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The Berean News is published monthly by the Berean Bible Students Church, 535 East Maple Street, Lombard, Illinois, 60148. The purpose is to share ideas, thoughts, and news from the Lombard church along with praising the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Berean News will be mailed free of charge to anyone who makes a request in writing. Copies are available in the main lobby. Press deadline for the January edition is December 10, 2011; donna.mathewson@comcast.net

Perspective

A History of Christmas

By Larry Urbaniak

"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

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14

"And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." Luke 1:30-31

"And the angel said unto them [shepherds], Fear not: for, 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

The actual date of Jesus' birth was apparently lost in history. The earliest followers of Christ are not known to have celebrated it at all. Today Christmas is a big deal - we all celebrate it in one way or another.

According to the eNews (by the Misslers) in December of 2008: "The first recorded mention of the December 25 date is in the Calendar of Philocalus (AD 354), which assumed Jesus' birth date to be Friday, December 25, in AD 1. Pope Julius I officially proclaimed December 25 to be the anniversary of Christ's birth in AD 440. Giving December 25th Christian significance has been understood to have been an effort to help the pagan world embrace Christianity and trade in their worship of pagan gods for the One True God. Originally called the Feast of the Nativity, the custom spread to Egypt by AD 432 and to England by the end of the 6th century. By the end of the 8th century, the celebration of Christmas had spread all the way to the Scandinavian countries." It wasn't until June 26, 1870 that Christmas was officially declared a holiday here in the United States.

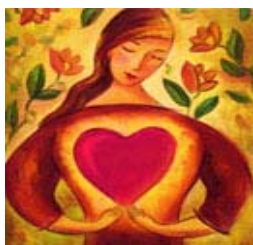
Even though Christmas has become rather commercialized, it is still a reminder to both Christians and non-Christians of the birth of Jesus. Christmas carols, time off from work and school, many family tradi-

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tions, decorations, the giving and receiving of gifts can all be significant in a very spiritual way. Even many non-churchgoers make an effort to attend some Christmas (or candlelight) service.

We should celebrate Christmas. We should use this time of the year to witness more than ever to the faithless. It is easier to point out what God has done for us and the joy of accepting the gift and grace of Jesus Christ. Take advantage of every presented opportunity.

Of course, what we say is most meaningful if it is backed up by what we do. Those around us notice how we live our lives, not just during the holiday season, by day by day throughout the year. May our lives be positive statements of what it really means to have the power of God in them. May that witness give others a true perspective of the birth of Jesus Christ.



A Daughter's Heart

The Desire of My Heart By Karen LePitre

"Delight yourself also in the LORD: and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 34:7

God has worked in our lives so much and He has come through again and blessed us! Kenny is now 4 years old and I was so excited that there was a possibility for him to attend preschool. We live in Chicago Ridge and they offer free preschool. I knew we could not afford to send him to a regular preschool, so this was a blessing in itself! I registered Kenny in August, and we got a pre-screening date of September 9. I was upset that it was Friday during my work, but Tom has Fridays off, so he took him. I had my hopes set pretty high, already planning on how the days would go, what time he would go and who would be on the list to pick him up. It would help my dad and Lucille out a lot with the baby-sitting!

Tom took Kenny to his pre-screening on September 9. I was anxiously awaiting the call from Tom and waiting to make the calls and post on Facebook that my son was going to preschool! Well, that did not happen. Tom called

me and told me everything went well, but the teacher told him that Kenny would probably not be accepted to preschool at this time because he was "too advanced." They apparently save the openings for the children that need help before going into Kindergarten. I was stunned to say the least. At first, I was mad because I know Kenny needs the socialization. On the other hand it was a blessing that someone had noticed all the work that Lucille and I did with Kenny at home and it was paying off. But to actually say he can't go to preschool because he is too advanced? I thought that was preposterous! I was mentally deflated. I had been praying that Kenny would be accepted, but I came to the conclusion that God was doing something else, and I had to live with that decision. I received a letter from the district stating that he was not accepted, but if an opening came about, they would contact us. I didn't believe that there was going to be an opening, and accepted that he would just attend Kindergarten in the Fall next year, without preschool. Boy was I wrong (again)!

God was working and I didn't even know it

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until I got this letter the last week of October from Ridgeland District #122.

