

Voice of Baptists

"The Voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." *Isaiah 40:3*

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ELDER F. L. RAY GOES TO LIVE WITH JESUS

On Friday evening, November 3, 1978, at approximately 9:30, from Nashville Memorial Hospital the sweet angels of glory carried the redeemed soul of Bro. F. L. Ray to the immortal bosom of God. He was 71 years of age. Cause of death was attributed to several successive heart attacks. But, though the heart of his flesh was torn and broken, his truest heart was fixed, O God, it was fixed with an everlasting fixing from thy bountiful throne. "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins (heart) be consumed within me" (Job 19: 25-27).

His faithful and loving companion of 50 years, Sistell Estell, survives to mourn his passing. Also, their nine children remain and do solemnly cherish the precious memories of their father. The sons and daughters are listed as follows by order of birth: Mrs. Margie Hall, Gallatin, Tenn., Mrs. Jean Overton, Goodlettsville, Tenn., Mrs. Delois Powell, Castalian Springs, Tenn., A. Wayne Ray, Goodlettsville, Tenn., Mrs. Adean Brooks, White House, Tenn., Mrs. Patricia Schmidt, Herndon, Va., Mrs. Tawanda Sanders, Chapmansboro, Tenn., F. L. Ray, Jr., Plano, Texas, and Rev. Randy Ray, Goodlettsville, Tenn.

Six sisters survive: Mrs. Grova Henderson, Madison, Tenn., Mrs. Flossie Crawford, Millersville, Tenn., Mrs. Georgia Alexander, Smyrna, Tenn., Mrs. Lola Hudgins, White House, Tenn., and Mrs. Gladys Blackburn and Mrs. Virginia Cole, both of Goodlettsville, Tenn.



Three brothers: Johnny Ray, Illinois, and Jim H. and Lovell Ray, both of Goodlettsville, Tenn., 22 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Others who survive to join the family in sharing this time of bereavement and sorrow are the two churches Bro. Ray was serving, Independent Missionary Baptist Church of Huntingdon, Tenn. and Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church of Holland, Ky., a great host of friends, his neighbors and every preacher who ever heard him declare and defend that faith once delivered to the saints and is yet most surely believed among us.

Bro. Ray experienced salvation early in the morning on April 8, 1932 while in the field plowing. "I was plowing in the field and by the grace of God I was able to lay down all that I had been holding to and trusting in; and with Godly sorrow, a broken heart, and deep conviction, I repented of all my sins and put my trust in the Lord who died for me that I might live" (Why I Am a Baptist, page 2).

At this time, Bro. Ray began attending New Bethel Baptist Church. He always gave the Lord and Bro. A. J. Sloan credit for making him a Baptist. During the revival at New Bethel in August of 1935, he made a public profession of his hope in one day reaching the top of old Mt. Zion. It was that same day that the Lord laid his mighty hand upon him and called him into the gospel ministry. He also united with New Bethel during that revival and was baptized by Bro. Sloan in September of 1935. On November 17, 1939, Bro. Ray was ordained by New Bethel Church to the full work of the ministry. (He held membership with this church at the time of his death). He entered totally into the work that day and never relinquished the commitment until God relieved him November 3rd. Bro. Ray had pastored 15 churches and served as Assistant Pastor of Fifth Street Baptist Church (Fairview Memorial) in Bowling Green, Ky. during the pastorate of the late Bro. C. B. (Cap) Massey. His first church was Union Missionary Baptist Church of Macon County, Tenn., and he was serving Independent Missionary Baptist Church and Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church at the time of his sudden death. In the years between, he served the following churches: Willette Pleasant Valley, Oak Grove, Ebenezer, Cornwell's Chapel, Union Hill, Concord, Siloam, McFerrin Ave., New Bethel, Madison and Longview. All of these churches are in Tennessee except Fifth Street (Fairview Memorial) and Mt. Zion which churches are in Kentucky.

Our esteemed brother had served as moderator of Wiseman Baptist Association for 30 years. He had engaged in approximately 12 religious debates and had been successful each time as a re-

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VOICE OF BAPTISTS

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Elder F. L. Ray (Continued from page 1)

sult of carefully preparing the truth for victorious presentation as God enabled him. He was a man of great oratory ability. His voice commands our ears occasionally as these words are being arranged. Many of his accomplishments are known only to God, but they shall not go unnoticed on that final day, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). I just copied that scripture from a Bible given me by Bro. Ray several years ago. He had underscored each word.

