



The G.E.M.

Volume 3 Edition 12

The Grace Electronic Magazine

December 2009

REFLECT ON CHRIST

Christmas is such a special time of the year for many of us. It is a season of spending time with family and friends, in sharing in the many joys that Christmas often brings.

For others, Christmas can be one of the most difficult times as one is reminded of a lost loved one. Maybe it is their first Christmas alone.

And still for others, it is a time just like any other. With nothing to live for, nothing to enjoy, and maybe having no food on the table or even a home to put decorations up in.

This Christmas, let us once again focus on Christ and the reason for Him coming to earth in the first place. Let us celebrate this season with the same attitude that He has.

We need to look out to the world and be like Christ to them. Let us offer help to those who need it, share love with those who are alone, and share Christ with those who are lost.

Therefore this month in *The G.E.M.* we have focussed on Christ and sharing Him and His Good News to others. Be sure to read the inspirational story on page 3 that will certainly challenge you to share your faith with others.

As usual we have the *Bible Basics*, *Product Reviews*, and *This Day in History* on Page 2.

And do not forget to visit the back page where we have a new trivia challenge for you.

Finally, be sure to visit us from 14 to 24 December for this month's Mid-Month Markdowns, where we are offering **10% discount** on all music.

Until next time, continue to place your hope in the Lord, and He will renew your strength.

Glyn and Linda. †

"Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"
(2 Peter 1:2)

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WE WISH YOU ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED 2010

BIBLE BASICS

Ezra

Return from Captivity Begins

At the close of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, the people of Judah were taken into captivity to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. This initiated a seventy-year period of exile as a time of judgement for God's people.

Accounts of what happened during this time are seen in later books of the Old Testament. However, in the book of Ezra, and its companion book Nehemiah, we see the events around the return of the nation back to Israel.

Author: It is not known who wrote the book of Ezra. Parts are written in the first person, while others in the third person. There are also a number of documents quoted in Aramaic, as well as a number of lists that would have been in the temple records. It would seem, therefore, that the book of Ezra has an editor who compiled the book rather than one single author.

Date and Basic Outline: The first group of Jews returned to Jerusalem during the first year of Cyrus' reign (±538BC). Eighty years later, during the seventh year of Xerxes reign (±458BC) Ezra and his group of Jews returned to Jerusalem.

The outline of the book neatly divides these events into two main sections:

| | <u>Chapters</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| The First Return | 1-6 |
| The Return Commanded | 1 |
| The List of Exiles | 2 |
| The Altar & Temple Foundations | 3 |
| Opposition | 4 |
| Prophetic Encouragement | 5-6 |
| The Second Return | 7-10 |
| Ezra's Mission | 7 |
| Ezra's Companions & Journey | 8 |
| Intermarriage Dealt With | 9 |
| Confession & Cleansing | 7-10 |

Main Characters: there are two main characters in the book of Ezra; Cyrus and Ezra.

Although Cyrus was the ruler of the Persian Empire and a pagan, God moved his heart and he ordered the initial return of the Jews to Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 36:22-23). It was his policy to return ethnic peoples to their homelands and it seems as though he had equal respect for the gods of other nations as his own.

Ezra was a priest in the line of Zadok. His primary task was to teach the law of God. We see that while still in Babylon, Ezra was fully committed to this task (7:12), and also held a position of influence within the Persian court (see 7:21-23).

Did you know? During the fifty-eight years between chapters six and seven of Ezra, three great world wars were fought – Salamis, Thermopylae and Marathon – and two great world leaders died – Confucius and Buddha.

Lesson: The main lesson of Ezra is that sometimes the purposes of God are delayed, but never abandoned. †

PRODUCT REVIEWS

THE WAY BACK HOME DVD



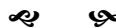
After hearing of his grandmother's recent stroke, New York attorney Spencer Crane returns to the town where he grew up. What started out as a short and simple trip home turns out to be far more that Spencer expected.

