrote *Imagine*, a song about an idealized world with no heaven, no hell, no wars and no religion.

The Beatles were looking for something to live by; something greater than themselves that they could belong to and serve. Everyone needs a world-view; a place to stand, from whence to face meaningfully all that life can throw at them.

During last century's Cultural Revolution in China, the whole population was organized according to the 'thoughts of Chairman Mao.' Everywhere in China, his thoughts were seen in print, in workshops and in classrooms. Everyone was obliged to meet routinely for public readings of the Chairman's books. Honesty sessions were instituted, where individuals were encouraged to express regret for not more fully embracing Maoist philosophy. In the event of not being able to remem-

ber any one particular in which they had fallen short, persons were admonished to display penitence for this fault as well.

The Chinese Cultural Revolution was billed by the Communist Party as 'The Great Leap Forward'. In truth it was a great leap backward. It nearly destroyed the Chinese economy. It produced untold hardship and widespread starvation for vast numbers of the populace. Chairman Mao's thoughts did not give life or hope.

For Christians, according to Peter the apostle, Jesus is all that the Passover was to Israel—and more. He even describes his life in Judaism before he met Christ, as empty. For him, Christ has become the all-sufficient foundation and centre for existence, filling his life with purpose, joy and hope.

What is your life? Centre it upon Jesus Christ and discover meaning, freedom, joy and hope such as you have never before known. You will belong to that which will last forever. You will never perish.

—R J Allen

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### Mission Statement

Christians united in offering to all, meaning and direction in their lives by a knowledge of God's reconciliation with humanity through his Son, Jesus Christ.

### Email





# IS THE CHURCH A HOLE IN THE HEAD?

Smuts van Rooyen

**A** while back I had a friend call me on the telephone in order to use me for a scratching post. You've seen such posts I'm sure at your local pet shop. They're upright structures beautifully covered with carpeting so that cats can safely drag their claws across them and thus work off their frustrations.

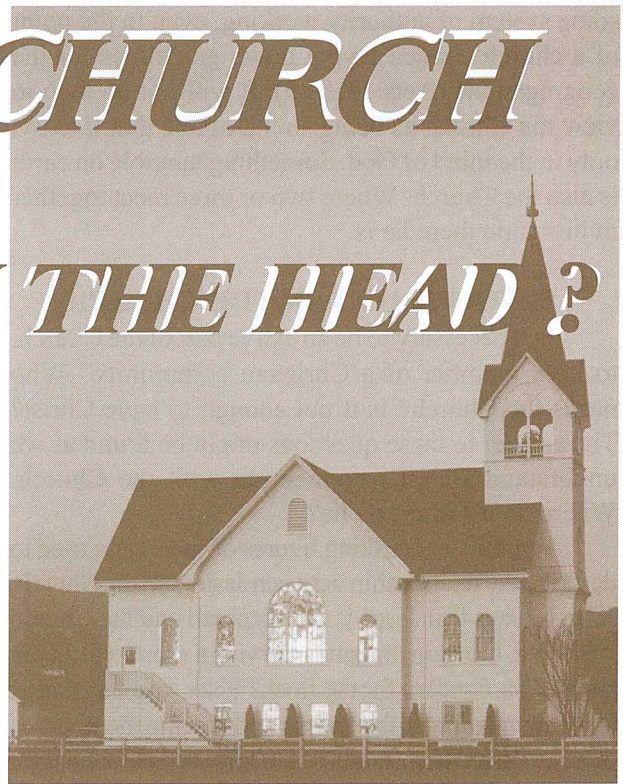
Now lest you get the wrong idea, as I said, I do consider this person a friend and he wasn't mad at me. Well, not exactly. He was really mad at the turn his life had taken and only thought that he was mad at me. His church had failed him, his belief structure had collapsed and he was suffering a severe case of loss-related depression. Said he, 'I need a church like I need poverty or leprosy. You know, the greatest hindrance to Christianity is churchism. Imagine paying someone good money to manipulate your spiritual life for you! I'm tired of organisations, of doctrines, of meetings and pious saints. I never want to see the inside of any church again. I'll go it alone with God.'

Of course there was very little of a rational nature I could say at that point to help him. His feelings were just too real, too big to oppose. He was responding to his pain like a freshly divorced woman who gags at the thought of ever meeting a moustache-growing human again.

But it has been a few months now and perhaps my friend is willing to look at the issue a little more objectively. It is for him that I ask and try to answer the question, Is the church a hole in the head?

## THE CHURCH LIVES

First a few disclaimers and then some definitions. By the word 'church' we do not mean any par-



ticular denomination, creed, or special remnant that has the ultimate truth at long last. The Church is that living organism made up of blood-bought believers under the administration of Christ. This organism exists to bodily carry out the will of Christ on planet earth. It is his body (Eph. 5:23). Please note that the operative word is *organism* and not *organisation*.

The reason for this choice is simply that an organism lives, but an organisation does not. Of course an organism is also organised into different parts (think of the systems of the body), but order is not its main characteristic. An organism is chiefly a thing that lives. The Church is a living thing.

Now how did it come into existence? It happened on a particular day almost two thousand years ago in the Palestinian town of Caesarea Philippi. There Jesus said to Peter, 'Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Matt. 16:18 KJV).

Notice that the Church was established by Jesus Christ himself. It is not merely of human origin. No human institution could break down the gates of hell. This thing called the Church was born of, and is sustained by God. It has a divine dimension.

Of course the Church has a visible human dimension as well. This we know from the fact that the apostles went out as missionaries and established geographical communities on a map which were called churches (Rev. 1:3). Moreover, these congregations had elders, deacons and deaconesses (e.g. 1 Tim. 5:17-22). Furthermore, there seems to have been



some system of authority working, even to the point of a church council laying down guidelines for the congregations (Acts 15:1-35). It will not do then to view the Church as being so intangible that it exists only in the mind of God. Something tangible on earth is also the Church. Where two or three meet together in his name there he is.

### INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH

Is it necessary to be an active part of the Church, to be a member of a Christian community? Who needs the Church? Is it not enough to have Christ? The answer to these questions might be found as we understand Christ's connection with the Church. Where do his interests lie?

A number of striking figures of speech are used to describe the relationship between Jesus and the Church. John 10 says that Jesus is the shepherd and the Church is his fold. Can you imagine marrying a shepherd but not sharing his concern for the flock? Peter says that Christ is the foundation of the temple and that the members of the Church are living stones standing on that foundation (1 Pet. 2:4-8). One cannot but be impressed by the intimate proximity between the two.

But perhaps Paul outdoes both John and Peter. He says that Christ is the head and the Church is his organs (1 Cor. 12:12-31). But more, he declares that Christ is as close to his Church as a husband is to his wife (Eph. 5:21-33). Now that's incredible! All of which leads me to conclude that it seems inconceivable that any person could be interested in Christ and his concerns, without also being interested in the Church.

This of course does not mean that the Church saves us. Salvation is by Christ alone. Nevertheless, salvation is expressed by participating in his body. Salvation by Christ plus nothing, does not mean that Christians therefore dispense with such things as the Bible, the Lord's Supper, the gifts, prayer and the Church. These are all the Saviour's practical instruments to draw and keep us close to him. What Christ uses on our behalf we cannot despise.

Yet it is true that nothing is as smelly as religion that is in the process of decomposing. This happens after a church ceases to be an organism and becomes only an organisation. Few people realise that the glorious text, 'Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool,' (Isa. 1:18) is an appeal

to those who have abused religion. The scarlet sin is religion gone sour. No more devastating fire is levelled against bad religion than is found here.

It seems inconceivable that any person could be interested in Christ and his concerns without also being interested in the Church.

How would you tolerate being labelled a full-fledged citizen of Gomorrah? How calm would you remain if someone called your church leaders rulers of Sodom? It must have been infuriating, shocking, yet there the prophet was pointing a provocative finger and calling their sacrifices irrelevant, their oblations vain, their incense abominable, their Sabbaths and assemblies intolerable to me, Lord. As members of such religion they were covered with sores and filled with leprosy. Then the plea, 'Come and reason with me, I will make your scarlet sin snowy white, your crimson sin woolly clean.'

