

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

WINTER QUARTER December 1999, January, February 2000.

Looking Ahead.....	2
Editorials.....	3

Studies in Matthew

UNIT I: Preparation for Jesus' Mission

5 Dec.—Jesus' Herald and Baptism—Matt. 3:1-8, 11-17.....	4
12 Dec.—Jesus Endured Temptation—Matt. 4:1-14a.....	18
19 Dec.—Birth of Jesus (Christmas)—Matt. 1:1-6, 18-25.....	32
26 Dec.—Coming of the Wise Men—Matt. 2:1-12.....	46

UNIT II: Participation in Jesus' Mission

2 Jan.—The Lord's Chosen Disciples—Matt. 4:18-22; 9:9-13; 10:1-7.....	60
9 Jan.—Teachings on Prayer—Matt. 6:1-15.....	74
16 Jan.—Miracles of Compassion—Matt. 9:18-31, 35-36.....	88
23 Jan.—Opposition to Jesus—Matt. 12:22-32, 38-40.....	102
30 Jan.—Laborers in the Vineyard—Matt. 20:1-16.....	116

UNIT III: Fulfillment of Jesus' Mission

6 Feb.—Christ's Triumphant Entry—Matt. 21:1-13.....	130
13 Feb.—Watch for Christ's Return—Matt. 24:45—25:13.....	144
20 Feb.—Jesus Died for Us—Matt. 27:38-54.....	158
27 Feb.—Christ's Resurrection and Charge—Matt. 28:1-10, 16-20.....	172
Topics for Next Quarter.....	188
Paragraphs on Places and People.....	189
Daily Bible Readings.....	190
Review.....	191

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World Missions

Like John's baptism, water baptism continues to be a visible action, a sign of a person's repentant heart. Water baptism gives testimony to a person's remorse for personal sin; it gives testimony to a person's deliberate turning away from sin to God; it gives testimony to a person's forgiveness of sins; and it gives testimony to a person's change of lifestyle. However, John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me . . . shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 3:11). Water baptism thus became more than just a sign of a person's repentant heart.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Jesus, water baptism gave testimony to a person's identity with Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:3-7). It gave testimony to a person who had been baptized with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13) and empowered to live a changed lifestyle (Rom. 6:8-10). In New Testament times, if a person had not been baptized in water, one could almost assume that he was not a believer. Water baptism was a symbol of one's salvation.

Water baptism continues to serve as a symbol of salvation. In fact, in some countries water baptism is taken very seriously because being baptized could result in alienation—alienation from friends and even estrangement from family. You no doubt have heard stories of Muslims, Buddhists, and Jews who, upon being baptized, were rejected by their family and friends.

Water baptism, however, at times requires a Christian to sever personal relationships prior to being baptized. I know a young Filipino woman who wrestled with cutting off such a relationship. Her name was Babet.

As is the custom in the Philippines,

Babet had come to Manila from the provinces to work as a house servant for an extremely modest salary plus room and board. She was young, pretty, and extremely pleasant. She worked hard and was dependable and honest.

When she arrived in Manila, Babet secured a position as a house servant at Rudolfo's, a Filipino pastor/missionary. He was working with SEND International. As you might expect, Babet eventually made a profession of faith. She was, however, engaged to be married to a young man who was not a Christian. What is a young Filipino girl to do?

Babet wrestled with II Corinthians 6:14, which says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" To make matters worse, the ratio of Christian men to Christian women at the time was one man to seven women; thus, to sever her engagement might mean that Babet would never marry.

As the day of her baptism drew closer, Babet searched her heart. To whom am I committed? With whom will I be identified? When the day of baptism came, Babet was not among the eleven who were baptized. She had chosen her unsaved fiancé over Jesus Christ.

Water baptism testifies to a person's repentant heart and a person's identity with Jesus Christ. Jesus commands that we go and "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). To refuse to be baptized is to disobey Jesus. To deny water baptism is to deny Jesus Christ.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

Jesus' temptations not only serve as a major prelude to His ministry; they also reveal Jesus' approach to ministry. Jesus' goal was to focus on God and God's truth. This is evident in Matthew 4:10 when Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Jesus was quoting Deuteronomy 6:13.