Bro. Ray's body was carried to Cole & Garrett Funeral Home of Goodlettsville, Tenn., where about 2500 people took their turn to pay a tribute of respect to this fallen Prince in Israel. Funeral services were carried out according to his requests (some were made on his death bed) on November 6, 1978 at 2 p.m. in New Bethel Baptist Church. Elders W. T. Russell, F. W. Lambert, P. H. Brooks and Kenneth Massey officiated with Bro. Bill Litrell leading the congregation in "Amazing Grace" as Bro. Ray's body entered the old church on the hill for the last time. Bro. Litrell also sang "A Wayfaring Pilgrim" and "It Is Well with My Soul" as solo numbers. Bro. Ray had requested that any and all Baptist preachers in attendance be asked to stand and be recognized. Bro. Russell honored this request and some 50 responded for a moment of standing silence. Final interment followed in Forest Lawn Memorial Gardens in Goodlettsville.

(Editor's Note: Bro. Ray had been my teacher, my counsellor, my example, my life-long friend, my brother in Christ he is eternally, and I thank God for the

privilege of having tried to be his helper on occasion. He preached my ordination sermon. I shall miss him until I see him again.)

SEASONS GREETINGS

From Staff and Editor

"....., behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is CHRIST THE LORD."

Luke 2:10, 11



James H. Smith



John A. Keen, Jr.



W. T. Russell



Kenneth W. Massey



**NOW THE
BIRTH OF JESUS
CHRIST WAS ON
THIS WISE:
(Matthew 1:18
thru chapter 2 and
Luke 2)**

**By Calvin Perrigo
Indianapolis, Indiana**

After the serpent had beguiled Eve, and Adam had sinned, God informed the serpent that from the seed of the woman would come the means whereby his head would be bruised.

Later on in the history of man, God reaffirmed this promise to Israel through the voice of Moses. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;" (Deuteronomy 18:15). During the time of Isaiah the prophet, the God of heaven supplied the following information to Israel, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, (Isaiah 7:14). God also supplied Israel with the information as to where the blessed event would take place. "But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," (Micah 5:2).

Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth of Galilee. Nazareth is over seventy-five miles

north of Bethlehem but Joseph and Mary had traveled to Bethlehem due to a census demanded by Caesar Augustus. They were required to go back to their own city for this enrollment. While they were in Bethlehem, Jesus was born and placed in a manger. An angel of the Lord made an announcement to some shepherds that were out in the fields in the same country, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." These shepherds went and found Mary and Joseph and Jesus and they spread the word around and glorified God for what they had heard and seen.

God did not give Israel a direct prophecy of the time of this birth. Paul refers back to the event and says, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of woman," (Galatians 4:4). I believe there is great importance as to why God did not tell Israel the exact time of this birth. I think it is important that God's people know that a date should not be over emphasized when considering the birth of Jesus. We should be happy and thankful that God brought the birth to pass in harmony with his promise.

The wise men, (three is a tradition) from the east came to Jerusalem searching for the king of the Jews. They had seen his star in the east but had lost sight of it for some reason. When king Herod learned of their presence he inquired of the chief priest and scribes as to the location of the birth of Christ. These Jewish leaders knew the prophecy and gave that

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NOW THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

(Continued from page 2)

information to Herod. The wise men were guided by the star that reappeared to them and they found Jesus in a house with his mother Mary. We have no scriptural evidence of the wise men going to Bethlehem. We do have some information as to the age of the baby Jesus at the time the wise men worshipped him. Herod inquired of them as to when they had seen the star. To be sure he destroyed this king of the Jews, he had all the children that were in Bethlehem from two years old and under killed. This clearly shows us that the wise men did not arrive in Jerusalem until sometime after the birth of Christ. Other evidence of this fact is seen in the type of the offering made when Jesus was circumcised in the temple at Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary were poor people and offered a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons. Had the wise men worshipped Jesus before his circumcision, they probably would have offered a lamb, (Leviticus 12:6 thru 8) because the gifts included gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Man has added many things to the Bible account of the birth of Jesus. It is by far the most popular, "Christian Holiday". The observance of the birth of Jesus has taken on the appearance of a pagan festival in many cases. I wish to mention a few accepted additions and their origin. The word "Christmas" comes from two English words; Christes and Masse. The mass is a celebration of the Lord's supper in the Roman church. They teach that each mass is a true sacrifice, in which the risen Christ becomes bodily present on the altar as a victim who is offered anew for the sins of men. (From the "M" World Book encyclopedia, page 211; Fulton J. Sheen). Baptists do not believe this doctrine. Read from Hebrews, chapter 6, verse 6 and see if you believe it.

The traditional date of December 25 was ordered by Liberius of Rome in the year 354 A.D. Other dates are and have been recognized as the birth of Christ, but we follow the Roman order for most part. We should be careful about observing days, and months, and times, and years. (Galatians 4:10)

There are many symbols associated with the present day celebration of the birth of Jesus. They include trees, gifts, cards, colored lights, reindeer, Santa Claus, intoxicating drinks, mistletoe, office parties, and the \$.