### SURVIVAL IN THE CHURCH

If religion can be that dangerous, perhaps someone should write a handbook entitled *How to belong to Any Church and Survive*. If I were to be that person I would include some of the following advice:

1. Treat the creed or statement of beliefs of your church with caution. Remember that virtually all creeds were written as statements of reaction and not merely to clarify the truth. The basic objective of most denominational creeds is to distinguish one denomination from another.

Creeds do not simply ask the question, what is the truth? They usually tend to ask, where do we view

ourselves as different? By their very nature these creeds are instruments of distinction and often of separation. I have wondered what would happen if a non-Christian person stranded on an isolated island found a creed such as The 'Westminster Confession' (or any other). Would this castaway, after reading it, have a reasonable idea of what the

***Notice that the Church was established by Jesus Christ himself. It is not merely of human origin. No human institution could break down the gates of hell. This thing called the Church was born of, and is sustained by God. It has a divine dimension.***

burden of the New Testament is all about? Do creeds really reveal the thrust of Scripture? Are they not, rather, documents that uphold the uniqueness and identity of a particular group—and often during a particular crisis?

Doctrinal content is not enough. It is never enough to be Christ-centred in your beliefs and not be Christ-spirited in your mentality. I say this, not to make creeds—which do have a place—worthless, but to put them in their right perspective.



2. Be aware of what is happening to the way you think; to the way you handle truth. Perhaps an illustration is in order: A friend had just finished his first year of studies at a conservative Bible school. When I asked him if he felt he was getting what he wanted from his course, his reply was very perceptive.

‘Yes and no,’ he said. ‘Yes, because the actual information I’m getting is of great value. Content-wise, I cannot really complain, some of my deepest doubts have been resolved.’ He gently stroked his moustache and continued. ‘And no, because I don’t like the attitude towards information the school engenders in its students. It’s hard to explain. Although the things taught are on the whole good, the graduates turned out seem so desperately confident; so stubbornly opinionated.’

The point he was making is that the mental set, the frame of mind that accompanies truth, is fully as crucial as the truth itself. Truth is something that is held by the brain. How we hold it is a vital matter, like a pet canary, truth can be allowed to flutter about the room, to perch on human shoulders, to nibble gently at unsuspecting earlobes, to delight with song. Or it can be gripped in the nervous, protective hand until its wings are broken and its heart stops from asphyxiation.

Christ alone is the ground of our eternal life. To the extent that any individual or church assumes this role it is anti-Christ.

As you then go to a church be aware of the spirit you are developing there. Doctrinal content is not enough. It is never enough to be Christ-centred in your beliefs and not be Christ-spirited in your mentality. Bigotry is almost always based on the simple premise that being biblically right is all that matters. Be cautious of any religion that does not foster a great respect for ignorance and difference of opinion.

3. Never permit any church to convince you that it is in control of your future. If a group can convince you of this single fact, then you are under its complete control. If I controlled your bank account, or your wife, or even your health, you would still have a measure of independence. But if I convinced you that your future well-being and your eternal life depended on me, then I believe I could control the totality of your existence. The fact that you place a supreme value on eternal life would enable me to supervise who you befriend, what you wear, how you eat, when you have recreation, what you think—every dimension of your life.

Christ alone is the ground of our eternal life. To the extent that any individual or church assumes this role it is anti-Christ.

4. Remember that the Church was made for man and not man for the Church. In other words, you do not exist for the sake of the Church. In a bad

marriage a wife has her own identity swallowed up by her husband. She ceases to be herself. In a good marriage she contributes to the joy of the union by what she is allowed to remain.

Never let the Church consume your identity. On the other hand, build the Church with your gifts, your love, your independence.

5. Determine what the priorities of a congregation are. The history of true religion is the story of the struggle to keep priorities straight. Even that which God gives can work against religion. In the days of Saul, God had to send the Ark of the Covenant into the deep freeze in Philistia for seventy years to help Israel see what mattered most. On three different occasions, God allowed the destruction of the Temple to bring Israel to right perspective.

Is the Church a hole in the head? God forbid. It is the body of Christ. And the story of the New Testament is nothing less than God’s attempt to remedy the distortion of the law and the Scripture. Cried Jesus, ‘You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me!’ (John 5:39).

Bad religion always sets something good in the place of Christ. It is therefore not enough to simply ask. What are the doctrines of this church? The questions must be asked, ‘What is its burden?’ ‘What is its mission?’ ‘What is its centre?’ To the Christian, Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:33).

### **BUT TAKE THE RISK**

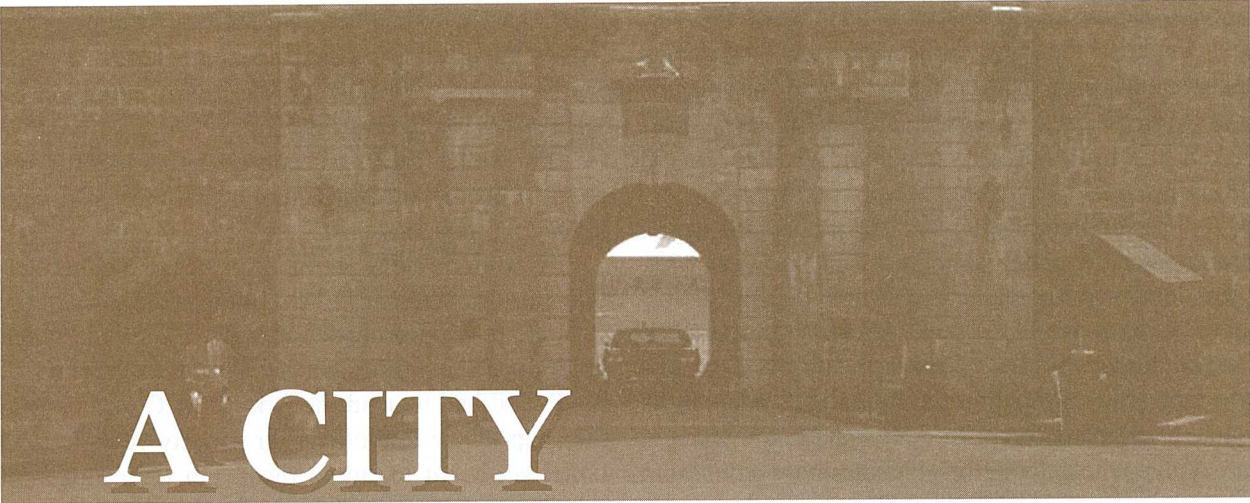
Having seen the dangers that lurk in churches, one may be tempted to steer clear of them altogether. Yet all relationships in life entail danger, but we cannot do without them.

Shall we deny Christ the fullness of our response, the totality of our effectiveness because churches are faulty? The writer of Hebrews exhorts those of us who have accepted the finished work of Christ in the Holiest to act in very definite ways. ‘Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith,’ he says. ‘Let us hold fast, let us consider one another,’ he continues, then concludes, ‘not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ... especially as you see the day approaching’ (Heb. 10:19-25).

So is the Church a hole in the head? God forbid. It is the body of Christ! 

***Yet it is true that nothing is as smelly as religion that is in the process of decomposing. This happens after a church ceases to be an organism and becomes only an organisation.***





# A CITY WITHOUT WALLS

Ritchie Way

**A**ll over the land people are setting up their own kingdoms. There is the Hill-song kingdom, the Willow Creek kingdom, the Saddleback kingdom, the Vineyard kingdom, the Calvary Chapel kingdom, the Elim kingdom, the City Church kingdom, etc. And inasmuch as we feel that we have something distinctive to offer, we also set about to organise our own kingdom. We decide that for people to be members of our Church they will have to be willing to accept our beliefs, values and goals etc.

