

Australia's Oldest Organisation Turns 200

Australia's longest continuing organisation (apart from the Church) celebrated its 200th anniversary on 7 March. Few institutions survive 200 years, let alone continue to flourish after such time. The organisation which reached this rare milestone is not a bank or a theatre company, nor a business or school; it is the Bible Society of Australia.



LET THE CELEBRATIONS BEGIN!
Pastor Brian Houston and Archbishop Glen Davies lead the BSA Bicentenary Celebration.

I suspect that if this were any other type of organisation, the coverage would be wide across our news and television. Let's admit it, a 200 year anniversary doesn't happen very often in Australian history. The British And Foreign Bible Society had started in England just 13 years earlier, with the purpose of distributing copies of the Bible to military servicemen, and later to Welsh speaking Britons who could not read an English translation of the Scriptures. It was NSW Governor Macquarie, no less, who in March 1817 encouraged the birth of the Bible Society of Australia.

The aims of the Bible Society have changed little in 200 years. The society exists to bring the Bible to Australians, in English, or by translating the Scriptures into Aboriginal or other languages so that all people can read the Word of God for themselves. They also support many translation projects across the world. According to McCrindle Research, approximately 45% of Australians now own a Bible (but that percentage shrinks to 32% for Gen Y), although Bible websites are visited by Australians in huge numbers, one site alone has over 50 million visits a year by Aussies.

**NEED A
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The Bible remains the most-read book throughout the world, and has been translated into more languages than any other book. Despite a smaller number of Australians owning and reading the Bible, it remains enormously influential across our culture, including in politics, law, and the arts. And while some Australians have put it aside, many thousands of new Australians are keen to read this most astonishing book. Like the foundations of a building, or the innumerable kms of pipes that traverse underneath our streets, both are unseen and yet we depend on them every day, so the Bible has provided a bedrock without which our society would be considerably weaker and less certain.

– Rev Murray Campbell, Mentone Baptist Church
Full text at: <https://murraycampbell.net/>

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Franklin Graham – Spreading Faith, Hope And Love

In what proved to be a futile attempt to stop Franklin Graham speaking at a *Festival Of Hope* gathering in Vancouver, Canada, from 3-5 March, a number of opponents, including ‘church leaders’ stated: ‘Although this event is supported by many local churches in the area, there are many others in the Christian community who are uneasy with having Franklin Graham speak in Vancouver, in light of his outspoken bigotry targeting refugees, Muslims and the LGBTQ+ community.

‘The goal of this petition is to demonstrate that not all Christians in Vancouver agree with Franklin Graham. In light of recent events in our country (ie the shooting in Quebec) and south of the border, many people of Christian faith in Vancouver believe that Franklin Graham will not help establish and bring shalom (peace). Many believe that his presence will in fact do the opposite. The purpose of this petition is to stand in solidarity with marginalized and minority groups, as we stand for the justice and dignity of all people, regardless of race, religion, gender or orientation.’ On the other hand, some 300 churches had extended the invitation to Franklin Graham to speak at *Festival Of Hope*.

Despite trawling through several news services, I’ve not found any accounts of shootings or other disturbances of the peace in Vancouver as a result of the *Festival*. Nor does it seem to have caused any angst among the so-called LGBTQ+ community.

On the other hand, news is to hand that some 1,900 (mostly young) people expressed faith in Christ as their Lord and Saviour. By now they will have been referred to appropriate churches where they will be receiving ongoing help and counselling in their new-found faith.

One suspects that this was the real reason for the attempt to stymie the *Festival*. Sadly there are people who take cover in the visible church but who know nothing themselves of a living faith in Christ as their Lord and Saviour nor do they have any desire to see the spread of such faith. To this end they were prepared to smear and defame Franklin Graham. Any trumped up charge or misrepresentation would do. Sadly too, there are many ‘innocents abroad’ in the visible church who fall for this malignant nonsense.

Even here in Australia, similar thoughts to the above were expressed, in a number of cases by people one would have thought would know better.

Now as it happens, I had been chair of the organising committee for Franklin Graham’s *Festival Victoria* in 2005, a position through which I came to know Franklin personally. This led me to make my own contribution on my *Facebook* page to the effect that Franklin is a true Christian gentleman, ‘a man in Christ’ who upholds and defends the Bible, including Biblical morality, and proclaims the Lord Jesus Christ in all His saving power.

We live in a world of gross darkness on account of its rebellion against God, and the only remedy is to shine the light of Christ into it. Anyone who does this, especially if they do it with the faithfulness and fervour of the Grahams – Billy, Franklin and Will – deserves the full support of us all. Our fellow Christians are not the enemy. The enemy is the one who ‘prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour’. Our friends are those who do the will and work of God; they are us and we are them – ‘all one in Christ Jesus.’ – *Bob Thomas*

CHINA: Massive Crackdown In Xinjiang

Authorities in China's volatile north-western Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have banned all Christian activities not linked to state-approved churches and launched a region-wide crackdown under the guise of 'anti-terrorism'. Churches have been targeted in the capital Urumqi and across Xinjiang. China Aid reports that at least 80 believers have been arrested and interrogated; some have even been sentenced to 15-day administrative detention and fined. Most of those arrested belong to the Fangcheng Fellowship, one of China's largest house church networks. A resident of Shayar county in Aksu prefecture told Radio Free Asia that churches in the cities of Aksu and Korla have stopped meeting altogether and that local believers have been warned not to meet privately for worship. 'We don't dare gather for worship now,' the church member said. 'The police are saying it's part of terrorism prevention in Xinjiang, and that they won't allow gatherings of even a few people ... The police want our church to join the Three-Self Patriotic Association.' [Churches in the Communist Party controlled TSPA are subject to unreasonable restrictions.]