Dear Parents or Guardians of Preschool Students,

Thank you for participating in the Preschool Screening Process. Our Preschool Team has worked very hard on developing and perfecting this process to give us the best information regarding your child's development.

This letter is to inform you that your child has been accepted into the Ridgeland School District 122 Preschool For All Program for the 2011/2012 School Year. Your child will start school on November 2, 2011.

Well, when I opened and read this letter, I was floored! Again, my prayers were answered, God had given me the desire of my heart! Kenny started preschool on November 2, 2011 and he loves it! It was hard for me to see him going, but I didn't shed a tear until I got to the car. Kenny, well he didn't cry at all! He said, "bye Mom" and off he went! I credit all of his time in the nursery and Sunday School at church to him not being upset leaving



me on this momentous first day of school! He already has a new friend (RJ) that he talks about all the time, and speaking to RJ's mom, I found out that RJ talks about Kenny all the time as well!

Just when I was convinced that Kenny was not going to preschool, God came through for Kenny again and has blessed us!

I am still uneasy about him and school. With him wearing glasses (not that it is a bad thing) I fear that he will be made fun of. I thought if he went to preschool, he would get more socialized and become more comfortable with himself. I praise the Lord for making this decision and giving me the desire of my heart and I will continue to pray that the Lord our God will continue to bless us and bless Kenny on his journey through life.

Dear Lord, Thank you for all the blessings you have given us, and I ask that you continue to bless our son Kenny through out his life. In Jesus' name I pray, AMEN

P.S. I thought Kenny was going to start in an already established class (that a child left the program for some reason or another). When I attended the mandatory meeting, I was again shocked to find that there were 19 other kids starting the next day as well! Apparently, the school was in the middle of building a new preschool room, but they were not sure if they would be using it for preschool or if another class was to use the room. Again, God was at work here, when the district decided to use the room for the extra 20 children in the district that wanted to attend preschool! PRAISE GOD!!!



Beside Still Waters...

Salvation & Life Thru Jesus by Donna Mathewson

“The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel, which means God with us.”

Isaiah 7:14; Matt 1:23

“Do not be afraid Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Luke 1:30-33



For thousands of years, mankind had suffered in sin, waiting for redemption. When all seemed lost, God sent Immanuel, God with us! He was sent in the form of a baby to poor earthly parents. Yet it was through this infant child, Jesus, that we might be restored to God and gain life. It was this baby who lay in a manger in a dirty barn who would save us. This child of Bethlehem would one day walk the road to Calvary and there die for our redemption. This tiny infant, who lay sleeping in a manger full of hay, would one day become the Savior of the world. Yet, the world had no idea what a great event had taken place in Bethlehem that Christmas morning! They slept on, oblivious to the birth of their Savior.



Most had no idea that Immanuel, “God with us”, would now walk amongst them. They were blinded by their own unrealistic expectations of how a king should enter the world.

There was no room for him in the Inn, nor in the hearts of men. They expected a warrior who would free them from Rome’s dominion, a King who would conquer and because of their unrealistic expectations they missed the Messiah! He slipped into the world on a quiet night, with no fanfare. Well, the shepherds heard the fanfare...angels singing of his entrance, but the rest of the world was asleep and totally unaware of the miracle that had taken place.

Praise be to God that He has opened our eyes that we might see this baby for who he truly was! This Jesus was Immanuel, God with us: God bringing us healing, salvation and life through His Son! Hallelujah!

Father, thank You for bringing us healing and salvation through your Son. Thank You for your plan of restoration for the whole world and thank You for our sanctification. Thank You for a love that would not let us go and brought us salvation and life through your Son. May we never take that love for granted. Amen



The Child of Bethlehem walked the
road to Calvary,
The Child of Bethlehem bore the cross
alone;
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Bore the shame for all the world to see,
The Child of Bethlehem died for me.

—Dan Burgess



Ebenezers

Justified by His Blood

by Jon Larson

A long, long time ago, I was just a really naive kid in elementary school, usually slouching at my desk. One ordinary day, the AV boy wheeled in a projector, I perked up, and we were shown an extraordinary film entitled, "Hemo, the Magnificent." Looking back now, I see that as the starting point in my continuing quest to understand blood. Even the title was brilliant, because Hemo is the Greek word for blood being used in many compound words such as hemoglobin, which is the protein in blood conveying oxygen to our vital organs and tissues. OH, WOW! There were all kinds of wonderful nuggets of knowledge like that which I learned that day, and I sincerely thank the producers of that film, because fifty years later I still remember.