But, the question we need to ask ourselves is: What constitutes *Christ's* Church? What kind of people are found in *his* kingdom? What are the beliefs, values and goals of Christ's Church?

## ECCLESIOLOGY

A good place to start would be Matthew 16:15-18, where Peter confessed his belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus responded, 'On this rock [man's confession of Christ] I will build my

church.' In other words, the Christian Church is *not* made up of people who believe exactly as I do; it is made up of people who believe in Jesus.

The difference between people in Jesus' Church and the people outside Jesus' Church is this, the people inside are born again of the Spirit—they are a union of the human and the divine—the Holy Spirit lives in them (Rom. 8:9). When they accept Jesus he comes to dwell in them through his Spirit (1 John 5:11-12). The people outside Jesus' Church, however, do not have eternal life, because they do not have the Lifegiver within. They are empty vessels.

Jesus knew that there would be a wide variety of opinions in his Church. As someone aptly said, 'If you put two Christians together, you will have three opinions.' So in his High Priestly prayer, before he was crucified, Jesus prayed to the Father that 'they may be one as we are one' (John 17:23). And the secret of this unity in their diversity would be, 'I in them' (John 17:23). If Jesus *truly* dwells in us, through his Spirit, we will find our unity in him. He is the One who draws us together into one family, with one Father.

To go out, therefore and create our own spiritual kingdom (denomination), which separates us from and opposes other spiritual kingdoms, would be to act contrary to Christ's prayer for unity among his followers.

Eternal life is not based on having the right doctrines [who would be saved if that were true], but is based on having Jesus dwell within through the Spirit. And if the Spirit of Jesus reigns within, he will lead us into a deeper relationship with himself. *Our unity, therefore, is not to be found in a static point of faith at which we all have arrived, rather, our unity is to be found in Christ, and our growing into him, both in understanding and practice.* All members of Christ's Church are on that same journey. Some may be out in front, others may be lagging in the rear, but we are all on the same journey towards the ultimate goal, which is Christ. If we wish to represent



Christ's Church diagrammatically, it would be an arrow rather than a square, for our faith is dynamic, not static. What really matters, at this point of time, is not where we are, but where we are going.

### **CONTROL IS NOT OF GOD'S ORDER**

We need to be very careful that we don't use methods that are alien to God's kingdom, by requiring people to believe exactly as we do. None of us, individually or corporately, is fit to be a mould for anyone else. Control is not God's way. If people have to be kept in the kingdom by control they don't belong there. The only control permitted is self-control through the Holy Spirit.

Some years ago an experiment was carried out in Texas to discover how a human being would tolerate the loneliness of long-term travel through deep space. A platform was built in a very deep cave near Del Rio, and was stocked with provisions for many months. A volunteer, French geologist Michel Siffre, was then lowered to this platform, and was sealed off from the surface. He had contact, through a phone link, with only one other person.

One day this incredibly lonely volunteer heard a faint scuffle at the edge of his platform. Shining his light in that direction he spied a small mouse. The creature was exceedingly shy, but because it was so hungry he was able to entice it closer with smudges of jam and biscuit crumbs. He decided that he would capture this mouse and keep it for a pet. But the inverted bowl that he had rigged up over the bait fell on the mouse and killed it.

We do not get people into God's kingdom by capturing them and keeping them within the restraints of our boundaries. That is the way of death. If they do not come freely and stay of their own volition, they do not belong there.

While denominations with their distinctive boundaries have served a purpose, the history of God's working in the Twentieth Century reveals that God is now leading his people in various denominations to work together in a purpose that transcends their denominations. God is not taking them out of their denominations, but is uniting them in the Spirit to fulfil the gospel commission. While these people are working within the framework of their own denomination, they are no longer limited by them, but openly accept other Christians as fellow citizens in the kingdom of God, and work with them to extend the kingdom.

In the last decade or two the walls that have been built by men are tumbling down. For example, Lighthouses of Prayer, now involve scores of different denominations. Christian radio and TV, Christian Aid organisations such as World Vision, Save the Chil-

dren, Tear Fund etc., Ships of Mercy, Youth With a Mission, Promise Keepers, a number of Bible Colleges, etc. are working across denominational barriers to extend God's kingdom.

The religious world is currently being divided into two groups:

1. Those who understand that their denomination is just one imperfect unit in God's kingdom and who use it as a base to work with other Christians to extend God's kingdom.

2. Those who understand that their denomination alone is Christ's true Church on earth, and who labour to bring other Christians into their fold and under their control.

The Church that God is building at the present time is an entity without walls. There are no unique doctrinal walls here to keep the faithful in and all others out; there are no cultural walls to divide. And the time is coming when there will be no administrative walls, for the coming persecution will remove these barriers to complete unity among God's people.

### **JOHN WESLEY'S DREAM**

John Wesley had a dream. In this dream he went to hell and knocked on its gate. A despicable horned creature demanded to know what he wanted. When John asked if there were any Catholics in hell he was told that the place was overrun with them.

'What about Anglicans? Are there any Anglicans in hell?' John asked.

'If there were no others in hell but Anglicans our work would be more than cut out,' the devil snorted.

'Just one more question,' said John, 'Tell me, please, are there any Methodists in hell?'

'Look!' said the devil, 'there are more Methodists here that you could shake a stick at.'

Feeling quite discouraged John went to heaven and knocked on the gate there. A courteous angel came and asked him what he wanted.

'Are there any Catholics in heaven?' asked John.

'No' replied the angel. There are no Catholics in heaven.'

'Well,' said John, 'are there any Anglicans here?'

'I've never heard of Anglicans,' replied the angel. 'If there were any here I would know about them.'

'Tell me then,' said John, 'are there any Methodists here?'

'Methodists' said the angel, thoughtfully. 'I've never heard of Methodists. There are definitely no Methodists here.'

'Are you sure?' asked John.

'Positive?' replied the angel. There are no Methodists in heaven.'

'Well, who on earth do you have in heaven?'



blurted out John in his confusion.

‘Only the saved,’ replied the angel. ‘Only the saved.’

In God’s eyes there are only two classes of people, the saved and the lost. God does not judge as we judge. He does not put denominational labels on people and we shouldn’t either. And if we will live and work together with Seventh-day Baptists, Nazarenes and Vineyard members in heaven, why not now in this life?

In Ephesians 2:11-22 Paul made it very clear that, through the cross of Jesus, all God’s people are one. With the cross there can be no boasting, the rich person cannot boast over the poor; the educated person cannot boast over the ignorant; the leader cannot boast over the follower; male cannot boast over female and Jew cannot boast over Gentile, [and, we might add, our denomination cannot boast over another denomination] for *all*, without exception, need the grace of Jesus.

### A CITY WITH NO WALLS

Long ago the prophet Zechariah had a vision of spiritual Jerusalem (Zech 2:1-5). His first impulse was to build a wall around this city, but the Lord said to him, ‘Jerusalem will be a city *without walls*. I myself will be a wall of fire around it.’ There are to be no man-made walls with their self-imposed restrictions


around God’s kingdom. The wall that God is, is infinite and has no human limitations.

We must go where the Lord is leading, and he is leading us away from creating our own kingdom. People have built walls around their little kingdoms of doctrine and religious culture and called them denominations. They have made divisions where God has not made them, claiming that those inside these

walls constituted the faithful, while those outside were outside God’s kingdom. That perspective is not only narrow, it is also quite false. In fact, it is more probable that those within their encircling wall, who thank God that they, and they alone, are the redeemed, the remnant, the true church—not like other men—have separated themselves from God’s kingdom.

God’s kingdom is a Church without man-made walls and consists of people

who love each other in Jesus, who are prepared to tolerate different understandings of truth and cultures. It is truly a universal church that finds its unity in Jesus and Jesus alone.

In saying this we are not denying the truth. And we are not ignoring the truth. Rather, it is our aim to move toward the Truth, acutely aware of the fact that some move faster than others, and that there will always be people coming into fellowship who are not where we are. 