People were created by God to worship Him, yet a great many people throughout the world worship other gods. They have, as Paul has written, "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23).

Jesus, however, came to redirect our worship to the one true and living God. As a result of Jesus' ministry, a great many Koreans have turned from Buddha worship and serve the one true and living God. I recently met one such Korean woman while I was teaching a three-week course at Asian Theological Seminary (ATS). She shared with me her testimony, which I now share with you.

"When I married my husband," said Grace, "neither his family nor my family were Christian. They were all Buddhists. My husband neglected me since he was busy doing business outside. I had to take care of my mother-in-law, who was very sick.

"Seeking the peace of her heart," Grace recalled, "one day my mother-in-law wanted to attend the worship service at Paul David Yong Cho's Full Gospel Church."

In looking back on that special day in her life fifteen years ago, Grace remembered, "The Holy Spirit struck my whole self. Crying and weeping, I became a child of my eternal Lord and Saviour." Although it was her mother-in-

law who was seeking peace, Grace was the one who found it. She turned from Buddha—a false and lifeless god—to worship the one true and living God.

"Life," Grace said, "became meaningful to me. For the sake of my Lord I could endure any persecution of the rest of the family, especially of my husband." Grace shared how for many years she found comfort in I Peter 3:1, which says, "Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives."

Perhaps you can imagine how difficult this was for Grace, or maybe you share a similar experience. To her credit, she continually obeyed Scripture and continually prayed for her family's conversion. "At last," she told me, "God worked wonders in my life. My husband is now a believer as well as his family." Grace's obedience to Scripture was rewarded, her prayers were answered, and her God was glorified.

Today Grace serves her Lord and Saviour. Her mission, like that of Jesus, is to pursue God's call. Her goal is not to draw attention to herself but to focus on God and His truth. She presently serves as a missionary to young people in Manila while she attends ATS. Upon graduation, she says, "if God is willing, I hope to go to Myanmar (Burma) as a missionary."

Although her husband's family are Christians, Grace told me that her immediate family are not believers yet; so she asked me, "Please pray for their conversion and my ministry."

Please join with me today in praying for Grace, her ministry, and the salvation of her family.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

If you have children, did you preplan a name for each child? Did you deliberate over all the possible names that exist? I did. I even bought books about names. They gave the history of naming children, the meaning of names, and the frequency with which a particular name was used.

Sometimes naming a child is quite simple. Other times, especially if it is your firstborn, it involves a great deal of thought. Should I name my child after a family member whom I greatly love or whom I wish to encourage? Should I give my child an inspirational biblical name?

Why do we spend so much time considering names for our children? I believe it is because names are important! A name can encourage us, a name can inspire us, and a name can stimulate us.

When Mary gave birth to her firstborn son in Bethlehem, her husband, Joseph, and she had a preplanned name for the Child. In fact, the Bible tells us that an angel appeared to Joseph and said, "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS" (Matt. 1:21). The name "Jesus" is special because its Hebrew form is "Joshua," which means Yahweh (the Lord) is salvation.

The reason the Child was named Jesus is given in Matthew 1:21: "for he shall save his people from their sins." The play on words "JESUS" and "shall save" points to an expression used for the expected Davidic Messiah (Christ) who would come and deliver His people.

Today, all around the world, people who call upon the name of Jesus are delivered from their sins. In fact, Peter told us in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none

other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Since "God hath made that same Jesus"—the one who was born in Bethlehem and later crucified in Jerusalem—"both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), salvation comes through faith in Jesus' name—no other.

The International Bible Society is committed to providing translations of Scripture in all languages and to giving those translations away, freely, to people throughout the world. Their aim is that men, women, and children everywhere might know of the name and Person of Jesus, believe in Jesus Christ, and attain salvation through the name of Christ Jesus our Lord.

In June 1997, Lars Dunberg, then President of International Bible Society, wrote about how the society launched a program in India. The goal, according to Dunberg, was "to reach as many of the nation's school children—numbering 300 million—with a specially designed and illustrated Scripture for children.