The regional government in Urumqi has published a list of banned activities which, according to those who spoke to RFA, is so detailed and specific that it could only have been drawn up with the aid of government infiltrators. 'Unauthorised editing, translation, publication, printing, reproduction, production, distribution, sale and dissemination of religious publications and audiovisual products' is prohibited. 'Missionary activities ... under the guise of business, tourism, lectures, overseas study, cultural exchange or donations to disaster relief or to fund studies or alleviate poverty and sickness' are also prohibited.

The deteriorating situation will not help long-time prisoner, convert from Islam and Kashgar house church leader Alimujiang Yimiti (44). A believer since 1995, Alimujiang was accused in 2007 of witnessing to Muslims. Arrested in 2008, he was sentenced in a secret trial in 2009 to imprisonment for 15 years, charged with unlawfully providing state secrets to overseas organisations. Alimujiang, his wife Gulineur and their two young children need our prayers.

There is absolutely no doubt that Islamic terror represents a serious and growing threat to China. The threat has escalated in recent years as Uyghur jihadists have moved from Pakistan's tribal regions to Syria, where they have been fighting mostly with al-Qaeda affiliates in Aleppo and Idlib, but also with Islamic State. Keen to counter the threat, Beijing has increased its support for and engagement with Damascus. Syrian-trained Uyghurs are also committing terror attacks further afield, eg at the Chinese embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (30 August 2016) and at a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey (31 December 2016). Released on 5 March, Issue 20 of the al-Qaeda-linked Turkistan Islamic Party's Arabic language magazine, Islamic Turkistan, urges jihadis worldwide to attack Chinese targets in their countries.

On 27 February Islamic State released a sophisticated and bloody half-hour propaganda video featuring Uyghurs in and from 'East Turkistan' (Xinjiang). The video, in which Uyghur militants vow to plant their flag in China and shed rivers of blood, was released as the Chinese government staged its fourth massive military parade in the capital Urumqi. For its part, Beijing has vowed to use 'thunderous force' against Uyghur terrorists throughout the region. Large detachments of soldiers have been deployed to Aksu, Hotan and Kashgar in the Uyghur heartland. Security in Xinjiang is no small issue for China, especially as it forges ahead with its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. CPEC is a 3,000 km, \$46 billion initiative to create a network of roads, rail and pipelines linking Kashgar, Xinjiang, to the deep-water port of Gwadar, Pakistan. China will not tolerate unrest in Xinjiang and will crack down hard to ensure everyone and everything is subject to its power.

PLEASE PRAY THAT GOD WILL:

- grant great wisdom to all Xinjiang's Christian leaders, so they will know what to do and how to respond at this tense and critical time. 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him' (James 1.5 ESV);
- bless Alimujiang Yimiti, his wife Gulineur and their two young children; may He preserve, protect and provide for them all. 'The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one' (2 Thessalonians 3.3 ESV);
- awaken the authorities in Beijing and in Xinjiang to the fact that Christians are not the enemy and indeed that the Church is deeply patriotic – always praying for China, eager to bless China;
- break the emotional, spiritual and material connections that exist between Xinjiang's Uyghur separatist and transnational jihadists who are looking for a door into China; may China's Uyghurs find peace, dignity, joy and liberty in Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth Kendal is the author of *Turn Back The Battle: Isaiah Speaks To Christians Today* (Deror Books, Melbourne, Australia, Dec 2012) which offers a Biblical response to persecution and existential threat; and *After Saturday Comes Sunday: Understanding The Christian Crisis In The Middle East* (Wipf and Stock, Eugene, OR, USA, June 2016). See www.ElizabethKendal.com

A Jew Finds Jesus On The Other Side Of The World

An Israeli backpacker had to travel to the other side of the world before finding the Jewish Messiah no-one had told him about at home. Born and raised in a secular kibbutz and knowing almost nothing about Jesus, Omri Jaakobovich was taken aback when the Dutch-born host of his hostel in the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, kept referring to him as one of God's 'chosen people.'

He challenged his host saying, 'What's so chosen about us Jews?' But he was shocked when she spoke to him about Jesus, the Messiah. Having wrestled since he was a child with the question, 'Why was I born if one day I have to die?' it now seemed logical to him that, if Jesus has been raised from the dead, maybe he too can be resurrected.

He became convinced beyond any doubt that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah, and is now ever grateful for the help of Host Israeli Travellers. Host Israeli Travellers has provided inexpensive rooms in a friendly home environment to more than 15,000 youngsters touring the world after their demanding stints in the Israeli Defence Forces. Beginning in New Zealand, which has become a favourite destination for young Israelis, it has now also spread to Australia, Fiji, Hong Kong and the UK. - ANS

OUR DAILY BREAD CAN LEAD PEOPLE TO FIND JESUS, 'THE BREAD OF LIFE'