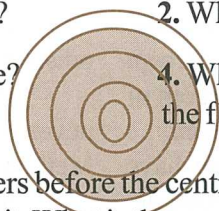


## CENTRE OF THE BIBLE QUIZ

1. What is the shortest chapter in the Bible?
2. What is the longest chapter in the Bible?
3. What chapter is in the centre of the Bible?
4. What is the centre verse in the Bible. See the following question for a clue?
5. There are 594 chapters before the centre chapter of the Bible, and 594 chapters after it. What is the sum of these two figures?

6. Who is the centre of the Bible?

(Answers on page 13)





# PAUL'S PRAYERS IN ACTION

Doug Martin

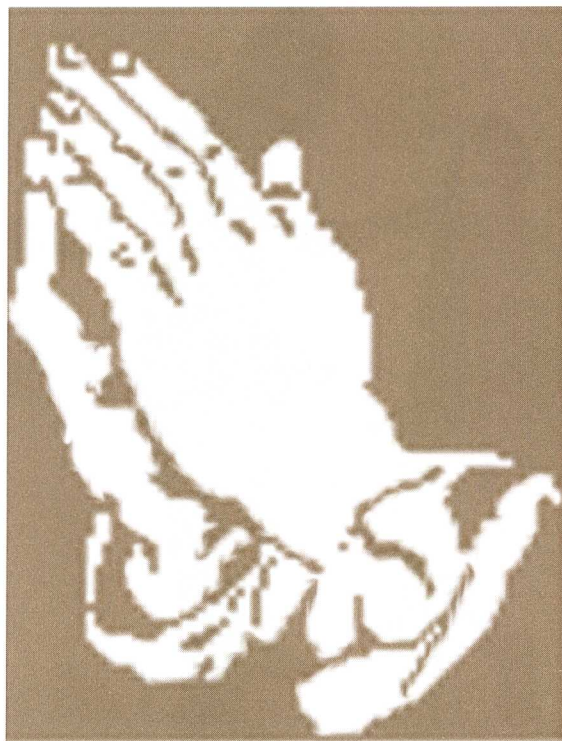
## PAUL'S EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

**I**t stands out like a bandaged hand, this spirit of thankfulness in statements Paul makes about his prayers. It usually relates to people who are in Christ—believers. While it is missing from 2 Corinthians and Galatians, where we see Paul dealing with relational problems, he still praises God. And in 1 Timothy thankfulness is not stated, but you hear overtones in the words, 'To Timothy, my true son in the faith.' But in all of Paul's other letters gratitude takes pride of place.

In Paul's letter to the Romans it is introduced with the word, 'First.' It is important to Paul, that he express his gratitude to God. 'First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you.' That sets the tone for most of his letters. Here is a man writing deep theological statements, but people are uppermost in his mind and affections. Romans is about the gospel, and in that gospel 'the righteousness of God is revealed.' But you do not find theological statements disconnected from the needs of people. They are God's concern and Paul's, and his spirit spontaneously expresses thanks to God for them.

Now, what is it about the people that so moves the apostle? In Romans it is 'because your faith is being reported all over the world,' and Paul is aware that God knows. 'God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times' (Rom. 1:8-10).

There were problems among the members of the Corinthian church—quarrels, divisions, immorality, lawsuits among members, marriage problems and disorder in the use of spiritual gifts, but he is still thankful for them, for in Christ they have been 'enriched in every way.' And he thanks God for Titus, for He had




## *The second of a four-part series*

'put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you' (2 Cor. 8:16), and he is able to report Titus's 'great confidence in you.' The reason being, as expressed in Philippians, 'being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus' (1:6).

The beginning of his expression of thanks for the Philippian believers is quite inspiring: 'I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.' Can you think of fellow-believers for whom you pray with joy? My prayers begin with thanks for Jesus; I smile when I talk to him. Then there's Paul, we are grateful for him and other writers of Scripture truth. And today there are fellow-believers like Des and Gillian who have clarified truth and suffered for it. Oh, yes, 'I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel.'

To the Colossians Paul writes, 'We always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints' (1:4), and to Philemon he says the same thing.

Can you imagine how our spirits would revive if we thanked God for each other as Paul did for those who joined him in a genuine fellowship of thankfulness? A spirit of joy, gratitude and confidence would spread God's glory around the world. Paul's bond with believers is our inspiration. 





# TONSILS AND TEMPLES



It isn't that I want them to know everything about my day-to-day life—even my best friends can't keep up with all of that—but I want them know what a typical week is like for me; what makes me laugh, what makes me feel loved.

## Tammy Brinsmead

'I am never going to church again' I texted. 'And no, I don't want to talk about it!' I punched the send button and switched off my mobile phone.

It was five hours later, buoyed up by a night of laughter, camaraderie and celebration with work friends that I found myself alone to reflect. Why such strong words? Why the unexpected resolution from someone as committed to the Church (or at least, to God) as Australians are to sport and beer? I came up with six reasons:

### 1. The Invisible Factor

In my youth group, there are about two hundred people. Walking into the hall is like stepping into the supermarket, or an airport overseas. You're lucky if you know one face in forty, and chances are, if they see your face, they will assume you're here for a purpose and for a person that they don't need to know about.

### 2. Shop Talk

They don't. What I mean by that, is people don't know you well enough to talk about what really matters to you. No one is going to ask me if I've learned how to intubate a twenty-four weeker in the neonatal ICU. They aren't going to wonder if I've changed hospitals lately on the ever-rotating registrar roster in the paediatric training program. And I know they aren't going to ask my latest two hundred metre sprint time.

### 3. Houses in the Sand

I include myself in this, but we need to read Ecclesiastes more often. Pleasure, work, money, status ... all fantastic, but only if you first 'fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all' (Ecclesiastes 12:13). When I come to church, I want to walk under a giant umbrella of grace that envelops us all. I don't want to compete for the shortest skirt, the most flirtatious smile, or the flashiest car. I want to be united with people, not because we're the same, but because our God is the same.

### 4. A Purpose

I once heard that in any church twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the activities. I've been one of the twenty percent in the past. Music, teaching, organizing, even prayer ministry. I've experienced the privilege (and burden) that all of those things can be. Now that I don't have the resources for those roles, I feel like I attend church as an inanimate object. I listen, sing, and in the silence of my mind, I pray ... but as a part of the body, I feel like an appendix, or a tonsil. I know that I am there to love, but I also know that if I struggle to feel love in a church environment, extending it to others becomes suddenly very tiring. My mind drifts back to Water Polo meets, or busy nights working in the Emergency Department. I am united with my teams there because together we are focused on one outcome (winning, or getting through the patients). I want that at church. A tangible, real, pragmatic pur-



pose, fulfilling the Great Commission and in the mean time, suddenly discovering we actually love each other simply because we are a team.

### 5. A place to Fall

I realize one of the reasons I find it difficult to fit in at church, is that of all of the places I want to fit in, church is top of the list. This is because Jesus Christ is the most important thing in my life. Where he is worshipped, loved and served, I want to belong. And so I try more (and consequently fit in less). This is particularly true in trying to be vulnerable. I had always thought that the Church was the place one could honestly fall apart, and still be loved. On the contrary, I have felt more pressure to appear 'together' at church than in my work, in athletic pursuits and in my secular relationships.

### 6. Intellectual Loneliness

I understand the Church is composed of people of all intellectual and educational backgrounds. I don't expect a sermon to extend my knowledge in the way a university lecture or classic commentary may, but I often lack intellectual stimulation in church programs. Jesus taught with apparently simple stories, but their layers of meaning brought challenge and fulfillment to people who had studied the Scriptures for years, or wrestled with more complex questions, perhaps


not contemplated in a life-time by some of their peers.

So what to do?

My mobile text message, although impulsive and sent in frustration, reflects more than a decade of 'sticking with it' when there are places in me that church doesn't fill. We are encouraged not to 'give up the habit of meeting together' and I am dishonest if I say that I have not been thoroughly blessed by the people and programs of my church at times throughout my life.