There are several stories about the tree and the birth of Jesus. Scandinavians

once worshipped trees. They mixed their sacred evergreens with the Christian festivals. The Romans exchanged green tree branches for good luck on the calends of January. The English took this custom over into the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The Germans were probably the first to use decorations on the tree. Read Jeremiah 10:1-6. The first specially designed card to commemorate the birth is believed to have been printed by a London Company and placed on sale in 1843. Martin Luther was perhaps the first man to use lights on a tree in observing the birth of Christ. The Irish put a burning candle in their window to light the way for the Christ child. Santa Claus and reindeer is a distinctive American symbol. The jolly, roly-poly Santa we know today is a legend. In 1823 an American minister and poet first described Santa's features in the poem, "A Visit From St. Nicholas" later called, "The Night Before Christmas". We have some sister churches that have met in the same location since before the origin of this symbol of the birth of Christ. No one knows exactly how mistletoe became a part of the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The Druids once gave sprigs of mistletoe as charms. The office party and intoxicating spirits are a reproach on the memory of the birth of Jesus. The \$ symbol is by far the most important symbol associated with the birth of Jesus. At the present a more fitting name for the holiday could be "Commercialmas". Stores in the U.S.A. depend upon the observance of Christ's birth for one quarter of their annual sales. Since the birth of Christ had been associated with all the traditions and symbols it has become less important as a religious holiday.

When we return to the Bible record of the birth of Jesus, only one of these symbols can apply. The giving of gifts. God gave us the best that he had and we are so thankful that Jesus came and gave his life for us. May the love that came to the world so long ago be shed abroad in our hearts and shown to the world every day of our lives.

Yes, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. Let us be glad and rejoice every time we think about the blessed event that took place in Bethlehem of Judea so long ago.

EXEMPTION CLAIMED

A little boy attended church for the first time. And as the offering plate was passed, he said, very brightly, "Daddy, you don't have to pay for me. I'm under six."

THE PREACHER

By F. W. Lambert
Westmoreland, Tenn.



"AND THE SERVANT OF THE LORD MUST NOT STRIVE: BUT BE GENTLE UNTO ALL MEN, APT TO TEACH, PATIENT, IN MEEKNESS INSTRUCTING THOSE THAT OPPOSE THEMSELVES; IF GOD PERADVENTURE WILL GIVE THEM REPENTANCE TO THE ACKNOWLEDGING OF THE TRUTH; AND THAT THEY MAY RECOVER THEMSELVES OUT OF THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL, WHO ARE TAKEN CAPTIVE BY HIM AT HIS WILL."

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Preachers need to beware of dangers in every day life. We like to shine. We might have a tendency to take glory for what God does in our churches and through us. Preachers often whine and complain; we can become full time whiners. We like to recline. We can skip on sermon preparation, daily devotions, and even soul-winning, while continuing to preach "full dedication" with vigor. There is a purpose in God's call. Many times his calls are hidden and disguised, but they are there nevertheless. We must discover and develop them; the secret is to be yourself in God's hands. Remember, you may plant or water, but God gives the increase.

It is strange how many men will feel the call to a pastorless church. Paul said in writing to the Corinthians, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Cor. 4:7 Now, we ask why? That we preachers will think more of the vessel than we do the treasure that is in it? O God, why did you call me? "Listen, my son, my preacher, God knows your weakness and mine; and they are many. But God has chosen you so that the treasure will not be lost in the excellency of the container." It is not the binding of the book that counts, but the contents therein. Some of the most beautifully bound volumes in my library are the most worthless. I would trade them all for the old Book handed me at my ordination.

Many people jokingly say: "You can always tell a preacher." We somehow think this is bad. We might try to hide the fact. This may be our mistake. There is no way to get around the fact that we are different. But I had rather be an oddball for God than a screwball for the world. Thank God for a God-

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THE PREACHER**(Continued from page 3)**

called ministry. Why he called me I shall never know, but I shall thank him to my dying day that he did call me personally into the glorious gospel ministry. More ministers rust out than burn out. (My dear friend, Bro. F. L. Ray, wore himself out in the Master's Great Vineyard.) You never hear of a boy burning out in the busy process of becoming a man. What is busier than a busy boy growing up? To see how some preachers behave in a crisis, you would think the God who called them into his service had gone out of business. A preacher whose nerves may be set on edge is an easy victim for a foe who wants him to surrender the ship. In an unguarded moment, they are ambushed by the enemy. Maybe sometime later, when he gives up, about ninety-five per cent of the members were thoroughly loyal and devoted in support of the pastor. There comes a time to many pastors when they must choose to flight or fight. There is no place for a worthy pastor to panic. God still reigns and his servants can always find him a present help in time of need. It is not the problems that get a preacher down; it is his inability to face them and live with them. In windy areas, it is a problem of surviving the terrific winds that drive the roots of the trees into greater depths of security of mother earth. The minister who prides himself on his ability to tell others where "to head in," frequently finds himself outside — wanting in — somewhere else! Too much exercise of the tongue will react on the nerves of a preacher.

