

Baptist Progress

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How can I help?

By **DR. MIKE SMITH**

Jacksonville College President

Jacksonville College needs your help. When people ask, "How can I help?" I respond, "Let me count the ways."

1. Pray for Jacksonville College.

"... not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). Prayer is our greatest need.

2. Promote Jacksonville College.

Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue . . ." There are a few who use their tongues to spread negative, hurtful words about Jacksonville College. JC needs you to say good words. Our best recruitment tool is still word of mouth. Say a good word today to someone about Jacksonville College.

3. Provide resources to Jacksonville College.

"... God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). How can you give? Let me count the ways.

a. Volunteer your time and skills. We always have projects that need attention at Jacksonville College. We need office help stuffing envelopes, entering data, and so forth. We need maintenance help painting, doing carpentry work, weeding flower beds, etc.

b. Give financially.

i. Contribute monthly. We thank God for our faithful monthly contributions from churches, associations, and individuals. This money helps keep the lights on.

JACKSONVILLE COLLEGE continued on p. 8

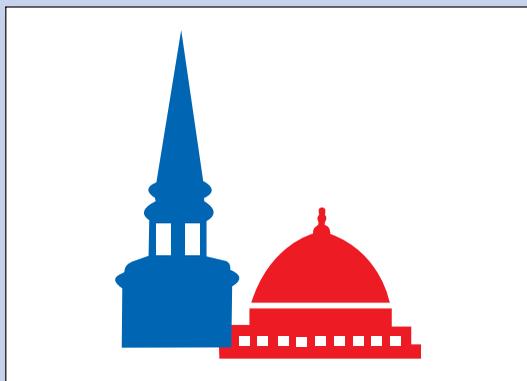


▲ Jacksonville College Singers and instrumentalists performing at the Ministry Café during the Southern Baptists of Texas (SBTC) 2015 Bible Conference on November 9



▲ The Jacksonville Choir singing during the historic joint worship service of the BMAT and SBTC on November 10.

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Baptist Progress

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From the Editor

On the road again

By **JERRY FULTON**

Baptist Progress Editor

I am having fun! These past several weeks have been an exciting time for me as my wife and I have traveled to represent *Baptist Progress*. Recently, we were in Tyler, where I sang and preached at Pine Brook Baptist Church. Bro. David Martin is the pastor. The parking lot was full and the sanctuary was filled to near capacity. What a friendly church! Thank you for allowing us to be with you.

Next, we got to stop in and see the folks at Anthony Drive, Ennis, where I served as teaching pastor. The church is moving forward nicely. The church elected Bro. Matt Walker as their interim pastor. Matt grew up in the church and served as youth pastor at Anthony Drive several years ago. It was great to see faces I had never before seen in attendance.

Nov. 20-22, I was privileged to preach a revival at First, Glenn Heights, where Bro. Mike Thornhill is the pastor. The church is situated in a rapidly growing area. Please pray for them as they seek new ways to reach people for Christ.

As I write this article, I am scheduled to be with Cedar Creek, Teague on Nov. 29. I will preach at 11 a.m. and perform a concert

at 1 p.m. Cedar Creek is a special place to me. I have preached numerous revivals there, and look forward to seeing old friends again on Sunday.

RATE INCREASE

Baptist Progress subscription rates will increase in January. Church plan mail subscriptions increase to \$1.75 per month and email to \$1.25 per month. Personal mail subscriptions increase to \$24 per year and email to \$18 per year. There will also be advertising increases.

As explained at our state meeting, we have not increased rates in a number of years, but with the rising cost of paper and postage, we are left with no choice. Thank you for your understanding.



▲ Jerry Fulton

Church News

OLD TYME, GILMER; Jim Crump, pastor—A church organizational service was held on Nov. 14, for Olde Tyme Baptist Church, 6637 FM 726 S., Gilmer, Texas 75645. The group began as a mission earlier this year when extended an arm by Pritchett Baptist Church of Gilmer.

