

TODAY IN THE WORD

DECEMBER 2004

I bring you good news
of great joy that will be
for all the people.

Luke 2:10

THE WISDOM OF GOOD NEWS

LORD OF ALL THE NATIONS

What looked like a massive river of vivid color was actually the parade of nations flowing into the Olympic Stadium.

Last August, at the 2004 Olympic games in Athens, more than 200 nations brought their brightest and best to the oldest athletic

event in the world. No scene captures the drama and exhilaration of these athletes coming together from all over the world like the magnificent parade that opens the games. “Citizens of the world,” exclaimed the announcer, “Welcome to the great party in Athens!” When the parade began, representatives from

nation after nation entered the stadium, holding high each country’s flag, tears and smiles on their faces.

Some of the young athletes wore traditional robes; some wore modern hats. Some were dark-skinned, others light. As the parade continued and thousands of young people circled the stadium, I could not help but marvel at the multitude and diversity of God’s creation. How deep and wide is the love of our Savior! “For God so loved the WORLD!” (John 3:16).

Seeing this visual display of the nations is a wonderful reminder of the deep and widespread needs of our world. As we view these faces from every tribe and nation, we cannot help but be reminded of the lostness of our world and the pressing need to share the loving sacrifice of Jesus.

While it is easy to get caught up in the here and now of our own lives, we must never forget the global reality of our call as

Christians. As the athletes entered the stadium, from the tiny countries of Barbados and Andorra to the much larger delegations from the United States, Russia, and China, I was reminded of our call to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus words of commissioning are ambitious ones that still challenge our hearts today. Yet, if we approach our life now with an eternal perspective, we know that this is our most important task: “to make disciples of all nations.”

Imagine if you will, those final moments—when we stand before Christ at the final Parade of Nations. At that moment, our view will at last be truly global. We will see the breadth and depth of God’s love displayed in the multicolored diverse stream of people who will walk through the gates of heaven. As John notes, in the book of Revelation, some from every tribe and nation will be there!

The apostle writes, “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9).

As we enter into this season of celebrating the birth of our Savior, let’s not forget why He came. Jesus was not born just for “our kind of people”—the gospel resonates with a global intent. Even as the angels announced at Christ’s birth, they heralded the widespread intent of God’s gift of salvation: “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10). Hallelujah! Our Savior is not limited by human divisions. He is indeed a “for all people” Savior. He died for you and for me and for those who circle the globe.



Joseph A. Stowell

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Incomprehensible

With obvious pride, Henry Ford once told a visitor to the Ford Motor Company the exact number of parts in one of the automobiles that had just been completed on the assembly line. “There are exactly four thousand, seven hundred and nineteen parts in that model,” he declared as he pointed at the vehicle. A little later in the tour the visitor asked one of the engineers whether the number Ford had cited was accurate. The engineer dismissed the question with a shrug of his shoulders. “I’m sure I don’t know,” he admitted. “I can’t think of a more useless piece of information.”

The various attributes of God are worthy of our study, but should not be treated as if they were theological abstractions disconnected from our understanding and experience of God beyond these individual attributes. Such knowledge is about as useless as knowing how many parts there are in a Model T. Nor, having studied them, should we conclude that we have learned everything there is to know about God. God is incomprehensible. This does not mean that He is confusing or nonsensical. God is knowable. The mission of the Son was to make the Father known (John 17:6). Jesus revealed the Father through His words and works and continues to make Him known (John 17:6, 8). The ministry of the Holy Spirit also enables us to understand the significance of both the Father and the Son. Because of this we can have real knowledge of God. Yet despite all that we can know about God and the fact that we can know Him relationally, we can never know Him exhaustively. We will continue to study the attributes of God for all eternity.

Why Theology Matters

In his classic book Knowing God, J. I. Packer makes the following observation: “The more complex the object, the more complex is the knowing of it.” The study of God is a lifelong pursuit, and even then we will only have just begun. For the past twelve months we have studied the various attributes of God. As we conclude our study, consider that if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior you enjoy an even greater privilege. You are known by God and you are called His child!

For Further Reading
To continue your study of what it means to know God,
read *Knowing God* by J. I. Packer (InterVarsity).



MBI Today

NEWS OF PEOPLE AND EVENTS AT MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE
DECEMBER 2004

By Lisa Ann Cockrel

Behind the Scenes at the Moody Broadcasting Network

You might not know Cindy Rojas's name, but chances are good that you know her work. As the programming coordinator for the Moody Broadcasting Network, Rojas works with Wayne Shepherd (Division Manager of Broadcast Programming) to oversee the programming on three of the network's most popular programs — **Midday Connection**, **Prime Time America**, and **Open Line**. Cindy recently offered a behind-the-scenes look at how some of these favorite shows are put together and a sneak peak at special programming during the Christmas season.



Cindy Rojas

Q: Can you explain what you do as a programming coordinator?

I try to keep everyone on the same page to make sure we're not duplicating programming. The three programs I work with all have a different focus. *Midday Connection* deals with relationships. Prime Time America is driven by the news of the day. And *Open Line* focuses on current events. But it's still possible that they can overlap in terms of the people and topics they feature. My job is to keep that from happening. I also oversee the booking of these three programs and deal much more closely with *Open Line* since I personally book that one myself. I make sure we are airing programs that fit into our mission statement and that will bless and edify those who listen to them.

Q: Where do you get your ideas for shows?

It really varies. I receive a lot of books and press materials so sometimes something there will spur interest. We do book people who have written books and have something to say, but a lot of our

ideas come through discussions with other MBN staff and with Wayne about what's happening in the world. And from that we try to develop programs that we think will minister to people who listen to MBN. I also get a lot of ideas from magazines. *Books and Culture* and *Leadership* articles have sparked many *Open Line* programs.

Q: And how do you find the people who you have on as guests?

We have a big contact list of people we've worked with through the years who we trust—authors, people related to MBI, professors, pastors, and so on. When we want to do a show on a specific topic, we go to that list to see who might be the best person to talk to.

Q: What are some of your favorite programs that you've worked on?

Not too long ago we had Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough in the studio for an *Open Line* interview. He wrote a recent bestseller on John Adams and it was really cool to have someone of his stature here. He was



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The Wisdom of Good News

God is good. That's not a new development. He's always been good and holy and long-suffering and gracious . . . but we forget that.

We forget God is good because we are separated from Him. Some people go so far as to deny His existence. And to the person who is buried in sin, to those who do not know eternal life, to every man and woman who longs for hope . . . the gospel of Jesus Christ is exceedingly good news.

This month in *Today in the Word*, we'll focus on the single greatest wisdom we can ever know, the news of God's love. Throughout all time, that news has restored lives, and we'll study the powerful history of this good, good news.

This Christmas, we celebrate the greatest news of all, the most precious gift God could have given, His Son. And we are also reminded that your gifts make our work possible. Thank you so much for supporting the study and the teaching of God's Holy Word.

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Bruce W. Anderson

MANAGING EDITOR

Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Adam Kellogg

Elena Maffer

WRITER

Dana Harris

DESIGN

Nancy Rudd

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Paul Currie

PERMISSIONS

Renee Oommen

1-800-DL MOODY

(356-6639)

www.moody.edu

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*Praise be to
the Lord, the
God of Israel,
because he
has come and
has redeemed
his people.*

LUKE 1:68



TODAY AT MOODY

Once again, as we embark on a month of Bible study together, we invite you to bring the Institute up to God in prayer. Today, please uphold the Moody Aviation Flight Instructors: Jay Bigley, James Conrad, William Powell, and Alvin Rice.

Read: Luke 2:1–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



One of the best parts of the Advent season is the rich legacy of Christmas carols. Consider the following line from a popular carol: “O little town of Bethlehem! How still we see thee lie . . . Yet in thy dark street shineth, the everlasting light; The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

The angel expresses a similar expectation in verse 10. Most of us are probably familiar with this verse, but it’s worth reminding ourselves why exactly this is good news—after all, many people today don’t believe that they need a savior.

The entire Bible is the single story of human beings lost in rebellion against their Creator and of that Creator’s great love for His people. The angel’s good news is that the birth of Jesus is God’s answer to the desperate condition of every human being. God’s good news of salvation is the hope of all peoples and all tribes, regardless of where they are located or what language they speak. As the angel proclaims, this good news is “for all the people.”

Our study this month will trace the wisdom of God’s good news for all the nations, beginning with humanity’s fall and ending with ceaseless worship of the multitude before His eternal throne. We will look at key passages that show the depth and glory of God’s love for

humanity, which is fully expressed in Jesus Christ. In our study, we’ll see that even though God often works through one person, such as Abraham, or one nation, such as Israel, His offer of salvation has always been intended for all the peoples of the world.

We see this in Luke 2.

Notice that the greatest event of mighty Augustus’ reign was the birth of a tiny baby boy in a poor town. Notice also that the birth announcement isn’t first given to the powerful, but to humble shepherds. Yet this seemingly insignificant event wasn’t just good news for a few people in a tiny town—it is actually the hope of the entire world.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In Luke 2:11, we find the three titles of Jesus all together: He is the Savior, the Christ, and the Lord. Using a Bible dictionary or a concordance, look up each of these titles and write out a brief definition of each. Take note especially of what these titles meant in the Old Testament and how they are fulfilled in Jesus. Then take some time to reflect on what each means for you personally. What has Jesus saved you from? How is Jesus Lord in your life?

Read: Genesis 3:1–24

TODAY IN THE WORD



The success of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* series is phenomenal. To date, his books have sold millions of copies, and the three recent movies based on these books were huge box office successes. People love a good compelling story, and Tolkien's is one of the best. But even this masterpiece pales in comparison with the greatest story ever told—the story of God's redemption of fallen humanity and His utter defeat of evil through His Son Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1–2 tells us that in the beginning, God created the heavens, the earth, and all living creatures. The emphasis is on God, who alone created the universe and is qualified to rule over it.

Equally amazing, however, is that humanity is the climax of God's creation. God intended for men and women to worship Him and to cultivate the garden in which He had placed them. It's essential to grasp God's great purposes for humanity; otherwise it's hard to understand why God would go to such lengths to redeem humanity.

In Genesis 3, we see that God alone knows the difference between good and evil. God's prohibition concerning the tree in the garden was intended to protect Adam and Eve from knowledge that created beings could not bear. But the serpent tempted Eve with the very thing that had ruined him—the desire

to be like God (v. 5). The results were disastrous. Adam and Eve experienced shame (v. 7), alienation from God (v. 8), and deception (v. 12). Eventually they would suffer death as well. But notice that the serpent was cursed (v. 14), not Adam and Eve. Although there were consequences for their rebellion, Adam and Eve actually received a promise—that an offspring would crush the head of the serpent.

This is the first inkling of God's good news; namely, that God will send One who will conquer evil and redeem fallen people. The rest of the Bible is the story of God revealing Himself to a lost humanity and redeeming a people for Himself who will fulfill the original purposes intended for humanity.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



There are many distorted views of humanity around.

Some claim that humans are just the result of random mutations. Others claim that a person ceases to exist at death. Yet the Bible presents a high view of humanity. Genesis 3 shows that God provides a way of redemption for humans, but not for the serpent.

