

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.” Jeremiah 23:5



the
OLIVE BRANCH

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2008

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A publication of
The Church of God
Northeast Region

From Glory to Glory: Part 2

The theme for the Northeast Region for the 2007-2008 Church year, titled *“From Glory to Glory,”* comes from 2 Corinthians 3:18:

*(18) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image **from glory to glory**, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

The first sermon of this series provided an overview to this theme. Paul, having taken care of his administrative overseer duties in the first two chapters of 2 Corinthians, commences in chapter 3 to lay out for the Corinthians the purpose and function that the glory of the Lord should play in the life of a Christian. Thereafter, in the remaining chapters, Paul looks at the glory of the Lord from multiple perspectives.

Just as Paul introduced this theme by considering the experience of Israel in the wilderness, so now will we too examine closer their experience with the glory of the Lord. The title

of this sermon could be subtitled *“So Close, Yet So Far Away.”*

In addition to the experience that Paul described from Exodus 34, the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses had numerous opportunities to behold the manifestations of God’s glory.



*Regional Overseer
James Smith*

Consider their crossing the Red Sea described in Exodus 14:13-14:

(13) And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

(14) he LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

The Lord would have the people to *“stand still, and see the*

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Regional briefs...

Plan ahead to attend BTI 2008

The theme for Bible Training Institute 2008 is, "Let us know Him," taken from Phillippians 3:10: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

BTI's Cleveland, TN school will be May 10-23. Registration is 1-3 p.m. on Saturday, May 10. Classes begin May 11.

If you are not able to attend, please keep BTI in your prayers.



*BTI Coordinator
Elliot Leighty*

Prayer line open

Regional readers can still send prayer requests over the Internet to prayer@tcog-ne.org.

Each request should contain basic information in the subject line, such as "Sis. Davis/broken hip," and

include any additional information in the body of the e-mail.

Requests will be forwarded to regional church members who have provided their e-mail addresses to regional headquarters and have expressed a willingness to pray.

Ladies Retreat applications available

Local pastors should have copies of the 2008 Ladies Retreat application at each church. They are also available for download from the regional website.

ABM: Ministering with Love

Jesus Christ has set us free from sin's crippling hold and has made available to us His Spirit so we might live a life of love. Because we are spiritually alive, we can learn to love God as Luke 10:27b says: *...with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.* We were created to love all -- with Him as our first love.

What is loving God like? Putting Him first in our lives is loving Him. The Lord describes Himself as a jealous God, who will not share His rightful place in our lives with anyone or anything. Doesn't He deserve all our loyalty and devotion? Loving God means spending time deepening our relationship with Jesus and submitting to Him. Loving Him means giving ourselves

wholeheartedly to knowing and learning what will please Him. We express our love through obedience.

God's Holy Word tells us in Matthew 25:40 that when we love others, we are loving Jesus. Loving God's way means we will pursue and act upon what is best for other people. We



*ABM Coordinator
Nancy Horchar*

need to ask God to show us what we can say and what we can do on behalf of others. The Lord needs to guide and direct us on how we can build up others and help them to grow into the likeness of Christ. We need to have the kind of love that God has for us when we are ministering to others. When we love people in obedience to God, we will find ourselves looking for ways to express His love to them. Love is the evidence that we belong to Jesus. John 13:35 says: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* My prayer is that we are all ministering with the spirit of LOVE. How can we tell them about a God that loves them if we don't show that love?

Is your church 100 percent in emergency dollars? The Lord is counting on you.

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2008 Calendar

Northeast Region District Convention (Western churches) -- March 29 at Ford City, PA

Northeast Region District Convention (Eastern churches) -- April 5 at Pittsville, MD

Ladies Retreat -- May 2-4 at Camp Sunrise in Markleysburg, PA

Northeast Regional Convention -- July 11-13 at Uniontown, PA

Youth Camp -- July 24-28 at Camp Bucoco near Pittsburgh, PA

General Assembly -- Aug. 26-30 at Cleveland, TN

As we enter into 2008, no one but God knows what it will hold. But, there is one thing that we do know -- there is a big world waiting for The Church of God to come. With wars and threats of terrorism, what should our response be? Should we, as believers, retreat and hide? Or, should we do what God has called us to do? God didn't put us here to be afraid. He put us here to make a difference in people's lives.

When He gave His Church the Great Commission, He also gave a promise: *"Go ye therefore, 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: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* Matthew 28:19-20.

It's in times of difficulty, trial and war that we are presented with the greatest opportunity as the Body of Christ. When people are fearful and uncertain, they begin to question and look for answers and reassurance. At these times, people are more open to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, this is not a time to retreat. It's a time to move forward.