The church has a healthy start with fifty-one charter members. The new congregation plans to petition for membership in Liberty Association in December.

A house full of worshipers were welcomed by Olde Tyme Pastor Jim Crump. Speakers included Randal Hodges, pastor of Pritchett, and Jerry Long, a deacon and pianist for Olde Tyme. Another deacon, Cranston Thacker, led the congregation in singing. Christine Royce brought special music.

Charles Johnson preached the organizational message and charge from Matthew 16:13-19 entitled "The Church is Here to Stay."

After the service, a bountiful buffet meal of various homemade dishes and desserts were enjoyed by the group. Pastor Jim Crump invites all to join them for worship services each Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

EIGHTH STREET, GRAND PRAIRIE; Jordan Tew, pastor—We were able to share the Gospel with about 400 people on Oct. 31 during our community-wide trunk-r-treat. We have been blessed with 10 members since January: including 3 conversions and baptisms.

Mission Life

By **JERRY BURNAMAN**

State Missions Executive Director

With our desire and vision to have an **Aggressive Mission Movement**, our goal is to see “life change” in people and ultimately impact communities with the Gospel.

No movement is without challenges, and Christian movements inevitably face strong satanic opposition. Individual Christians and our nation collectively, are in a spiritual war.

The Rise of Secular Humanism

In the 1880’s secular humanism emerged as Christianity’s major competition in America. Beginning in Western Europe and entering the United States on the East Coast, it swept across the U.S. like wildfire. Secular humanism is the belief that human beings are capable of being ethical and moral without religion or a god. Not only did it influence Christian thought, it also influenced our judicial system.

The Declaration of Independence declares, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. They are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among them are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

In several decisions during the 1960s to 1980s, the Supreme Court overturned the principle by outlawing the teaching of biblical creation in our schools; thus there is no Creator, a bold denial of Scripture. It outlawed school-sponsored prayer. It made school-sponsored Bible reading unlawful. It said the Ten Commandments could not be taught within the public education system in the U.S.

There are ongoing rules handed down by judges to remove the Ten Commandments from all government buildings and properties. I wonder where they think the

concept of laws to govern human behavior came from.

As a result of the secular humanism movement, a gigantic spiritual vacuum occurred. Secular humanism left us unsatisfied and opened the way for the “Age of Aquarius.” This began with dis-satisfied young people. We became a nation of technicians, bowing to the computer and the internet.

What’s New is not New

We have further evolved to what is called the New Age Movement. It is the picture of a man, “an Easterner, sitting in a Western business suit, in an Eastern Lotus position, meditating on his Macintosh.” –Dr. Norman Geisler

The New Age movement is not new. It is as old as Satan whispering to Eve in the Garden of Eden, “You will be like God”

Actors and actresses have had enormous influence on our society. For example, John Denver said, “One of these days I will be so complete I won’t be human. I will be like a god.”

Another example is Shirley MacLaine who wrote in in her book *Out on a Limb*, “When one says, ‘I am god,’ the sound vibrations literally align the energies of the body to a higher level. You can use, ‘I am god,’ or ‘I am that I am’ as Christ often did. Or you can extend the affirmations to fit you own needs.”

Dr. Geisler lists thirteen major views of reality which identify the New Age movement. It is not expedient to deal with all of them in this article, but I will point out some major believes.

1. It begins with pantheism. “God is to the world what a pond is to drops. We are little drops in an infinite pond. We are all one great big drip; we are all one great big

drop.” Pantheism says that everything in nature is god.

2. There is extreme mysticism. Shirley MacLaine said the best kept secret of the twentieth century is “We are all god. But we forgot it. We have fallen in America and we need to awaken from it by transcendental meditation. Godhood is obtainable by mystical experience.”

3. There is reincarnation. We gods have to learn to be God, but if we miss it in this life, we can still obtain it in the next. Or in the next! Or in the next! Or in the next! Geisler says that reincarnation is “the heart of the New Age movement.”