In other words, God reveals that the climax of His creation, humanity, is worth saving. This doesn't mean that we somehow deserve this great gift; instead, it shows the depths of God's grace and mercy.

*He will crush
your head,
and you will
strike his heel.*

GENESIS 3:15



TODAY AT MOODY

MBI's Provost, Dr. Charles Dyer, requests your prayers this month for the students and faculty of Moody Bible Institute. Please pray that God would continue to work in their hearts in preparation for His service.

[God] protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others.

2 PETER 2:5



TODAY AT MOODY

Tonight marks the beginning of the 50th annual Candlelight Carols concert featuring the student music groups of the Sacred Music department. Please celebrate with us in worship-filled prayer and ask the Lord to grant strength to everyone whose hard work makes this event possible.

Read: Genesis 6:1–9; 9:8–17

TODAY IN THE WORD



Anthropologists note that many peoples have some great flood legend.

In his book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, Don Richardson tells about the Santal people of southern India. Nineteenth-century missionaries were amazed by a legend about a holy couple who escaped destruction when the god Thakur Jiu sent a great flood to destroy wicked humanity. This remarkable account suggests possible residual memory of Noah and the flood.

Genesis 6 is actually the culmination of a long spiral into sin that begins with Abel's murder (Gen. 4). Next we find the arrogant and evil Lamech, who is far worse than Cain. By the time we get to Genesis 6, unspeakable evil is taking place. We don't really know who the Nephilim were, but clearly normal society was breaking down and people's actions were perverse with evil results.

The Flood is both judgment and promise. We often think of Noah as only an ark builder, but Peter calls him a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). With a hammer in one hand, Noah was also urging repentance. But most people refused to listen and, for them, the Flood was judgment. But for Noah and his family, the Flood provided a fresh start. In the midst of corruption and violence, Noah and his family alone obeyed God. Hebrews 11:7 says that Noah became “heir of the

righteousness that comes by faith.”

After the Flood, Noah and his sons built an altar to the Lord (Gen. 8:20). Genesis 9 records the gracious covenant that God made with Noah and future humanity, promising that never again would the flood waters cover the earth. As a covenant sign, God set His rainbow in the clouds (v. 13). Despite humanity's depravity, God still intended restoration and redemption for His creation.

The Flood is actually one of three cycles of sin and judgment, and each is followed by a display of God's grace. After the death of Abel, Seth is born (Gen. 4:25). After the Flood, God starts over with Noah and his family. Tomorrow, we'll see that after the Tower of Babel, God calls Abraham.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Like the days before the Flood, many still live as if judgment will never come.

Jesus used the example of Noah's day to point out that people would be unprepared for the Son of Man's return (Matt. 24:37–39).

But just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to make it through the flood, so also God makes a way to escape His coming wrath through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:18–22). And, like Noah, we are also called to be “preachers of righteousness.”

Read: Genesis 12:1-8

TODAY IN THE WORD



Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is the poignant tale of the convict Jean

Valjean who, upon his release from prison, finds himself graciously taken in by a godly bishop. Hardened by years of deprivation and crime, Valjean robs the bishop of some silver candlesticks and flees. Later, Valjean is caught and brought back to the bishop. Valjean, anticipating judgment and punishment, is surprised when the bishop graciously gives him the candlesticks. This marks a new beginning in Valjean's life.

Yesterday we read about the great Flood that came as judgment upon a depraved humanity. If we were to continue in Genesis, we would come to the sad account of the Tower of Babel. As we noted, Genesis 3 to 11 records one long descent into sin. The tower represented the height of human arrogance and rebellion, so it's surprising to read of God's gracious call of Abram in Genesis 12. To be sure, the nations were judged for their arrogance, but beyond judgment was God's grace.

In choosing Abram, God declares his intention to do a brand new thing with humanity. Just as God spoke creation into existence, God begins his great new work of redemption by speaking (vv. 1-3).

No doubt it was very difficult for Abram to leave all he knew in order to go to an unknown place. But this initial command is followed by six statements of what God prom-

ises to do for Abram, beginning with making him a great nation and giving him a great name. God also promised to make Abram a blessing to all peoples on the earth. Through this one man, God would extend His grace to the rest of the world.

The call of Abram begins the central story of the Bible, namely, how God will work to redeem lost humanity and to restore His people back to the garden of fellowship with Him.

Over the next few weeks we will trace this story, focusing specifically on how all people of the world have been blessed through this one individual. In the process, we'll see God's great love for the entire world.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Noted missions scholar Bruce Winters once said, "Most Christians

think that the Bible doesn't really emphasize missions. They see it as sort of an afterthought that Jesus had at the end of his ministry."

Have you ever really thought about the Bible's teaching on missions? Today we see that Abraham's call is key to God's plan for the nations. In fact, the Bible's teaching on missions begins right here, in Genesis 12. Be prepared for more surprises from the Old Testament concerning God's heart for all the nations.

He said to Abraham, "Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed."

ACTS 3:25



TODAY AT MOODY

Please pray today for Dr. Thomas Cornman, Dean of the Undergraduate School. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate him with wisdom and guide the decisions to prepare Moody students in the best way possible for ministry in today's world.

SUNDAY

*He is patient
with you, not
wanting any-
one to perish,
but everyone
to come to
repentance.*

2 PETER 3:9



TODAY AT MOODY

The Academic Records department would appreciate your prayers on their behalf. Margaret Creech, Susan Ewing, Leonor Gemoto, Yvette Ibrahim, and David Lee fulfill important administrative duties, and we thank God for their faithfulness in every task.

Read: Genesis 18:16–33

TODAY IN THE WORD



Amsterdam's "red light" district is known for its drug addicts and prostitutes. Many try to avoid this part of the city, but for the Christian outreach, Youth with a Mission, this neighborhood was the perfect place to establish a base. Outreach workers frequently go on "prayer walks," during which they pray against the obvious evil of this district and for the salvation of its residents.

Yesterday we saw that God chose Abraham to bless all the peoples of the earth. Abraham certainly wasn't perfect, and neither were some of his interactions with other nations. For example, when Abraham lied about Sarah in Egypt, great sickness came upon the Pharaoh's household (Gen. 12:10–20). But foreigners, such as Eliezar of Damascus (Gen. 15:2), became part of Abraham's household and shared in God's covenant blessings. Genesis 18 shows that Abraham blessed people around him by praying for them.

When the three divine visitors who announced that Sarah was going to have a son were about to leave, the Lord revealed to Abraham His intentions against Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 20). No wonder Isaiah 41:8 says that Abraham was the friend of God. Abraham's mercy and justice not only reflect the Lord's work in him, but also show his own heart.

This is the second time that Abraham acted on behalf

of Sodom. The first time, he intervened militarily (see Gen. 14:14); this time, he intercedes spiritually. Both times, Abraham is concerned to protect the righteous. At first, the exchange in Genesis 18 sounds more like a business deal than a prayer session! But Abraham's questions show his concern for the entire city, not just Lot and his family. Abraham wants to affirm that Judge of all the earth (v. 25) will do the right thing.

Indeed the Judge of the earth does the right thing, but sadly this meant the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Despite Abraham's prayers, the residents of Sodom were too hardened in their sin. Yet the Lord faithfully rescued Lot and his family, even though it doesn't appear that Lot was a very good witness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Even people who don't read the Bible know that Sodom and Gomorrah are synonymous with wickedness. Given how terrible these places were, Abraham could have felt relief, or even satisfaction, over their judgment. Instead we see that he was grieved because of their impending destruction.

Do we feel grieved when we consider evil around us, knowing that many individuals are facing destruction? Are our hearts moved to intercession for them? Abraham's intercession is a challenging example for us all.

Read: Genesis 46:28–47:12; 50:15–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



The story of Esther is the story of God's providence over even the most terrifying circumstances.

Esther was an exiled Jew living in the Persian Empire. When Queen Vashti displeased King Xerxes, Esther was the one, chosen from among many beautiful young women, who won the heart of the king and became the new queen. Later, when a plot emerged to kill all the Jews, Esther was used by God to save her people. Today's verse records the wisdom of Esther's uncle Mordecai who saw God's redemptive hand at work.

Joseph is another example of God's sovereignty. After his brothers sold him into slavery, Joseph ended up in an Egyptian prison, through no fault of his own. Later, through a series of providential events, Joseph became the second most powerful person in Pharaoh's Egypt. Behind Joseph's exalted position, however, we see the hand of God, who used Joseph to save the rest of his family. But we must not overlook the fact that Joseph's administration and policies were a blessing to the Egyptians and the other nations who looked to Egypt for help during the seven-year famine (Gen. 41:56–57).

In today's passage, we find Joseph's family in Egypt because of the severity of the famine in Canaan. Goshen was located in northern Egypt and had excellent pasture land, which Jacob and his sons

needed. Clearly the concern here is for Jacob and his family, but notice that Jacob blesses the Pharaoh twice (47:7, 10). In this we see a partial fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham, that through him all the families of the world would be blessed.

As the story of Joseph unfolds, we see that God's purposes for bringing Jacob and Joseph's brothers to Egypt also included reuniting the family. Following the death of their father, however, the brothers were fearful that Joseph might take revenge for their earlier mistreatment of him. Instead, we find one of the most remarkable accounts for forgiveness in the Bible. Joseph clearly understood that God used him to bless his family as well as others in Egypt (50:20).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Although the actions of Joseph's brothers were obviously evil, God redeemed the situation and used it to bless many people, both Egyptian and Israelite.

We too may find ourselves in difficult circumstances. But like Joseph, we need to trust God and know that He is in charge. Just as God used Joseph to bless a wide circle of people around him, we never know how God might use our situation. Genesis 50:20 is one of the key verses in the Bible; consider memorizing it this week.

*Who knows
but that you
have come to
royal position
for such a
time as this?*

ESTHER 4:14



TODAY AT MOODY

Please continue to pray for the employees of the Academic Records department, especially Melanie Monteclaro, George Mosher, Brian Talbot, Bethanne Tremper, and Timothy Wiegert. Their work might go on behind the scenes, but it is vital to Moody's ministry of education.

Question Answer

Q *A person in our church offends me repeatedly, and I usually forgive her without a word. Shouldn't I confront her? Isn't that what the Bible teaches?*

A The Bible says more about *not giving offense* than coping with it if we are on the receiving end. The habitual attitude of those who are sinned against, possibly by malicious gossip, should be willingness to forgive. See Luke 6:27–36 and Ephesians 4:32.

However, Luke 17:3–4 clearly implies that in some cases forgiveness is contingent upon the offender's confession and bid for forgiveness. He asks for forgiveness. But he may not ask for it unless he was first rebuked. Is a rebuke a *confrontation*? If so, it is sometimes appropriate. The word *confrontation* suggests defiance or antagonism. I prefer terms such as the verbs "to admonish," or "to exhort." Matthew 18:15 says simply, "show [the sinning brother] his fault." See also 1 Timothy 5:1.