In reconnecting with some old friends, Spencer is forced to come to terms with a number of issues in his life with regard to relationships and his faith.

The Way Back Home stars a few familiar faces from Hollywood, Julie Harris, Ruby Dee and Danny Nucci and has been featured at a number of film festivals in the USA.

The Way Back Home is a compelling drama that the whole family will enjoy. Containing romance, drama and a touch of comedy, this is a movie that will appeal to young and old alike.

Our Price: R 160



52 FAMILY TIME IDEAS

by Timothy Smith



School holidays are upon us once again, and the time has come for that annual family getaway from the city. For some families, it is a pleasure to be away and to share some quality time together, but for others, it seems as though

some members of the family want to do their own thing and family-time together seems to be rare or non-existent.

This is where *52 Family Time Ideas* comes in. In about only 20 minutes at a week, families can enjoy some quality time together even when everyone seems to want to go off in different directions.

The ideas contained within this book, one for each week of the year, including holidays, are excellent for bringing the family together during those busy times. Although the book is designed for weekly use, one could easily use the activities within the book to bring the family together each day for some meaningful sharing.

Each idea comes with its own easy-to-follow activity plan that incorporates materials and locations that are common around the home. Through the games, Bible readings, discussions and other fun activities in this book, one's family will not only be drawn closer to each other but also to God.

Our Price: R 120

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

25 December 496

Mass Conversion

Not all who sing Christmas carols are Christians. Superficial sentiment is sometimes substituted for genuine faith.

Take Clovis, for example. After the breakup of the Roman Empire, disorder reigned. Anarchy prevailed. Fifteen-year-old Clovis inherited a small kingdom in the corner of Gaul. King Clovis seized adjoining lands, united Gaul, moved his capital to Paris, and founded the nation of France.

In 493 Clovis married a Christian. When Queen Clothilde wanted to baptise their newborn son, Clovis agreed; but when the child died in his baptismal robe, Clovis blamed the Christian God. When a second child grew ill following baptism, Clothilde prayed earnestly, the child recovered, and the king was impressed.

When Clovis was 30, he was routed in battle. "Jesus Christ," he cried, "Clothilde says you are the Son of God and can give victory to those who hope in you. Give me victory and I will be baptised!" The tide turned, and Clovis, true to his word, entered the Cathedral of Rheims on December 25, 496. "Worship what you once burned," the priest told him, "and burn what you worshipped."

On that day 3,000 troops followed Clovis in baptism. The army marched alongside a river where priests, chanting the baptismal formula, dipped branches into the stream and flung the water supposedly making them Christians.

This was a momentous day in church history, for it was the first of the great mass conversions that turned Europe into a "Christian" continent. Little change was detected in Clovis or his troops who were as pagan as ever, apparently viewing Christ merely as a war god who insured them victory. But the stage was set for many genuine believers who spread the message of the Babe of Bethlehem throughout emerging Europe.

Quoted from: *On this Day: 365 Amazing and Inspiring Stories About Saints, Martyrs & Heroes* (electronic edition) by Robert J. Morgan. †

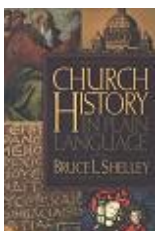
LEARN MORE

Church History in Plain Language

by Bruce L. Shelley

Dr Bruce Shelley makes church history come alive in this classic book that has not only become the first choice of many laypeople and church leaders, but also the standard text in many college and seminary classrooms around the world.

Church History in Plain Language reads almost like a story that makes history easy to follow and retain.



R 290

THE CHRISTIAN DRUMMER BOY

The following story is a true account, taken from an old, out-of-print book called *Touching Incidents and Remarkable Answers to Prayer*. It was compiled by S.B. Shaw and published in 1894. We believe it will touch your hearts as much as it has touched ours.

I was a surgeon in the United States Army during the Civil War. After the battle of Gettysburg, there were hundreds of wounded soldiers in my hospital. Many were wounded so severely that a leg or an arm, or sometimes both, needed to be amputated.