"As I presented the first copies to Hindu, Muslim and Christian students in South India," Dunberg wrote, "I learned that almost every school in every state of the nation is open to God's Word through this special children's edition." In this special children's edition of the Bible, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian students of India learn about Jesus.

The name "Jesus" was not chosen arbitrarily. It was a deliberately chosen name that is proclaimed throughout the world by our missionaries because we know that "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

World Missions

When the Magi saw Jesus and His mother, Mary, they "fell down, and worshipped him" (Matt. 2:11). Although Scripture says nothing about the number, the names, or the country of these wise men, many legends about them exist.

Some legends say there were two wise men. Other legends say twelve. Perhaps three wise men came.

Perhaps Matthew's mention of their being "from the east" (Matt. 2:1) means they were from Persia or Mesopotamia. Perhaps they came from Parthia, Arabia, or India. Or maybe they were three representatives of the human race (Asia, Africa, and Europe)—a descendant from each of Noah's sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth).

Whoever these men were, wherever these men came from, and how many there were are unimportant. What is important is that these wise men were Gentiles. They were Gentiles who came to worship the Descendant of King David, the promised Messiah.

The expensive but not uncommon gifts brought by these Gentiles from the East reflect their submission and allegiance to this newborn Davidic King (cf. Ps. 72:10-11; Isa. 60:6). Their submission and allegiance are also evident in the fact that they worshipped this newborn King.

Matthew was foreshadowing, or signaling, an important point—a point that Jesus Himself made to all His disciples. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:18-20).

All people groups are expected to join in and send men and women to

The calling of the disciples in Matthew is a beautiful account of individuals who left everything to become part of a group of people who lived for Jesus, who were identified with Jesus, and who shared in Jesus' ministry.

When Jesus saw Peter and Andrew, He said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). The priority of their lives changed from fishing to following Jesus. They exchanged fishing for fish with fishing for people. They became missionaries for Jesus. Everyone who has decided to follow Jesus is not only a disciple but a missionary.

I realize that prior to World War II, to be a missionary meant that missions was your calling, your career, and your livelihood. I remember a similar philosophy proclaimed while preparing for ministry in the 1980s.

In the past, mission agencies tended to be rigid and overly selective. They wanted only career people, those who were called to do nothing more and nothing less. They turned down the physically disabled. They frowned on and even rejected anyone over thirty years old. They seldom trained nationals.

According to Jim Reapsome, however, "the word 'missionary' has been blown apart.

"The classic understanding of 'missionary,'" said Reapsome, "has been disfigured and put out with the trash. But I'm not about to bemoan its fate, because this should force us back to the Bible" ("Who Is Today's Missionary, Anyway?" *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, July 1997).

The point Reapsome eventually made is that God is the one who calls and God is the one who sends. As a result, missions has changed. Today's mission agencies are more open, more creative, and much more flexible. For example,

World Missions

most agencies not only allow people to serve short terms, they actually encourage it—whether it is for a two-year term, a summer, or a two to three-week project. More and more opportunities exist for people—young and old alike—to get involved in short-term missions.

The leadership at Trinity Fellowship in Dallas gather a group of men together to help build several buildings in Peru. Since the missionaries they support had a need, they took it upon themselves and made themselves available to the mission to meet that need.

Another sign that mission agencies are being more open and flexible is the type of missionary on the field today. First-term missionaries tend to be over thirty years of age. Tentmaker missionaries, second-career missionaries, and senior citizen missionaries are not unusual. Many individuals today have joined the ranks of the missionary to serve as linguists, educators, secretaries, physicians, radio technicians, and more.

Another even more significant attitude about missions has also changed. In the past, the only "real" missionary was the one who crossed cultures, the one who went to another country, the one who spoke a different language. Not so today.

Just prior to His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Missions begins across the street; then it expands to the world. One church in the Midwest exemplifies this truth with a sign for all to see as they are about to leave the church building. The sign reads, "You are about to enter the mission field." Just as we are disciples for Jesus, so we are also His missionaries.

Jesus told us, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet (the home's most private location), and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6).

