



SUGAR LAND BIBLE CHURCH
"BRINGING THE BIBLE TO LIFE FOR 33 YEARS"

APRIL

THE CORNERSTONE

April 2015

And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

Men's Expedition in April 17 – 19, 2015

As in the past few years, our traditional, Annual SLBC Men's Expedition will take us to Frontier Camp in East Texas. The speaker this year is our own **William Miller**, who ministers as our Sunday Service announcer, and whom you may also have heard bringing the message from the pulpit in Pastor Andy's absence.

William will address us on the subject of the Spiritual Life in our Saturday and Sunday morning meetings. Saturday afternoon will be reserved for different sporting/camping activities. At dark we'll assemble around a camp fire for a time of singing, sharing and prayer.

Frontier Camp (www.frontiercamp.org) is located on the shore of Houston County Lake in the piney woods of East Texas between Crockett and Grapeland. It is about 60 miles east from Huntsville, a two and a half hours drive from Sugar Land.

Frontier Camp has great recreational facilities including: Volleyball, Basketball, Skeet Shooting, Rifle Range, Tomahawk Throwing, Archery, Canoeing, Hiking, Giant Swing, Low, High Ropes, etc. While it may still be too cold for some of us for water sports such as wake boarding or swimming, fishing for bass and catfish is great on the lake any time of the year. The pictures show some of the activities enjoyed by our men at last year's expedition.

Please mark your calendars for April 17 through 19 and pray for your participation in a great weekend in God's wonderful creation and in His excellent word. The cost is \$96 per person which includes lodging, meals and all recreational facilities. We want to extend a special invitation to our young men in High School. As in the past, scholarships are available for those who would need some help on the financial side. Sign-up sheets and further information are available on the ministries table in the church foyer. You may also contact **Dan Denham (713-705-2616)**, **Robert Hanan (281-242-0135)**, or **Hans Meinardus (281-265-8067)** for any questions.





MISSION NEWS ON ROY AND GOSIA STIFF

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Budapest! I am here at our Area Headquarters for our Global Church Movements (GCM) team meetings. It has been great to connect with other team members and jump into the issues facing our movement. We have two main subjects, one coming from the success that God has given, and one the result of a lack of success.

As I've written before, our training, which helps believers start home fellowships, has seen very encouraging results. In Ukraine alone there have been over 100 groups started in the last two years. Several other countries in Eastern Europe have seen similar results. Because of this, there has been even more interest from local churches, and the need to train greater numbers is before us. Our training model has been a centralized one, i.e., bringing people to one location in a country for 3-4 days for seminars and practice. In order to increase from training hundreds per year to thousands, we need to change to a decentralized model where the training takes place once a week in many different locations for a much longer period of time. This means that our emphasis now shifts from training people, to training other trainers while still maintaining quality control. Easy to write, not necessarily easy to do.

The second issue we are facing is that most of the home fellowships that have been started are not multiplying. As thankful as we are for all the people who have received Christ and been baptized, and for all the new groups that have been started, in order to reach our goal of one home fellowship for every 10,000 people, these new fellowships need to begin to plant daughter groups. The reason for this lack of multiplication is a lack of vision in the new groups, and not enough new leaders. It is human nature to focus inward seeking solutions to our own problems.

This is what happens in the new home fellowships, causing the vision of reaching their city with the gospel to decline. This inward vision also inhibits new leadership from developing. This requires from us better discipleship of the staff leaders that we are working with, that they in turn might better communicate the vision and lead the staff and volunteers that they work with. Because every member of our team is responsible for several countries we are almost always working over distance. Much of our time here in Budapest is being spent on how we can better minister and disciple when the people we are working with are in different time zones, hundreds if not thousands of miles away.

Personally, I think that there is a deeper, more fundamental change that needs to take place in how we minister. Every great church planting movement, both in the New Testament and in church history, is started and accompanied by extraordinary prayer. Scripture is quite clear that unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. It is also clear that God has ordained that in His Kingdom, He delights to answer the prayers of His people, and often does not act if His people do not pray.

Gosia and I have been on extended leave in the US for medical reasons, and God has used this time to reacquaint me with the American culture. I have been so encouraged, not only by our own church and the brothers and sister in it, but also by how many other great churches and active Christians there are in America. But what is also clear to me is that there is an increasingly intensive attack on believers, not because of their faith in Jesus Christ, but because of their stand for His righteousness. People have lost jobs, and some are being seriously threatened with losing their homes, all for the sake of God's Kingdom.