A new website has been launched to explore 'the only physical thing Jesus left us with which to build church and community,' according to its founder, the British writer and theologian, Noel Moules. The Peacemeal website is a free online resource celebrating the power of sharing a meal as an act of Christian witness and relationship-building. Mr Moules, who is the director of *Workshop*, a Christian teaching charity, says he has been exploring and experimenting with this truth for most of the past five decades. 'Sharing food not only meets physical needs, but also nurtures relationships and builds communities,' he says. 'It is a powerful medium for developing spirituality and bringing about social change.' Mr Moules says this is the genius of Jesus' example at the Last Supper, central to communicating His mission and message. Eating together is common to all cultures and speaks every language. It can feed the poor, reconcile enemies and communicate love. - *Inspire Magazine*

Anglicare Meets Surge Of Need

A surge in the number of people reaching out for help in Sydney's Glenmore Park has led Anglicare to open an emergency relief centre in the mortgage stressed suburb. Data shows that cash-strapped locals are pouring more into their home loans leaving less of a buffer for when things go wrong. Anglicare Penrith has partnered with Glenmore Park Anglican Church to deliver an Emergency Relief Point. The church's assistant women's pastor Ruth Baker says they are hearing more and more people are in need in Glenmore Park, from homeless people, to people who won't be okay financially this month, to those fleeing violence.

- *Sydney Anglicans*

Darlene Zschech Spreads Hope

For Darlene Zschech - speaker, author, pastor and worship leader, who has written over 100 anthems sung by 30 million worshippers around the world, - the concept of hope is not a concept at all. Darlene says hope has hands that serve the poor. Hope trusts even when the diagnosis seems grim. Bringing hope and the love of Christ to the world has long been the calling for Darlene and her husband Mark through their work within the Hope Church Unlimited they pastor in NSW and through

relief agencies such as Hope: Gospel, an organization they founded to serve the poorest of the poor. The message of hope drives the Hope Unlimited congregation, and it is the overarching message for Darlene's latest recording, *Here I Am Send Me*, a live album and her first project following a life changing cancer diagnosis in 2014, now in remission.

- *Breaking Christian News*

YouVersion Gets A Make Over

The world's most popular Bible App is getting a makeover thanks to Bible Society Australia. To mark 200 years of the Good Book in Australia, *YouVersion* is offering Aussie users of the Bible App a chance to join the celebrations by signing up for customised daily devotions. *Eternity News* reports that the goal of this new partnership is to enable more people to access the Bible on their phones and tablets, bringing God's Word closer to everyday Aussies. The Bible App will also deliver the latest messages from Bible Society Australia, as well as offering a selection of Bible devotions published by Bible Society, to help people engage with the Word of God. *YouVersion* has announced that the Bible App surpassed a record 250 million downloads around the world.

- *Eternity News at biblesociety.org.au*

A Great Week At The NEXTGEN Leaders Conference

For the last few years my church has been sending the youth group leaders to a week-long conference at the Katoomba Christian Convention. It is always a great week away during the summer break, and the skills we learn day by day through the lectures and workshops really benefit us as we serve in youth ministry.



Morning Talk, the first session of the day, gets us off to a great start, with singing and prayer, and the sermon which took us through 2 Samuel and David's story with Bathsheba on the theme: *The Depth Of Human Depravity & The Discomfort Of Divine Grace*. We all know that David was a man after God's own heart, but he was also incredibly human in some good ways and some bad ways. These talks really looked into the human side of the story and gave us a fresh view of a well-known story in the Bible.

Training Group followed Morning Talk, when we broke off into our training groups. NEXTGEN is a three-year course, when we are broken into smaller groups of around ten for Training Group. In our Year Two training group we were learning about *God's Big Picture*, particularly the Old Testament and how the common threads link through the whole Bible. At the end of the week, we had to present an example Bible study from 2 Samuel 6.1-11. It seemed a daunting task at first for those who hadn't had much theological training, but as we read the linking verses and looked at the context of the passage, we were soon able to see the link.

Workshops came next, following the lunch break. These were practical sessions where we looked at running a youth night, effective ways to engage with teenagers, and holding small group discussions, as well as open forums about issues and ideas we have had with our own youth groups.

Yes, there was Free Time – for two hours in the afternoon before dinner. This was a time to go bush walking, visit the local cafes in Katoomba, look at some second-hand book stores, read through our notes, or work on our Bible studies. It was also time to meet other young adult Christians from across Sydney and from interstate as well. Our lodging for the week was at the Katoomba Backpackers Hostel, and with 80 young adults all in the common room laughing, joking and sharing stories, as well as playing many competitive games of *UNO*, there was a great atmosphere all through the week.

Evening Talks back at the main conference centre after dinner was a series of talks from 2 Corinthians, looking at different aspects of being a leader – *A Leader's Power, Weakness And Enemy*. The main theme throughout was that we aren't perfect, but our weaknesses are opportunities to make use of the grace and power of the Gospel. We have more influence over those we minister to than we think, and we shouldn't limit what God can do based on how we limit ourselves: be yourself, and let God be God.

After a week in Katoomba for the NEXTGEN conference it was time to pack our bags and head home. As part of the conference we could pick two books for free from a book stand. I picked up *What's Best Next?* by Matt Perman, which talks about how the Gospel transforms the way we get things done, as well as *Dangerous Calling* by Paul David Tripp, which looks at confronting the unique challenges of being involved in ministry. NEXTGEN is always a great time of learning and growing, and I look forward to next year's conference.

– Christopher Archibald



Christopher Archibald lives in Sydney and is a Youth Leader at New Life Christian Church in Blacktown. A voracious reader, he ploughs through many books in a calendar year, with a bookcase that is constantly being re-arranged to accommodate new additions. He wrote this article for Press Service International and it was first published in *Christian Today*.