These are just two of the many ways Satan is attacking our society and Christians in these last days. It is essential for Christians to Wake Up from their lethargy! Stand Up for biblical truth! And Look Up for Jesus is returning soon (Romans 13:11-14). Yes, it is time to unsheathe the “sword of the Spirit,” attack Satan and defeat him.

If your interest about Spiritual Warfare has been stimulated, you may want to get a copy of Dr. Ed Murphy’s book, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*. It gives an in-depth study of Satan’s attacks on Christians and our society, and how Christians can fight back with God’s weapons that are recorded in the Bible.

Jerry Burnaman is the executive director of State Missions and the Baptist Missionary Loan Association. Contact him at jerryburnaman@yahoo.com or 972-923-0757.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Registration for Winter and Spring 2016 is ongoing

Winter Term: Begins December 14
(online and face-to-face classes)

Spring Term: Begins January 19
(online and face-to-face classes)



Homecoming 2016:

February 19-20



The Great Escape Youth & Children’s Leader Cruise

DiscipleGuide and Central Baptist College invite youth and children’s leaders to come aboard the Carnival *Freedom* and be part of a unique opportunity to fellowship and build supportive relationships with others in leadership roles, whether paid staff or volunteer. This is a unique opportunity to refresh, learn new ministry skills, and enjoy free time. The cruise is open to anyone working with youth and children. Because of their vital role in ministry, spouses are encouraged to attend as well. (Due to the nature of the cruise, it is not recommended that children attend.)

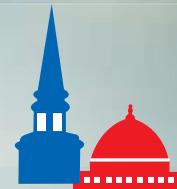
The cruise will depart from Galveston on Jan. 16 at

4 p.m. and return to the same port Jan. 21 at 8:30 a.m. Ports of call will be Yucatan, Progresso, and Cozumel, Mexico, along with two days at sea which will include entertainment and great food aboard the ship.

Terry Kimbrow, president of Central Baptist College, will again be the cruise host. Mark Dance, Lifeway’s pastor advocate, will be the guest speaker. His topic will be how to build a healthy life in and away from ministry.

For more information, contact Thomas Mobly at 501-358-3530 or thomas@discipleguide.org. You can also visit discipleguide.org/thegreatescape

Images are a big no — Exodus 20:4-6



By **DR. JOHN ADAMS**

Moral Action Executive Director

Two cowboys had spent the weekend in the little west Texas town, and did something on Sunday that they rarely ever did—they went to the community church for the morning worship. The pastor gave a rather stirring interpretation of the Ten Commandments that morning. The two cowboys left the worship with their heads bowed.

As they rode out of town, Peter turned to Tom and said, “Well, at least we haven’t made any graven images!”

That may reflect what we feel as we read the Ten Commandments. We feel relatively comfortable with this commandment because we do not have any idols in the house, at least none that we know. It may be that we have not really understood the real force of this commandment.

It is worth remembering that some groups, including Catholics, see this as actually a part of the first Commandment. They recognize that both of these commandments have to do with worship. The first commandment has to do with who or what we worship. The second has to do with how we worship. The use of images was common in the worship of the gods in that ancient world. Many who would have claimed to be worshippers of the one true and living God used graven representations of God in their worship. This commandment forbids the use of any man-made likeness of God in our worship of Him. The Hebrew word translated “idol” in other text means a graven or carved image. It could be carved with a knife, or chiseled out of stone, or molded out of metal. It is something that the person would then use in the worship rendered unto their deity.

This prohibition sets the worship of the Creator—God who made the covenant with Israel apart from all of the other gods of the ancient and modern world. He will not tolerate the use of graven images in the worship that is performed in His name. Let’s apply this to the worship that we attempt to render unto God.

THE MORAL MOTIVES OF THE IMAGE-MAKER

It is not just the presence of an image that offends God, but rather the motive that is behind the act of making graven images. Morality is very important when you are approaching God in worship.

The image-maker is motivated by a desire to create an aid to worship.

Since the God of Israel and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is a spiritual being, sinful man feels that he needs some help in worshipping God. He feels that it is difficult to worship a God that you cannot see, touch, or feel. He reasons that it would be easier to worship the true God if he only had something made in the likeness of God.