Our medical journey has only deepened my commitment to the necessity of prayer. As Gosia wrote in her last letter, her doctors were treating her as a terminal patient. God in an extraordinary way led us to a different clinic and to try a different treatment, all against the strong advice of her doctors, a treatment which literally saved her life. God did this in answer to the prayers of His people. What God did for the one, He can do for the many. We can, and we will see a true movement of multiplying home fellowships across Eastern Europe, if like the apostle in Acts 6 we are committed to the ministry of prayer without distraction, and like Cornelius in Act 10 we are devoted to prayer, involving heart, soul, and mind. Just as Gosia and I do not know what the Lord has for her future, I do not know what the Lord has for the future of America. But I do know that He has, can, and will work mightily in our country if His people will pray. Gosia has finished,



Andy Woods—Pastor

The Rapture (Part 27)

My previous articles commenced a series on the rapture of the church. We began with the question, "What is the Rapture?" This question can best be answered by noting ten truths about the rapture from [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) and [1 Corinthians 15:50-58](#). We then moved to a second main question, namely, when will the rapture take place relative to the coming seven-year Tribulation period? We offered the contention that believers can develop certainty that they will be raptured before the Tribulation period occurs for at least seven reasons. After dealing with these two questions, we began to explore some of the weaknesses associated with the other competing views that seek to answer the question, "When Will the Rapture Take Place Relative to the Coming Tribulation Period?" At least five differing perspectives exist. We noted at the onset that it is important to understand that all of the non-pretribulation positions have a difficult time handling the seven arguments favoring **pre-tribulationism** previously discussed in this series. We have already noted the problems associated with **mid-tribulationism**. In the last few articles we began to scrutinize the arguments favoring **post-tribulationism**. In this article, we will continue to scrutinize **post-tribulationism**.

POST-TRIBULATIONAL RAPTURE

Post-tribulation rapture theory contends that the rapture will take place at the end of the coming Tribulation period. This view typically sees no distinction between the rapture and the Second Advent and thus seeks to harmonize all references to Christ's return as taking place at the end of the future Tribulation period. Those adhering to the **post-tribulationism** rapture typically rely on at least one of *four* arguments to support their position. In past articles, we noted that **post-tribulationism** errs in superficially connecting Paul's depiction of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-58) with either the events of Matthew 24:30-31 or Revelation 20:4-6. Moreover, we noted that contrary to the assertion of **post-tribulationism**, although believers will be exempted from some of the judgments during the Tribulation period, they will still be subjected to many other judgments during this time period. Thus, **post-tribulationism** errs in failing to understand that the divine promise of Revelation 3:10 conveys a complete escape not only from coming Tribulation judgments but also the very time of those judgments. We now move on to an analysis of a *fourth* argument posited by post-tribulationists.

4. *The post-tribulation rapture position has been the dominant view held by theologians throughout the history of the church.* Adherents of the post-tribulation view are quick to point out that the pretribulation rapture view appeared relatively late in church history and that the dominant view early on was the posttribulation view. According to posttribulationist George Ladd, "every church father who deals with the subject expects the church to suffer at the hands of the Antichrist" and "the prevailing view is post-tribulationist premillennialism." Gundry similarly concludes, "Until Augustine in the fourth century, the early Church generally held to the premillennarian understanding of Biblical eschatology...And it was post-tribulationist." Indeed, post-tribulationism's appeal to history rather than the Scripture at this juncture may be a subtle concession of the inadequacy of its biblical support.

At any rate, this objection can be handled in *three ways*. *First*, in our last article, we saw that the issue is not when the view became popular but if it is taught in the Bible. If the view can be successfully defended from the Scripture, this fact alone should be sufficient to settle the argument, regardless of when the view became popular. *Second*, we also observed that the notion that the earliest Church Fathers were universally post-tribulationist is a highly debatable proposition. One of the pervasive characteristics of their writings was their belief in the imminent, or any moment, appearance of Christ. Imminency is compatible with pre-tribulationism rather than post-tribulationism. We now move on to our *third* response.