Paradoxically, I have even been blessed by my difficulties at church because it has made my faith my own, and sent me to Jesus in search of the best friend and soul mate, which the world seems loathe to give. And so, as I ask God about the way to 'stay in' just that little bit longer; to 'not grow weary in doing good' and 'endure until the end'; I am humbled to know he did. Jesus taught in synagogues and on the street, and he was not understood.

Like a weary servant in another man's house, he 'had no place lay his head'. The Bible claims there was nothing in his physical appearance that attracted people to him. And he died a criminal's death, naked and crying out, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?'

I will return, not because it's easy, but because it's right, and because for all its cracks, nails and cold indifferences, it remains my family. 

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## SO YOU DON'T GO TO CHURCH?

**What's your reason for not going to church? Before you answer read, *Ten Reasons Why I Never Wash!***


- (1) I was forced to wash as a child.
- (2) People who wash are all hypocrites—they think they are cleaner than everyone else.
- (3) There are so many different kinds of soap; I just can't decide which one is best for me.
- (4) I used to wash, but I got bored and stopped doing it.
- (5) I only wash on special occasions like Christmas and Easter.
- (6) None of my friends wash.
- (7) I'll start washing when I get older and dirtier.
- (8) I don't have time to wash.
- (9) The bathroom is never warm enough in winter or cool enough in summer.
- (10) The people who make soap are only after your money!

**Bob Gass**

Sound familiar?

Speaking of the Church, Paul writes: 'There should be no division ... its parts should have equal concern for each other ... each one of you is a part of it' (1 Cor 12:25-27). You are part of Christ's body, the Church, so you need to be there! Watchman Nee says, 'Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively and he will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me effectively knocking my head against a wall until I realise that I need the help of the body, as well as of the Lord.'

There are truths taught in God's house that you won't hear anywhere else. There you'll find a spiritual family to belong to, a faith to live by and a focus that gets your eyes where they should be—on Christ!

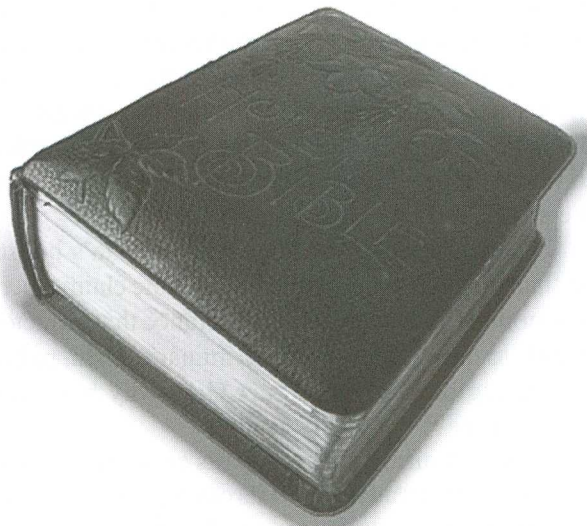
So, see you in church! 



# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## Part 2

### The Wedding



Ritchie Way

**J**ohn chapter 2 begins with the phrase, 'On the third day ...' This phrase is a scriptural expression signifying deliverance. It was on the third day that Jonah was delivered from the whale. It was on the third day that Queen Esther began a process which resulted in the deliverance of Israel from Haman's pogrom. And it was on the third day that Jesus broke the shackles of death and rose from the grave.

*'On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."'* (John 2:1-4).

This was a family wedding and the extended

family was responsible for the food and drink. It was an unbearable shame in that culture for the food and wine to run out on such an important occasion. If that happened the family would never live down such embarrassment, so Mary appeals to Jesus for help.

Jesus' whole ministry was focused on the climax of his death and resurrection, which he referred to as his 'time' or 'hour' (John 7:30; 8:20; 13:1). At his last Passover Jesus said, 'My appointed time is near' (Matt. 26:18). And in his final High Priestly prayer Jesus said, 'Father, the time has come' (John 17:1). In what way then, would Jesus' involvement in providing wine for the family wedding, play any part in his coming 'time'?

Nearby stood six stone water pots with a total capacity of over 570 litres, which would provide about 2300 servings. The waterpots were used for the Jewish ceremony of purification. Jesus asked the servants to fill the pots with water, so they filled them to the brim, probably wondering, as they did so, why Jesus would want to conduct a ceremony of purification during the wedding feast.

As soon as they had filled the stone water pots Jesus told them to draw some out and take it to the headwaiter. They did as they were told but when the headwaiter tasted the water that had turned into wine he called the bridegroom aside and whispered, 'Everyone serves the good wine first and when the guests are happy he brings out the cheap stuff, but you have kept the good wine until last . . . why?'

#### The Lesson

R. V. G. Tasker comments: 'The turning of water into wine is not a purposeless exhibition of supernatural power, but a teaching miracle of great significance.'<sup>1</sup>

The marriage Jesus attended represented the union between God and his people, Israel (Hos. 2:19). But that union was very fragile, as it was based on promises that had not been confirmed in reality. The old wine of Judaism was about to run out.

Outside the banqueting hall there were six stone water pots and six stood for the imperfection and incompleteness of the Jewish law, which could not make anyone inwardly clean. Their waters of purification cleansed the body but not the soul.

The purification waters held by these pots, however, were a type of the cleansing that God himself would provide—a cleansing that would save the marriage between himself and his people. But when would he provide it? And how? God needed to do something soon, because it would take nothing short of a divine miracle to save this marriage.

That miracle was God in Christ, giving himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world on the cross.




When Jesus' time came, he proclaimed, 'It is finished!' And the water of types and ceremonies was turned into the wine of salvation. For it is not with water that the soul is purified, but with the blood of Jesus. Thus the best was saved till last.

As servants of Christ, we have been commissioned to draw out this wine and take it to the guests who have been invited to the marriage and say to them, 'Drink of it, all of you.' This divine wine will save the marriage between God and his people (2 Cor. 11:2). There is an abundance that will last until the very end—until the union between God and his people is consummated (Rev. 19:7).<sup>2</sup>

Was it necessary to supply a wedding party with so much wine? Jesus wants us to know that his gifts are given liberally. There is far more air than we need to sustain life, and the sun produces far more light and heat than the Earth can use. God always provides more than is necessary. The benefits of Jesus' divine atonement are also infinite. Every sin, no matter how big, has been provided for by Jesus' death. There is nothing to prevent us from being united with God.

A drunken Welsh coalminer was converted and became a vocal witness for Christ. One of his old friends tried to trap him into having a drink by asking, 'Do you believe that Jesus turned water into wine?' 'I certainly do!' the believer replied. 'In my home, he has turned wine into furniture, decent clothes and food

for my children!'

Jesus' first miracle was not a spectacular event that everyone witnessed. Mary, Jesus' six disciples and a few servants found out about it, but no-one else at the feast had any idea what had happened. Some, no doubt, knew that something wonderful had happened, but they did not know how. And so it is with the sacrifice of Christ. As servants of Christ it is our responsibility to make the benefits of his death on the cross available to all, even though few of them will fully understand what God has done for them. But all who willingly drink of that cup become citizens of Christ's kingdom and members of his Church. This is the greatest deliverance of all. 

#### Endnotes:

1. R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel of John: Tyndale NT Commentaries*, p.55

2. No wedding on earth could drink 570 litres of wine.

#### Answers to *Centre of the Bible* quiz (from page 8)

(1) Psalm 117

(2) Psalm 119

(3) Psalm 118

(4) Psalm 118:8

(5) 1,188 chapters.

(6) Psalm 118:8 says: 'It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.'



### Lions In Israel

Did you know that while there are no wild lions roaming free in Israel today, the Bible has about one hundred and fifty references to lions? It describes lions as:

- (a) Living in the forest (Jer. 5:6; also 12:8).
- (b) Mighty among the beasts (Prov.30:30).
- (c) Bold (Prov. 28:1).
- (d) Retreating before nothing (Prov.30:30).
- (e) Roaring (Amos 3:8)
- (f) Crouching in cover (Psa. 17:12).