We usually know when a confrontation is necessary. The offense is serious, or the offender has become a serious nuisance. We should not take offense easily, as do unduly sensitive people. Every church has a few tactless people who mean no harm; they are not intentionally offensive. They blunder along unmindful of the pain their words may be giving. For such

people, we do not allow ourselves to be touchy.

Q *When Jesus gave the twelve apostles power (i.e. authority) to cast out demons and heal sick people, did he include Judas (Matt. 10:1)? Did Judas cast out demons?*

A The inclusion of Judas in the group of twelve apostles in Matthew 10 does not compel us to believe that Judas cast out demons. Jesus said that Judas was a devil, and He also said that Satan does not drive out Satan lest his kingdom collapse (John 6:70–71; Matt. 12:25–26). Judas's role in the Twelve was, perhaps, limited to being the treasurer and, ultimately, the traitor (John 12:6; Luke 6:16).

On the other hand, it seems not to have been necessary to be holy to cast out demons. On Judgment Day, many lost souls will complain that they had cast out demons in Christ's name. Yet, He will reply, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers (Matt. 7:23)!" That gang may include Balaam, who prophesied, and the seven sons of Sceva, who cast out demons in the name of Jesus, and Judas (Num. 22–24; Acts 19:13–16; Acts 1:25).

Q *What is Pentecost and why do some churches identify themselves as Pentecostal?*

Ancient Israel celebrated annually three great religious festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles—in that order. The Old Testament does not use the term *Pentecost* (a Greek word); it identifies Pentecost as “the Feast of Weeks,” because it was celebrated seven weeks after the offering of a barley sheaf at the beginning of Passover. The festival marked the end of the barley harvest.

The most important Old Testament references to Pentecost are Exodus 23:16, Leviticus 23:15–22, Numbers 28:26–31, and Deuteronomy 16:9–12.

There are three references to Pentecost in the New Testament: Acts 2:1, 20:16; and 1 Corinthians 16:8. As the five-sided building in Washington, D.C., is called the Pentagon, so the fiftieth day after offering of the barley sheaf during Passover is called, in Greek, the *pentekostos*. The 5 in the equation gives the celebration its name. Acts 2 tells what happened on the fiftieth day after the Passover when Christ was crucified. The Holy Spirit was given and believers spoke in tongues.

Pentecostal churches are those that believe that the Pentecost described in Acts 2 was not a once-for-all event, but that at least some of the phenomena present at that Pentecost may be reproduced in modern times. Accordingly, most Pentecostal churches are

characterized by speaking in tongues and other features associated with the first New Testament Pentecost.

Q *Is God really a person?*

A Not in precisely the same way that we are persons. We are just human beings. Nevertheless, God has personality and is, in that sense, a person. At the Burning Bush, He told Moses, “I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14). God also told Moses to tell the people of Israel, “The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation” (Ex. 3:15). *All* the names given to God in Scripture denote personality. Furthermore, the Bible uses personal pronouns with respect to God, as in John 17:3: “Now this is life eternal: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

The Bible ascribes attributes of personality (or personhood) to God. God grieves (Gen. 6:6); He gets angry (1 Kings 11:9); He loves (Rev. 3:19), etc. Thus, the testimony of the Bible is that God is indeed a person.

All the names

given to

God in

Scripture

denote

personality.

TUESDAY

He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son.

COLOSSIANS 1:13



TODAY AT MOODY

Please add MBI's General Counsel, Robert Gunter, to your prayer list today as he helps keep an eye toward the legal issues pertaining to the Institute's extensive ministry. Pray that God would help him keep Moody's witness to the public above reproach in every detail.

Read: Exodus 12:1-42

TODAY IN THE WORD



Gladys Aylward was a British missionary to China, and shortly after

her arrival in the 1930s the Japanese invaded China. After the town where she lived was bombed, Japanese soldiers were sent to kill any survivors. Aylward led the survivors, including many children, on a long march through perilous terrain. Miraculously, many survived this harrowing escape and caught the last train for freedom.

There's something very compelling about rescue operations, the greatest of which is surely found in the story of the Exodus. Here we see a pattern of God's redemptive work. Just as He chose one man, Abraham, through whom He would bless all the peoples of the earth, so now He chose this nation, Israel. But before this nation could be a blessing, they would have to be freed.

Exodus 12 is really the climax of the first eleven chapters of Exodus, which record the efforts of Satan to thwart God's redemptive plans and God's sovereignty. The book opens with the cruel plot to crush the Jews through forced labor (1:11), but the Jews continued to increase. Then the Pharaoh ordered the murder of all Jewish baby boys, but God intervened again (1:15-20). The story of Moses' birth (Ex. 2) is an entire rescue operation in itself! God's protection of His people is tied to His covenant promise to Abraham (Ex. 3:13-17).

Exodus 12 describes the final plague. Although this plague was to fall upon every firstborn in Egypt, the Lord provided a substitution for the Israelites: a spotless yearling lamb, whose blood was to be spread on the outside door-frame (v. 7). In this way, the plague would pass over the Israelite households (v. 22).

As we read this account, it can be difficult to see how this was a blessing to the nation Egypt. But notice that many other people, presumably Egyptians, left with the Israelites (v. 38). They likely saw the power of God and wanted to join His people. Keep in mind also that God's purpose for rescuing the Israelites was to make them a great nation that would be a blessing to all the nations around, including Egypt.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It's not hard to see how the Passover prefigures our Lord Jesus Christ. Like the sacrificial lamb, whose blood offered protection, His death upon the cross offers salvation.

Luke 4:18 says that Jesus came to set the oppressed free, but the oppression here is not physical bondage to a foreign power, but spiritual bondage to the Evil One. By His death and resurrection, Jesus has made possible the greatest rescue operation in the history of the universe—the rescue of a lost person from the realm of darkness (Col. 1:13).

Read: Exodus 18:1–27

TODAY IN THE WORD



Growing up under Communism, Karin Krachova had never heard the gospel.

One day in 1995, however, she heard some students at her university describe how God had helped protect them and their families, who were all Christians, during the years when the Communists were still in power. As Karin listened, she began to wonder if there really might be a God. Months later, through her friendship with these students, Karin became a Christian herself.

In Exodus 18, we find another individual, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, who was profoundly impacted by hearing what God had done in the lives of others. Somehow word of the Lord's victory over Egypt spread to Jethro, just as it spread to Rahab (as we'll see in tomorrow's study).

Sometime after Moses had returned to Egypt, he sent his Midianite wife, Zipporah, and his sons back to his father-in-law's place. It's possible that Zipporah told her father about the events of the Exodus, but the Bible is not clear about this, nor about why and when Zipporah and the sons returned to Midian. What is clear is that Jethro was eager to see Moses again. Both Rahab and the nations mentioned in Exodus 15:14–16 were terrified by this news, but Jethro rejoiced to hear "everything that the Lord had done for Moses and his peo-

ple" (v. 1) and sought out Moses.

After Jethro heard first hand from Moses of the Lord's faithfulness, he praised God and confessed that "the Lord is greater than all other gods" (v. 11). Jethro learned from the account of the plagues and the Exodus what the Egyptians were intended to learn, namely that there is only one true God. And Jethro praised and worshiped the Lord. This account gives us a good insight into God's plan for the nations as they hear all that He has done.

It is perhaps ironic that Jethro, a Midianite, had a better grasp of what God had done for the Israelites than they themselves had. Exodus 16 and 17 record the constant grumbling of those who were eyewitnesses of the remarkable events of the Exodus!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Too often Christians say they don't know how to share their faith. But what many Christians don't

realize is that one of the most powerful ways to share the gospel is simply to tell what God has done.

Of course, it's vital to know the gospel essentials—namely, that Jesus paid the price for sin and must be confessed as Lord and Savior. But sharing the good news often means declaring what He has done for us, by bringing about our own Exodus from the bondage of sin and darkness.

*We will tell
the next
generation the
praiseworthy
deeds of
the Lord.*

PSALM 78:4



TODAY AT MOODY

Will you continue in prayer for our Legal department today? Elizabeth Brown, Katalin Morris, Charity Russell, and Cassandra Blakely commit their expertise to ensuring sound legal practices in all of Moody's endeavors. We also thank God for His laws and the wisdom of His Word.

Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, . . . and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

JOSHUA 6:25



TODAY AT MOODY

Today is the last day of undergraduate and graduate classes.

Celebrate in prayer today with our Educational Ministries faculty—Martha Alvarado, Dennis Flederjohann, and Mark Eckel—another completed semester and enriching time of teaching.

Read: Joshua 2:1–24

TODAY IN THE WORD



Christian music artist, Wendy Talbot, has a beautiful song, “Lady of the Night,” in which the Lord declares to Rahab, “Rahab, rise, I know who you can be, and I will call you a lady of the light.” God saw who Rahab would become, not who she was before she heard Him.

Like Jethro, the news of the Lord’s deeds in Egypt and the conquest of Canaan had reached Jericho. But unlike Jethro, Rahab and Jericho’s residents were terrified. Yet like Jethro, Rahab came to acknowledge the Lord and seek His favor.

The spies were sent to find any weakness in the heavily fortified city of Jericho, even though God had already promised to give them the land. There’s a bit of humor in this account, for while the spies are hiding at Rahab’s, she is the one who declares the faithfulness and power of God! After their encounter with her, however, they gain confidence that the Lord is indeed delivering the land into their hand, despite their own apparent fears (see Josh. 1).

When we first read about the conquest, it doesn’t seem like a blessing to the nations, especially the conquered ones. But we need to keep a few things in mind. First, these nations could have responded as Jethro and Rahab did, and indeed, there may have been other individuals who acknowledged the Lord God. Second,

the wickedness of these nations was great and many refused to acknowledge God as the Creator. So, the conquest was intended to drive out evil from the land. We must also remember that the focus at this point in redemptive history is on establishing Israel as a great nation, from which the covenant promises could go forth.

As we look at Rahab, however, we see clear evidence of God’s redemptive hand. Because of her faith, Rahab became incorporated into God’s people. Later we find out that King David was a descendant of Rahab (Matt. 1:5–6). Eventually this line led to Jesus Christ! Moreover, in Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 Rahab is held up as an example of faith.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



If we were writing the Bible, we probably wouldn’t include a prostitute like Rahab! But thankfully the Lord’s ways aren’t our ways, because His ways are always about redemption, regardless of initial appearances.

Rahab’s story is encouraging at many levels. First, we see God’s faithfulness to reveal Himself, even in ways that are difficult to explain. Rahab responded in faith to second-hand reports of what the Lord was doing. Second, we see that there is no one who cannot be reached and used by the Lord.

Read: Leviticus 19:10, 33–35; 26:27–45

TODAY IN THE WORD



Anyone who has ever traveled knows how vulnerable the experience of being an “alien,” or

foreigner, can be. This is particularly true if you don’t speak the native language. It’s easy to feel misunderstood, or even wonder if you’re being taken advantage of somehow. For most of us, such experiences are temporary. There were, however, a number of alien residents within Israel, and we see the Lord’s concern for these foreigners throughout the Mosaic Law.