The subject of blood is such a fascinating topic in general, but in particular, the blood of Jesus is just a crucial topic to understand. Scriptures like Lev. 17:11, "The life of the flesh is in the blood... for it is the blood that makes atonement," also Heb. 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin. It's only when we have some degree of knowledge about justification, atonement, and blood, that Rom. 5:9, "Being now justified by his blood," becomes so much more relevant and meaningful to us.

The word blood is literally used hundreds of times in scripture. So, even if we personally feel kinda queasy about the topic, the importance of blood in scripture is just undeniable in the process from being unjustified with God, to being justified with God. In the big picture, death is just inevitable unless you're justified with God. Therefore, it would seem quite appropriate for disciples of Jesus to be acquainted with the subject of blood, and the process of attaining justification with God.

Ponder the drama which unfolded, so long ago, on Mt. Moriah.



Consider what would have happened had the hand of Abraham not been held back, but had actually come down, plunging that knife into the living, pumping heart of his precious son Isaac, as he passively laid on that altar? The immediate and obvious

consequence would have been gushing blood flowing out of Isaac, along with his life. My friends, what happened on that mountain was a picture, a type, of our Heavenly Father offering his own Son for us. The big difference, of course, is that God didn't hold back His own hand. No, His Son "Gave himself a ransom for all." Why? Because, "Without the shedding of the blood there is no remission" of sin, and, "The life of the flesh is in the blood... for it is the blood that makes atonement."

Among the many names of the disciples of Jesus is "Church of the Firstborn." I believe that title is a direct reference to the typical Passover of God's chosen people, before they left the land of Egypt. On the ordained evening, certain peculiar instructions had to be followed for the firstborn to be saved from death.



The culmination of obeying those instructions is found in Ex. 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be on you... and this day shall be unto you for a memorial." In short, the blood of a unblemished lamb needed to be spread over the door posts and lintel of the abode being clearly visible to all or the firstborn died, dead as a doornail dead from the plague of death. Therefore, it is abundantly evident that it was, indeed, the blood of the lamb which saved the firstborn.

Let me assure you from personal experience, using hyssop to spread blood all around your doorway is quite a messy process, and is certainly not pleasing to the eye. Actually, it's just plain repulsive, unless you understand the big picture. This is a very significant point to firstborn, whether type or anti-type. For, "The Church of the Firstborn" it means that being "Justified by His Blood," "Passed from

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death unto life," and walking the "Narrow way, which leads to life," is not always just a bowl of cherries. Rather, taking up your cross and following Jesus means that the blood of the lamb is spread all around the doorway of your heart, clearly visible for all to see. Some will find that very repulsive, but as Paul understood, "It is a faithful saying... If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him". (2 Timothy 2:12)

John 6:53-69 tells a disturbing story about many disciples of Jesus turning their backs on Jesus, and walking no more with Him. WHY? Short answer: eating flesh and drinking blood. Scripture says, "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." It would seem these disciples(?) found the Lord's words repulsive, and just too messy for their sensibilities. Kinda like spreading blood around the doorway of your abode. However as in the type, if the blood of the lamb was not spread around the doorway, the first-

born within was not passed over and not saved from death. For the firstborn to be saved from death, the blood of the lamb had to be plainly visible. It was then and only then, that the miracle of passover occurred.

When Jesus told his disciples that they must drink his blood to have life, many of them thumbed their noses at the Lord, then walked away from the Lord, and did not return. It was at this very sad moment in time that Jesus turned to his remaining disciples and inquired, "Will you also leave me?" Thankfully, those remaining understood enough to stay, and of course at this decisive moment, my friend Peter chose to speak. Peter gazed in wonder upon our Lord, tears flowing from his eyes, and speaking from his heart said, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." SIGH....What a magnificent ensample for us all!

Bible Quiz



WHO Was IT?

