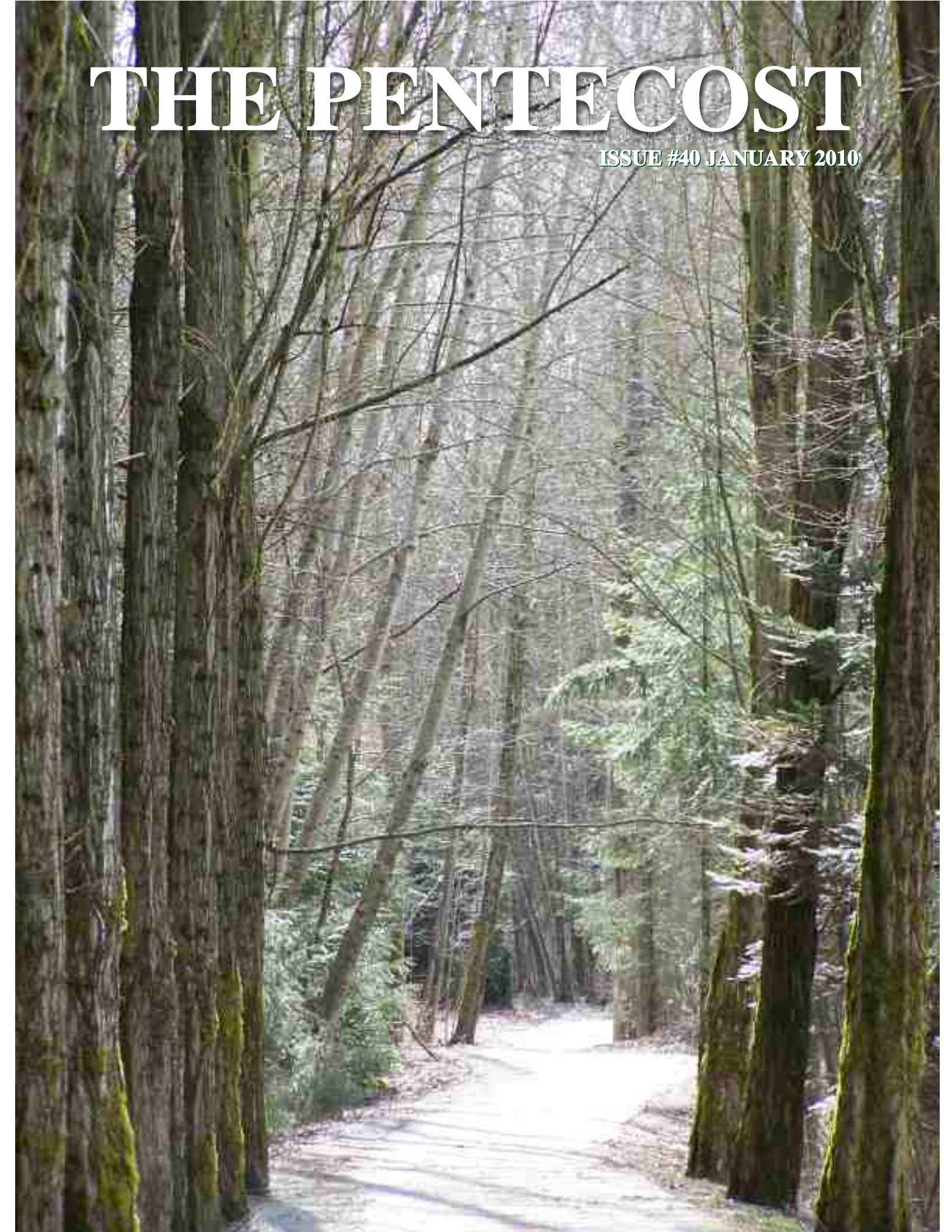


THE PENTECOST

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THE PENTECOST

Hello, and welcome to the January, 2010, issue of The Pentecost. Happy New Year! You are reading the 40th issue of this publication. Join with us as we begin a series on the Bible, as a book, and on the Dead Sea Scrolls. God bless you!