You can't give your assent to the crowd that says the horse is black, and then, give your assent to another crowd that says the same horse is white without ultimately finding yourself in front of the horse with both crowds standing by, waiting for you to tell them all you said. That pattern of talk doesn't even make "horse sense," and it is hard on the nerves. Some of us preachers need to listen more and talk less. We could spend our "nervine" money for fish bait! What we whisper to another today, under oath to secrecy, is passed on to others tomorrow, under oath to secrecy. You can't criticize one of your members without little birds picking up the crumbs & feeding them to the members you criticized. The desire to talk and the urge to tell has brought mountains of trouble down on the heads of talkative preachers. One of the best tonics for a preacher's nerves is to exercise his ears more, and his tongue less. If we would pinch our words like

most preachers have to pinch our pennies there would be less pinch on our nerves. If we must tell, **LET US TELL IT TO THE LORD AND LEAVE IT THERE.** The church is sometimes blamed for a preacher's nerves, when the trouble can be found in the preacher's home. Fortunate is the pastor who still has a sweetheart in the girl he married. Only God himself can do more to give a preacher calm nerves than a loving wife in a happy home.

I have heard preachers publicly pray for God to move the opposition, even if it took death. Preachers sometime conclude that the work of the church cannot go on as long as the opposition remains in the church. Since the members of the opposition don't die and won't move, some preachers move. Please note that Jesus never prayed for the Father to kill or move His opposition. Note also, that those opposed to Christ were never able to halt the progress of His work, even when they killed Him. Did you ever read of Jesus asking for another world to serve and save because of the opposition he found in this world? But some preachers do! Opposition has an uncanny way of refusing to be eliminated. Elimination may be the shortest way, if elimination is possible. However, the pastor may be caught in the backwash of it. The eliminated opposition will always have enough relatives or friends remaining in the church to take up the torch and to fire the preacher when the time is ripe. If opposition is to be eliminated, let the church plan it, promote it, and swing the hatchet! The struggle to eliminate leaves the pastor's nerves tattered and torn, and under tremendous tension as he waits for the whistle to blow for the next quarter of the "game." The church is willing to follow the man who can live contentedly with those who oppose him, and can continue to make progress in spite of it. As a preacher, it is very difficult for me to stay sweet under all conditions. This does not mean to sway with the wind. It means to be able to stand, express, and act as needs be with the **RIGHT SPIRIT.**

A deacon came to my house, and wanted to know how to get rid of a preacher. He was a pretty good preacher, but the church was on a standstill. I didn't have an answer. Only the majority rule; so I got to thinking about how to get rid of a preacher. So, I'll be ready to answer when he comes back. Here are five suggestions about how to get rid of an undesirable preacher:

1. Look him straight in the eye when he is preaching and say "amen" once in awhile. He'll preach himself to

death in a few weeks!

2. Pat him on the back and brag on his good points. He will soon work himself to death!

3. Start paying him a living wage. Perhaps, he is one of those many preachers who has gone on starvation wages for so long, he'd eat enough to kill himself, if he had the chance!

4. Try to live a life for Christ, and ask the preacher for a job to do (preferably some lost person you could win to Christ. He will die of heart failure!

5. Get the church to unite in prayer for the preacher, and he'd soon become so effective that a larger church would take him off your hands!

God didn't call preachers to discipline other preachers, nor did he call them to become detectives to seek out and advertise other preachers' faults. The reaping time will come for the fault-finding preacher. God called us to attend to our own business. "Even preachers should do unto other preachers as they would have them do unto them."

DENVER BAPTIST MISSION BEGINS

On or about November 16, 1978, a group of Baptist people living in and around the Denver, Colorado area were planning to meet in the home of Bro. Luther E. Jent to begin organizing themselves into a Baptist Mission. Five families were expected to attend that initial gathering. If you could offer any names of people who might be in that location and looking for a church home or perhaps, you are in that area and desire to know more about it, you should contact Bro. Luther E. Jent, 45 Garfield St., Denver, Colorado 80206. His telephone number is: (303) 377-5050.

FELLOWSHIP

The recent Fellowship Service, held with Fellowship Miss. Baptist Church, consisting of the participating churches in the annual Bethel Baptist Association was reported as an enjoyable service by those attending. An hour of fellowship preceded the service in which Elder William L. Shoulders brought the sermon. The latter portion of the service was a Memorial to Elder F. L. Ray. The next Fellowship Service will meet with Grace Baptist Church, Lantern Rd., Fishers, Indiana on January 6, 1979, beginning at 7 p.m. Let's make our plans to attend!