Although the larger context (Matt. 6:1-15) reflects Jesus' concern with practicing or flaunting one's piety before other people, verse 6 in isolation identifies an important fact about God. When we pray in earnest, regardless of where we are, whether it is in the most private location of our home or in public, God hears; God answers; and people know it—the redeemed and the unregenerate alike. Prayer in and of itself is an effective tool for missions.

Early in February 1997, a nine-year-old girl (we will call her Valerie) suffered a life-threatening cerebral hemorrhage. After the neurosurgeon's successful operation, Valerie was doing quite well until she suffered another life-threatening event. She had a serious stroke.

"While we must confess that we did in fact fear evil," Valerie's mother recalled, "we were surrounded by the care of the Good Shepherd in a very tangible way: over twenty friends and church members stood with us that day as we waited at death's door, praying fervently and reassuring us of God's love."

Severe swelling of the brain required Valerie to be placed in a drug-induced coma so that the medical team could manage the swelling. The coma lasted eleven days. As you can imagine, this was very difficult for Valerie's parents. Valerie's mother, however, recalled how they "were sustained by the prayers, concerns, and many acts of compassion by friends, family members, members of Hope Presbyterian

Church, co-workers and business associates . . . and our neighbors."

Valerie is home now. She goes to therapy to relearn some of her motor skills. She takes part in special educational classes to help with spatial perception. Emotionally, Valerie is doing very well. Speech, vocabulary, and cognition are back to normal.

Valerie has survived, and she is recovering quite nicely. She is a testimony to answered prayer. She is living proof that, regardless of where we are, God hears and answers our prayers and people around us know it—the redeemed and the unregenerate alike.

A physician who attended Valerie wrote, "Not too many people can appreciate how much Valerie really, really went through. What a miraculous recovery! As a physician, I can tell you that the brain injury Valerie had was extremely severe. To recover to her extent is certainly pushing modern medicine beyond its capabilities. As a Christian, who happens to be a critical care pediatrician, I can tell you that God works through the power of prayer. Believe me, I can sense when people are praying; God was at work in her life. As I pray for each of my patients, what encourages me is seeing exactly what you experienced: answered prayer. Valerie's recovery is certainly a reason I will continue to pray for our critically ill kids."

Prayer is an instrument God uses to reveal His existence and His presence. Prayer is the catalyst for God to exercise His sovereignty and His compassion. Prayer is a tool God uses to develop our dependence on and submission to Him. Without the earnest and sincere prayer of God's people, there would be no missions.

—Herbert W. Baleman, IV

If someone were to ask you to describe God, how would you describe Him? I immediately think of His sovereignty, His holiness, and His compassion. In fact, when I think of God's compassion, two biblical events come to mind.

The first concerns Manasseh. King Manasseh is presented in II Kings 21:1-18 as a despicable sinner and the reason for Judah's downfall, yet II Chronicles 33:10-17 presents Manasseh as praying earnestly and humbly to God. His prayer of repentance was heard, and God restored him to his throne. There he initiated religious reform throughout his kingdom.

Although no record of his prayer exists in the Bible, someone—prior to the birth of Jesus Christ—captured what Manasseh may have prayed in the apocryphal writing *The Prayer of Manasseh*. It is a short yet beautiful prayer of repentance, and it captures the fact that God's compassion extends to even the vilest of sinners.

The other act of God's compassion that comes to my mind occurs in Jonah. After Jonah's preaching to Israel's arch-enemy, the people of Nineveh, God forgave them when they repented of their sin. In anger, Jonah cried out, "I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful (compassionate), slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Jonah 4:2). God's compassion extends to any group of people who repent of their sin.

Is it any wonder that "when [Jesus] saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they were faint, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36)? Like God the Father, Jesus—God the Son—is compassionate.

Missionaries, whether here in the states or overseas, also need to be com-

passionate, for the people they are trying to reach with the gospel message are not always a pretty sight. Some may be extremely poor or uneducated. Some may be alcoholics or drug addicts. Some may be dying of cancer or AIDS; nevertheless, people need the Lord. It takes people of compassion to minister God's gospel message to such people.