Shawn Stevens

You may wonder why the Bible has stood the test of time. Unlike other books, simply written by man, the Bible is the inspired word of God! It has many different parts and is applicable to all human life, no matter what your background or race. Let's explore it together, shall we?

Ramona Stevens



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GOD'S WORD FROM ITS BEGINNING

*"Thank God, I have a Bible!" were the words of a poor, elderly woman in London. "What should I do without my Bible? It was the guide of my youth, and it is the staff of my age. It wounded me, and it healed me; it condemned me, and it acquitted me. It showed me I was a sinner, and it led me to the Saviour. It has given me comfort in life, and I trust it will give me hope in death."*¹

The Bible has been a faithful guide and staff, comfort and hope, for multitudes throughout history. How did this great Book begin? To our knowledge, God's first communication with man, which was written down, was called the *Decologue* or *Ten Words*, which we know as the *Ten Commandments*. These were given to Moses on his first mountain encounter with God. Moses then went up the mountain a second time and was given more instructions from God. This time Moses wrote down the words of the *Covenant*. This was the beginning of the sacred writings.² Those sacred writings were followed by additional sacred writings, compiled and passed down to us, all of them, in time becoming known as the *Holy Bible*.

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word *Biblos*, which was the outer coat of a papyrus reed used in Egypt during the 11th century B.C. The plural form of this word is *Biblia* and it was used by Christians to describe their sacred writings as early as the 2nd century. This word was carried over into Latin and the English translation became *Bible*.³ The Bible is divided into two *testaments*, which is another word for *covenants*. Its first half is called the *Old Testament* and its second half is called the *New Testament*. The Old Testament consists of inspired Jewish writings which predate Christ's incarnation. Probably the earliest division of this material was called *The Law And The Prophets*.⁴ The Old Testament is a composition of historical, poetic and prophetic writings.

Why did all of this historical, poetic and prophetic material need to be written down? God had been communicating with man long before Moses' life. However, the problem with oral and other forms of communication is that they are not preserved as accurately as a written tradition. God wanted His Word accurately recorded in written form and, at the time of Moses' life, this was begun. We read in the Old Testament that "... Moses wrote all the words of the Lord..." (Exodus 24.4). Moses was followed by other prophets who continued to record the Word of God.

The Bible teaches that God spoke through the prophets. Some titles that are given in the Bible for prophets are "the man of God" (1 Kings 12.22), "His servant" (1 Kings 14.18), "My messenger" (Matthew 11.10), "a watchman" (Ezekiel 3.17) and "the seers" (Isaiah 30.10). The Bible says; "for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1.21). Again, we read that "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets," (Hebrews 1.1). The Bible claims this in many places. Also, the Ten Commandments, recorded by Moses, are prefaced with these words; "And God spoke all these words, saying:" (Exodus 20.1). God spoke to His prophets directly, telling them what they were to say. For example, He told the prophet Ezekiel that "You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious." (Ezekiel 2.7). The Bible emphatically states that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, ..." (2 Timothy 3.16). The word "inspiration" means "God-breathed." The Bible says that the Jews were advantaged because "... to them were committed the oracles of God." (Romans 3.2). The phrase "thus sayeth the LORD" and similar expressions are together found in the Old Testament 3,808 times. The Prophet Isaiah, in the first chapter of his Book declares; "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: ..." (Isaiah 1.2). Similarly, the Prophet Jeremiah says in his Book;

"Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ... " (Jeremiah 1.11). Because of these scriptures, and others, Evangelicals use interchangeably the word "Bible" and the phrase "Word of God."

Because the Bible is the inspired Word of God, some might assume that the whole of it would be written down in the same form. This is not true. One of the characteristics of the Bible is how God has used a variety of forms, and a variety of personalities, in communicating His Holy Word. Although all of the Bible's books are inspired, one notices a difference between reading the Apostle Paul's *epistles* and King David's *psalms*. Similarly, one notices a difference between Moses' historical books, such as 1 Chronicles, and John's apocalyptic book, Revelation.