So the image-maker sets out to carve or make of wood/metal something that he feels can be a representation of God when he comes to worship. He never considers what the consequences of making such an image might be. Some tell of using a picture of Jesus to help them focus on Jesus when they are in worship. It is an aid for him; it makes it easier for him to feel closer to Jesus. Another finds it easier to sense the presence of the unseen God if they are surrounded by quiet organ music and the beauty of stained glass windows. The motivation may be rather worthy, but the end result may be damaging.

When you come to worship God, what do you need? Do you need a beautiful church structure with stained glass windows

around you? Do you need a certain type of music before you can worship? Careful! God forbids the use of man-made images in the worship of His name! It is so easy for the aids we have made to either stand between us and the true God, or to become in them a substitute for God.

A refusal to accept what God has revealed of Himself as sufficient

Can you not see the folly of the image-maker? God in His wisdom has not revealed Himself to any human being, at least He has never allowed even the most holy of men to see His likeness. The nearest He has come to this is the revelation of Himself that He made in Jesus Christ. But it is interesting that He did not allow a physical description of Jesus to survive, nor any drawing that preserved anything about his likeness.

If God had wanted us to have a picture of him, or an image of him to be used in worship, would he not have given us one? The image-maker ignores this fact. He attempts to go beyond what God has revealed of Himself. God prohibits this since whatever man comes up with can only be a perversion of what He really is. Whatever you use as a representation of God will surely be less than He is. How can anything man has made ever represent the eternal, infinite Creator-Redeemer?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WORK OF THE IMAGEMAKER

The consequences of image making are serious. Let me just list some of them for our consideration.

They dishonor God.

This is what the image-maker does. In his spiritual blindness he attempts to make something that looks like God, but in the process he actually ends up bringing dishonor to the Lord he pretends to love. You can be sure that there is not even one instance in Scripture where God felt honored by something that had been made to represent him.

He opens his life to spiritual darkness (Romans 1:18-23).

The apostle Paul helps us appreciate the seriousness of image making. He recounts the path that the Roman world had followed into the darkness of idolatry.

The insight of Paul is clear—when you refuse to accept God for who He is, and begin to try to do worship on your own terms, you open your life to all kinds of spiritual deception. Scripture consistently identified the image-makers with the demonic.

Neil Anderson, a gifted pastor from Minnesota and counselor, wrote, “At its very root, idolatry is a demonic strategy to give an individual permission to indulge in his strongest natural desires without guilt.” Is this not what Israel did at Sinai when they made the golden calf and worshipped it?

He brings a curse on his children (Exodus 20:5).

This is a part of the warning that God attached to the commandment. Not all of the commandments have such a warning attached, but this one has one.

What does it mean when God is called jealous? We almost put jealousy in a bad light, an unacceptable emotion or response. As the word is used in Exodus 20:5 it refers to intensity of God’s love for His people. He is intolerant of their giving to another that love and worship that should come to Him alone. He feels so deeply about it that he will allow the outcome of their actions to affect the next four generations. This must not be seen as some harsh act on the part of God.

Whatever is important in your life will be even more important in the life of your children. So by your actions you are bringing your children under the judgment of the Lord that falls on the image-maker. Did you notice that the Lord accuses the image-maker with actually hating Him?

THE MORAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE IMAGE-MAKER (Exodus 20:6)

Love is the key! Love accepts God as He is and worships Him in the manner that pleases Him.

Approach God as the Person He is – an eternal, spiritual Person.

Since He is a Person without a body, without any need to manifest Himself physically or materially, you acknowledge Him to be such a God. You do not try to make Him something like something else. There is nothing else in the universe like God—He is Holy! While we are created in the image of God, this does not mean that He is like us. There is a great difference between God and man. This must be acknowledged in our worship of Him.

Refuse to allow any physical or material thing to come between you and God.