Years ago, a young man in his early twenties (we will call him John) met two Christians (we will call them Chris and Terry) who took a personal interest in him. Although he no longer took drugs, John had a problem with alcohol. He was an alcoholic; nevertheless, Chris and Terry invited John to a college and career group meeting where he got to know some other Christians his age.

Terry and Chris knew that John needed more than an occasional college and career group meeting; so despite extremely busy schedules, they made it a point to become socially involved with John. They golfed with him and took him along on outings to the beach. In essence, they became John's friends.

As their relationships grew, John came to realize that Terry and Chris had something that he lacked. He became more and more unhappy and discontented with his life and his lifestyle. As he began to search for answers, guess who was there to help direct John? Guess who was there to support John when he wanted to turn from alcohol to the living and true God? Terry and Chris! They were there because they not only felt compassion but also extended that compassion to a man who needed a Saviour.

Churches and mission agencies today need people who will exercise God's compassion toward the lost.

—Herbert W. Baleman, IV

According to Matthew 12:30, neutrality with reference to Jesus is impossible. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." As a result, if you are for Jesus, you have opponents. You may even face opposition in much the same way Jesus faced opposition from the Pharisees.

Assuming that everyone who reads this article on missions is a Christian, how does the following title strike you? What emotions are stirred within you when you read "The Global War on Christians" (Bennett, *Readers Digest*, August 1997)?

Since we seldom face severe opposition or persecution here in the United States, perhaps a sudden sense of paranoia has overtaken you or thoughts of overstatement have crossed your mind. If you have suffered opposition, you might feel distress or self-pity, yet as we speak, Christians around the globe are suffering severe opposition.

In his article "The Global War on Christians," Ralph K. Bennett pointed out that an estimated 200 to 250 million men, women, and children are at risk of torture, imprisonment, and execution. Their crime is that they are Christ followers—Christians.

In Sudan, the Muslim-controlled government is engaged in a full-scale war against Christians—Christians who make up one-fifth of the population. According to Bennett, "Sudan's Nuba Mountains, where Christians have lived since the sixth century are now a wasteland of mass graves, destroyed villages and camps filled with starving women and children. Half a million Nuba Christians, virtually all men, have been killed in the past decade."

In Saudi Arabia, all citizens must be

Muslims. Expressions of Christianity such as wearing a cross, reading a Bible, or uttering a non-Muslim prayer are prohibited. Religious police search out hidden church services among the millions of Filipinos, Koreans, Indians, and other foreigners who take up residence in Saudi Arabia as hired laborers. If a person is arrested for preaching Christian beliefs, it could mean death.

Although Christianity has been rooted in China since the seventh century, Bennett pointed out that "many of China's estimated 40 million Christians still worship in fear." Why? Since 1995, the government's Religious Affairs Bureau has stepped up attempts to stamp out Christian Bible classes and evangelical church centers. Conviction of such activities results in imprisonment and reform-through-labor camp, as it did for Rev. Charles Guo Bole.

It may mean death, as it did for thirty-six-year-old Zhang Xiuju. "Xiuju was dragged from her home one night by police. When the police returned her lifeless, battered body, they claimed Xiuju had died accidentally when she jumped from a car" (Bennett).

Michael Horowitz, a Jewish lawyer who is fighting for Christian human rights, "was shocked by the silence of U.S. Christians in the face of worldwide persecution," yet he saw the issue through a different set of lenses. "It may be easier for me," he said, "to see the eerie parallels between what is happening in Christian communities today and what happened to my people during much of Europe's history."

Let us take a moment to pray for the three-fourths of all Christians who live outside the West, many of whom are being persecuted.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16) is a beautiful picture of the sovereign grace, goodwill, and largehearted generosity that God extends to outcasts, to sinners, and to latecomers through Jesus. "Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you" (Matt. 20:4).

One group of Christians who are ceaseless in reaching sinners for Jesus Christ, who are unremitting in making known God's largehearted generosity of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ, are those involved in The JESUS Film Project, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ International.

The "JESUS" film is a biblically based film on the life of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The 16-mm film, now in four hundred languages, is shown throughout the world by hundreds of traveling "JESUS" film teams.