(g) Having fangs (Joel 1:6).

(h) Crunching bones (Isa. 38:13).

(i) Tearing their prey (Eze. 22:25).

Both Samson and David killed a lion (Jud. 14:3-6; 1Sam. 17:34-37). A basalt relief from Beth-Shean in Palestine, created in the second half of the second millennium BC, shows two lions in deadly combat with wild dogs. Solomon has six carved lions on each side of the steps leading up to his throne (1Kings 10:20; 2 Chron. 9:19).

The lions found in Israel were smaller, though no less fearsome, than the African lions we are familiar with today. The number of lions in Palestine was greatly reduced in Roman times and they disappeared completely during the time of the crusades.



Angus McPhee's series on *Daniel* will return next month.



# Discussion Point

GNU is a meeting of minds from a wide range of church affiliations and therefore, opinions expressed in our articles may differ from that of many of our readers.

Recognising that opinions can differ and we all have much to learn and unlearn, we encourage our readers to participate in this forum.

## PLEAD OR DEMAND

**Dear Ritchie**

*I've had two husbands leave me. Both claimed they left because I dominated and bossed them around. But they needed to be or else nothing would have been done.*

*I'm past middle age and need a life companion, but am afraid to get into another relationship for fear that I might get the wrong man again. What would you do if you were in my position?*

**X.**

**Dear X**

As I see it your problem is not your choice of a husband but your choice of method to motivate him. Look upon marriage as a master/servant relationship. You can either choose to be the master and treat your husband as your servant, or you can choose to be the servant who graciously, respectfully and patiently beseeches her master for a favour. Demanding, humiliates your spouse, whereas graciously seeking a favour exalts him/her.

Jesus' way was always to be the servant. And that is what he wants us to be like (Luke 22:25-28). The master exalts himself; the servant exalts his/her master. So instead of demanding that your spouse do something, with the Spirit as your guide, respectfully and graciously ask them if they would mind doing it for you. If you have earned their love and respect I believe they will.

**Ritchie.**

## BAPTISM

**Ritchie**

*Should a pastor baptise someone who, after accepting Jesus as their Saviour, requests baptism even if they don't want to join the Church or return their tithe to it.*

*It seems at the moment that as a church we say that unless you return your tithe you cannot be baptised and join the Church.*

*To me that seems very judgemental in deciding who can and who can't accept Jesus.*

**S. G**

**Hi S**

That's a toughie, as have been your other questions.

A person is not only baptised into Christ (Rom. 6:3 Gal. 3:27), they are also baptised into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13, 27; Acts 2:41). If a person is baptised and doesn't join and support their church, then how can it be said that they have been 'baptised by one Spirit into one body' (1 Cor. 12:13). So why would a person seek to be baptised into the body of Christ if they didn't want to support that body?

The only exception to this rule that I can think of is when a person's loyalty is to another part of 'the body of Christ' but has no opportunity to fellowship with that group, so seeks fellowship with a group of similar beliefs and culture. In that case the person seeking baptism should ask a representative of the group that he supports to come and baptise him/her.

Love and blessings

**Ritchie.**

## MULTIPLE WIVES

**Dear Ritchie**

*According to the seventh commandment, it's an absolute in God's kingdom that no man can have another man's wife. But there is no absolute saying that a man can't have more than one wife. In one of Solomon's speeches to a new bride, he states quite clearly in Song of Solomon 6:8: 'I have*

*sixty other wives, all queens and eighty concubines, and unnumbered virgins available to me.' This one was simply wife number sixty-one and we know she was later superseded by a couple of hundred more. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon lists his wives and concubines amongst all the projects he tried that brought him no real satisfaction. Nowhere though, is there any hint that this involved immorality.*

*Now I could quite easily argue that what was good for Solomon (the wisest man) is quite okay for me. Why shouldn't I? God apparently said nothing about it to either Solomon or his father, David. David got into trouble, not for polygamy, but for stealing another man's wife.*

*So why is it sinful for a man to have more than one wife today?*

**S.G**

**Dear S**

For the ideal on marital relationships we need to go back to the ideal prototype—which was the Garden of Eden. In that sinless world there was just one man united with just one woman. They were equal. The wife is not equal with her husband if she has to share him with other wives and/or concubines. How would you feel if the boot were on the other foot and you had to share your beloved wife with several other husbands? Not such an attractive thought, eh?

So why doesn't the seventh commandment forbid polygamy? The seventh commandment, which was written in an era when polygamy was acceptable, neither overtly condemns nor condones polygamy, but it allowed for the fact that with progressive revelation, humankind would grow into a deeper understanding of what 'adultery' involved. It is, for this reason, that our understanding of the seventh commandment more closely approaches God's intention for humankind than did that of the ancients.

This understanding is confirmed by Jesus, who said, 'At the beginning the Creator made them male and female ... for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh' (Matt. 19:4-5). He did not say, 'A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wives, and the sixty-one



will become one flesh with him.' Makes you want to wince.

**Ritchie.**

### **MARY MAGDALENE OR MARY OF BETHANY?**

**Dear Ritchie**

*In the October, 2008, GNU magazine you asked the question: 'Who used her hair as a towel? And the answer given on page 17 was 'Mary Magdalene (John 11:2; 12:3).' However, the texts that you gave to support your answer suggest that the woman was Mary of Bethany, not Mary Magdalene.*

**R. I.**

**Dear R**

Oops! You're right. I used to think that they were the same person (and they may well have been) but Mary of Bethany (the sister of Lazarus and Martha) lived in Bethany just east of the Mount of Olives, whereas Mary Magdalene probably came from Magdala in Galilee. The first woman had lived an immoral life, but there is no evidence that Mary Magdalene did.

Thank you for your correction. The right answer should have been Mary of Bethany, not Mary Magdalene.

God bless you

**Ritchie.**

### **ICE IN THE NEW EARTH**

**Dear Ritchie**

*You've mentioned, on occasions, your perceptions of the New Earth, which I have discovered don't fit the views that most of us have had of Paradise. I recognise, of course, that our mental images are only speculations, as are anyone else's and we'll have to wait until Jesus comes to see the reality.*

*But one thing has perplexed me—having been taught from youth that the sharp and rugged profiles of the mountains would be clothed in fertile soil and green verdure in the New Earth—whether we would be able to enjoy the delights of skiing in the New Earth. Do you think there will be high mountains with snow and ice-fields in the world to come?*

**N. I.**

**Dear N**

Do you know what I would do if I were God, remaking a New Earth? In order to ensure that there was sufficient

water in summer, when there is little rain and greater evaporation, I would create great mountain ranges to capture the moisture from the prevailing winds in winter. This moisture, which would fall as snow, would freeze into great reservoirs of ice, which, in turn, would release their captive water in the dry season or summer when it was most needed. Without mountains and their glaciers life in the plains below would be anything but Paradise during the dry time of the year.

Just a thought

**Ritchie.**

### **BAPTISM AS A SIGN**

**Hi Ritchie**

*Should a person be baptised upon profession of faith in Jesus, or should they give some evidence that their profession of faith is more than just words? It seems to me that many people in the New Testament were baptised the moment they accepted Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.*

**B. N.**

**Dear B**

In New Testament times, to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour was often the ultimate test of a person's faith. In many cases it meant being cut off from family, friends and social support; in some cases it meant death. A person who accepted Christ in such circumstances would gladly yield everything else that came between them and the Lord. That scenario is not the case today.

I have baptised people on profession of Christ, before they gave up taking drugs, and I have refused to baptise people until they gave up taking drugs. The first group begged me to baptise them, promising that they would never take drugs again. To this day they still take drugs. The second group condemned me, and one even walked out of my Bible study. But they gave up drugs before baptism and never returned to them. I told them, right from the start, that baptism was like a marriage in which they joined themselves to Christ. And those who enter into marriage promise to 'forsake all others.' And if they wanted to unite their lives with Jesus in baptism, then they needed to give some evidence that they had given up all other 'gods' first.