One of these was a boy who had only been in the service for three months. Since he was too young to be a soldier, he had enlisted as a drummer. When my assistants came to give him chloroform before the amputation, he turned his head and refused it. When they told him that it was the doctor's orders, he said, "Send the doctor to me." I came to his bedside and said, "Young man, why do you refuse the chloroform?"

"When I found you on the battlefield, you were so far gone that I almost didn't bother to pick you up. But when you opened those large blue eyes, it occurred to me that you had a mother somewhere who might be thinking of you at that very moment. I didn't want you to die on the field, so I had you brought here. But you've lost so much blood that you're just too weak to live through an operation without chloroform. You'd better let me give you some."

He laid his hand on mine, looked me in the face and said, "Doctor, one Sunday afternoon, when I was nine and a half years old, I gave my heart to Christ. I learned to trust Him then, and I've been trusting Him ever since. I know I can trust Him now. He is my strength. He will support me while you amputate my arm and leg." I asked him if he would at least let me give him a little brandy. Again he looked at me and said, "Doctor, when I was about five years old, my mother knelt by my side with her arms around me, and said: 'Charlie, I am praying to Jesus that you will never take even one drink of alcohol. Your father died a drunkard, and I've asked God to use you to warn people against the dangers of drinking, and to encourage them to love and serve the Lord.' I am now 17 years old, and I have never had anything stronger than tea or coffee. There is a very good chance that I am about to die and to go into the presence of my God. Would you send me there with brandy on my breath?"

I will never forget the look that boy gave me. At that time I hated Jesus, but I respected that boy's loyalty to his Saviour. And when I saw how he loved and trusted Him to the very end, something deeply touched my heart. I did for that boy what I had never done for any other soldier – I asked him if he wanted to see his chaplain.

Chaplain R. knew the boy well from having seen him frequently at the tent prayer meetings. Taking his hand, he said, "Charlie, I'm really sorry to see you like this." "Oh, I'm all right, sir," Charlie answered. "The doctor offered me chloroform, but I told him I didn't want any. Then he wanted to give me brandy, which I didn't want either. So now, if my Saviour calls me, I can go to Him in my right mind."

"You might not die, Charlie" said the chaplain, "but if the Lord does call you home, is there anything I can do for you after you're gone?" "Chaplain, please reach under my pillow and take my little Bible. My mother's address is inside. Please send it to her, and write a letter for me. Tell her that since I left home, I have never let a single day pass – no matter if we were on the march, on the battlefield, or in the hospital – without reading

a portion of God's Word, and daily praying that He would bless her."

"Is there anything else I can do for you, my lad?" asked the chaplain. "Yes – please write a letter to the Sunday School teacher in Brooklyn, New York. Tell him that I've never forgotten his encouragement, good advice, and many prayers for me. They have helped and comforted me through all the dangers of battle. And now, in my dying hour, I thank the Lord for my dear old teacher, and ask Him to bless and strengthen him. That is all."

Then turning to me, he said, "I'm ready doctor. I promise I won't even groan while you take off my arm and leg, if you don't offer me chloroform." I promised, but I didn't have the courage to take the knife in my hand without first going into the next room and taking a little brandy myself.

While cutting through the flesh, Charlie Coulson never groaned. But when I took the saw to separate the bone, the lad took the corner of his pillow in his mouth, and all I could hear him whisper was, "O Jesus, blessed Jesus! Stand by me now." He kept his promise. He never groaned.

I couldn't sleep that night. Whichever way I tossed and turned, I saw those soft blue eyes, and when I closed my own eyes, the words, "Blessed Jesus, stand by me now," kept ringing in my ears. A little after midnight, I finally left my bed and visited the hospital – a thing I had never done before unless there was an emergency. I had such a strange and strong desire to see that boy. When I got there, an orderly told me that 16 of the badly wounded soldiers had died. "Was Charlie Coulson one of them?" I asked. "No, sir," he answered, "he's sleeping as sweetly as a babe."