Leviticus 19 is sometimes called the Community Code, because of its focus on farming and commercial practices, but it’s also part of a larger section called the Holiness Code (Lev. 17–26). The placement of Leviticus 19 within the Holiness Code shows that every part of life in Israel somehow concerned holiness, even treatment of foreigners.

In Leviticus 19:10, we find instructions to leave some grapes for the poor and the alien, revealing God’s heart for those most vulnerable to deprivation and exploitation. It was often difficult for foreigners to make a living, because they didn’t have inheritance rights or access to land. We will see a similar provision for foreigners in the story of Ruth (see Dec. 12; see also Deut. 24:19–22). The basis for Israel’s treatment of foreigners was the remembrance of what it was like to be a foreigner in Egypt (vv. 33–34).

The passage from Leviticus 26 outlines the disaster that would befall the nation if it failed to keep God’s ordinances. First, notice the horror of exile; instead of blessing the nations, Israel would be scattered among them to die (vv. 33, 38). This was the complete reversal of the covenant blessings and the consequence of failing to be the kind of witness the nation was intended to be.

Second, notice the link between Israel’s actions and God’s reputation among the nations. We have already seen how the nations “watched” as God delivered Israel from Egypt. In a similar way, God’s faithfulness to His covenant promises could be observed by all the nations. Thus even when Israel sinned, God would remember His covenant “in the sight of the nations” (v. 45).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It’s surprising how much of the Pentateuch addresses the concerns of foreigners. Using a concordance, look up “alien,” “foreigner,” and “stranger.” What are some of the specific concerns that are addressed? Ask yourself who the foreigners are in your midst. At one level, this could include anyone outside the body of Christ, but it could also include those from another country. Perhaps there are international students at a nearby college that you could befriend. Or maybe your church could help foreigners learn English.

*Do not oppress
an alien; you
yourselves
know how
it feels to be
aliens, because
you were aliens
in Egypt.*

EXODUS 23:9



TODAY AT MOODY

The Faculty of the Educational Ministries department—Nancy Kane, Jeri Kendrick, and Robert MacRae—request your prayers of thanksgiving for the opportunity to train men and women to serve the Lord in vocational ministry.

SATURDAY

Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

DEUTERONOMY 4:6



TODAY AT MOODY

Please lift up in prayer Robert Neff, Vice President of Broadcasting, today. Ask the Lord to pour out His strength, hope, and peace for him and the entire Moody Broadcasting family. May we all feel the reassuring hand of God in this holiday season.

Read: Exodus 32:1–14; Deuteronomy 9:1–7

TODAY IN THE WORD



In our limited thinking, we may wonder why God would choose one nation, Israel, to specifically reveal Himself. What about all the other nations that weren't chosen? How can that be fair? Maybe we think about times when we weren't chosen for something and conclude that choosing one and not others is inherently unfair. But this is to focus on only half the process. Yes, it's true that Israel was chosen from all the nations, but (and this is key!) Israel was chosen to be a blessing to all the nations.

In Exodus 19:5–6, God said to Israel, “You will be my treasured possession . . . you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” From the beginning, God intended the nation to minister to the surrounding nations (a kingdom of priests) and to demonstrate the ways of God to them (a holy nation).

Deuteronomy 9 makes it clear that Israel wasn't chosen because of its own righteousness, but rather because of the wickedness of the surrounding nations. Here then are two reasons for the Conquest: first, God's promise to Abraham; and second, the wickedness of the nations (v. 5). Because Israel was to be a witness, it had to be holy. But the sad truth is that the Israelites had been stubborn and sinful from the time they left Egypt (v. 7). The rest of this passage refers to the incident

involving the golden calf, which is also recorded in Exodus 32.

While Moses was still on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, the waiting Israelites began to worship a pagan idol that they themselves had made (Ex. 32:4). After all the Lord had done for them, no wonder His anger burned against them (v. 9).

Notice carefully the reasons that Moses gives as he intercedes for God to spare the people. First, the Lord's reputation will be damaged among the Egyptians (v. 12), who will ascribe evil motives to the holy God. Second, God made a promise to Abraham and his descendants. Moses knew that God could never go back on His word, so this appeal is really an affirmation of the Lord's faithfulness.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Just as Israel was called from the nations to minister to the nations, so too we as Christians are called from the people around us to minister to these very people. We must remember that it wasn't because we were so good or so talented that God saved us, but because of His great love and His glorious redemptive purposes.

This should motivate us to share our faith with others. If God has placed someone in your life who needs Christ, pray that you will have an opportunity to minister to that one today.

Read: Ruth 2:1–13; 4:1–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



When Mark and Jan adopted two-year-old Kwan, they celebrated with a special dedication service at their church. As Mark said during the service, they felt a renewed understanding of God's love for us as His children after going through the experience of adopting Kwan into their family. Adoption is a remarkable picture of God's redemptive love. In fact, the New Testament teaches us that as believers we have been adopted as God's children (Eph. 1:5).

In many ways, the story of Ruth is like an adoption, because we see a foreign woman becoming part of the people of God. In fact, the Old Testament has many similar examples, such as the Egyptians who left during the Exodus (see Dec. 7), Jethro (see Dec. 8), and Rahab (see Dec. 9).

Recall that Ruth married into a Jewish family who had moved to Moab during a famine. Eventually Ruth returned to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. As it turned out, this Moabite demonstrated more clearly than some Israelites what it meant to love God with all one's heart and to love one's neighbor as oneself (Deut. 6:5).

In Ruth 2, we find Ruth gleaning in the fields according to the laws that we read about earlier (see Dec. 10). More important, Ruth is in a field that belongs to Boaz, who is

Naomi's relative. Boaz's godly character is evident from the way he greets his workers (2:4), and is further revealed in his kindness toward Ruth. Recognizing the vulnerability of a foreign woman, Boaz gives Ruth both protection and provision. Behind Boaz's actions, we clearly see the hand of God.

As we jump forward in the story, we find out that Ruth was essential to God's plans. The son born to Ruth and Boaz would become the grandfather of David. So without Ruth, there would not have been David. And God promised to David an everlasting family, which eventually led to Jesus Christ (see Matt. 1:5–6). So in the story of God's care for one foreign woman, Ruth, we see His providential care for the nation Israel, and eventually, all the nations of the earth.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Israel was called to be holy rather than to go forth, and in the Old Testament we find numerous examples of individuals, such as Ruth, coming to Israel and believing in Israel's God.

After Christ's atoning sacrifice and the coming of the Holy Spirit the church is commanded to go forth. But we are still called to live holy lives as well. Can others see Christ in your life? Our holy lives of obedience should be radiant examples that attract others to the faith we profess in Christ.

*Nations will
come to your
light, and
kings to the
brightness of
your dawn.*

ISAIAH 60:3



TODAY AT MOODY

Perry Straw, David Trout, and David Woodworth in Network Development will be encouraged to know that you are praying for them today. As they extend the outreach of Christian radio, keep them in your prayers and thank the Lord for the opportunity we have to worship and serve Him freely.

MONDAY

*How shall I
make amends
so that you
will bless
the Lord's
inheritance?*

2 SAMUEL 21:3



TODAY AT MOODY

Will you bring before the Lord today the ministry and staff of Radio

Esperanza headed by its Programming

Director, Gersón García? They bring the good news, or buenas noticias, to the Spanish speaking communities of Chicago.

Read: 2 Samuel 21:1–14

TODAY IN THE WORD



In many court cases, restitution is quite important. It's not uncommon for a criminal sentence to include prison time and compensation for the victim, which tries to make up for losses in property, time, or physical well-being. In the Old Testament, this is sometimes called *lex talionis*, or more commonly, "an eye for an eye." This principle lies behind the incident that we read about in 2 Samuel 21.

After a three-year famine, David prays to the Lord and finds out that this calamity is the result of Saul's betrayal of the Gibeonites. We have to look back to Joshua 9:3–27 to learn that the Gibeonites tricked Joshua into a peace treaty so that they might be spared. Years later, Saul violated that treaty when he killed the Gibeonites (v. 2).

Clearly God takes oaths and promises seriously, so there were consequences to Saul's actions. David's compliance with the Gibeonite request for seven of Saul's descendants might shock us, but keep in mind that his action was consistent with "an eye for an eye" concept of justice. We also see how seriously David took his own oaths. Before Jonathan died, David had promised to protect Mephibosheth (see 1 Sam 20; 2 Sam 9), which is indeed what he did.

The end of David's life was filled with a series of heart-wrenching events, including the rebellion and death

of his beloved son, Absalom. But the last four chapters of 2 Samuel are most likely intended to give us a final portrait of David as Israel's ideal king. In these chapters we find events that show how David acted righteously, including the incident we find in today's passage. Here we see that Saul's failure impacted the next generation, but that David's willingness to repent and to do justice led to the reversal of the famine.

David represents further fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham. Israel at this time was a great nation, and they enjoyed a great reputation. Today's passage shows us that David's concern for justice blessed the nations—in this case, the Gibeonites.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



God takes justice very seriously and is concerned about violations of promises and the oppression of others. Have you ever excused an unjust action toward someone by thinking that that individual probably would have done the same thing? Or perhaps you deceived someone, thinking that he or she wouldn't know the difference anyway?

As we see from this account, we can never anticipate the full consequences of unjust actions. When we live honorably, we bring glory to God and blessing to others.

Read: Psalms 67; 72

TODAY IN THE WORD



History is filled with numerous individuals who declared their own glory and splendor. For example, Caesar Augustus issued decrees to proclaim himself the savior of the world. But the Bible shows that only the Lord God Almighty is to be worshiped, and His name alone is to be proclaimed throughout the world.

Consider, for example, Psalm 67. This psalm seems to have clear links to the promise made to Abraham that he would both be blessed and be a blessing to all the peoples. As you read this psalm, you may have also been reminded of the blessing found in Numbers 6:24–26. But whereas that blessing was given by Aaron the high priest to the nation Israel, here it's applied to all the nations of the world.

Notice also that the purpose of the blessing is so that God's ways and salvation may be known through out the world (v. 2). This is the same idea behind the promise to Abraham: that the blessing given to him would be a blessing for all the people of the earth. This point is made clear in verse 6, where the psalmist asks for God's blessing on his own people ("us") so that all peoples might fear and praise the Lord.

In Psalm 72, we find a psalm written by Solomon that celebrates the enthronement of the king. But as we read this

psalm, it's clearly talking about a king who is much greater than Solomon. Not surprisingly, this psalm is considered to be messianic, which means that it describes the perfect reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the emphasis on justice (v. 4, 12–14) and the extent of the king's rule through the whole world (v. 8). In fact, all kings and nations will serve Him (v. 11). And notice the clear link to the promise given to Abraham that is found in verse 17. Unlike the decree to worship a human ruler who will pass away, the call here is to praise the Lord God whose glory fills the whole earth!

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



In his book, *A Biblical Theology of Missions*, George Peters wrote, "The Psalter is one of the greatest missionary books in the world."

You might be surprised by this declaration, but you can investigate it for yourself by reading through Psalms 2, 33, 66, 96, 98, 100, 117, and 145.