NEXTGEN18 will be held at Katoomba Convention Centre from 15-19 and 22-26 January 2018 on the theme **Fully Equipped**, with Geoff Harper speaking from Isaiah and Ray Galea from Romans 8. Go to nextgen.kcc.org.au for further details.

FAITH TO THE FORE ...

Thousands Hear The Gospel At Franklin Graham's Festival Of Hope In Vancouver,

Thousands flooded Vancouver's Roger's Arena on the weekend of 3-5 March to hear about Jesus. Worship and prayer filled the massive stadium as Rev Franklin Graham preached the Gospel during his *Festival Of Hope* crusade across the country. Many attendees say their lives will never be the same. 'Praise God for an amazing encounter,' attendee Destiny Kuo says. 'I got emotional seeing so many people accepting our Saviour!'



Franklin Graham counselling those who came forward. – BGEA pic.

Nearly half of the 1,900 people who responded to Graham's invitation to make Christ their Lord and Saviour were under 18. Sabrina Hay was one of many parents who watched their children give their lives to Christ. 'Such an amazing night! So worth every minute!' she said. 'My daughter even asked the Lord to be her Saviour! She has begun her walk.'

While thousands of lives were changed by the Gospel, many tried to stop Franklin Graham from preaching at the event. Just days before the crusade, several city leaders and 14 ministers asked that Graham be banned from preaching the Gospel for what they called 'extraordinarily derogative' beliefs about gay marriage and Islam. Vancouver Mayor Gregor Robertson and the ministers wrote a letter asking organizers to drop Graham from the itinerary. 'Why would they have invited this person in the first place, knowing that he's said these things about Muslims, knowing that he's said these things about the LGBTQ community?' said Councilor Tim Stevenson, Canada's first openly gay minister. 'Why would they not invite a different evangelist, one that isn't controversial?'

Franklin Graham has always been honest about Biblical marriage, calling society's celebration of the homosexual lifestyle a 'tide of moral decay.' He has also called Islam 'evil' and 'a danger to our security.' Despite the backlash, organizers told *CBN News* that Franklin Graham's only mission was to tell Vancouver about Jesus. 'We made it very clear that Franklin Graham was not coming to incite hatred or violence, but to simply preach the Gospel to this city,' Westwood Community Church pastor Giulio Loreface Gabeli told *CBN News*. Gabeli also made it clear that while some ministers may be wary of Graham's personal views, he and other organizers 'are committed to pursuing the unity of the Church in Vancouver.'

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CHURCH AND NATION

Church Leaders Call For More Compassionate Foreign Policy

Church Leaders representing 12 major denominations have written to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, calling for Australia to set a more compassionate direction for future foreign policy. *The Church Leaders Statement on Foreign Policy* is endorsed by signatories from the Adventist, Anglican, Apostolic, Baptist, Catholic, Chinese Methodist, Churches of Christ, Congregational, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Salvation Army and Uniting churches. The church leaders argued that 'the purpose of Australia's foreign policy should be to achieve the sustainable flourishing and wellbeing of all Australians and of our global neighbours.' 'Jesus' call to love our neighbours as ourselves reminds us that a concern for the needs and rights of others must not be an afterthought nor the accidental by-product of a unilateral pursuit of self-interest. Rather, that we must apply the same concern for the rights and interests of others that we apply to our own.' Highlighting the fact that Australia is a wealthy nation in a region marked by extreme and unacceptable poverty, as well as vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change, the church leaders urged that Australia's foreign policy address poverty, economic exclusion and inequality, violations of human rights, and climate change. They noted that, despite its wealth, Australia's aid to tackle poverty in the region has fallen to its lowest ever level and called on the Government to take concrete steps to increase development assistance towards the internationally-agreed target of 0.7% of Gross National Income – a benchmark which the United Kingdom, among other nations, has already met.

Micah Australia National Co-ordinator, Ben Thurley, said, 'With national and international politics seemingly turning away from generosity, it is heartening to see Australia's Christian leaders speaking up for a more just, generous and compassionate foreign policy. Australia's Christians want Australia to be a nation that acts as a good neighbour in a region where too many are still forced to live in poverty and vulnerability. We want to live in a nation that increases aid to help our poorest neighbours tackle poverty, instead of cutting it. A nation that stands with vulnerable communities as they face up to climate change, instead of denying we have a problem.'

Micah Australia is a coalition of church groups and Christian aid and development organisations, raising a powerful voice for justice and a world free from poverty.

Read: *Can The Theory Of Evolution Survive The Attack Of Science?*
at www.defenceofthefaith.org

Ramon A Williams
- Worldwide Photos -
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PLANNING AHEAD

Hon Paul Green MLC Pre-Selected BY CDP For 2019

With an eye to the future, the Hon Paul Green MLC has been pre-selected as CDP candidate for re-election as a Member of the Legislative Council in 2019. Paul is currently part of the Christian Democratic Party (Fred Nile Group) team that holds the strategic balance of power in the NSW Upper House. His current term of service expires with the 56th Parliament on 1 March 2019.



Paul practised as a Registered Nurse before starting a small business. While studying leadership in Bible College, Paul was involved in the *God Cares* prison ministry at Parklea Prison. After finishing Bible College, Paul became a pastor at his local church on the South Coast of NSW before running for local government in 2004 where he was elected to a position on Shoalhaven City Council. In 2007, he became Deputy Mayor. In 2008, Paul contested the Mayoral election and became Mayor of the City of Shoalhaven and remained in that role until October 2012. He played a major role in the establishment of the \$110 million South Coast Correctional Centre.