Third, even if the post-tribulationism was influential in church history long before pre-tribulationism, this fact in and of itself would be insufficient to establish post-tribulationism's credibility. Prophetic truth is designed by the Holy Spirit to become progressively more understandable as the world approaches the allotted time period when the prophecies will be fulfilled. Progressive revelation has ceased with the closing of the biblical canon back in the first century (Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19). However, progressive illumination, whereby the Holy Spirit enables the Church to comprehend ever increasing degrees of already revealed biblical and prophetic truth, not only has been taking place but even now continues to be an ongoing reality. After receiving a prophetic vision about the future, Daniel was told, "But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase" (Daniel 12:4). Daniel then inquired into the vision's meaning and was once again told that the words are to be closed up and sealed *until* the time of the end. Daniel 12:8-9 says, "As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, 'My lord, what *will be* the outcome of these *events*?' He said, 'Go *your way*, Daniel, for *these* words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.'" Many incorrectly interpret this reference in Daniel 12:4 to how many in the last days "will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase" as increase in travel and technology in the last days. However, the reference going "back and forth" is also used in Amos 8:12 to refer to a vain search for spiritual knowledge during a time period when it is inaccessible. This verse says, "People will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find *it*." When this parallel passage is taken into account, going "back and forth" or "to and fro" is a reference to reading revealed Scripture. As people will give themselves in the last days to reading and studying prophetic truth, Daniel predicts that God's obscure end time program will become increasingly understandable, especially as the time period for the predicted events draws ever nearer (Dan. 12:4, 8-9; 1 Peter 1:10-11).



We find this principle of progressive illumination also at work in Daniel's vision of the Ram and the Goat in Daniel 8, which would not be ultimately fulfilled until the Grecian era, or several centuries from Daniel's personal time frame. Daniel 8:27 says, "Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up *again* and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain *it*." This same concept of progressive illumination is also discernible in the writings of the Old Testament prophets, who were unable to comprehend some of the specific details of their own messianic prophecies. Concerning these Old Testament prophets, First Peter 1:10-11 says, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow." In this same sense, God's end time prophetic truth becomes progressively unsealed or illuminated as history finally catches up to the time period when the prophetic scenario will be fulfilled.

Because God's prophetic truth is not meant to be fully understood until just before the prophetic events transpire, we have the ability to understand end times prophecy better than the great minds who studied it throughout church history. This is not because we are more intelligent than them, but rather because we are living closer in time toward the fulfillment of these prophecies. Similarly, if the Lord tarries, those living on the earth just before the Tribulation period begins, or those who are actually in the Tribulation period itself will comprehend prophecy far better than we will. Because prophecy is progressively revealed, it is logical to assume that prophetic truth would be better understood by believers living later in Church history than by Christians early on in Church history.

This reality explains why Eschatology was the last of all the branches of theology to be developed and systematized. Here is a very rough outline of doctrinal history. The Church resolved issues related to canonicity around A.D. 180. It then applied itself to the subject of Christology around A.D. 400. It dealt extensively with issues related to the Atonement around A.D. 1100. About mid A.D. 1500, the Church systematized issues related to salvation, known as Soteriology. It was not until around A.D. 1800 that the vast subject of Biblical eschatology began to be systematized and developed.

Orr outlines the progress of Christian dogma in a similar way. The second century was the age of Apologetics. The doctrine of God and especially the Trinity then took center stage in the third and fourth centuries as the Church dealt with the Monarchian, Arian, and Macedonian controversies. Anthropology then became the Church's focus in the early fifth century during the Augustinian and Pelagian controversies. The late fifth and then sixth and seventh centuries were characterized by an ecclesiastical interest in Christological (Nestorian, Eutychian, Monophysite, Monothelite) matters. In the sixteenth century the reformers focused upon salvific or Soteriological concerns. Finally, the Church gave itself to correcting a Mythical and Mediaeval pre-reformation Eschatology. Thus, Eschatology was the last of the branches of theology to be systematized since it was not designed to be progressively unsealed or illuminated by the Holy Spirit until just before the fulfillment of the predicted events (Dan. 12:4, 8-9).

If this doctrine of progressive illumination related to biblical prophecy is accurate, then turning to the sages of the past throughout corridors of Church history in order to understand end times prophecy is an exercise in futility. The real question should be not what the earliest Church Fathers or even the Protestant Reformers taught about Bible prophecy. Rather, a more fruitful inquiry should relate to what the Holy Spirit is illuminating to the Church today about Eschatology through God's written Word as interpreted in its plain and ordinary sense. If the preceding discussion is accurate, then post-tribulationism's appeal to antiquity for support is significantly undermined.

In sum, in this series, having previously answered the question, "What is the Rapture?", we noted at least several reasons that affirm the pre-tribulation rapture view. We then began interacting with the other positions on the timing of the rapture. In this and the prior article, we observed that **post-tribulationism's** argument from antiquity errs in appealing to historical sources outside the Bible, failing to acknowledge that imminency was embraced by many Church Fathers, and failing to understand the notion of progressive illumination of prophetic truth.

(To Be Continued...)