Keeping in mind the promise given to Abraham, make a list of the ways that the nations would be blessed through the nation Israel. Look also for the theme of the nations fearing (respecting) and praising the Lord.

*God reigns
over the
nations; God
is seated
on his
holy throne.*

PSALM 47:8



TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Joseph Stowell requests your prayers for the students of Moody Bible Institute as they begin an intense few days of final exams. We rejoice together in observing the great things the Lord has taught them so far this year!

The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

1 KINGS 10:24



TODAY AT MOODY

Conference Ministries brings joy and hope to individuals and families through biblical teaching and Christian love. Please thank God with us for the ministry of Rebecca Anderson, Richard Pierce, and Stacey Pittman.

Read: 1 Kings 8:41–42; 10:1–9

TODAY IN THE WORD



In the middle of the seventeenth century, King Louis XIV of France began constructing a palace that would display his power and glory. Its vast rooms were filled with precious art pieces and gilded gold ceilings. Nobility throughout France and from all over Europe sought an audience with the king at Versailles. Its glorious splendors only confirmed Louis XIV's epithet, the "Sun King."

The glory of Versailles is undeniable, but 1 Kings tells us that kings from all over the world eagerly sought the splendor of Solomon's wisdom, his palace, and the temple. With Solomon we see even further fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. By this time, Israel was a great nation with vast borders and wealth. Jerusalem had become a world center that attracted many visitors.

Perhaps the most famous of these visitors was the Queen of Sheba, an important South Arabian trade center. Her visit indicates the importance of Israel among the nations. But the Queen of Sheba didn't visit Solomon simply because of his wealth and fame. The account in 1 Kings 10 is quite clear that she was drawn to Solomon because of his relationship with the Lord (v. 1). When she saw all the glory of Solomon and the temple, she praised the Lord and "his eternal love for Israel" (v. 9).

As we have seen before, God's favor toward Israel was

intended to be a blessing to all the nations. The Queen blessed Solomon and was in turn blessed by him. Her visit anticipates later prophecies concerning the time when the nations will stream in to Zion (Isa. 2:2–4; 60–66) and to the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24).

The rest of Solomon's story isn't so happy. After spending seven years building the temple (1 Kings 6:38), Solomon spent thirteen years building his own palace (1 Kings 7:1).

Then in 1 Kings 11 we read about Solomon's love for foreign women. Toward the end of his life, he witnessed the rebellion of one of his officials, Jeroboam, who would eventually bring about the division of the kingdom.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Universalism is the belief that all people, regardless of whether they confess Jesus Christ, will be saved. Some parts of the Old Testament, including the passage from 1 Kings 8, might seem like they teach universalism. But 1 Kings 8:42–43 records Solomon's prayer that all may know the Lord and fear Him, the same desire we find in 2 Peter 3:9. Scripture is clear that the way to know and fear the Lord is only by calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Only those who trust Christ to forgive their sins will be saved.

Read: 1 Kings 17:7–24; Luke 4:13–28

TODAY IN THE WORD



All morning long Tommy's mom talked with him about the impor-

tance of sharing his toys. Each time she asked if Tommy understood, he nodded his head and agreed to share his things when the other three-year-olds showed up for a play date. But when one of the kids picked up one of his toy trucks, Tommy ran over and grabbed the truck. Baffled, his mother came over and asked Tommy if he remembered their earlier discussion about sharing. Tommy nodded yes. Slowly it began to dawn on her that Tommy hadn't grasped that sharing meant actually letting others play with his toys!

Sadly, many Jews living in Jesus' day seemed to have a similar problem. For them, the issue concerned the intended recipients of the Messiah. Knowing that the gospel would eventually extend beyond Palestine, Jesus appealed to the account of Elijah and the widow in Zarephath to show that the blessings of God were also intended for the Gentiles. But the people listening to Jesus didn't want to be reminded of that (Luke 4:28–29).

It's somewhat remarkable that Elijah ministered to the widow of Zarephath considering the horrible state of Israel at that time. Ahab, a very evil king, together with his wife, Jezebel, a native of Sidon, introduced perverse Baal worship to Israel. Much of Elijah's ministry cen-

tered on exposing the falseness of Baalism and calling the people back to the Lord God.

When Elijah first encounters this poor widow, it's not clear how his request for food and water could be a blessing to her. Under normal circumstances, widows were among the poorest of the poor, but during a famine their situation could be life-threatening (v. 12). But her willingness to help Elijah opens the way for a miraculous provision for her (vv. 15–16).

Next the woman is faced with yet another challenge, the illness of her son. The harshness of her circumstances may explain why she initially blames the illness on Elijah. The loving Lord used Elijah to restore her son and to reveal Himself to this needy woman.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The story of the widow of Zarephath reminds us that there is no limit to the depth of God's

love. Just as the oil kept refilling itself in her jar, so too God's ability to provide never runs dry. This is a good reminder, because sometimes we can be envious of God's blessing to others, especially nonbelievers, thinking that somehow we deserve that blessing instead. It is possible that God is blessing others so that they too will come to know the Lord as this widow did.

*He has
filled the
hungry with
good things.*

LUKE 1:53



TODAY AT MOODY

Richard Campbell, Chief Financial Officer, invites you to praise God for His faithful provision to the work He's called us to do at Moody. December is our most important month for donations, and the generosity that pours in from God's people is an amazing thing to behold.

You have prepared . . . a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.

LUKE 2:32



TODAY AT MOODY

Over the next two days, please join us in praying for the Extension Studies sites of the Moody Distance Learning Center. Today, please pray for the staff of our Northwest Campus in Spokane, Washington: Tina Armagost, Jack Lewis, Grant Opland, and Rebekah Wilson.

Read: Isaiah 49:1–23

TODAY IN THE WORD



Researchers have noted that rates of depression and anxiety are higher during the winter and in areas of the country that receive less sunlight, but they didn't know whether this was a correlation or if the lack of sunlight was the cause. Even if there was a connection, there didn't seem to be much remedy other than moving to a sunnier location. Now Seasonal Affective Disorder, the depression some people experience from a lack of light, has been recognized, and sufferers are able to get special light machines that imitate sunlight and reduce their symptoms.

Just as sunlight is necessary for our physical and emotional health, the Bible uses light as a metaphor for salvation, indicating that God's light is essential for spiritual life.

As we've seen in our study, God's intention for choosing Israel was that it might be a blessing to other nations. Yesterday we saw that God was faithful to meet the needs of Gentiles even when the nation was in great crisis and rebellion. We also know that eventually this sin would lead to the nation's exile. Elijah was one of the early prophets whom God raised up to warn the people to repent and to display the power of the living God when the people were worshiping lifeless idols. But God also used the prophets to articulate His promises of restoration and future hope. In Isaiah 40–66, we find a

series of powerful prophecies, sometimes called the Servant Songs, that refer to the Servant of the Lord.

In Isaiah 49, we learn that this Servant will restore Israel to the Lord. For a nation facing exile, this was certainly comforting to hear. God's plans for the Servant extended to the ends of the earth: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (v. 6). Indeed, the work of this Servant will be so great that kings will bow before Him.

Although there are obvious messianic hopes in today's passage, it's also true that the nation itself had been called to be a light to the Gentiles. Part of Isaiah's message included a reminder to the nation of God's intended purposes for them.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The theme of "a light to the Gentiles" extends well into the New Testament. We first see it in Simeon's praise in Luke 2:29–32. Simeon well understood that Jesus was the promised Servant of Isaiah.

Interestingly, the term is appropriated by Paul in Acts 13:47 concerning his own call to the Gentiles. When his Gentile listeners heard about God's plan for them, they rejoiced! These links between the Old and New Testaments help us to see that missions is no afterthought in the plan of God!

Read: Jeremiah 6:16–20; 33:1–11

TODAY IN THE WORD



Cindy Howard was raised in a Christian home and made a personal commitment to Christ in high school. But when she went away to college, she quickly got caught up in the campus party lifestyle. She always intended to find a good church and a Bible study, but somehow it never happened. By the end of her freshman year, Cindy had the reputation of a party girl who could drink a lot of alcohol. By the time she graduated from college, few, if any, of her college friends even knew that she was a Christian.

Sadly, Cindy Howard's example isn't an isolated one. As believers in Jesus Christ, our lives will bear a witness—but our witness can be either positive or negative.

Jeremiah ministered just prior to the Babylonian exile (627–580 B.C.). Like many other prophets, he urged the people to return to God's ways (Jer. 6:16). But they refused to do so! Even though God had sent previous prophets (the "watchmen" in v. 17), the people persisted in their sin. Rather than destroy all false idols, the Israelites had adopted many perverse pagan practices. Rather than trust the Lord to protect them, the Israelites had entered into dangerous foreign alliances.

The consequences of their sin were far-reaching. Instead of being a witness to the nations, we find that the nations were

called upon to testify against Israel in the courtroom of God's justice and to hear His sentence against his people (v. 18). This is indeed a sad point in the nation's history.

Fortunately, Jeremiah prophesied of God's wonderful restoration. Jeremiah 33 contains some of the most glorious promises of restoration, although the gruesome horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem and exile are not excluded (vv. 4–5, 10). Yet after the Exile, God promised to reunite Judah and Israel and to rebuild Jerusalem in such a way as to display His glory to the surrounding nations (v. 9). The very nations that had been called upon to testify against Israel would at some point rejoice because of what God has done in and for Israel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It can be easy to think of witnessing for Christ in terms of what we say to other people, but it is often what we actually do that has the greatest impact.

To be sure, we are called to witness in both word and deed. Still, it's always a good idea to take some time to ask if our behavior lines up with our words. In other words, do we walk the talk? We read in 1 Peter 3:13–16 that even our accusers should give glory to God because of our good deeds.

If you will return, O Israel, return to me . . . then the nations will be blessed by him and in him they will glory.

JEREMIAH 4:1–2



TODAY AT MOODY

Please continue with us in prayer for our Extension Studies site in Ohio, headed by Richard Fisher, who works hard to bring a Moody education to people with a passion for serving Him.

*Now I...
praise and
exalt and glo-
rify the King
of heaven,
because every-
thing he does
is right.*

DANIEL 4:37



TODAY AT MOODY

Dr. Richard Epps, Vice President of Stewardship, would appreciate your prayers for the thousands of friends who give to Moody in December. His prayers of thanks go out in your honor as well, as your support does immeasurably more for Christ than we can ever imagine.

Read: Daniel 4:1–37

TODAY IN THE WORD



Several decades before Christopher Columbus came to America, a remarkable event happened in the South American Incan Empire. King Pachacuti began to question his people's worship of the sun when he observed that the sun did the same thing over and over, acting more like a laborer than a god. There was a legend of an omnipotent creator God, named Viracocha, and Pachacuti decided that this must be the true God who alone must be worshiped.

Equally remarkable is the account of the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, which the king himself narrates. Before his dream, he had a fairly high opinion of himself, which is understandable considering that this king's rule spread from Egypt to modern Iran. If we were to walk beside the king as he surveyed the city of Babylon (vv. 29–30), we would see one of the greatest cities of antiquity, boasting two of the seven wonders of the world: the hanging gardens of Babylon and the great city wall. But human pride is a dangerous thing, and Nebuchadnezzar's pride had to be broken if he was ever going to come to know the Most High God.