There's no hard and fast rule

about what is expected of baptismal candidates, but from a pragmatic perspective, it is better that they do not treat baptism lightly and give some evidence that the outward experience of baptism reflects their inner experience of death and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12).

Blessings

**Ritchie.**

### **ISRAEL OR JESUS**

**Dear Ritchie**

*Like many other Christians I passionately believe that the Jews should have their own homeland. What I would like to know is this, should they be satisfied with the current size of Israel, or should they seek to support its expansion to the size that God intended, which would be about the size the country was during the reigns of David and Solomon?*

**J.C.**

**Dear J**

I shall answer your question in the words of Colin Chapman: 'Our message to the Jewish people [should be] that it is in the person of Jesus the Messiah that their hopes have been fulfilled, not in their return to the land and in the creation of the state of Israel.'

When Jesus returns he will give those who commit their lives to him the whole Earth to dwell in, not just one tiny country. The essential thing in this age is for everyone to pin their hopes, not in Israel, but in Immanuel; not in land but in the Lord. If the Jews have the land but not the Lord, they will lose both. On the other hand, if they have the Lord but not the land, they will receive both.

**Ritchie.**

### **Websites:**



**Des Ford:**

[www.desford.org.au](http://www.desford.org.au)

**GNU Aust:**

[www.goodnewsunlimited.org.au](http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org.au)

**GNFA:**

[www.goodnewsforadventists.com](http://www.goodnewsforadventists.com)

**GNU USA:**

[www.goodnewsunlimited.org](http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org)



# Africa Sends Out Missionaries by the Thousands in a New Wave of Missions Activity

Michael Ireland

**A**n Ethiopian tells how, when he landed on Indian soil as a missionary in 1998, it surprised him as much as anyone else, according to an article from *Joel News International* (JNI) by Sheryl Montgomery Wingerd, in JNI's Great Commission Update. 'Could this be possible?' the East African asked himself. 'We always thought only white people could be missionaries.'

Wingerd writes that more than a step of faith, this venture created a worldview change for the new missionary. After all, he had gone out from Africa, the continent that for generations has been known as the mission field—the place where missionaries go.

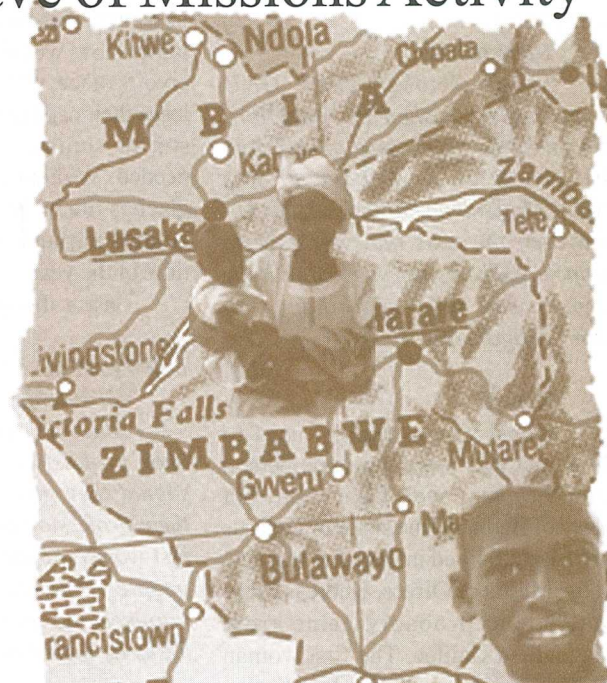
But God had prepared the way. Soon after arriving, one of his team members shared the gospel with a woman. She stopped him. 'I had a dream last week,' she said. 'Fire was consuming the village and people were running. Two people were praying with arms outstretched. Then something like a cross came between the fire and the village.' The woman concluded, 'You were the people.'

Wingerd reports that in the following three months 1,357 people gave their lives to Christ. After their initial success, the home church in Ethiopia sent twenty more missionaries to India and Pakistan.

In her article, Wingerd explains that in the same way, thousands of Africans from across the continent are defying old stereotypes and embarking on the cross-cultural missionary adventure. In some areas, she says, the Church has been doing it for awhile; in other places it's just getting started. In Nigeria, missions have been gaining momentum since the mid '70's. NEMA, the Nigerian Evangelical Mission Agency, now has 5,200 missionaries serving in Africa and around the world.

Wingerd says that a church in one of South Africa's townships has been sending out short-term missionaries for seven years, according to a report at a recent MANISA conference. Just two years ago they sent their first long-termers. Church members are enthusiastic about their missionaries who are working in three other countries, and are committed to support them.

Africans are still mindful of what foreign missionaries have done in their continent, Wingerd states. 'We appreciate you and what the Lord has done through you for us,' said Nigerian, Dr. Rev. Nicholas Asamayan, who mobilizes black churches for missions. 'And to those who died, thank you for your sacrifice and your love. But in God's prophetic timetable, the time has come for us,' he said. He explained that it is time for an Afro-centric approach to missions, for defining mission in the African context, for writing materials



and coming up with creative ideas. 'They are moving into the earth's difficult un-reached communities. Professionals back home, such as engineers and doctors, raise money to support them.'

The JNI article says that God's new company of African missionaries is moving into some of earth's difficult un-reached communities. What motivates them to go into lowly villages with bad water, disease and a fearful relationship with local gods? Or to venture out into Europe, Asia and South America? Each country has its own story.

In Nigeria, it began with students, JNI reports. As they went out to the villages for their year of national service, they saw parts of their nation they hadn't seen before, and were moved to action. They began planting churches, but they also caught a vision for missions, leading eventually to the birth of three mission agencies, Calvary Ministries, Christian Mission Foundation, and EMS, the missions branch of the Evangelical Church of West Africa.

Then, in the early '80's, NEMA was born—the Nigerian Evangelical Mission Agency, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in October, 2007. They have an exciting support group, the Mission Supporters League (MSL), an innovation rarely found even in more prosperous countries. It includes one hundred chapters of professionals, such as engineers and doctors, who raise money for supporting and sponsoring missionaries.

In Zimbabwe 10,000 churches were planted in the '90's. As persecution came, they went abroad preaching the gospel. Then there is Zimbabwe. 'Our church planting model,' says Dr. Shana, 'is described in Acts 8 and 9: "When they were persecuted, they went abroad preaching the gospel."' Shana's congregation, the mushrooming *Word of Life Church* in Bulawayo, has planted 3,500 churches all over the world,



instilled with the missional vision to affect the community around them in every sphere of life.

But Zimbabwe's missionary movement, according to Dr. Shana, came out of troubled times. It started with a movement in the '90's where 10,000 churches were planted. Soon after, the country dove into economic and political turmoil. Unexpectedly, those 10,000 churches became the seedling bed for a new missions thrust. As Zimbabweans left the country to settle in new places, they took their faith with them.


'We've been following our diasporic sheep,' explains Dr. Shana. 'In their new homes, they miss the church they've had in Zimbabwe, so they begin to meet in groups, and talk to their communities. A little group starts, which we support and we watch over for a period of time. And we start a church. The gospel has been in Ethiopia for 1,670 years,' said Pastor Langana at MANISA '08, 'first brought here by the eunuch in Acts 8. But I'm sorry to say that, even though we were a Christian nation, we never reached the rest of Africa.'

Things changed in 1990. 'God brought a missionary,' said Langana, 'and used him as a key person.' He told us, 'It is time for Ethiopia to see the people who are unreached, we had never been thinking of going outside Ethiopia.' Now, more than 3,000 missionaries in the North African country of Ethiopia have moved from one culture to another in order to

share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The missions-minded country of Ghana, which has sent people to such far-reaching places as China, Ukraine, Brazil and India, was inspired by the Nigerian missions movement, and continues to be motivated by the Acts 1:8 strategy. 'It's simple', the JNI article says 'every church has four realms to influence: Jerusalem, your own home town. Judea, the next closest region. Samaria, even farther out, and then 'the ends of the earth.' The Church of Pentecost is a good example, which opened Pakistan as its 70th mission field this year.