4. James Orr, *The Progress of Dogma* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 21-31.



The Cornerstone Newsletter deadline for News articles is the 19th of each month. You can e-mail Patricia Chandler at:

earlbudc@att.net or send information to Carol Henry at Carol@SLBC.org

Bulletin Board



Home Fellowship Groups

First Colony East—Adults Only: Host: Eric and Veronica Wasek—Meets 2nd & 4th Fridays at 7 pm—2801 Hidden Knoll Court—281-980-3742— A study in 1 & 2 Timothy -.Leader: Earl Chandler

First Colony West—Children Welcome: Hosts: Keith and Judy Kurrus- 2803 Pineleaf Drive—281-242-3031 Co-Hosts: Brooks and Elizabeth Sellers—281-313-0527 : Meets 2nd & 4th Fridays at 6:30

New— Young Couples Fellowship—Held at SLBC—7 pm. Coordinator: Andrea Merkin, 1-210-367-6452; Meets 2nd & 4th Friday They meet in the fellowship room.

Men's Weekly Bible Study— Tuesday, 8:00 pm David Sandlin—Teacher

Ladies Bible Study—Thursday—9:30 to 11:30

Ladies Bible Class—Hostess and Teacher: Betty Cooke

21926 Rustic Canyon Lane, Richmond, 281-232- 1795 Meets every Tuesday at 7:00 pm

Family Mission Trip to Florida

June 13-19, 2015

Sign-up Sheets are in the foyer (*See John Nemece for Details*)

Vacation Bible School

July 6-10, 2015

Volunteers needed (*See Gabe Morris for Details*)



Scripture for the Month: Joshua 1:6-9



Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is* with you wherever you go."



Continued from Page 2

praise the Lord, her alternative method of chemo. Her latest blood tests show slightly elevated liver levels causing her doctor to order an MRI “just to make sure” that everything is okay. After that her doctors strongly want her to start traditional chemo. She needs a couple of weeks to recover her strength before we make that decision. Please pray that the MRI would be clear, and that God would give clear leading about more treatment.

Thank you all so much for standing so strongly with us, not only during this trial, but as we have labored through the years in fruitful and difficult times, and we ask that you continue to pray.

In Christ,
ROY

FILLED BY FAITH

Stan Giles, our first SLBC pastor, is writing these homilies as he approaches being with the Lord. I hope you “enjoy” these. Submitted by Earl Doyle

In 2006 I was in Iraq for five months and spent some time traveling throughout the country visiting small groups of military members. One trip took me to Ur, the place where the Biblical character Abram was visited by God and called to leave his town and move to what is today termed Israel.

At this location a photo was taken of me. It may be the most significant photo of me ever taken. Shot about twenty feet from behind me my arms are crossed as I stare forward. It doesn't show my face but it seems to reflect my mental engagement was as I was thinking, wondering and very intrigued with what I was seeing.

Historically this was a fairly fascinating former facility in what is roughly the middle of modern Iraq. The roofs are naturally gone but many of the ancient walls are still there. In 1979 then president Saddam Hussein had a series of mimicking walls built which were climbable. So I climbed up and stood on one of those modern walls and while standing there a friend snapped a picture from behind me. That photo seems pretty clear that I was touched deeply as I reflected on God's call fifty centuries earlier.

As I stood there I was intrigued to view the area and visualize Abram (not yet named “Abraham”) as the one who was called by God to drop everything and move himself and his extended family hundreds of miles to relocate in what is today modern Israel. In this sense God spoke to him and he responded. He was a man of faith.

The New Testament book of Hebrews (11:8) says this, “*By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going*”.

Faith is important to our response to God. Throughout the New Testament a handful of places tie it in with hope and love. Those three – *faith, hope and love* -- reflect the calling that we are to trust God. To exercise faith.

As we move through life we tend to assume that God is going to adjust our lives to be as we want it to be. But that is not always the case. While Abram was surprised at God's calling him to move out of Ur, I was surprised 6 months or so ago to discover I had brain cancer. Deadly brain cancer. This was in spite of my reasonable efforts to live healthy and it can be discouraging, but it can also be faith filled, believing that the length of life is not as important as the goodness of God. Just outside of the facility was a small sales station, rare for that period of the war. It was selling a series of simple rugs very cheap and so I purchased a few for family and friends. Sandi laid ours downstairs next to our pool table and so when I walk on this carpet I am often reminded of the challenge that the people of Iraq have and still face.

So this relatively inexpensive carpet that I see in our house is a reminder that both Abraham and I are mystified by God's sovereignty, but mostly filled by faith in God's service in our lives.

Stan Giles

But without faith *it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.* Hebrews 11:6