The sacred prophetic writings of the Old Testament were passed on from generation to generation. However, in 586 B.C., the Babylonians conquered the Jews and attempted to burn everything in the temple. The Jews were under Babylonian captivity for seventy years and at the end of this period many returned to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. In God's providence, not all copies of the sacred *Scriptures* were destroyed. Synagogues began springing up everywhere and they needed copies of the Scriptures. This need led to the creation of a new institution and profession, that of the *scribes*. Scribes zealously and meticulously went about the task of duplicating the Scriptures which were then used in the synagogues.

Another significant development of this period was the rise of Alexander the Great and his conquering of the then-known world. By the time of his death, in 323 B.C., much of the world was bilingual, with Greek as its second language. Around 285 B.C., Demetrius Phalereus, the head of the library in Alexandria, inquired of the king of Egypt whether a Greek translation of the *Jewish Law* could be made for the library. The king consented and requested from the Jews six scholars from each of the twelve

tribes of Israel to work on the translation. In seventy-two days the translation was finished and this translation is known as the *Septuagint*.⁵ This seems to be the favorite translation of the early Christians. The early Christians soon had another collection of inspired writings in addition to the Old Testament. These were the *Gospels*, *Epistles* and *Apocalypse* of the New Testament. With Jesus Christ, the Son of God, coming to Earth the world was again infused with divine prophecy and teaching. The Bible says that "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ..." (Hebrews 1.1-2). Jesus said on one occasion; "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (John 14.10). His words came with the full authority of His Heavenly Father. This is because, as He said; "... the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me." (John 14.24). In a prayer to His Heavenly Father, Jesus said; "... I have given to them the words which You have given Me; ..." (John 17.8). He had given His disciples the Word of God. Although Jesus gave His disciples the Word of God, He did not personally write down His divine teachings but, instead, this work was given to some of His disciples and certain others. At the *Last Supper*, He told His disciples; "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14.26). Here, Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit will do two things. The Holy Spirit will bring to their memory all that Jesus has said to them and He will teach them all things. The Apostle Paul, operating under this same inspiration, wrote many epistles. He knew that his message came from God. He said to the Thessalonians; "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, ..." (1 Thessalonians 2.13). Concerning his gospel, he said to the Galatian

Church; "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1.11,12). To the Corinthians, he said; "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: ..." (1 Corinthians 11.23). To the Thessalonian Church, he said; "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, ..." (1 Thessalonians 4.15). With these inspired records of the apostles, and certain others, the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were formed.

The writing of these twenty-seven books, and the acceptance of them as inspired Scripture, is an interesting chapter in Christian history. From the period of 33 A.D. to 50 A.D., emphasis was not put on a written record. This is probably because Christians believed that Christ was coming back imminently. However, by 50 A.D., Christian faith was spreading very rapidly and it was necessary for written copies of apostolic instruction to be supplied to the churches which were springing up everywhere.⁶ Even though emphasis was not on a written record in the first half of the first century, there was a sorting of gospel material. Luke, the author of one of the four Gospels, dedicates his Gospel to a man named Theophilus. He opens with these words:

Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed. (Luke 1.1-4).

Here, we see Luke setting about the work of writing a narrative of Christ's life and ministry. While some, like Luke, wrote gospels, apostles, such as Peter

and Paul, wrote epistles (letters). The Apostle John wrote down the prophetic book of Revelation. During this New Testament period, one of Peter's epistles refers to Paul's epistles, giving credence to them (2 Peter 3.15-16). Apostolic epistles were circulated (see example Colossians 4.16) and read to congregations (see example 1 Thessalonians 5.27). By the first half of the 2nd century, the apostles' writings were more generally known and had circulated more widely. By the second half of the 2nd century, New Testament books were even more widely recognized as Scripture. These books were organized into a single catalogue of recognized books and distinguished from other Christian literature.⁷

The Bible has truly been a faithful guide for countless men and women who have chosen to follow its lead. Here we have briefly looked at the history of the Bible, as a book, beginning with the giving of the Ten Commandments and ending with the New Testament. We have discussed the nature of the book as history, poetry, and divine prophecy as well as its New Testament use as gospels, prophecy and epistles for teaching the Churches. The Bible has a rich history and we will continue to explore it in our next issue of The Pentecost.