Since the film has a clear and compelling gospel presentation, many of the outcasts and sinners who see it come to know of God's largehearted generosity evidenced through the Person and work of Jesus. Many respond to the message about Jesus Christ—His love, His sacrificial death, His resurrection, His lordship—and put their trust in Him.

Many uncultivated vineyards are being cultivated for Jesus. On Christmas Eve 1996, Palestinian authorities on the West Bank allowed gospel literature and the "JESUS" film to be distributed in Manger Square. The results were amazing.

A Palestinian Campus Crusade for Christ worker recalled that twenty thousand people had gathered that night and that 80 percent were Muslim. "We had," he said, "Arabic New Testaments, 'JESUS' film videos, and audio cassettes. They gave us a special location

in the square. I want to tell you something. People came to us like a wave. . . . They came by tens and hundreds, stretching out their hands, pushing and shouting. I asked them, 'Do you know what this is?' 'Yes, it is the Bible. We want it!'"

When the evening came to a close, thousands of Bibles and "JESUS" videotapes and cassettes had been distributed. A vineyard had been cultivated for Jesus Christ. Opportunities revealing God's sovereign grace had been made available to thousands of outcasts and sinners.

Elsewhere, the film has not only cultivated but also reaped a significant harvest. After the film was translated into Yao for 1.4 million people who live in Mozambique—a nation in southwest Africa—a premiere showing of the film took place. About 3,500 Yao people came to hear and understand the gospel. For four days, the "JESUS" film teams (consisting of 35 people) presented the film at schools during the day and held open-air showings at night.

While retelling the event in a May-June 1997 newsletter, the director of the JESUS Film Project, Paul Esleman, said, "In total, 39,000 Yao saw and understood 'JESUS' and 6,000 publicly indicated decisions for Christ. And this was in a Muslim area where a profession of faith can cost you your livelihood, your family, or your life."

This particular Campus Crusade ministry not only cultivates, it also harvests vineyards for Jesus Christ. They go, and God rewards them with people who are trusting Jesus Christ for their salvation. Please pray for the JESUS film ministry.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

World Missions

Prior to His death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus made two prophecies about the future. He foretold the coming of a great tribulation, and He prophesied that a sign would be evident in the sky at His second coming and the end of the age (Matt. 24:1—25:13).

Although we ponder what exactly that sign in the sky may be (Matt. 24:30) and debate whether or not we ourselves will experience the Great Tribulation (vss. 15-22), one thing is clear. We are to "watch therefore, for [we] know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (25:13). Regardless of the tribulations we may face while serving our Lord and Saviour, we are to continually watch for His return.

As the hour of our Lord's return draws nearer, investigations of Christianity and persecutions of Christians will increase. Our message will be questioned. We will be rejected and our intentions misconstrued. In fact, it is happening in Europe now.

A missionary in Germany, we will call him Dale, told of an elderly woman who had called him one day speaking with an almost fearful, troubled voice because her grandson had accepted the Lord as his Saviour. Dale went on to say, "She, like so many other people, think of us as a sect because we are not part of the State Church, and eye us very suspiciously." Christian intentions are thus misconstrued.

In addition, a revisiting of the occult and cults seems to be occurring in Germany. Dale observed, "People are much more open and accepting toward esoteric groups, witches and the rein-statement of old Germanic cults. Even in the media, some of these groups and people are more favorably discussed than those so-called 'Fundamentalists,' as they would call us." Christians and

their message are thus rejected.

Finally, Christianity is being questioned in Germany. Dale explained that "the government has started to investigate those groups who are not in the World Council of Churches" because their fundamentalistic tendencies are viewed as harmful to those people who join such groups. He contended, "As long as there is a statement that says 'There is only one way,' you are suspect. And our message is clear: Jesus is the ONLY way."

The German Christian heritage, as great as it once was, is eroding. As in Germany, the Christian heritage in Holland is also eroding. This erosion, however, is of a different kind. They too reject the Christian message, but their rejection manifests itself in moral decadence.