WMB



2007-08 Theme:

*"Into His Harvest Fields
-- Fasting, Praying
Working."*



WMB Coordinator
Diana Seese

As children of God, you and I make up the Body of Christ, and we should never forget our responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission.

We have that message in John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* This message is sufficient and is so simple it can be understood by all who hear it. It will transform a person's life, no matter the circumstance.

The mission of The Church of God is global. Revelation 5:9 says: *"And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."*

What is He saying -- there will be people out of every nation, tribe and language who have been saved by the grace of God.

Church of God, it's time to share our faith more than ever before. Tell the world what Jesus Christ means to you. This year, "go" forward with boldness, because God will be with you as promised. If you ask the Lord how He can use your life to impact the most people, He will show you. He may tell you to "go" by fasting, praying or working. Obey the Lord and leave the consequences to Him.

A reminder: March is World Missions Month. Let's give our best in this offering to see the Commission fulfilled in these last days!

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CONTACT US

The Olive Branch is a publication of The Church of God Northeast Region, which serves churches in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania and new works throughout the greater area. It can be viewed online at <http://www.tcog-ne.org>.

Reports and other **submissions for the April-May issue** must be received by **March 1**.

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-----Meeting Grove City, PA-----

Loving God's people

When Bro. John Texter Jr. was a little boy, crossing the state line to come to church in Youngstown, OH with his grandfather, it might have been hard for him to imagine that he would someday be pastoring a church of his own. Not to mention, that he'd be expecting a grandchild.

But, that's how it is and Bro. Texter said he is thankful for the example of loving God's people that his grandfather set in his early childhood.

"He was the instrument used to get me where I am," he said, noting his parents later also came to the church. "I am often conscious of that and hopeful that I can bring along someone else. He took time for me."

That kind of commitment to family and his congregation is a guide to his ministry.

Right now, it's in a joyous way. He's anticipating sharing God's love with a first grandchild, the child of son Matt and daughter-in-law Abby, who is due in March.

But Bro. Texter said a first-hand knowledge of God's love also sustained him and Sis. Texter when they suffered the death of their teenaged daughter Valerie a few years ago.



"During the time my daughter passed away ... It just built up our hope for heaven that much more. No matter what trouble comes our way, we've made up our minds we're going to make heaven our home."

Love must also have played a role when Bro. Texter went beyond his secular work as an auto body repairman to take the Grove City church from a home prayer meeting to a full-fledged church with auxiliary facilities like a fellowship hall. The church now has 23 members and about 30 other attendees.

Bro. Texter has been married 31 years to Ginny Kearns Texter, who grew up in the former New Eagle, PA church. He served as a district youth director in Ohio before entering the pastorate in 1982. While the Texters have mostly served in Pennsylvania, they also pastored in Alaska for a few years.

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A word from Grove City's pastor

The Bible is about people -- two particular kinds. No. 1 -- the people who served. No. 2 -- the people who were recipients of the service.

Jesus once asked His followers a simple question: *For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?* Luke 22:27.

Can you hear the pause as he gave the opportunity for thoughts or reply? Jesus, knowing the answer in their hearts said, "Is (it) not he that sitteth at meat?" Of course. The one for whom the meal was prepared was the greatest. Jesus, speaking and looking at them, let them know that such is not the case in the church, in which, "he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

It is great to be served. It is wonderful to sit in a service, sing the songs, be lifted by praises and hear the Word of God. This is good! But is isn't service.

James 1:27, Matthew 25:35-36. Look these up and read them. These passages of scripture describe people serving people. Jesus served because He loved people. To serve people we must also love.



Pastor John Texter

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I suppose all of us have heard someone say, "Bro. (or Sis.) So-and-so just doesn't have a vision of the Church." Well, maybe they need to get one! One way to start is to get out the Bible and look for references to the Bride of Christ. For starters, we can look in Revelation 19:7-8: *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* So, first and foremost, she is righteous. Her wedding gown has been woven out of the truly Christian actions in which the Lord takes pleasure and doesn't contain the discolored threads of sin.

In 2 Corinthians 11:2, Paul likened the Church to a virgin: *For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.* Likewise, the prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 62:5: *For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.* In Song of Solomon 5:2 and 6:9, she's characterized as "undefiled." She has kept herself chaste and pure, and has saved herself for her husband. The Church, the Bride of Christ, has likewise not embraced false doctrine but adheres to the Gospel.