Nothing is to be more important to you than God. Nothing physical is to be essential in your worship of God. You are to be dependent only on the Holy Spirit who lives within you and is able to energize and guide you in your worship of God.

Paul laid this truth down to the Philippian Christians when he declared: “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3).

Worship of God is to be consistent with His spiritual nature. No place, building, tools, aids or anything else is necessary. All that is needed is the truth of God and the Holy Spirit who dwells in your heart.

Learn to listen to the spoken Word of God.

The image that we need to see, the reality that we need to encounter, in our worship of God can be found as we listen to the proclaimed Word of God. The Holy Spirit can do with the spoken Word what man will never be able to do with an image or likeness or painting of God. We must continue to give proper place to the spoken Word in the worship of the Lord. Moments of personal revelation and encounter take place as the Word is preached.

Cultivate an awareness of the unseen presence of God.

God is revealing His glory in the world all around you. Our Lord was able to see the heavenly Father in the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, in the falling of a hair from a head, in the way a friend responded to a friend. There is so much more for us to know of Him. We still see through a glass darkly—but someday we will see Him face to face.

Dr. John M. Adams, Jr. serves as the executive director of Moral Action, an agency of the BMA of America. He has served as the senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Mantachie, Miss. since 2000. Contact him at Moral Action – BMA of America, P.O. Box 305, Mantachie, Miss. 38855



Auxiliaries

The Perfect Woman, TEXAS WMA

By SHARON COLE

Texas WMA ladies from all over the state convened once again for a time of business, fellowship and inspiration at Champion Forest, Houston for the annual Texas WMA meeting. As a prelude to the meeting, Jacksonville College Choir presented a medley of music, led by director Tim Timmons. Texas WMA Recording Secretary, Jane Meyers, welcomed everyone on behalf of Harris County District and presented President Diana Morris with a beautiful corsage in recognition of her service in WMA. After scripture reading and prayer, special recognitions were made for National WMA officers, past and present missionaries, pastor's wives and local and district WMA presidents.

Special recognition was given to Dian Pope for her 45 years of service to WMA and GMA work.

Second Vice President Johnnie Ross, introduced the program and speaker, Brenda Bateman, who spoke on the subject, "It's Not About Competency, It's About Connection" using John 15:15. She reminded us that living a life of true worship goes beyond NOT about what we do, it's about who God is and what He does through us.

After a short break and singing, door prizes were given out. Texas Miss GMA, Alaina Verhelle, spoke using Ecclesiastes 4:6 and Romans 12:9. She thanked the WMA for their support of the GMA work. Project Promoter, Charlotte Johnson, reported on the project for the year, Bro. Ashraf and Jenny Sara's work with the Arabic speaking people.

A total of \$15,611.21 was given to this project. Certificates were given to the churches who gave at least \$250 to the project during the year. Bro. Sara expressed his thanks to the ladies for their support and prayers for this ministry. First Vice President, Sherry Decker, presented certificates to the following churches who reached the Standard of Excellence this year: Myrtle Springs, Quitman, First Missionary, Terrell, and Camille Acres, Longview. Project Nomination Committee



▲ Dian Pope



▲ Sherry Decker

Chairperson, April Meyers, presented the new project nomination and the body elected: 90 percent- Jacksonville College Tractor with Front End Loader and Brush Hog—10 percent Youth Fund. The goal is \$15,000.

The following officers were elected: President-Sherry Decker; 1st Vice President-Cindy Allen; 2nd Vice President-Johnnie Ross; 3rd Vice President-Kerri Heuermann; Corresponding Secretary-Jo Strong; Asst. Corresponding Secretary-Charlotte Johnson; Editor-Sharon Cole; Historian-Alicia Johnson; Project Promoter-Diana Morris; Recording Secretaries-Jane Meyers & Elizabeth Midkiff; GMA/YLA Promoter-Kristi Key; Asst. Cheryl Hughes; Sunbeam Promoter-Melissa Henry; Asst. Sunbeam Promoter-Vera Koonce; Song Director-Sherri Walker; Project Selection Committee-D'Andra Smith, Pat Quesenbury and Claudie Thompson; Nominating Committee-Ann Pugh, Johnita Winters and Jackie Ricks; Advisory Committee-Bro. Leon Ross, Bro. Coy Quesenbury and Bro. Buddy Sadler.