Ross Campbell, MANI's Information Coordinator, observes that 'from the day of conversion, believers are commissioned, equipped and engaged in Kingdom advance.' And this is only one of Ghana's major denominations which all have international mission boards. Others include the Presbyterians and Methodists. GEMA, the *Ghana Evangelical Missions Association* is a connecting point for them all.

Wingerd concludes that, in these and other countries, Africans are a key part of today's missionary task force, digging into the hard work left to finish the job of fulfilling the Great Commission. 

—Used with permission from ASSIST News Service.

**Good News Unlimited**  
**Saturday Bible School 9.30am**  
at the GNU office, 2/54-60 Industry Dr.,  
South Tweed Heads NSW

**Morning tea will be provided.**  
**Please bring your Bible**

### ***Future Bible Schools:***

As the GNU Seminars will be conducted in March, April and May there will be one only Bible school for these months

**February 7 and 21**  
**March 14 April 4 May 2**

**Narellan,**  
**Sydney**  
**Focus for Life**  
**Christian Fellowship**

Those living in or near Narellan are warmly invited to meet for Bible study and fellowship in the Salvation Army Worship Centre on the corner of Exchange Parade and Narellan Road in Narellan, every Saturday at 1:30pm. For further information, contact Pastor Santo Calarco on phone number: 0404 029822

### **STANDING IN THE**

*Good News Unlimited is supported by a group of people committed to praying for the needs of our readers. If you have a prayer request please share it with Carolyn at the office. You don't have to be specific if you wish to keep the matter private. Your request will then be passed on to a group of intercessors who will take it to the Lord on your behalf. They would be honoured to support you in this way.*

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**NEED OF PRAYER.....**

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***Dr Ford Live on Broadband at Pea-***  
***chester meetings 2nd and 4th Saturdays***  
***of the Month 2.30pm-4.00pm. Go to:***

***<http://www.desford.org.au>***  
***and click on 'Dr Ford Live'***

***Alternatively go to:***

***<http://www.ustream.tv/channel/dr-desmond-ford>***  
***The link is on Youtube Channel page with times***  
***<http://au.youtube.com/user/pangear>***



# 2009 Christ In All The Scriptures

## Prahran Adventist Church

8 Wynnstay Road, Prahran, Melbourne

**28th February** Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Classical Music

**7th March** Dr Desmond Ford *Christ in the Pentateuch* 11.00am  
*Christ in the Historical books* 2.00pm

**28th March** Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Contemporary Music

**25th April** Laurie Landers *Christ in the Poetic Books*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Iron and Clay

**30th May** Dr Ross Cole *Christ in the Prophets*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Avondale Singers

**27th June** Dr Norm Young *Christ in John*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm TBA

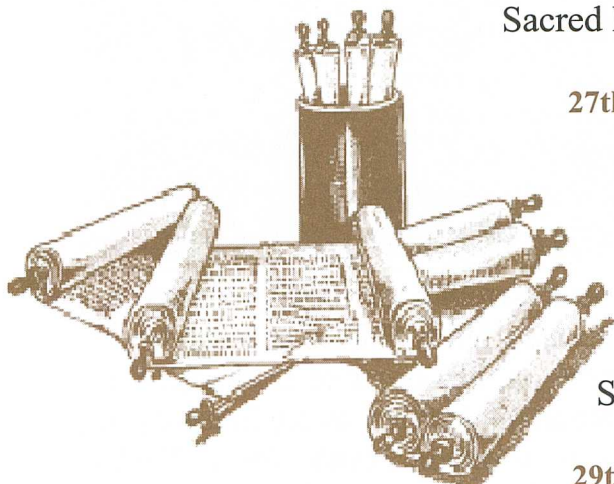
**25th July** Peter Roennfeldt  
*Christ in the Synoptic Gospels*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Craig and Leanne

**29th August** Graeme Loftus *Christ in Acts*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm TBA

**26th September** Garth Bainbridge *Christ in the Epistles*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm TBA

**31st October** Dr Des Ford *Christ in Hebrews & Revelation*  
11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm TBA

**28th November** Dr Adrian Turner  
*Christ, Whose Kingdom is Come, Abides Forever* 11.00am & 2.00pm  
Sacred Music Concert 5.00pm Celebration Singers





# Announcing *Good News Unlimited* 2009 Bible Seminar

**Presenters:**

**Dr Desmond Ford**

**Dr Milton Hook**

**Pr Ron Allen.**

**Pr Ritchie Way**

**Melbourne:**

**March 21**

**Sydney:**

**April 18**

**Brisbane:**

**May 16**

## The Message



## That

## Changed the World

**Melbourne: Saturday March 21, 9:30am - 4:00pm**

Carey Baptist Grammar Chapel, Cnr Barker's Rd. and Danielle St. Kew.

**Sydney: Saturday April 18, 9:30am - 4:00pm**

Thornleigh Community Centre, Cnr. Central and Phyllis Ave's. Thornleigh.

**Brisbane: Saturday May 16, 9:30am - 4:00pm**

Springwood Tower Hotel, 9 Murrajong Rd. Springwood.

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**Dr Desmond Ford will present at 10:30am and 2:00pm at all venues.**

**1. THE DIVIDING LINE FOR ALL PROFESSED CHRISTIANITY.**

**2. THE SECRET OF SPIRITUAL POWER IN LUTHER, WESLEY, WHITEFIELD AND SPURGEON.**

**Pastor Ritchie Way will present at 11:30am at Melbourne and Brisbane.**

**WORTHY IS THE LAMB**

**Dr Milton Hook will present at 11:30am in Sydney only.**

**BECAUSE CHRIST IS RAISED:** *Life after death in Sumerian, Egyptian and Hebrew thought, as compared with the greater Christian hope.*

**Pastor Ron Allen will present at 9:30am at all venues.**

**A PEOPLE-FRIENDLY GODLINESS:** *Sanctity or service? Saving life or killing?  
The Church versus the Good News. Thoughts from Mark 2 & 3.*



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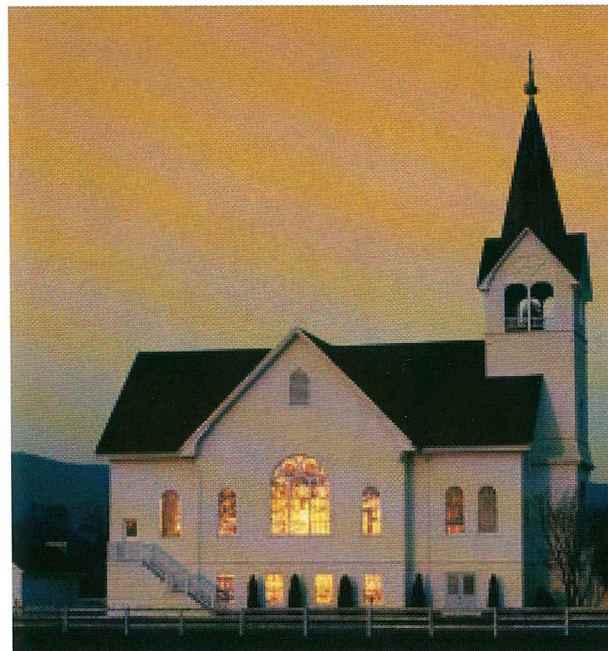
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[www.goodnewsunlimited.org.au](http://www.goodnewsunlimited.org.au)



While denominations with their distinctive boundaries have served a purpose, the history of God's working in the Twentieth Century reveals that God is now leading his people in various denominations to work together in a purpose that transcends their denominations. God is not taking them out of their denominations, but is uniting them in the Spirit to fulfil the gospel commission.

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