When I came to his bed, one of the nurses said that at about nine o'clock, two members of the Y.M.C.A. came through the hospital to read and sing a hymn. Chaplain R. was with them, and he knelt by Charlie's bed and offered up a fervent and soul-stirring prayer. Then, while still on their knees, they sang one of the sweetest of all hymns, "Jesus Lover Of My Soul." Charlie sang along with them, too. I couldn't understand how that boy, who was in such horrible pain, could sing.

Five days after I performed the operations, Charlie sent for me, and it was from him that I heard my first Gospel sermon. "Doctor," he said, "my time has come. I don't expect to see another sunrise. I want to thank you with all my heart for your kindness to me. I know you are Jewish, and that you don't believe in Jesus, but I want you to stay with me, and see me die trusting my Saviour to the last moment of my life." I tried to stay, but I just couldn't. I didn't have the courage to stand by and see a Christian boy die rejoicing in the love of that Jesus who I hated. So I hurriedly left the room.

About 20 minutes later an orderly came and found me sitting in my office with my hands covering my face. He told me that Charlie wanted to see me. "I've just seen him," I answered, "and I can't see him again." "But, doctor, he says he must see you once more before he dies." So I made up my mind to go and see Charlie, say an endearing word, and let him die. However, I was determined that nothing he could say would influence me in the least bit, so far as his Jesus was concerned.

When I entered the hospital I saw he was sinking fast, so I sat down by his bed. Asking me to take his hand, he said, "Doctor, I love you because you are a Jew. The best friend I have found in this world was a Jew." I asked him who that was, and he answered, "Jesus Christ, and I want to introduce you to Him before I die. Will you promise me, doctor, that what I am about to say to you, you will never forget?" I promised, and he said, "Five days ago, while you amputated my arm

and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ and asked Him to make His love known to you."

Those words went deep into my heart. I couldn't understand how, when I was causing him the most intense pain, he could forget all about himself and think of nothing but his Saviour and my unconverted soul. All I could say to him was, "Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right." With these words I left him, and 12 minutes later he fell asleep, "safe in the arms of Jesus."

Hundreds of soldiers died in my hospital during the war, but I only followed one to the grave, and that was Charlie Coulson. I rode three miles to see him buried. I had him dressed in a new uniform, and placed in an officer's coffin, with a United States flag over it.

That boy's dying words made a deep impression upon me. I was rich at that time so far as money was concerned, but I would have given every penny I possessed if I could have felt towards Christ as Charlie did. But that feeling cannot be bought with money. Alas, I soon forgot all about my Christian soldier's little sermon, but I could not forget the boy himself. Looking back, I now know that I was under deep conviction of sin at that time. But for nearly ten years I fought against Christ with all the hatred I had, until finally the dear boy's prayer was answered, and I surrendered my life to the love of Jesus.

About a year-and-a-half after my conversion, I went to a prayer meeting one evening in Brooklyn. It was one of those meetings where Christians testify about the loving kindness of God. After several had spoken, an elderly lady stood up and said, "Dear friends, this may be the last time I have a chance to publicly share how good the Lord has been to me. My doctor told me yesterday that my right lung is nearly gone, and my left lung is failing fast, so at the best I only have a short time to be with you. But what is left of me belongs to Jesus. It's a great joy to know that I shall soon meet my son with Jesus in heaven."

"Charlie was not only a soldier for his country, but also a soldier for Christ. He was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg, and was cared for by a Jewish doctor, who amputated his arm and leg. He died five days after the operation. The chaplain of the regiment wrote me a letter, and sent me my boy's Bible. I was told that in his dying hour, my Charlie sent for that Jewish doctor, and said to him, 'Doctor, before I die I wish to tell you that five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ for you.'"