Mrs. Johnnie Ross, second vice president, installed the new officers with the theme, "Given to Hospitality, using Matthew 25:31-45. She read "The History of Aprons" and each officer was given an apron. Mrs. Ross announced the program theme for 2015-2016: "Open Homes-Open Hearts." Special prayer was led by Bro. Leon Ross for Diana Morris' mother, Frances Smith Cantrell, who was seriously ill in ICU in Tyler at the time of this meeting. To close this meeting, Diana Morris presented the gavel to Sherry Decker, incoming president, who led in closing prayer.

A MESSAGE FROM TEXAS WMA PRESIDENT, SHERRY DECKER

What a privilege and honor to serve God and the ladies of the WMA of Texas. I wanted to take this opportunity to let you know a little about myself. I was blessed to be raised in a Christian family that loved and served God and still do. God led me to my wonderful husband, Jerry, while we were in college at Jacksonville. We have been married 37 years and God could not have given me a more godly man to share my life with. We are blessed to have a daughter, son, son-in-law and of course, four handsome grandsons. God has richly blessed my life.

My heart's desire is to be in God's will and to follow His leadership as I strive to serve as president of the BMA of Texas WMA. I would like to meet as many as possible of your faithful, dedicated ladies who serve in different areas of WMA throughout the state. Psalm 37:28 says: "For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones." The Word of God is filled with verses telling how the Lord loves His faithful servants. I want to encourage each one of you to continue seeking God and fulfilling His Will in your life. Everyone is important to

His work wherever you may serve. No task is too small and no act of kindness is unimportant in the eyes of God. I pray that we will all work to honor our Father and to reach other ladies to become a part of this special work through WMA. May God bless you as we seek Him.

OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

This series was recommended to me and has very good reviews. It is by Nancy Gantz and is entitled, Herein Is Love. Old Testament. The books are all over 250 pages and each one includes a teacher's guide at the end of the book. The books are written in a narrative form that brings the stories of these Old Testament books to life. Some of them are ones we do not spend a lot of time in. The author states that she entitled the series Herein Is Love because God's love permeates every book and chapter of the Bible. The intended audience is older children, but I think we can all agree that these beginning books of the Old Testament are somewhat confusing at times, and any help sorting them out is appreciated. They are intended for family Bible study, Sunday school, personal study, or small group study. The books are available from amazon.com or crownandcovenant.com. Happy reading!

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



Christmas Time at Texas Baptist Home for Children

We need your help to provide gifts for the 150 foster children at Texas Baptist Home this Christmas. Please visit our website or call us at 972-937-1321 to help a child have a wonderful Christmas! www.tbhc.org



EVENTS

APRIL 25-27, 2016

67th Annual Session
of the BMA of America
@ Gatlinburg Convention Center
Gatlinburg, Tennessee
Headquarters Hotel: Glenstone Hotel

OBITUARY

Theresa Johnson

Theresa Helen Johnson, 65 of Red Oak, passed away at her residence surrounded by her loving family on Nov. 20, 2015. She was born to the late Everett and Helen Ward on April 9, 1950 in Big Springs. Theresa was a compassionate and loving person who was devoted to her husband, Bro. Ted Johnson, and his ministry of 38 years. She lived her life for the Lord and was devoted to her church, First, Red Oak. She was active in women's ministry and Bible study. She worked as billing supervisor for Rockett Special Utility District of Waxahachie for 13 years. She is survived by her son, Tim Johnson, of Red Oak; her daughter, Tiphany Hood and her husband, Andy, of Red Oak; her sister, Barbara Clark, of Red Oak; her brothers, Gerald Ward and his wife, Kay, of Lubbock and Roy Ward, and his wife, Elizabeth, of Weatherford; her grandchildren, Kaleigh and Skylar Johnson, Andru, Tyce and Kase Hood; and a great granddaughter, Sophia Johnson; and numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband, Ted Johnson, former BMA pastor and president of Texas Baptist Home for Children, and also by her parents, Everett and Helen Ward. Services to celebrate her life were Nov. 24, 2015 at First, Red Oak. Memorials may be made to the Texas Baptist Children's Home, 629 Farley Street, Waxahachie, Texas 75165.