Daniel had already demonstrated his God-given ability to interpret the king's dreams (see Dan. 2). The tree of this dream symbolized the prosperity and growth of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Although this cos-

mic tree extended over a very large region, it was cut down, with only a stump remaining. Such a dream would have been disturbing to most people, but when Daniel understood that it applied to Nebuchadnezzar, we can understand why he was hesitant to explain it to the powerful king (v. 19).

Despite the unusual way in which Nebuchadnezzar was humbled, God was merciful to protect him and to lead him to a correct understanding of himself and of God. After his ordeal, the great king understood that the Most High ruled over the eternal kingdom—even Babylon the great couldn't compare to that. Moreover, he wanted all peoples to know about the Most High God (v. 1), not the great king Nebuchadnezzar.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



No matter how powerful, no one is beyond God's reach. Like the Incan king Pachacuti, Nebuchadnezzar realized that only one God alone must be worshiped.

If you would like to read other accounts like Pachacuti's, we recommend, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, by missionary Don Richardson, available at most Christian bookstores. This book further illustrates what we see in Daniel 4: God is sovereign over even the most powerful human rulers, and He desires to reveal Himself to the peoples of the world.

Read: Jonah 3:1–4:11

TODAY IN THE WORD



At the height of the Soviet Union's power, it controlled territory from the Baltics to the Balkans, and controlled a circle of Central Asian republics. Soviet troops often used brutal tactics to suppress challenges to Soviet domination. For residents who lived in Soviet satellite countries, the Soviets were feared and hated. Yet believers from countries such as Romania and Poland risked their lives to bring the gospel into the heart of the Soviet Union.

Although most people only think about Jonah and his encounters with a big fish, this book is a compelling example of God's love for even the most hated of nations. Assyria at that time was known for its gruesome cruelty. Assyrians were so proud of their ability to terrorize that they left numerous monuments boasting of their sadistic practices. To the average Israelite, the most logical object of God's wrath would be Nineveh. It's no wonder, then, that Jonah felt that he had to run from God's call. If he went to Nineveh, he was sure to be killed; and even if he were successful in his mission, no one would rejoice at home that anything good had happened to these hated people.

After much resistance, Jonah went to Nineveh, and the results of his preaching were nothing short of miraculous (Jonah 3:5, 10). The Lord's concern for Nineveh shows that

His love was not confined to a particular nation or place. This is the most likely reason why Jonah tried to run away. It was unthinkable to him that God could love even the Assyrians. In Jonah's mind, these people deserved God's wrath because of all they had done. But, apart from God's intervention, all people are deserving of His wrath. God's heart is that all people might repent and turn toward Him.

Jonah was a very human prophet. God's ways were difficult for him to understand—and he was not afraid to let God know that. But God's response to Jonah cut to the core: Jonah cared more about his comfort than the fate of a 120,000 people.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The book of Jonah forces us to ask some hard questions. Are we like Jonah and become angry if God extends mercy to those who we feel deserve judgment? Perhaps this is how we feel about outreach to hardened criminals or prayer for terrorists. Or are we going to take God's perspective, which asks, "Should I not be concerned about that great city?" Jonah pushes us to see how great God's love is for all nations and peoples, even those whom we consider enemies deserving His wrath.

Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? . . . Am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?

EZEKIEL 18:23



TODAY AT MOODY

Edward Cannon, Executive Vice President, will be honored by your prayers for MBI as this year draws to a close. We look back at another year of ministry in the name of Christ and are thrilled to be involved with such a faithful network of hope and love, and you're such an important part of that.

TUESDAY

*Christ died
for our sins
according to
the Scriptures
... he was
buried ... he
was raised on
the third day.*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4



TODAY AT MOODY

Would you include in your prayers the staff of WRMB, Moody Radio station in Boynton Beach, Florida? Wallace Barr, William Hurne, and Barry Marsh work hard to bring the hope and light of God's Word to Florida.

Read: Matthew 12:38-45

TODAY IN THE WORD



Most people know about Jonah and the “whale,” even if they don't know that this story is in the Bible. It certainly is a memorable event—even making its way into Walt Disney's *Pinocchio*! Yet as we saw yesterday, Scripture records this event because of something beyond the fact that Jonah spent some time in the belly of a big fish.

Jesus' own reference to Jonah forces us to consider the significance of this event. Jonah's “fish tale” showed him God's deliverance and forgiveness for his rebellious attempt to flee. The sign of Jonah was that God providentially rescued His prophet so that His intended mission might be carried out. Moreover, Jonah's presence in Nineveh was a sign of God's judgment. Similarly, Jesus was a sign to those rejecting Him that God's judgment was also upon them. The Ninevites further illustrated what true repentance looked like.

The context of Matthew 12 is important. The Pharisees had just questioned Jesus about the source of His miracles (Matt 12:22-37). Then they demanded to see a sign. Keep in mind that they had already seen many signs of Jesus' deity, so they were really trying to trap Him. By pointing to Jonah, Jesus drew a parallel between Jonah's time in the fish's belly and His own upcoming time “in the heart of the earth.” Just as Jonah was rescued from the

fish, so too, God would deliver His Son from death on the third day.

Jesus then went on to make two more points. The Ninevites would condemn the generation that Jesus addressed because they had repented with only Jonah's one-sentence prophecy (Jonah 3:4). But those listening to Jesus had heard someone greater than any prophet, and still they refused to believe. The same is true with the Queen of the South, the Queen of Sheba. She heard Solomon's wisdom and believed in the Lord (1 Kings 10; see Dec. 15). But now one greater than Solomon was present, and this generation still refused to believe. It was shocking to see two examples of Gentiles who believed, whereas the Jews in Jesus' day would not.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It may seem curious that teaching about evil spirits follows Jesus' discussion of the sign of Jonah. But Jesus was showing the Pharisees that they were in danger of great evil by rejecting Him. When they ascribed His power to Satan, they opened themselves up to a terrible fate.

That's a sobering thought. When people hear about Jesus and deliberately reject the truth, they turn themselves over to the Evil One. This shows us once again that rejection of Jesus is never neutral; it has horrific, eternal consequences.

Read: Mark 7:24–30

TODAY IN THE WORD



In 1655, Morgan Godwyn left Oxford University to minister in Virginia and Barbados. As he tried to evangelize slaves, however, slave owners opposed Godwyn, balked at the idea that slaves could become Christians. Some were afraid that if slaves converted, they would end up with the same status as their owners.

As we read today's account, at first we might think that Jesus was exhibiting some sort of racial prejudice. But was Jesus really calling Gentiles "dogs"? We need to understand exactly what Jesus meant in His encounter with this woman.

First, note that this happened near Tyre. We know from the Old Testament that Tyre was especially hated by Israel (see, for example, Ezek. 26–28). So Jesus' encounter with this woman was designed to instruct both her and Jesus' disciples, who must have wondered how He would respond to a woman from Tyre.

Jesus' initial response probably encouraged the disciples, apparently confirming the idea that Gentiles had no part in God's plans. But the key to Jesus' response is the word *first*. He didn't say that she would leave empty-handed, but rather that the children, meaning the Jews, must eat first. Here Jesus confirmed that His primary mission was to Israel. It would only be after His death and resurrection that the gospel would fully go out to the Gentiles. This was

later affirmed by Paul (Rom. 1:16).

This woman immediately understood what Jesus meant. Notice that she only asked for some of the crumbs that fell to the ground. She grasped the secondary place of the Gentiles in God's plan, but she also recognized that second place was better than nothing. And, she refused to take no for an answer! She was desperate to save her daughter.

The woman got more than a crumb; her daughter was fully delivered. The beginning of Mark 7 records Jesus' discussion of clean and unclean. By placing this discussion before the account of this Greek woman, Jesus showed that even Gentiles were not unclean and that no one was beyond God's salvation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Jesus' primary call was to the Jews, a sign of God's faithfulness to His people. But they rejected Him (and their call to bear witness to the nations). Thus, in today's passage Jesus also made it clear that eventually God's good news would cross the boundary between Jew and Gentile.

The gospel continues to cross boundaries. When we are tempted to think that our group is better than another, we need to remember Jesus' example of extending grace, mercy, healing, forgiveness, and love to rich and poor, Jew and Gentile.

The gospel . . . is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

ROMANS 1:16



TODAY AT MOODY

Please continue to keep WRMB in your prayers today and mention its staff: Dana Shelton, Boyce Tate, and Kenneth Vaughn. Your encouragement means so much to them and their listeners in the areas recently devastated by hurricanes.

THURSDAY

*This man
really is the
Savior of
the world.*

JOHN 4:42



TODAY AT MOODY

Today we ask that you pray for the Institute's Facilities Management department under the leadership of Vice President, Bruce Cain. Ask for good teamwork and a continued strong walk with the Lord.

Read: John 4:1-42

TODAY IN THE WORD



Bible commentator G. Campbell Morgan once speculated what would happen if the disciples set up a commission to investigate starting a mission in Samaria. The commission's findings would be as follows: "Samaria undoubtedly needs our Master's message, but it is not ready for it. There must be first ploughing, then sowing, and then waiting. It is needy, but it is not ready."

Quite the opposite of this "commission's" conclusion, we see that Jesus was more than willing to take a significant risk when he reached out to a Samaritan woman, and it resulted in the conversion of an entire village.

The decision to go through Samaria was deliberate, and may have been due to the Pharisee's opposition (vv. 1-3). Most Jews went to great trouble to avoid this region, even though Samaria was the most direct route between Judea and Galilee. Not only did Jesus take a risk in going through Samaria, but He also broke many cultural and religious barriers by even acknowledging a woman, and a Samaritan woman at that. It was simply unheard of that a rabbi, especially one who was unmarried, would even speak to a woman, let alone ask something of her. This explains why the disciples were so baffled by Jesus' actions (v. 27).

In addition to being a Samaritan and a woman, this woman's lifestyle was highly questionable, which explained

why she was drawing water in the middle of the day (v. 6). Jesus knew that this woman was very isolated—both from her community, and more important, from the source of Living Water. As their conversation unfolded, Jesus helped her see that her theological concerns were really a cover for her deeper need of salvation. He moved beyond her earthly focus to show her that He was the source of abundant, Spirit-filled life that satisfied more than even the best well water.

The woman's willingness to share what had happened with the village demonstrates her tremendous excitement. They also responded in faith. Her tainted background no doubt piqued their curiosity and enabled them to see the power of God in her life more clearly.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The villagers' response is another example of Jesus crossing cultural and geographic barriers in His earthly mission. Although His primary focus was the Jews, all four Gospels record significant ways in which Jesus ministered to Gentiles.

Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman challenges us to think about how we might take risks to cross similar barriers for the gospel. Will we see the great need of individuals and be willing to reach out to them? Or will we conclude that "they are needy, but not yet ready?"