As I heard this lady speak, I just couldn't sit still! I left my seat, ran across the room, and taking her hand said, "God bless you, my dear sister. Your boy's prayer has been heard and answered! I am the Jewish doctor that Charlie prayed for, and his Saviour is now my Saviour! The love of Jesus has won my soul!" - By Dr. ML. Rosvally

INSPIRATIONAL DVD

The Cross and the Switchblade

The Cross and the Switchblade tells the true story of hardened criminal, gangster and drug addict, Nicky Cruz, and the pastor that did not give up on him, David Wilkerson.

Although the events in this movie occurred over 30 years ago, this life-changing movie still continues to inspire lives today. A compelling movie of love, grace and truth.



R 130

Charlie was a soldier for Christ

I respected that boy's loyalty to his Saviour

THE BACK PAGE

BIBLE SUDOKU CHALLENGE

How well do you know the Good Book?

Bible-Sudoku Challenge combines the logic skills to solve a normal Sudoku with Bible trivia.

Begin by answering the Bible trivia questions. Using the answers and placing them in the relevant coordinates, solve the grid on the right. The coordinates with each question indicates where in the grid that starter number is to be placed (e.g. A1, E9).

All answers are found in the book of Ezra.

- How many items of polished bronze were donated by the officials of Israel for the house of God?
(B2, I3, D6, G7, A9)
- For how many days did they celebrate with joy the Feast of Unleavened Bread?
(C1, H3, F4, A5, B7, I8)
- How many hundred male lambs were used for the dedication of the house of God?
(C2, E5, F7)
- The rebuilt temple, as a place to present sacrifices, was ___ty feet high and ___ty feet wide.
(D7, H9)
- Within how many days did all the men of Judah and Benjamin gather in Jerusalem?
(E1, I7, A8, F9)
- Tattenai's Letter to Darius is dealt with in this chapter of Ezra.
(E3, G4, D5, F8, I2)
- Zebadiah son of Michael, had ten times this number of men with him.
(F2, C3, B5)
- Ezra the priest selected this number of men from each family division as officials over Israel.
(G1, A3, B4, H5)
- How many descendants of Pashhur were named as having married foreign women?
(H1, D3, I4, B6, G8, C7)

| | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I |
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Answer in the Next Edition

FUN RECIPE

Frankincense and Myrrh Hand cream

This fragrant hand cream is rich and nourishing, and everything your hard-working hands deserve this Christmas time

Ingredients:

- 3 Tablespoons Cocoa Butter
- 2 Tablespoons Shea Butter
- 1 Tablespoon Coconut Oil
- 3 Tablespoons Glycerine
- 6 Tablespoons Aqueous Cream
- 20 Drops Frankincense Fragrance
- 20 Drops Myrrh Fragrance
- 1 250ml Jar

Method:

- Warm the Cocoa Butter, Shea Butter and Coconut Oil in a pan until they are melted.
- Mix the Glycerine into the Aqueous Cream and stir well. Then add the melted oils.
- Add the Frankincense and Myrrh Fragrances and stir through thoroughly.
- Pour into the jar and seal.

SHOP

TRADING HOURS:

Monday – Friday:

9am – 5pm

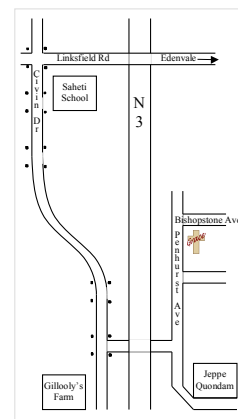
Saturday:

9am – 2pm

Closed Sundays and some Public Holidays

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Directions: From the N3, take the Linksfeld Rd off ramp. Turn right up hill. Stay in left lane. Turn left into Civin Dr. At the stop street at the road works, turn left under bridge. At t-junction turn left. Through the boom. We are ± 200m on the right hand side. Entrance is in Penhurst Ave.

To advertise your church, ministry, business, event or product in *The G.E.M.* or on the Grace Media website, contact Glyn Williams on 011-454-6045 or webmaster@gracemedia.co.za

**Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus,
the Saviour of mankind!**