During his time as Mayor, he successfully contested the 2011 State Election, and was elected as a Member of the Legislative Council in the NSW Upper House. Paul is known for his fairness and impartiality, and has often been called upon to Chair a number of parliamentary inquiries, including the Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing, and the Select Committee on the Inquiry into Closing and Downsizing of NSW Corrective Services. Paul is married to Michelle, and they have six children.



On 1 March 1784 John Wesley signed the Deed of Declaration institutionalising the Methodist movement. The spirit of Wesley is well summed up in this quotation, a spirit all church planters and pioneers do well to reflect on:

JOHN WESLEY
1703-1791

'Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.'

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TURN BACK THE BATTLE:

Isaiah Speaks to Christians Today.

With persecution escalating globally, **Elizabeth Kendal** calls us to revisit the prophecy of Isaiah, maintaining that Isaiah 1-39 provides an unambiguous treatise on how God's people are to respond to persecution, suffering and existential threat.

For purchasing options, visit: www.turnbackthebattle.com

AN UNSUNG HERO OF THE FAITH

Missionary Died Thinking He Was A Failure; 84 Years Later Thriving Churches Found Hidden In The Jungle

After crossing the Kwilu in 1912, medical missionary Dr William Leslie went to live and minister to tribal people in a remote corner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After 17 years he returned to the US a discouraged man – believing he failed to make an impact for Christ. He died nine years after his return.

But in 2010, a team led by Eric Ramsey with Tom Cox World Ministries made a sensational discovery. They found a network of reproducing churches hidden like glittering diamonds in the dense jungle across the Kwilu River from Vanga, where Dr Leslie was stationed. With the help of a Mission Aviation Fellowship pilot, Ramsey and his team flew east from Kinshasa to Vanga, a two and a half hour flight in a Cessna Caravan. After they reached Vanga, they hiked a mile to the Kwilu River and used dugout canoes to cross the half-mile-wide expanse. Then they hiked with backpacks another ten miles into the jungle before they reached the first village of the Yansi people.

Based on his previous research, Ramsey thought the Yansi in this remote area might have some exposure to the name of Jesus, but no real understanding of who He is. They were unprepared for their remarkable find. 'When we got in there, we found a network of reproducing churches throughout the jungle,' Ramsey reports. 'Each village had its own gospel choir, although they wouldn't call it that,' he notes. 'They wrote their own songs and would have sing-offs from village to village.'

They found a church in each of the eight villages they visited scattered across 34 miles. Ramsey and his team even found a 1,000-seat stone 'cathedral' in one of the villages. He learned that this church got so crowded in the 1980s – with many walking miles to attend — that a church planting movement began in the surrounding villages. 'There is no Bible in the Yansi language,' Ramsey says. 'They used a French Bible, so those who taught had to be fluent in French.'

Apparently, Dr Leslie crossed the Kwilu River once a year from Vanga and spent a month traveling through the jungle, carried by servants in a sedan chair. 'He would teach the Bible, taught the tribal children how to read and write, talked about the importance of education, and told Bible stories,' Ramsey notes. Dr Leslie started the first organized educational system in these villages, Ramsey learned. It took some digging for Ramsey to uncover Leslie's identity. 'The tribal people only knew him by one name and I didn't know if that was a first or last name. They knew he was a Baptist and he was based in that one city and they knew the years.'

When Ramsey returned home he did some additional investigation and discovered Dr Leslie was affiliated with the American Baptist Missionary Union. The American Baptist Missionary Union was founded in 1814 by Adoniram Judson, who led a pioneering work in Burma. Born in Ontario, Canada, William H. Leslie followed his intended profession as a pharmacist until his conversion in 1888. He moved to the Chicago area, where God began to grip his heart with the desire to become a medical missionary.

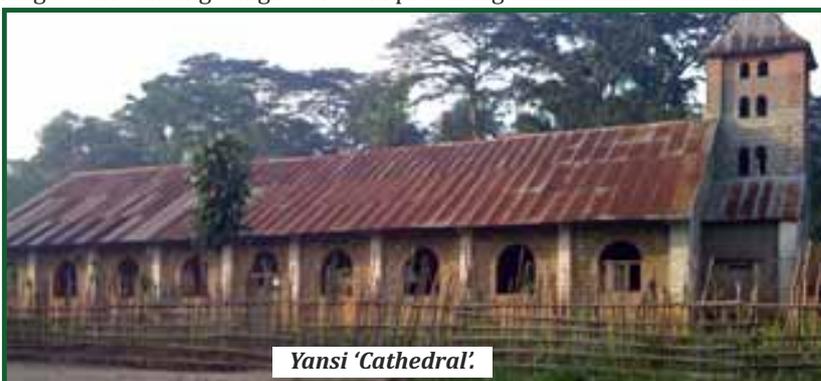


Dr Leslie initiated his Congo service in 1893 at Banza-Man-teke. Two years later he developed a serious illness. A young missionary named Clara Hill took care of him until he recovered. Their budding friendship ripened into love and a marriage proposal. They were wed in 1896. In 1905 William and Clara pioneered a work in Cuilo, Anglola, where they overcame a hurricane that struck the night before one of their children was born, and more mundane obstacles like charging buffaloes and armies of ants. Seven years later they cleared enough of the leopard-infested jungle along the Kwilu River at Vanga for a new mission station

perched on a small plateau. Some of the villages surrounding Vanga were still practising cannibalism at that time.