Read: Luke 24:36–53; Matthew 28:16–20

TODAY IN THE WORD



“Twas the night before Christmas when all thru the house / Not a crea-

ture was stirring not even a mouse”—so begins one of the most-loved Christmas stories. No doubt you heard this story as a child, and may plan to read it again today. On the night before Christmas, there’s much talk of Saint Nicholas, or as he’s commonly called, Santa Claus.

Christmas traditions are fun, but it’s important to keep our focus on the real reason for our celebration, which is Jesus’ birth. Perhaps even more important, Christmas also celebrates His resurrection, because if He hadn’t been raised from the dead, there would be no remembrance of His birth.

As we’ve seen, God often uses one to reach many. What was true with Abraham and Israel is even more true of Jesus, who fulfills the promise to Abraham—that through him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. God’s promise of redemption, begun in Genesis 3:15, is now revealed. Because of His death and resurrection, the forgiveness of sins is possible (Luke 24:47).

Jesus’ final words to His disciples end His earthly ministry. The Great Commission, recorded in today’s passages, is rightly understood to be the basis for Christian missions. But as we have seen, God’s heart has been for the nations all along. What is different at this stage in redemptive history

is the command to go to all the world.

In both commissioning accounts, we notice that the first response to Jesus’ resurrection is worship. Next, the disciples were encouraged that they would receive power from on high (Luke 24:49), which is the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus would be with them forever (Matt. 28:20). The expression “all the nations” is important, because some suggest that the Jews have been somehow now excluded from God’s plan. Yet the clause “beginning at Jerusalem” in Luke’s account refutes this. Jesus commissioned His disciples to go from Jerusalem into all the world, making disciples of all peoples, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



We can consider the Great Commission as the “eve” of a whole new phase of

God’s redemptive plan. Just as we feel excitement and anticipation on Christmas Eve, so too we can sense the excitement that the disciples must have felt hearing Jesus’ final words. Two thousand years after these words, we have even more reason for excitement. Although there are believers worldwide, we are eager to see the gospel continue to reach the nations. In our prayers and actions, let’s make this our focus for this upcoming year.

He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him.

DANIEL 7:14



TODAY AT MOODY

As Catering and Special Events Coordinator, Janet Ellis provides hospitality ministry in the name of Christ to hundreds of people in the Moody family. Pray that God’s name would be glorified through this ministry and that His people feel His love on Moody’s campus.

SATURDAY

*You will be
my witnesses
in Jerusalem,
and in all
Judea, and
Samaria, and
to the ends of
the earth.*

ACTS 1:8



TODAY AT MOODY

There's no better time than Christmas to come to God with thanksgiving and praise for the good news of His Son. As we study God's Word this month, thank Him today for His Living Word to all the nations.

Read: Acts 2:1–21

TODAY IN THE WORD



On this day, believers from all cultural backgrounds join together in celebrating our Savior's birth. Whether there are drums or church bells, rice cakes or Christmas cookies, the focal point is the same for all Christians.

From a tiny manger in Bethlehem to nations around the world, nothing in history compares with the spread of the gospel. Acts 2 records the very beginning of this worldwide explosion. Jews from "every nation under heaven" (v. 5) were gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. This feast day celebrated the first fruits of the harvest (Lev. 23:19–22; Ex. 34:22) and was one the three most important holy days for Jews.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, the small band of disciples began to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the multitude of assembled Jews. The list of nations (vv. 9–11) is similar in some ways to the table of nations listed in Genesis 10, just before the Tower of Babel incident. This shows us that what God had to separate because of human sin, He was now reversing because the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Although some accused the disciples of being drunk, Peter rightly understood that this phenomenal event signaled the last days prophesied by Joel (2:28–32). This outpouring of the Spirit was possible, because, unlike David who died and still lay in his tomb, Jesus now sat

enthroned at the right hand of the Father.

Yesterday we read in Jesus' final words while on earth that His disciples would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. This commission is also recorded in Acts 1:8, where the program to be followed is more clearly outlined. The spread of the gospel would begin in Jerusalem, which is what we read about in today's passage. And although the focus here was on the Jews, there are indications that these Jews shared the gospel in their home countries (see 1 Peter 1:1). Also, Peter indicated that the gift of the Spirit was also for "all who are far off" (v. 39), an expression that referred to Gentiles.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



It's easy for the true meaning of Christmas to be obscured by the gifts and activities of the season. Take some time today to review our study of God's great gift of redemption through His Son Jesus Christ. Truly this is the indescribable gift (2 Cor. 9:15). Then take some time to pray for individuals in your life who need this gift, asking the Holy Spirit for opportunities and receptivity to share with this person. Finally, if God places a specific nation on your heart, pray that the gospel will go out and be received there.

Read: Acts 8:4–8, 26–40

TODAY IN THE WORD



When Luka was just an infant his mother died, causing his father to abandon him. He was then given to his grandmother, who didn't want him either and tried to sell him . . . twice. Finally, after eight years of being passed around to various foster families, he ended up at the Good Samaritan Orphanage in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. At first, Luka was withdrawn and continued to steal and lie. But as time went on, Luka began to realize that God did have a plan for his life, which was found in the Bible.

In the eyes of many, a child such as Luka is a social outcast who would only end up causing trouble. But Luka looks much different in the eyes of God, who cares about everyone, but especially those who are orphaned and cast aside. It's exciting to consider that the spread of the gospel that began at Pentecost in Jerusalem (see yesterday's study) eventually spread to a young boy in Cambodia named Luka.

After the events recorded in Acts 2, the next chapters of Acts show how the gospel began to spread through the Judean region (see Acts 1:8). Ironically, the persecution that led to Stephen's death helped to spread the gospel into these outlying areas as followers of Jesus were scattered by the Jewish authorities. This explains why Philip was in Samaria, proclaiming Christ (v. 4).

From Samaria, Philip was led by an angel to the southern area of Gaza, where he met an Ethiopian eunuch, returning from worship in Jerusalem. Although this man held a very important royal post, eunuchs were generally treated as social outcasts. So Philip's encounter with him shows that not only does the gospel transcend cultural barriers, but it also transcends class and social distinctions.

Far from being rejected by God, we see that the Spirit supernaturally brought Philip to the eunuch to explain the Scriptures and to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Once this key mission had been accomplished, the Spirit redirected Philip to other areas that needed to hear about the gospel.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Like the Ethiopian eunuch, people still rejoice to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. Through the efforts of the Bible Society in Cambodia and the Good Samaritan Orphanage, children like Luka are being transformed by God's love. Numerous Bible societies throughout the world are committed to bringing the Bible to millions. If you are interested in learning more about the work of various national Bible societies, you can visit the American Bible Society Web site at www.americanbible.org.

Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

ACTS 8:35



TODAY AT MOODY

Frank Leber, Vice President of Information Systems, invites you to pray for all the work his department is doing in network and programming support, web design, and implementing new software on campus. We are privileged to use new technology for God's glory.

MONDAY

*So then,
God has
even granted
the Gentiles
repentance
unto life.*

ACTS 11:18



TODAY AT MOODY

For the next three days join us in praying for our Food Service staff working in the Student Dining Room. Our prayers go to God today with thanksgiving for the hard work of Douglas Becker, Charles Blalack, Michael Burrill, Karen Davis, and Vinh Hoang.

Read: Acts 10:1–11:18

TODAY IN THE WORD



When Ling came to the United States, she thought she had come to study chemistry. She never suspected that God had other plans, mainly because Ling was sure there was no God. But as she struggled with loneliness and academic pressures, Ling began to wonder if there was more to life. She had never been religious, but lately she began to wonder. On campus, she frequently saw flyers for Bible studies, but she thought the Bible couldn't be for someone from China. One day, she had an overwhelming sense that some force was directing her, although this made no sense to her and she was afraid to talk about it. A few weeks later, another student asked Ling if she was interested in finding out more about Jesus. Inexplicably, Ling sensed that this had to do with her recent feelings and decided to attend a Bible study. By the end of the year, Ling understood that the “force” that had been touching her was actually Jesus Christ.

The lengths to which the Lord goes to reach people staggers our limited imagination, but it's a reminder of how much He loves people. One such individual was a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Although Cornelius feared God and tried to do the right thing, he didn't know about the good news of Jesus Christ. Knowing the desire of Cornelius's heart, however, the Lord supernaturally

spoke to him in a dream, directing him to find Peter.

Peter, however, needed a vision from the Lord himself. Despite all that Peter had witnessed, the natural prejudice of Jews against Gentiles was so strong that the Lord had to break through this before Peter could minister to Cornelius. So the Lord used an unusual dream to correct Peter's understanding of what was unclean (in this case, Gentiles). Equipped with God's perspective, Peter was then ready to go to Cornelius.

Notice that Cornelius had assembled his entire family and close friends to hear about the gospel! Both Peter and Cornelius were able to see that truly the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ was for all people.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Although the gospel continues to spread, there are many people groups who have yet to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. According to a 2002 article in *Mission Frontiers*, there are nearly 144 million people in 815 ethnic groups who don't have access to the gospel. There are several ways to respond to such statistics. First, we can learn more about these people groups and pray for specific ones. Second, we can support mission groups targeting the unreached. Third, we can pray about our own involvement in missions.

Read: Romans 15:14–22; 11:11–16

TODAY IN THE WORD



A stanza from the popular hymn, “Tell Me the Old, Old Story,” begins:

“Tell me the story slowly, That I may take it in—That wonderful redemption, God’s remedy for sin.” This is the story that we’ve been tracing this month, and today we see that Paul carefully understood his own part in the “old, old story.”

You may have heard the claim that Paul “invented” Christianity, because Jesus never intended to start an organized religion. The problem, of course, is that this is completely untrue. This becomes clear when we see that both Jesus and Paul saw their own missions as fitting perfectly in the larger context of God’s redemptive story. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus showed the disciples how everything in the law and the prophets related to Him (Luke 24:44–45). Similarly, Paul’s understanding of his call to the Gentiles was firmly rooted in the Old Testament. Paul didn’t “invent” anything—he was simply obedient to God’s call and His Word.

Toward the end of his letter to the Romans Paul affirmed his call to be a light to the Gentiles. Crediting God’s grace, Paul acknowledged that some of the points that he had made in this letter weren’t easy, but he was duty-bound to proclaim the gospel in its entirety to the largely Gentile church in

Rome. Using language from the Old Testament, Paul likened his ministry to the Gentiles to offering an acceptable sacrifice to the Lord. Citing Isaiah 52:15, Paul affirmed his call to preach the gospel where it hadn’t been previously proclaimed. And, in fact, God had enabled Paul to preach the gospel all the way to Illyricum, modern-day Albania.

Despite his clear call to the Gentiles, Paul also understood that the gospel went first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles. As he traveled, he first shared the gospel in synagogues. It’s also clear that Paul saw his ministry to Gentiles in terms of its impact on the Jews. As we read in Romans 11:14, Paul hoped that his Gentile ministry would make the Jews envious and lead to their salvation.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Perhaps you’ve seen a child become bored with a toy, only to want it back the moment another child starts to play with it.

Similarly, God prepared a special gift for His people, but they rejected it. So God brought the gospel directly to the Gentiles, to provoke the jealousy of Jews and increase their desire for this gift. We should pray for Jewish people around us to accept the gospel and embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.