1. Who used fig leaves to make aprons? Genesis 3:7
2. Who hauled in 153 fish? John 21:11
3. What queen wrote official letters in her husband's name? I Kings 21:8
4. What woman made her son a coat every year? I Samuel 2:19
5. Who mentions a hen and her chickens? Luke 13:34
6. Which apostle mentions someone's stomach? I Timothy 5:23
7. By what man did 78 women have 88 children? II Chronicles 11:21
8. Who refused to drink well-water after he had requested it? II Samuel 23:15-17
9. What king installed a city water works system? II Kings 20:20
10. Whose ear was cut off with a sword? John 18:10



A MATTER OF DIRECTION NOT A MATTER OF DEGREE

Many choices we make are difficult because they involve matters of degree [e.g. How much is too much?]. Instead of remaining undecided about matters of degree because we don't know how far to go, how much better would it be to simply ask which *direction* we should go? Move in the direction you believe God wants you to go and let him show you how far to go. Expect God to honor your integrity and obedience. God is much more likely to enlighten your heart to perceive his will if he sees that you are sincerely trying to find it. Whenever you feel a need to justify your habits don't throw up a smoke screen by sayings "it's all a matter of degree." **Most of the time when we are faced with the possibility of changing our life we already know in our hearts which direction God would have us go. Let's get moving in that direction!** Abraham provided us an excellent example of someone who stepped out in faith and starting moving in the right direction: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, *not knowing whither he went.*" Heb 11:8-9 When God told him which direction to go he didn't ask how far. When our conscience tells us which direction to go [eg. Do more of... OR Do less of...] we should also trust and obey. Let God show us how far we should go in his own good time. Here are a few points to keep in mind in deciding your direction:

YOU CAN PETITION YOUR FATHER FOR DIRECTION

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Matt 7:7-11 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"



WE SHOULD SEEK THE ADVICE OF OTHERS

Prov 20:18 "Make plans by seeking advice." Talk to your brothers and sisters in Christ. Ask them what they might do in your situation. Be sure to seek out the advise of the elders and those whose walk is worthy.

THE COMPANY WE KEEP AFFECTS OUR JUDGMENT AND DIRECTION

1 Cor 15:33 "Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Be aware that the world has different values and will mislead you if you seek its counsel. Satan will use the world to his advantage.

WE MUST HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matt 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Observe the lives of saints and sinners of past and present until you hunger to be like the righteous and fear to be like the wicked. Make the desire to please God a burning desire in your heart and your eyes will be opened to see the right direction.

WE MUST MOVE AHEAD SPIRITUALLY TO SURVIVE

Luke 19:26-27 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.'" Be afraid to be found unproductive and stagnant and lose whatever spiritual strength you had before. Recognize that you must move ahead spiritually to be safe spiritually. Let this thought guide you when you choose your direction.

GOD BECOMES CLEARER TO THOSE WHO SEEK HIM

1 Sam 2:30 GOD SAID, "those who honor me I will honor."

James 4:8 "Come near to God and he will come near to you." We need to continually seek the Lord's counsel and wisdom before we step out in faith but we cannot stop moving. Let's move forward in God's direction!





Viewpoints

Being A Difference Maker **By Andy Weeks**

One thing that stands out to me about the Apostle Paul was his thoughtful consideration to make a difference rather than making a point. Paul obviously had a rich background in Jewish religion and, no doubt, there were many beliefs and viewpoints that he felt very strongly about. If you've ever read the Old Testament, you KNOW that an Israelite would shudder at that thought of idols. "Thou shalt not have any graven idols..." With this background, Paul does something that not many Jewish Christians would have done. Paul decided rather than making a *point*, he would make a *difference*!

Luke records a wonderful scenario of Paul in Athens in Acts 17:16-34. In this passage Luke notes, "While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city." Paul makes an important decision at this point. He decides *not* to make a point about all the idols he sees. Instead he uses the idols as an opportunity to bring Christ to the Athenians. Instead, he ponders and thinks about the common ground that he has with his audience. And eventually he gets a great opportunity to address a large audience before the Athens high council.

Paul builds three bridges to connect his audience with himself:

1. Commends them for being religious
2. Unknown God
3. Poets "We are his offspring."

So, here's what you and I need to think about... Are we apt to judge when we see people doing ungodly things or we will take the time to find some common ground and use it as an opportunity to bring Jesus to them?