They spent 17 years at Vanga, but their service ended on a rocky note. 'Dr Leslie had a relational falling out with some of the tribal leaders and was asked not to come back,' Ramsey says. 'They reconciled later; there were apologies and forgiveness, but it didn't end like he hoped. His goal was to spread Christianity. He felt like he was there for 17 years and he never really made a big impact, but the legacy he left is huge today.'

– Mark Ellis



Yansi 'Cathedral'.



Dr William Leslie

PERSECUTION WATCH

SUDAN – Authorities Pardon Czech Aid Worker Given Life Sentence; Sudanese Pastor And Student Left To Rot In Prison For Highlighting Plight Of Christians

The Sudanese government has pardoned Petr Jacek, a Czech aid worker and filmmaker recently given a life sentence for ‘espionage’ after he documented the plight of Sudanese Christians. However, the two Sudanese believers each sentenced to 12 years for assisting him – church pastor Hassan Abduraheem and graduate student Abdulmonem Abdumawla – remain in jail. Both were sentenced to ten years for ‘abetting espionage’ and a further two years for ‘inciting strife between communities and spreading rumours undermining the authority of the state’.



Christians in southern Sudan are forced to meet under cover, to avoid aerial bombardments

Since the secession of mainly-Christian South Sudan in 2011, the Sudanese government has stepped up efforts to Islamise the country, waging a violent counter-insurgency campaign in historically Christian regions in the south.

EGYPT: In The Deep (Arab) Mid-Winter

Al Arish residents in Egypt have been told: ‘Leave tomorrow ... or we’ll hang your heads on the top of your houses. Around 200 Christian families have now fled the northern Sinai town, where six Christians were recently murdered. The mass exodus was not just a response to the immediate killings, but to a concerted long-term effort by Islamists to religiously-cleanse the town.

Seifein Morqos, at 89 the oldest Christian resident, said: ‘I have lived in Arish for 55 years ... We were never threatened or attacked ... Then came the “Arab Spring” in 2011 ... We began to see masked Islamist jihadis driving through town with black flags and banners splashed with emblems of swords and Islamic slogans [and] the threats against us Christians and the killings began ... the threats escalated; we got messages that said: “Leave tomorrow, you Crusaders, or we’ll hang your heads on the top of your houses” ... I left with nothing but the clothes on my back and my walking stick.’

– Barnabas Fund

NIGER: Recent Tragedies Reveal Disturbing Trend

It’s been about four months since American missionary Jeff Woodke was kidnapped in Niger, yet little progress has been made in finding him. Woodke, who worked for a local branch of the US-based Youth With A Mission, was taken on the evening of 14 October from the town of Abalak in northern Niger. Nigerien authorities tracked his captors to neighboring Mali, but his exact condition and whereabouts are unknown.

‘As the mayor was saying, as many of his colleagues who he worked with before [were saying], there’s never been an issue, there wasn’t a person who disliked this man, yet he was kidnapped and they don’t know what happened to him,’ Emily Fuentes, communications director for Open Doors USA, says. ‘They’ve never had their safety quite at this risk before.’

Niger has often been a peaceful place for Christians to live, but the kidnapping and other recent events reveal a disturbing trend. Niger’s defence ministry said at least five armed police officers were attacked in Wanzarbe near the country’s western border with Mali on 6 March. Two weeks prior, Islamic extremists killed at least 15 soldiers near the same border in the Tillaberi region.

‘I think the concerning trend is that it was five, six years ago that it was viewed as a relatively peaceful country, especially for the region,’ Fuentes says. ‘But now we’re seeing these incidents could sometimes lead to other incidents, and I think we’re going to see maybe a steady stream of continual persecution.’ Open Doors works in Niger and other countries where Christians face persecution by providing education for children, providing jobs for widows, caring for refugees and rebuilding churches.

– Reagan Hoeszee mnonline.org

Fighting For The Kingdom

There are many ways we can use the word 'fight', especially as used by Paul at 2 Corinthians 10.3-6. **In 1999 I was in Athens as a Singapore Airlines Captain** when at 9 o'clock on a Monday morning I found myself in intensive care with a heart attack. I was completely at peace with the Lord, yet in my Spirit I determined to 'fight it with everything I've got'. I'm still here, fighting strong for justice and righteousness in the Lord for our nation.

In 1942 all my father's Jewish family were rounded up by the Nazis in Slovakia. All but one died in the gas ovens at Auschwitz. I've stood in the gas ovens at Auschwitz. I've also stood and pondered the past and the future in the terror museum in Budapest. Accordingly I am going to 'fight' satanic deception and oppression in my country 'with everything I've got' ... because I love my country and I live that Christ may reign supreme in every facet of my country's future.

But we do not fight as the world fights. We fight with the weapons of the Kingdom. That includes truth, justice, righteousness, faith, obedience and goodwill towards all ... 'the truth shall set you free'. Above all I am determined to fight for faith and freedom in our nation through the explosive power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the prophet says in Isaiah 9.6,7, 'of the increase of His government there shall be no end' and: 'the zeal of the Lord shall accomplish this'.

Our victory over the world, the flesh and the devil is to be found in being operative in the midst of the zeal of the Lord. As Jesus gave His life for this end, so must we lay down our lives so that His glory may be known across our land 'as the waters cover the sea.'

Will you fight with us with everything you've got so that Jesus Christ may be glorified in every domain of our nation?

