

Praises . . .

- The Lord has blessed us with a jam-packed schedule for the first six months of 2009.
- In March we will hold our first conferences at First Baptist Church, Sachse, Texas, and at Calvary Baptist Church, North Platte, Nebraska.
- For so many who have ordered our DVD series on *Following Jesus*.

Prayer Requests . . .

- For clear guidance concerning mission trip opportunities for this summer.
- For the new DVD series we will record at First Baptist Church, Poteau, Oklahoma, in April.
- For my health, physical strength, traveling safety, and most importantly—empowerment by the Spirit in all the conferences.
- For more conferences for the summer and fall months.

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"The devil tempts
that he may ruin,
God tests that he
my crown."

Ambrose

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An Encouraging Word

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Written by Michael Taylor, Bible Teacher

For Personal Study

Please read chapters 14–17 of Exodus. As the Israelites traveled from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, God deliberately led them into five difficult situations to test whether they would trust Him to meet their needs. These situations were:

The Attack of Pharaoh's Army 14:1 – 15:21

The Bitter Water at Marah 15:22-27

No Food in the Desert of Sin 16:1-36

No Water at Massah and Meribah 17:1-7

The Attack of the Amalekites 17:8-16

The Israelites failed tests one through four. Each time they reacted, not with faith, but with fear and grumbling. Read again 14:11, 12; 15:23, 24; 16:2, 3; 17:2-4, 7.

Notice that the five tests are structured as a chiasmus. The first and last tests tie together. Both show how the Lord delivers His people from enemy attack. There are times when God does all the fighting. All we have to do is trust and obey. On other occasions we are commanded to do the fighting. Without strong, persistent prayer our efforts will fail. It is really God who wins the battle.

The second and fourth tests deal with the need for water. God turned the bitter water into sweet water. He is the great healer. God can even get water from a rock! Concerning the tests of water, see John 4:10-14, 28-30; John 7:2, 10, 37-39; Luke 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 9-15; Philippians 2:14-16.

The central test was whether the Israelites would trust God to provide their food. He provided more quail and manna than they could eat. See Joshua 5:10-12; Matthew 4:1-4; Matthew 6:11, 25-34; John 6:11, 26, 27, 30-36, 41, 42, 48-58.

So many in our nation have lost jobs and homes in recent weeks. Reacting with fear and grumbling will not help. God is still on the throne. Let's pray and trust the Lord to provide for our needs.

Mike

"Unwillingness to accept God's "way of escape" from temptation frightens me - - what a rebel resides within."

Jim Elliott

2009 Conference Schedule . . .

- February 8-11 First Baptist Church
Booneville, Arkansas
- February 15 Batson Baptist Church
Batson, Arkansas
- March 1-4 Oak Crest Baptist Church
Midlothian, Texas
- March 8-11 First Baptist Church
Coal Hill, Arkansas
- March 15-18 North Tenth Street Baptist Church
Blytheville, Arkansas
- March 22-25 First Baptist Church
(pending) Sachse, Texas
- March 29—April 1 Calvary Baptist Church
North Platte, Nebraska
- April 5-8 Oak Grove Baptist Church
Van Buren, Arkansas
- April 19-22 First Baptist Church
Poteau, Oklahoma
- April 26 Northlake Baptist Church
Garland, Texas
- April 30—May 3 Miramichi Valley Church
Doaktown, New Brunswick, Canada
- May 31—June 3 First Baptist Church
Langdon, North Dakota
- July 26-29 North Tenth Street Baptist Church
Blytheville, Arkansas
- September 20-23 Rome Baptist Church
Chillicothe, Illinois

Recent Conferences . . .

Our first conference of 2009 took place at First Baptist Church, Paris, Arkansas, with pastor Edgar and Joyce Pierce. The topics were *Exodus* and *The Holy Spirit in Ephesians*. The Spirit was working. I look forward to being back in Paris next January.

In spite of the winter weather obstacles, I enjoyed my fourth Bible Conference at First Baptist Church, Wewoka, Oklahoma, with pastor Michael and Tara Vallandingham. We studied *Exodus* in both the main and noon-day sessions. It is good to see that this church is now gaining young couples. It will be a joy to be with them again in 2010. Special thanks to Joe and Chris for helping me get my car unstuck with the ice and snow.

February began with a conference at Morning Star Baptist Church in Meeker, Oklahoma, with pastor Bryan and Shonda Pain. Bryan chose *The Crucifixion* and *The Book of Jonah* for the topics. This was my second conference at Morning Star and my third conference with Bryan. Please encourage him with your prayers as he works on his Doctorate of Ministry dissertation in the area of discipleship—an area close to my heart.

"And God is faithful; He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear."

1 Corinthians 10:13



Answer to the December Newsletter trivia question: Joy to the World

Question was: Which familiar Christmas Carol does not mention the birth of Christ--rather it is about the return of the Lord?