When you see the homeless, do you want to make a point or make a difference in their lives? When you see someone who is infre-

quent in their church attendance, do you 'write them off' or do you make a difference in their lives? When someone is struggling with some sin, do you judge or do you make a difference in their lives?

Making a difference is hard; takes time; takes investment in people's lives. I'm fairly sure that is how Paul lived his life. I'm positive it's how our Lord Jesus lived with the people who came across his path. The question is for you and I, will we take the easy way out and make a point or will we take the time to make a difference?



The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But... the good Samaritan reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

~Martin Luther King, Jr.





2012 Camp Blessing Schedule

February 3-5 (Friday - Sunday) -- Wausau, WI
Winter Family Retreat - Jim and D'Ann Lesch with Directors-in-Training Jarrett and Karen Skorup

February 17-20 (Friday - Monday) -- Wausau, WI
Winter Teen Retreat - Directors TBD

March 8-11 (Thursday - Sunday) -- Wausau, WI
Crafting Retreat - Lisa Mackey with Director-in-Training Karen LePitre

May 25-28 (Friday - Monday) -- Wausau, WI
Tween Retreat (ages 12-14) - Julie Polychronis with Director-in-Training Vanessa Polychronis

June (Dates TBD...but a weekend in early June) -- Wausau, WI
Work Weekend - Todd Casell

June 8-10 (Friday - Sunday) -- Apple Valley, CA
General Retreat - Director TBD

June 18-22 (Monday - Friday) -- Wausau, WI
Special Persons Overnight Camp - Director TDB

June 25-29 (Monday - Friday) -- Wausau, WI
Special Persons Day Camp - Faith Schwebke with Director-in-Training Lois Spano

July 8-11 (Sunday - Wednesday) -- Wausau, WI
General Retreat - David and Tracie Elliott

July 15-20 (Sunday - Friday) -- Wausau, WI
Children's Camp (ages 7-12) - Liz Fischer with Director-in-Training Shannon Fischer

July 22-28 (Sunday - Saturday) -- Wausau, WI
Teen Camp (ages 12-18) - Jeff and Melissa Cannon

August 9-12 (Thursday - Sunday) -- Wausau, WI
Adventure Retreat - Mike Fischer

September 21-23, 2012 (Friday - Sunday) -- Wausau, WI
Women's Retreat - Clare Ostwald and Cassidy Pohl

October 5-8, 2012 (Friday - Monday) -- Wausau, WI
19-30's Retreat - Director TBD

October 5-8, 2012 (Friday - Monday) -- Apple Valley, CA
General Retreat - Doug Famous





Of Interest...

Upcoming Speakers & Studies

December 4

Food Pantry

Sermon: Joe Funari

Study: Mike Knapp

December 11

Sermon: Mike Knapp

Christmas Offerings:

Tim Chabot

December 18

Christmas Sermon: Dennis Thorfeldt

YFT/SS Programs

7PM-Candlelight Service

December 25

Sermon: Jon Larson

Presents from Christ: Andy

Weeks

As of Printing the January Schedule had not been Completed

Thanks be to God
for his
unspeakable Gift—
indescribable,
inestimable,
incomparable
inexpressible -
precious beyond
words.

—Lois Lebar

Attendance

October 16-98

October 23-100

October 30-120

November 6-116



Mark your Calendars...

December 18-7PM Candlelight Service

December 31-6:30 Dinner; 7:30 Praise &

Worship; 8:15-9:15-Activities & Fellowship

Sunday Services

Prayer Meeting- 8:15AM

Worship- 9:00AM

Sermon- 9:30AM

Second Service-10:30-11:30AM

Sunday School-10:15AM

Study/Youth For Truth-10:30AM



Mondays

1st Monday of the Month—Men's Meeting,
6:30PM

Tuesdays

Weekly—Church, 10:30AM

Every Other Tuesday—Church, Revelation, 7:00PM

Alternating Tuesdays—Pioneer Club at Church, 6:15PM

Every Other Tuesday—Women's Meeting—Church 12-2PM

Thursdays

Weekly—Women's Meeting—Church, Exodus, 7:00PM

Weekly—Joe Knapp's Home, 6:45PM