- Peter Kentley.

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The Good News Travels Quickly – Acts 11.1-18

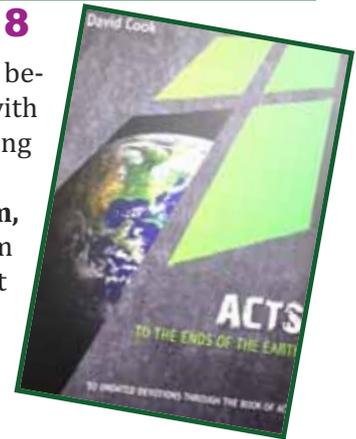
The news of the Holy Spirit’s coming on the Gentiles reaches Jerusalem before Peter does – and the church there is horrified by reports of Peter mixing with Gentiles (v 3). Peter vividly describes what happened at Cornelius’ house, noting that he had six witnesses with him when he went there (v 12).

Earlier in Acts, Peter asked the Sanhedrin to judge if it is right to obey them, or to obey God (4.19). Here, as Peter tells his Christian brothers in Jerusalem about the events at Cornelius’ house, he applies the same principle. Peter wasn’t about to oppose God by denying water baptism to those whom God had baptised in the Spirit (v 17).

All objections are dropped (v 18) and the Jerusalem church praises God that He has given the gift of repentance to non-Jews.

This is an important turning point in the church’s life. Luke indicates its importance by reporting it three times (see Acts 10, 11 and 15.1-11).

Luke again shows us people ‘warts and all’. Tanning was considered an unclean activity and although Luke tells us Peter was staying at Simon the Tanner’s house, Peter makes no mention of this in his report to his Jewish brothers (11.5). We see that Peter is human after all. He was happy to accept hospitality from an unclean Jew, but to do so from an unclean Gentile was unthinkable. It required a vision from God to arrest his prejudice. This is a stark reminder that the best of men are men, at best.

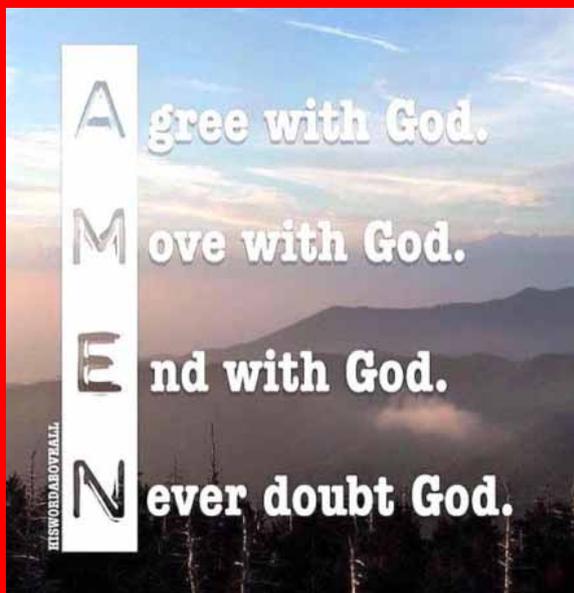


REFLECTION:

How does the description of the Gentile experience in 11.18 help us in our evangelistic efforts? Are there people who we have categorised as ‘off limits’ to the Gospel? If so, how must our attitudes change in light of Acts 10 and 11?

Content taken from 'ACTS – To The Ends Of The Earth' by David Cook, published by 10Publishing, used with permission.

SEEN ON FACEBOOK:



John 4.35
The harvest is white NOW

Words Of Wisdom:

‘The larger the faith we bring, the larger measure we carry from Christ.’ - Richard Sibbes.
‘A par-boiled conscience - soft in one part and hard in another - is not right.’
- William Gurnall.
‘The prayer that is faithless is fruitless.’ - Thomas Watson.
(From The Puritans Day By Day, Banner Of Truth.)

Who Can YOU Forward New Life To?

BOOKS WORTH READING

THE MESSAGE OF OBADIAH, NAHUM AND ZEPHANIAH: The Kindness And Severity Of God, Gordon Bridger, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2010. ISBN 978-1-84474-438-1

Looking for a good commentary? *The Bible Speaks Today* series is well-known as a trustworthy guide to the interpretation of Scripture, with both an OT and NT series. As the name of the series suggests, they aim to explain and apply the biblical text in a way that shows its relevance to modern life, giving an example of how it might be expounded and put into practice. The series strikes the right balance: not too heavy on exegesis and not too light on application. It would not be right for pastors just to lean heavily on the BST books for sermon preparation (they should do their own exegesis and think of the needs of the congregation they preach to) but the books do provide an example of how this might be done.

Gordon Bridger, retired Principal of Oak Hill College, London, tackles the neglected books of *Obadiah, Nahum* and *Zephaniah*, which are hidden away in the middle of the Minor Prophets. They are unjustly neglected, for each prophet claims to speak for God, and Bridger highlights how each teaches major truths about God that we need to hear, like God's sovereignty over the (unruly) nations of the world, the Day of the Lord is near, and the sure hope that the nations will turn to God (*Zephaniah* 2.11). There are rich gems of divine truth planted in these wrongly ignored prophetic books.

THE MESSAGE OF JEREMIAH: Grace In The End, Christopher J. H. Wright, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-78359-032-2

Dr Chris Wright of Langham Partnership expounds the large prophecy of *Jeremiah*, and its substantial size and often sorrowful tone seems to explain its neglect by modern preachers, who think that their job is to cheer people up. Instead, Wright challenges us to 'encounter the God of Jeremiah, an encounter that should be both profoundly disturbing and ultimately re-assuring, as it was for him'. Wright, with his expertise in OT ethics, provides an insightful and challenging exposition of the writings of Jeremiah.