PERSONNEL & POSITIONS

AVAILABLE POSITIONS

PASTOR—Round Prairie, Fairfield is seeking a fulltime pastor. Send resume to Round Prairie Baptist Church, 932 E. Main Street, Fairfield, Texas 75840 or rmcadam1@luminant.com. ^{12/17}

PASTOR—Myrtle Springs, Quitman is seeking a pastor. Send resume to Myrtle Springs Baptist Church, 2185 FM 2225, Quitman, Texas 75783.

PASTOR—Eighth Avenue, Teague is seeking a fulltime pastor. Send resume to 201 S. 8th Avenue, Teague, Texas 75860 or eabccw@sbcglobal.net.

PASTOR—First Missionary, Morton is seeking a fulltime pastor. Send resume to the church at P.O. Box 981, Morton, Texas 79346 or to jimmysealy@aol.com. ^{TFN}

MUSIC—First, Crandall is seeking a bivocational music leader. Salary negotiable. Mix of contemporary and traditional. Call Bro. Mike Waits for more details: 214-697-7998 or mbwaitssr@att.net. Visit church website at firstbaptistcrandall.org. ^{TFN}

YOUTH—Antioch, Gilmer is seeking a bivocational youth/student minister. Send resume to the church at P.O. Box 688 Gilmer, Texas 75644; Contact person—Michael Pool, pool-michael@hotmail.com. 903-315-6822. ^{TFN}

SPEAKER FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

STACIE BOSTIC is available to speak at women's luncheons, youth retreats, adult conferences, seminars, Bible studies and other events. She has a powerful testimony that focuses on the art of surrender, walking by faith and rising above circumstances. Her message resonates with a wide range of listeners. She has the ability to tailor her message to fit a group's unique event theme. Stacie is a member of Liberty, Gun Barrel City. Contact her at Stacie@claypotworks.com or 903-603-8597. Also, visit www.claypotworks.com or connect with Stacie on Facebook at <https://facebook.com/claypotworks>. ^{12/15}

PASTOR & STAFF CHANGES

ROGER MANNING has resigned as associate pastor of First, Ferris.
MATT WALKER has been elected as interim pastor of Anthony Drive, Ennis.



What Happens To Your Gift to the BMA Foundation?

All gifts to the Foundation, except those designated for operating expenses, are placed in an endowment fund and invested for one or more of the BMA departments or agencies as specified by the donor. Income from the investments provides supplemental funding for those ministries until the Lord returns. Gifts of cash should be mailed to P.O. Box 1188, Conway, Arkansas 72033. Call the Foundation office at 501-329-6891 for more information on other ways to give.

GOD'S GIFT

HEAVEN IS A FREE GIFT!

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

MAN IS A SINNER.

"For all have sinned . . ." (Rom. 3:23)

Because of this, man cannot save himself.

GOD.

On the one hand, God is merciful and does not want to punish us. Yet God is just and must punish sin. God solved this problem for us in the Person of . . .

JESUS CHRIST.

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

THE GIFT IS RECEIVED BY FAITH.

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

SO MAY WE ASK . . .

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

Do you know for sure that you are going to heaven when you die?

The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you are willing to repent (turn away from your sin and to the Lord Jesus) you can receive the free gift of eternal life by simply praying:

Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins, and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept your free gift of eternal life.