"The Netherlands," as Carrie Gordon pointed out, "is known for its liberal social policies. The Dutch allow citizens to buy, sell, and smoke marijuana in public. Prostitution is also legal. About two decades ago, the Dutch began experimenting with doctors intentionally taking action to cause a patient's death. . . . In fact, the Netherlands is the only nation in the world where these practices are commonly accepted" ("Euthanasia: It's No Dutch Treat" *Focus on the Family*, June 1997).

These two European nations, Germany and Holland, exhibit a spiritual vacuum, a vacuum that will continue to spread as we draw closer to the Lord's return. The Christian message will continue to be questioned. Christians will continue to be rejected and perhaps suffer persecution, and intentions will continue to be misconstrued; yet, this is part of God's plan. While you watch for the Lord's return, will you also pray for Europe?

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

World Missions

At first glance, Christ's triumphal entry appears to be a glorious occasion. The crowd praised the Son of David, saying,

"Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matt. 21:9). The event, however, gives the appearance of a charade because of what was about to happen.

Jesus entered Jerusalem as the Davidic king who brought the nation's deliverance, but a week later He was crucified outside the city as a messianic impostor. Jesus, however, was no impostor. Although despised and rejected, Jesus humbled Himself and remained obedient to God's plan; thus, Jesus died on a cross for our sins and the sins of the world.

As you might imagine or perhaps have even experienced, missionaries are frequently rejected; yet they humbly remain obedient to God's directing and continue to share the message of Jesus Christ. Such is the case of a missionary in the Bronx in New York City.

In 1991, Beatrice and her husband were called to plant a church in the Bronx. Tragedy, however, struck the family. Her husband died of cancer two years into their ministry. With enormous pressure to take her children back to California—and against what some might say was better judgment—she remained in the Bronx.

Through street evangelism, music, drama, dance, and residential rehabilitation, she has seen significant success. Her little storefront church, which at one time was a billiards hall, stays open all day to help the physically, emotionally, and spiritually hurting people of the neighborhood.

The Monday I was there with a group of others visiting her ministry, an ex-drug dealer struggling to stay clean stopped in for support. We encouraged him,

prayed with him, and supported him in his struggle with substance abuse.

She also showed us the spot where a murder had occurred just outside the church's door. After the murder, three other family members had been gunned down in crossfire due to a drug deal gone bad. Despite the danger, the church extended compassionate love to the mother of these young men. As a result, she and the neighborhood are slowly healing. Shootings no longer occur around the church, and the people in the area help protect the church.

Since Beatrice is sometimes less than conventional in her approach to win the lost for Jesus Christ, she sometimes faces opposition. The opposition, however, is not so much from the people in the community; it is from other churches. In fact, her greatest discouragement is not so much the killings, the drug and alcohol abuse, or the dangerous streets of the Bronx; it is the backbiting, the skepticism, and the legalism of neighboring churches.

Beatrice remains faithful to God's call, nevertheless. The church consists of ex-cons, ex-crack addicts, and ex-drug dealers. They regularly canvass the neighborhood with tracts and conduct "corner blasts." (A "corner blast" is a fifteen-minute presentation by church members of music, dance, and testimonies on a busy street corner in the Bronx.)

Although despised and rejected by some churches in the area, Beatrice humbly serves and remains obedient to God's call and plan for her life. With limited resources, she discipled two men: Daniel and Edwin. She teaches them the Bible and helps them develop their speaking skills so that they can preach and teach God's Word.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV

World Missions

One of the most reassuring teachings about God is this one: "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34)—all are sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23). All deserve His judgment (1:18-19), yet "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4:14). Jesus died for us—not just for some of us but for every one of us. Salvation is thus available to anyone who desires to turn to God for the forgiveness of his sin.

I was vehemently reminded of this theological truth while visiting various ministries in New York City during the summer of 1996. Within a period of one week, I saw God working in many ethnic communities—the Bronx, Harlem, Chinatown, and Greenwich Village.

One particular ministry that touched my heart was located in Harlem. The church began in 1920 as a neighborhood Bible study led by a young woman. She provided Bible training to converts who were denied membership in the exclusive uptown church. In fact, the current pastor's family came to know Jesus Christ through this woman.