CPMA



2007-08 Theme:

"To Make All Men See What Is the Fellowship of the Mystery" - Ephesians 3:9



CPMA
Coordinator
Roger Fuester

One cannot help but contrast the Bride of Christ with John's description in Revelation 17:2 of: *"the great whore that sitteth on many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.* She is the exact opposite. By no means chaste or pure, she is a pampered, luxury-loving prostitute. Anybody can consort with her (or join her "church" for that matter). Notice that not just the "kings of the earth" (rich and powerful) have carried on with her. The "inhabitants of the earth" (Joe Q. Public) have also listened to her siren's songs. She has a long list of hits -- maybe you've heard some of them: "All religions are equally valid," "You gotta commit a little bit of sin every day," and "If double marriage is wrong, I don't wanna be right."

Unfortunately, throughout the ages and the present day, many people have lusted after her -- listening to her litany of greed, luxury and any sinful pleasure that serves to entice men and women away from God. Of

course, she is not content with that. Why not, you ask. If you asked her, she would probably say, "Because that virgin Ms. Goody Two Shoes goes around spreading the Gospel of Christ and telling people not to sin." But it doesn't end there.

In Revelation 17:6, John: *saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.* It's easy to understand why John was astonished. As he wrote those words, Christians were being thrown to the lions and burned alive in the Roman Colosseum. Still today, Christian martyrdom exists in Asia, Africa and even the U.S., where one of the killers at Columbine High asked a young girl if she believed in God and killed her when she said she did.

As the Bride of Christ, the Church is called upon to take an uncompromising stand in spite of such threats. She will be blameless. In good time, God's justice will be served.

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OVERSEER

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salvation of the LORD.” Regarding their enemy of some 400 years, “*ye shall see them again no more for ever.*” How many times have each of us thought we had the solution to our problem, only to learn later that it wasn’t? The children of Israel were promised an “everlasting solution!” We are promised “everlasting life.” Is not the “*salvation of the LORD*” glorious? We serve the Lord who can deliver what He promises!

The first explicit mention of God’s *glory* manifested before Israel is described in Exodus 16. Having just been delivered by the hand of the Lord from Pharaoh’s armies, they are some two months’ journey into the wilderness. Yet already they are complaining -- Exodus 16:3:

(3) And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

The LORD certainly would have been justified to have returned them to Egypt. Instead, His response was to provide them with “daily bread” – the manna from heaven in the morning, and “*at even the quails came up, and covered the camp*” (v. 13). How long did this continue? They received their daily manna the entire 40 years that they sojourned in the wilderness (v. 35).

Many sermon thoughts can be gleaned from this experience; we will mention a few here. Is not the Lord’s daily providing for our needs glorious? When received of the

Lord as He had so directed them, the manna was a blessing: “*the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.*” (v. 31) However, what should have been glorious to them quickly became a burden. When they failed to gather and to use the manna in the manner that they were instructed, that same wonderful manna, “*bred worms, and stank*” (v. 20).

In addition to providing their daily bread, God also gave the children of Israel a visible sign of His glorious presence with them. He promised them that “*ye shall see the glory of the LORD*” (v. 7), which is described in Exodus 16:10

(10) And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

So, the children of Israel beheld a manifestation of the glory of the Lord, even as He provided for their daily sustenance. While we yet look as did John to that day “*... when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (see 1 John 3:2), let us not fail to behold the many daily blessings that He bestows upon each of us.

In addition to this manifestation of the Lord’s glory to all the people of Israel, He also specifically called a selected few to draw much closer to Him. In Exodus 24 we find the account of Moses being called up into the mountain to receive the law which the LORD had written.

(1) And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.

(2) And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

Thus Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the elders went up as instructed into the mountain (v. 9). While they were in the mountain, God made Himself known to them in a glorious manner, specifically:

(10) And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

Even now as we consider this event, we cannot fully appreciate what these men experienced. It seems they saw where the Lord stood. To quote from the writings of Matthew Henry:

“They saw the place where the God of Israel stood (so the Septuagint), something that came near a similitude, but was not; whatever they saw, it was certainly something of which no image nor picture could be made, and yet enough to satisfy them that God was with them of a truth. Nothing is described but that which was under his feet; for our conceptions of God are all below him, and fall infinitely short of being adequate. They saw not so much as God’s feet; but at the bottom of the brightness, and as the footstool or pedestal of it, they saw a most rich and splendid pavement, such as they never saw before nor after, as it had been of sapphires, azure or sky-coloured.”