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Sunday School Lessons

Ezra—Return from captivity

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: December 13, 2015

TEXT: Ezra 1; 7:13; 7-10

The book of Ezra reveals the joyous event of the return of a second group of Jews from their 70-year captivity by the Babylonians. (See Psalm 137)

Ezra, a priest in Israel, was responsible for teaching the law of God and overseeing the worship of the people. In the book of Ezra, we see a wonderful object lesson of God's divine protection of His people, and how He is able to raise up gentile king, Artaxerxes, and Cyrus, to be used in the process of the Jews' deliverance and return to their homeland. Ezra 7:13 notes that the Persian king said, "I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee."

The king had even assisted by sending this remnant of the Tribe of Judah, back to Jerusalem with the silver and gold, some of which "the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem."

The book of Ezra covers two time

periods following the 70 year Babylonian captivity. Chapters 1-6 covers the first return of the Jews from captivity, led by Zerubbabel, and chapters 7-10 where Ezra led the second group of exiles to Jerusalem.

Between chapters 6 and 7 there is a 58 year gap, and this is when Esther and Mordecai came to Persia and Esther, his younger cousin, became the queen, whom God raised up to serve in the deliverance of the Jews living in Persia from destruction by the dreaded Haman.

Two great issues were faced by the returning exiles—the struggle to restore the temple (Ezra 1:1-6:22) and the need for spiritual renewal. (7:1 - 10:44) Ezra's priority was to restore the law of God as the basis for genuine worship and devotion to God by the Jews.

God moved in the hearts of secular rulers (Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes) to encourage the Jews in their quest to return to Jerusalem. Sometimes God sends help, restoration, and blessing through some of the most unlikely agents. He does this to demonstrate His power and ability to use anyone He chooses to perform His will.

Nehemiah—Godly leadership

By PAUL GAUNTT

DATE: December 20, 2015

TEXT: Nehemiah 1:1-2:8; 2:9 - 7:73; 2:6; 1:4-7;

Nehemiah is often used in seminars and workshops about leadership. Nehemiah, in this book, wore three hats—he was a cup bearer in Shushan for the king of Persia (Nehemiah 1:1-2:8) He was a builder (2:9-7:73) and he was the governor (5:14)

As a servant to Artaxerxes, king of Persia, Nehemiah had received some heartbreaking news from one of his brothers, Hanani, concerning the plight of the Jews who had already returned to Judah, saying they were in great trouble. (1:3)

Nehemiah, upon hearing the news, sat down and wept, mourned, fasted and prayed to God. (1:4-7)

He boldly but respectfully asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to help in the rebuilding of the temple gate. With the king's blessing (2:6) and with letters from the king addressed to the governors of the provinces through which Nehemiah would travel, he was off on the mission God had ordained him to fulfill.

Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite official were angered and began to mock Nehemiah and accuse him of dishonoring their king—a

common tactic of the evil one.

In reply to their scoffing, Nehemiah demonstrated his faith as he told them, "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem." (2:20) God's faithful servant will stand firm, and he will acknowledge his Power Source.

Chapter 3 reveals the multitude of people who stood with Nehemiah to help him rebuild the wall and the various gates. God is gracious and will raise up helpers for His servants.

In chapters 8 - 13, Ezra brought out the book of the Law of Moses and read it to the people, which were gathered "as one man" (8:1). When a nation or province gathers for the reading of God's law, and abides by it with a receptive and joyful spirit, revival will be the result.

A great spiritual renewal followed. New promises were made, new commitments to obedience were signed: and prayers and shouts of praise rose up to the God of Israel.

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



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2. End of Year appeal. This special offering helps us with various projects and to end the year in good financial shape.

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iv. **Provide for scholarships.** The majority of our students are able to attend Jacksonville College because of scholarships. Therefore, we need numerous contributors to provide the funds annually for these scholarships. Without contributions each year, these

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▲ JC President Dr. Mike Smith giving the Jacksonville College annual report at the BMAT Annual Meeting on November 11

For more information, contact Director of Development Buddy Aultman at baultman@jacksonville-college.edu or 903-589-7142; or President Mike Smith at msmith@jacksonville-college.edu, 903-589-7106 (office), or 903-721-0279 (cell).

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