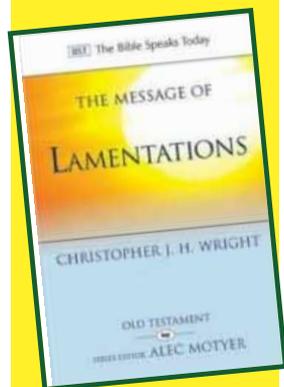
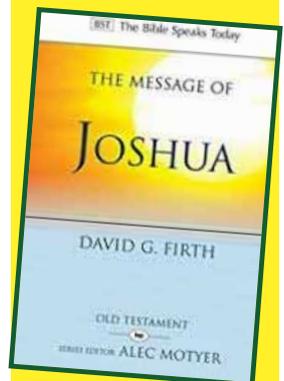
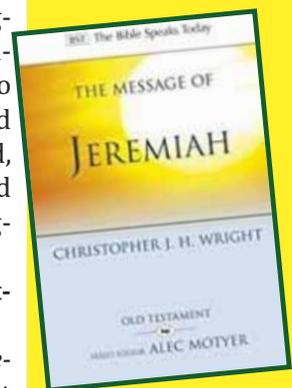
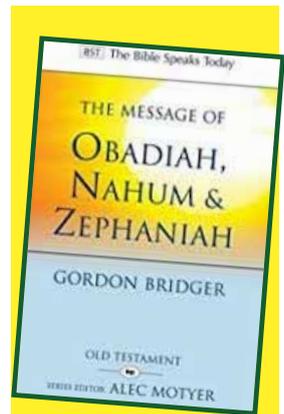
THE MESSAGE OF JOSHUA: Promise And People, David G. Firth, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-365-1

Recent world developments have seen the rise of Jihadist Muslim groups and this makes the ethics of the extermination of the Canaanites a hot topic. David Firth, now teaching at Trinity College Bristol, does not skirt around 'the problem of violence' in the book of *Joshua*. This inspired book does not promote a xenophobic or nationalistic theology, and Firth assists his readers to think through issues of vital concern for today. He combines clear theological reasoning, careful attention to the biblical text (what it actually says and doesn't say) and an honest probing of the issues. There is no need to avoid the book of *Joshua* or to wish it wasn't in the Bible.

THE MESSAGE OF LAMENTATIONS: Honest To God, Christopher J. H. Wright, Nottingham, Inter-Varsity Press, 2015. ISBN 978-1-78359-275-3

Finally, Chris Wright explains the message of *Lamentations* that has fresh currency after the holocaust, 9/11 and the willful destruction of modern cities (most recently Aleppo). Where is God amidst this tide of human suffering? *Lamentations* asks the hardest questions and refuses to supply too-easy answers, as Wright says, 'Never to read *Lamentations* is to miss the challenge and reward of wrestling with the massive theological issues that permeate its poetry'. Too often, church is trivial and banal, and the real issues of life and the things that stop people believing in a sovereign God of love are not addressed. One antidote is a sermon series on this unique OT book! With the assistance of the four books reviewed, pastors and laypersons can venture with confidence into the terra incognita of the OT and discover resources for faith that they never knew existed.

– Greg Goswell



BOOKS WORTH READING

Books To Help Your Quiet Time

Many readers will be familiar with C.H. Spurgeon's *Morning And Evening* daily devotionals. Perhaps they've read through them many times over many years. Three new books published by Banner Of Truth have been recently released and they will provide variety for those who find such books helpful adjuncts to their daily prayer and Bible reading times.



THE PURITANS DAY BY DAY, Puritan Quotations For Each Day Of The Year, Compiled by H.J. Horn, Banner Of Truth, Edinburgh, 2016. ISBN 978 1 84871 707 7.

A selection of words of wisdom are set down for each day of the year. These are selected from the writings of a large number of divines from that 16th/17th Centuries' blossoming of godly scholarship known as the Puritan era. My own favourite is William Gurnall, Rector of Lavenham, Suffolk, who cast his long and fruitful preaching ministry within the framework of Ephesians 6.10-20 (*The Christian In Complete Armour*, also published by Banner).

This book, with its thousands of quotes and three indexes – of authors, Scripture texts and topics – will often bring just the right thought at just the right time to many a wondering mind and greatly expand our grasp and understanding of God's Word.

VOICES FROM THE PAST, Puritan Devotional Readings, Volume Two, Ed Richard Rushing, Banner Of Truth, Edinburgh, 2016. ISBN 978 1 84871 727 5.

If you look on the inside back flap of the dustcover of this book you will see that we said of Volume One: 'If you are looking for spiritual comfort, encouragement, light and strength just about every day of the year, then this is the book for you.' We say it again with emphasis, for this volume, cast more in the mould of Spurgeon's *Morning And Evening*, with a one page devotional extract from one writer of the Puritan era for each day of the year may be even more helpful than *The Puritans Day By Day* for it will not only be helpful to the individual but will provide a wealth of material for anyone charged with delivering a devotional message to a gathering of fellow Christians, but who might find such a task to be rather daunting. Both books are highly recommended.

– Bob Thomas.

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– Jeff M. Sellers, Editor, Persecution News Service, Morning Star News.

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