The congregation worships in a renovated junior high school that occupies an entire city block. They purchased the school from the city of New York at public auction after the city reduced the price from \$1,000,000 to \$300,000. They paid half the amount, and the city provided the church a mortgage for the other half.

Since the building had stood vacant for eight years, every piece of sellable material had been stripped by vandals. In addition, sixteen inches of water and heating oil had flooded the basement. For one year, the congregation worked together to prepare the building for renovation.

Today, the building houses a beautiful sanctuary where the church's con-

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

169

World Missions

In the midst of Columbia University and Union Seminary in New York City stands a majestic church. The gothic cathedral holds unbelievable treasures—stained-glass windows, ornate sculptures, and other beautiful works of art.

It is a beautiful building, but something is drastically wrong. The preaching in that church is not built on biblical absolutes. From the church's beginning there has been a continual proclamation of "tolerance" and "affirmation." The preaching within those walls mingles many worldly philosophies with biblical teachings. The atmosphere has created acceptance of the practice of worldly lifestyles.

Jesus, however, told His disciples, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). Jesus did not charge His disciples to assimilate other world philosophies with His teachings, nor did Jesus charge His disciples to integrate worldly lifestyles with the Christian lifestyle.

Christian missionaries have a distinct message. They have the message that Jesus Christ alone is sufficient for the forgiveness of sin. It is this message that changes lives.

Rosine, a Filipino, is one such person who was changed. "I finished my college days," she said, "at the age of nineteen and was immediately employed by our government in Quezon City. A religious person in my office kept inviting me to an office Bible study group."

Since Rosine was interested in law, she worked during the day and pursued her law degree in the evening. She used her office breaks

to sleep. As a result, she continually turned down the invitations to attend the Bible study. Her religious friend, however, continued to invite Rosine to the Bible study. One day, she said, "I gave in to the invitation of my friend." Rosine went to the Bible study. Despite her fatigue, God spoke to her.

"God is really wonderful," she said. "In the midst of my sleepiness the Word of God penetrated my mind: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me' (John 14:6). The Word was a blow to me."

God's Word was a blow to Rosine because she was a religious person. She gave herself to many activities that gave the impression of religious faithfulness; yet when she heard the teaching of Jesus, it rattled her.

Rosine said, "I refused the Word and just let the meeting pass. Days went by... but the Word kept haunting me; so I started reading the Scripture. While reading the Bible, I discovered that I was a sinner doomed to eternal death and that I needed a Saviour. I confessed my sins and accepted the Lord Jesus in my heart in my little room."

Rosine recalled how, on the following day, she went to a prayer meeting and publicly acknowledged her decision. In 1990, she quit her government job and entered full-time Christian ministry.

Today Rosine attends Asian Theological Seminary and plants churches in the Philippines. She too now goes and shares the specific message that Jesus Christ alone is sufficient for the forgiveness of sin.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV.

183

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

20 February 2000

gregation of two thousand worshippers during two morning worship services. They also have a large fellowship hall that is used by the congregation for special events. We expect to find a sanctuary and a fellowship hall in a church, but what continues to impress me are the other facilities in the building.

First, there are two gymnasiums and a fitness center for the young people of the neighborhood. They serve as great opportunities to reach the young for Jesus Christ.

Second, there is a rehabilitation center for men. The center provides for men off the street with physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. They are given a place to live, responsibilities, and a place to worship with a group of people who love them.

Third, there is a crisis center. People who are destitute or in need can come to receive food, clothing, and counseling. A prerequisite for everyone asking for help is a visit with a counselor. The church does more than just hand out food and clothing. They are committed to helping people care for themselves.

I praise God for Christians who, like God, are no respecter of persons. One woman's determination to rise above social prejudice and her desire to discipline a small group of converts in 1920 have resulted in a ministry that has literally touched thousands of people in Harlem.

While we are enjoying eternity together, while we walk upon the streets of gold beside the crystal sea, I suspect that many people will echo the words of "Thank You," Ray Boltz's song to her:

Thank you for giving to the Lord,
I am a life that was changed;
Thank you for giving to the Lord,
I am so glad you gave.

—Herbert W. Bateman, IV.

183

Bible Expositor and Illuminator

27 February 2000