ISAIAH 49:6



TODAY AT MOODY

As we continue to bring before God our Food Service staff, please mention Catherine Hoskins, Mattie Kemp, Steven Kile, Yrama Kingsley, and Hoa Lam during your prayer time. Our students are always grateful for the nutritious meals and great service they provide.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

GALATIANS 3:28



TODAY AT MOODY

In conclusion of the prayer segment for those who work in the Student Dining Room, thank the Lord for the dedicated service of Hanh Nguyen, Lois Sanders, Jonathan True, Jeffery Williams, and Donald Wood.

Read: Ephesians 2:11–22; Romans 15:5–13

TODAY IN THE WORD



Throughout his short life, Antonio had only known hatred—for his abusive parents, for kids who weren't part of his gang, and for all the Asians and African Americans who lived in his neighborhood. Hatred led him to juvenile detention at age twelve. It seemed that hatred would consume this young man. But then God's love broke into his life. A local Christian outreach sponsored a basketball Bible club. With nothing better to do, Antonio started to attend. Slowly he began to change, and others began to notice. One day, an African-American club member was seriously injured on the basketball court. Antonio was the first to help him, and even held his head until the paramedics could arrive.

One of the greatest testimonies to Christ's transforming power is unity within His body. Only the love of Jesus could enable a kid like Antonio to care for someone he had been taught to hate. Recall from our study on Genesis 3 (see Dec. 2) that the consequence of the Fall was alienation. In Ephesians 2, we see that the effect of Jesus' ministry is reconciliation.

Throughout this section, Paul has two levels of reconciliation in mind. First and foremost, believers are reconciled to God the Father through Jesus the Son. No other reconciliation is truly possible if a person remains estranged from God. But once this level of reconcil-

iation occurs, then we see that Christ also reconciles those who are far (Gentiles) and those who are near (Jews). To be sure, this includes Jewish and non-Jewish believers. But this also indicates any groups who have been separated historically, such as the groups that Antonio formerly hated. Miraculously, God is building His church (v. 21) out of formerly separated peoples who have been brought together in Christ.

We find this same emphasis on unity in Romans 15, where Paul urges believers to accept one another to the glory of God. The series of Old Testament quotations in this section offer a fitting summary of our study this month. Praise is the proper response to God's great mercy in bringing the good news to Gentiles.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



The saddest condition of any person is to be “without hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Any work of reconciliation, whether it's between different ethnic or economic groups, must begin with reconciliation to God.

If you have never experienced this reconciliation with God, don't let this year pass without committing your life to Jesus Christ. If you are one who has been brought near, prayerfully ask God how you can reach out to others who are far away, to those who are without hope and God.

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:11–6:2; Colossians 1:5–8

TODAY IN THE WORD



In the ancient world, ambassadors were extremely important representatives of their countries. A visit from a foreign ambassador was the occasion of much pomp and celebration. In order to show other world powers that their king or queen was a serious player, these ambassadors often had access to great wealth and power themselves and could easily resort to bribery or intimidation to secure their demands. In this context, it's somewhat surprising that Paul would call believers ambassadors. But as we'll see, it's a very high calling.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, he had to defend himself against those who rejected both him and the gospel message. Apparently there were even those in Corinth who sought to gain financially from sharing the gospel (2 Cor. 2:17). So Paul made it clear that there were no gimmicks with him; the nature of who he was and of his ministry were plain for all to see. Paul's sincerity clearly set him apart from any who would abuse a position of power for personal or financial gain. Unlike others, he was motivated by the fear of the Lord (v. 11).

More importantly, however, Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that the only basis for their identity was Jesus Christ. It didn't matter who they knew or what they had formerly done, the only thing that mattered was that they were a new

creation in Christ! What was important from the world's perspective lost its significance in comparison with Christ (v. 16).

Once again we find the important theme of reconciliation here. Recall from our study yesterday that this reconciliation is both between a person and God as well as between a person and other people. In today's passage this idea is extended further: in addition to being reconciled, we are called to a ministry of reconciliation.

Paul models this ministry for us in the rest of this passage. His strong tone reveals how deeply he cared for the Corinthians and was anxious for their salvation. Like an ambassador who seeks to avoid a crisis, Paul pleaded with the Corinthians to be reconciled with God.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



Have you ever thought of yourself as an ambassador?

Take some time today to list the qualities and responsibilities of a good ambassador. For example, an ambassador must be comfortable in another culture and sensitive to how things are said, qualities that are also important for sharing Christ, especially in a cross-cultural context.

Ambassadors must often be patient, yet persistent. Above all, ambassadors act on behalf of the one who sent them, not according to their own interests. Truly, being an ambassador for Christ is a high calling.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:20



TODAY AT MOODY

Our Human Resources department provides numerous services to all our employees and students—and your prayers will be a great help to them. We appreciate their professionalism and expertise and the leadership of Lloyd Dodson, Vice President of Human Resources.

A great multitude . . . [was] standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

REVELATION 7:9



TODAY AT MOODY

In our end of the year prayer today we want to thank all the friends of Moody for faithfulness and friendship this year in studying the Bible together. Thank you for this journey in the pursuit of God and His wisdom in these changing and challenging times.

Read: Revelation 7:9–12; 21:22–27

TODAY IN THE WORD



Perhaps you are one the millions who will turn on the TV a few minutes before midnight to watch the great illuminated ball drop into Times Square in New York City. Or perhaps you have other traditions for closing out one year and bringing in the next. Either way, New Year's Eve is a huge night of celebration around the world.

But no earthly celebration comes even close the scene in Revelation 7, which is perhaps the most exalted vision in the New Testament. Those who have suffered persecution and tribulation are given the incomparable honor of joining the elders, angels, and four living creatures who worship before the throne. Notice the astounding diversity and unity of this multitude. Here we find representatives of all the nations, tribes, peoples, and languages joined in praise, no longer separated by prejudice, fear, and linguistic barriers.

This glorious scene shows God's plan of redemption accomplished. The promise given in the garden (Gen. 3:15) ultimately pointed to this eternal praise. We also see the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. Through the descendents of this one individual, truly all the nations will be blessed. Because of the one Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16), Jesus Christ, redemption has been accomplished and the rightful Heir has taken His throne.

Revelation 21 shows us the final destination to which God's redemptive story leads. Here we find the New Jerusalem, solely illuminated by the light of God's glory. We see the promise of Isaiah 49:6, that Israel would be a light to the Gentiles, at last fulfilled (v. 23). In this vision, we also find this promise fulfilled: "Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. . . . To you the riches of the nation will come" (Isa. 60:3, 5).

What an exciting conclusion of the story that we've been tracing this month. We hope that this study on the wisdom of God's good news for all the nations has encouraged you as you consider your own place in this great story and its certain, victorious conclusion.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY



One of the amazing aspects of the worship scene in Revelation 7 is that praise from

every language and culture will somehow be brought together in a unified yet variegated chorus, never yet heard in history.

We can only imagine what that kind of worship will be like, but in anticipation of it, consider visiting several churches that are quite different from your own during this upcoming year. See if you can get a glimpse of the diversity and unity of worship that we will fully experience in heaven.

familiar with D. L. Moody's life too, so that was a great opportunity to minister and reach out to someone who might not have known about MBN.

I also really enjoyed a special program we did last spring with George Beverly Shea. He worked at Moody Broadcasting before he was recruited to work with Billy Graham, and so we brought him back and he sang for us up in Studio B, where many years before he had sung and produced programs for us. We've also done a few music specials that I have really enjoyed. We've had Chris Rice and Sara Groves in the studio singing some of their music and those were great programs.

Q: Christmas is coming soon. How do you approach programming during the holiday season?

I try to keep people's schedules in mind when I'm putting together programming for December. Most of our stations play wall-to-wall Christmas music the week of Christmas and that's perfect, because usually listeners are on vacation or traveling and they're likely to miss the program they listen to regularly, like *Mid-day Connection* or *Prime Time America*. So, for those programs, we try to run Christ-

mas-themes earlier in the month. And we try to put new twists of those Christmas-themed programs every year. We want to give people something to think about so, for example, we had Moody Church pastor Erwin Lutzer on last year talking about Christmas from Mary's perspective.

Q: What can listeners look forward to this holiday season?

Well, listeners will definitely want to tune in for the wall-to-wall Christmas music. Music is such a big part of the holidays. So, we'll plan if possible to have a few programs where we bring artists into the studio for them to sing Christmas music and talk about their work as musicians and singers. We'll have programs that talk about the meaning of the holiday. I'd like to have Pastor Lutzer on again this year; he always brings such depth and spiritual truth to our programs. And *Open Line* will do a retrospective at the end of December that will feature segments from the best programs of 2004.

To view a broadcast schedule or to find a Moody Broadcasting station in your area, visit www.mbn.org or call 1-800-DL-MOODY.

Moody Trusts & Estate Planning Seminars

Even if you already have a will or estate plan, there may be a better plan for you. Attend a MOODY TRUSTS & ESTATE PLANNING SEMINAR and find out if you have the best plan available. This presentation is loaded with practical information with plenty of time for your questions. The seminars are FREE and you are under no obligation if you attend.

Monday, January 24, 2005

First Baptist Church
3000 South John Young Parkway
Orlando, FL 32805
10 to 12 noon and repeated from 7 to 9 PM

Tuesday, January 25, 2005

Holiday Inn
2701 East Fowler Ave
Tampa, FL 33612
10 to 12 noon and repeated from 7 to 9 PM

Wednesday, January 26, 2005

Holiday Inn Express
3601 West Burleigh Blvd (Hwy 441)
Tavares, FL 32778
10 to 12 noon and repeated from 7 to 9 PM

Thursday, January 27, 2005

Holiday Inn Conference Center
3260 US Highway 98 North
Intersection of Interstate 4 and US 98
Lakeland, FL 33805
10 to 12 noon and repeated from 7 to 9 PM

Friday, January 28, 2005

Hilton Garden Inn
Sarasota-Bradenton Airport
8270 North Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL 34245
*Seminar begins at 11 AM with a box lunch being served.
Pre-registration needed as space is limited to 50 guests.*

To register for a free seminar, please call 800.801.2171

Do You Need More Income?



The continuing low interest rates have a positive effect on some parts of the economy, but not for people on a fixed income. If you depend on fixed income investments for a part of your income, these low interest rates are a problem. A possible alternative to fixed income investments is establishing a **Moody Gift Annuity**.

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE has issued charitable gift annuities for 97 years. A Moody Gift Annuity provides you with a stable, lifetime income at an attractive annuity rate based on your age. You also benefit from an income tax deduction, if you itemize deductions, and a part of the income is tax-free for your life expectancy. The best part is the satisfaction of knowing your gift to Moody will help continue preparing young men and women to serve Christ throughout the world.

You can get more information about the Moody Gift Annuity from the informative brochure, *A Giving Partnership*. This **FREE** information is available by simply checking the box on the attached reader reply panel, or call us at 1-800-DL MOODY (356-6639) and ask for *A Giving Partnership*.



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