As glorious as that experience must have been, there was more to come. To receive it, these men were expected to obey the LORD’s directions. Moses and Joshua were

to continue up the mount, while Aaron, Hur and the other elders were to remain and to tarry (v. 14). During those six days that they tarried (v.16), as Moses waited to come closer, the glory of the Lord abode upon Mount Sinai:

(16) And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

(17) And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

(18) And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

How marvelous were the manifestations of God's glory -- from mighty visual displays, to the mighty deliverance from their enemies, to having their most fundamental needs met daily. Yet the children of Israel could not hold their confidence and trust in the Lord. The 40 days that Moses was in the mount (v. 18) was long enough for them to completely turn back (at least in their hearts and minds) to their life in Egypt.

Could they but have held faithful 40 days, what marvelous blessings the Lord could have had in store for them. Instead, Exodus 32 recounts the story of the golden calf the people had Aaron to fashion for them, of how so quickly they forsook all that the Lord had for them.

Their exposure to God's glory was not enough to establish them. Indeed, they came close to being completely cut off that day (v. 7-10). At the unktion of Moses, a group from the tribe of Levi went through the camp slaughtering some 3,000 (v. 26-28). God also sent plagues upon them (v. 35).

At this point, the future of Israel looked rather bleak. The tabernacle had to be relocated outside the camp (Exodus 33:7). The days were passed in which the 70 elders could approach unto the Lord as they previously had in the mount (Exodus 24). Moses now must go outside the camp unto the tabernacle to commune with the Lord, during which times the cloudy pillar of the Lord would descend upon it (v. 8-11).

Fortunately for the people of Israel, their leader Moses had a meek and humble heart to seek unto the Lord for His mercy. He pleaded for their forgiveness in Exodus 32:

(31) And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

(32) Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

But Moses sought for more than just their forgiveness. He prayed for their restoration as the people of the Lord in Exodus 34:

(9) And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

(10) And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

During this time of seeking the Lord, Moses was again 40 days in the mount, but this time the children of Israel obediently awaited the return of their anointed leader. Moses indeed reached a new higher plateau in his

experience with the Lord -- one in which the glorious radiance that enveloped him when in the presence of the Lord remained with him when he came down from the mount. Exodus 34:29-30:

(29) And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.

(30) And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

What a lesson in contrasts this period was. Moses, who continued to draw ever closer to the Lord, could "come down to their level," but the *stiffnecked* people of Israel could not ascend to the walk that Moses had with the Lord. Time and again, God attempted to reach down to the people of Israel with His glorious presence, only to have them fall back in unbelief and a stiffnecked spirit.

Today, we can manifest the same questioning/doubting spirit. Or, through Jesus Christ we can commence our own ascent (up our own mountains) into the presence of the Lord! 2 Corinthians 3:18:

*(18) But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image **from glory to glory**, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

In coming sermons, we will take a closer examination of what this entails, and the glorious blessings that await.

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Some final thoughts...

“One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it.” That was the discovery of main character Elizabeth Bennet when comparing two suitors in Jane Austen’s classic “Pride and Prejudice.”

Such discernment is valuable enough in fiction (Miss Bennet does marry the good man) and in everyday life. It is even better when one looks at the eternal.

This thought particularly comes to mind when considering how God views and judges our “goodness.” He is surely not fooled by appearances -- as much of celebrity society is -- into thinking that goodness is a label that can be earned by humanitarianism and then worn on top of any kind of sinful deeds. Or, worse, that sin can even be “good” in itself. Yes, modern culture shares much of the

delusion of ancient Israel and Judah, as recorded in Isaiah 5:20 as: *...them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

God did not agree with His people’s lowered standard then and He still doesn’t. This can be seen in 1 Corinthians 13:3: *And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

It seems the key to being acceptable in God’s judgment is not being the one who builds housing for disaster victims, creates schools in poor nations or organizes massive food relief efforts -- even though such a one may alleviate great human



*Assistant Editor
Nora Edinger*

suffering in his or her time. The key is to instead have what the King James Version of the Bible translated as “charity.”

As many Christians know, this “charity” is not good works but the inward state that is brought about by knowing a good God. It is that *agape* love -- or the love that only God is capable of -- that gets God’s seal of approval. That’s because it is the mark of a heart that is cleansed and kept by Jesus.

When this kind of love is in our hearts, it is only natural that the good works too many people are trying to justify themselves by will follow. Even if our good works are not the kind that draw the kudos of tabloid TV hosts.

Let’s consider that balance between God’s amazing love and good works as America celebrates a season of love. I’d rather have the reality of God’s love and goodness in me rather than just an appearance of it. Wouldn’t you?

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