Shawn Stevens

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Elon Foster, 6000 Sermon Illustrations (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 52.
- 2 Ken Connolly, The Indestructible Book : God's Word to Man - How The Bible Began, Vol. 1, Produced by Bueno Distribution, Video Cassette.
- 3 Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 17.
- 4 *ibid.*, 2-3.
- 5 Ken Connolly, The Indestructible Book : God's Word to Man - How The Bible Began, Vol. 1, Produced by Bueno Distribution, Video Cassette.
- 6 *ibid.*
- 7 Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, A General Introduction to the Bible (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 345-346.

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- Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

It is an exciting discovery when someone finds a letter in his attic that is several generations old. Likewise, historians study with great interest the writings of famous people who lived a hundred years ago. Even more so, they are elated when they discover a document that is two or three hundred years old, perhaps in the crypt of an old church. When documents over twenty centuries old are found, they are in a class by themselves.

The Jericho region of the Dead Sea had long been rumored to be the home of ancient biblical manuscripts. A Seleucian patriarch named Timotheus I (727 - 819 A.D.), in a letter to Sergius, wrote that he had learned that some Jews had discovered sacred books in caves near Jericho, and that they had since come out in large numbers and gathered these findings. An ancient historian, Eusebius (260-340 A.D.), mentioned in his "Ecclesiastical History" that both Greek and Hebrew manuscripts were found in a jar near Jericho during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caracalla Antoninus (reigned 211-217 A.D.). Another clue, earlier still, is in the writings of Origen (185-264 A.D.). He compiled a massive work of six Hebrew versions of the Old Testament which he named the "Hexapla." He said that the portion of the sixth version, that contained the book of Psalms, was taken from a jar found near Jericho.¹

In 1947, three Bedouin shepherds were wandering through the desert between the Jordan River and Bethlehem, as their people had done for centuries. They passed through an area known as Qumran, near Jericho, north-west of the Dead Sea. They did not know that they were about to discover the greatest archeological discovery of the 20th century. As they walked past the opening of a cave, one of them threw a rock into it. A crash resounded from the cave. What was it that he had struck? It was getting dark so they left the scene, but within days the curiosity of the youngest one, fifteen years of age, prompted him to make his way back to the spot. Through an opening only large enough for a slender man, the shepherd squeezed his way inside. After a short time, his eyes adjusted to the dim light in the near entrance area of the cave. Before him were ten pots, some with lids on and some left open. Within two sealed pots he found a couple of bundles in cloth wrapping. Within the wrappings were the first discovered portions of what we call today, the Dead Sea Scrolls.^{2 3}

What was in the scrolls? Does this discovered material confirm the other books of the Bible? Questions such as these will be discussed in our series on The Dead Sea Scrolls. Keep reading.

Shawn Stevens

1James C. Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 1-2.
2James C. Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 4.
3The first discovery uncovered the great Isaiah Scroll, a Habakkuk commentary and a Qumran writing called "The Manual of Discipline." This discovery was followed by the discovery of more caves, eleven in total, containing many documents.

The following is an article from the Apostolic Faith magazine of 1906. It contains a stirring testimony from a Mr. Mead who attended the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles. It has a timeless message that we can be challenged by today.

NEW-TONGUED MISSIONARIES FOR AFRICA

Our dear Brother and Sister Mead, who have spent twenty years in missionary work in Africa have received their Pentecost in Los Angeles, and as the Lord leads and opens the way they will be on their way to the dark continent again with the divine fitness for missionary work.

Bro. Mead's Testimony of Pentecost

We are asked by many dear ones about our Pentecost, etc. It is beautiful, simple and full of comfort. I went to the meetings when I first heard of the manifestations of the Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing of the body, etc. I was not surprised, for we had been praying and expecting something of this kind to arouse God's people to the reality of the Word of God, and the truth of God Emanuel. While seeking the closer walk with God in Africa, the Spirit seemed to fall on us, revealing Jesus so real to our souls; a burden seemed to be on my heart in writing and in conversation. I could but say, Jesus is real.

The first night at the meetings, my heart went out for the baptism. I went forward to be prayed for, and hands were laid on me, and prayer was made, that I might receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I continued praying and fasting, in hope and much comfort. One

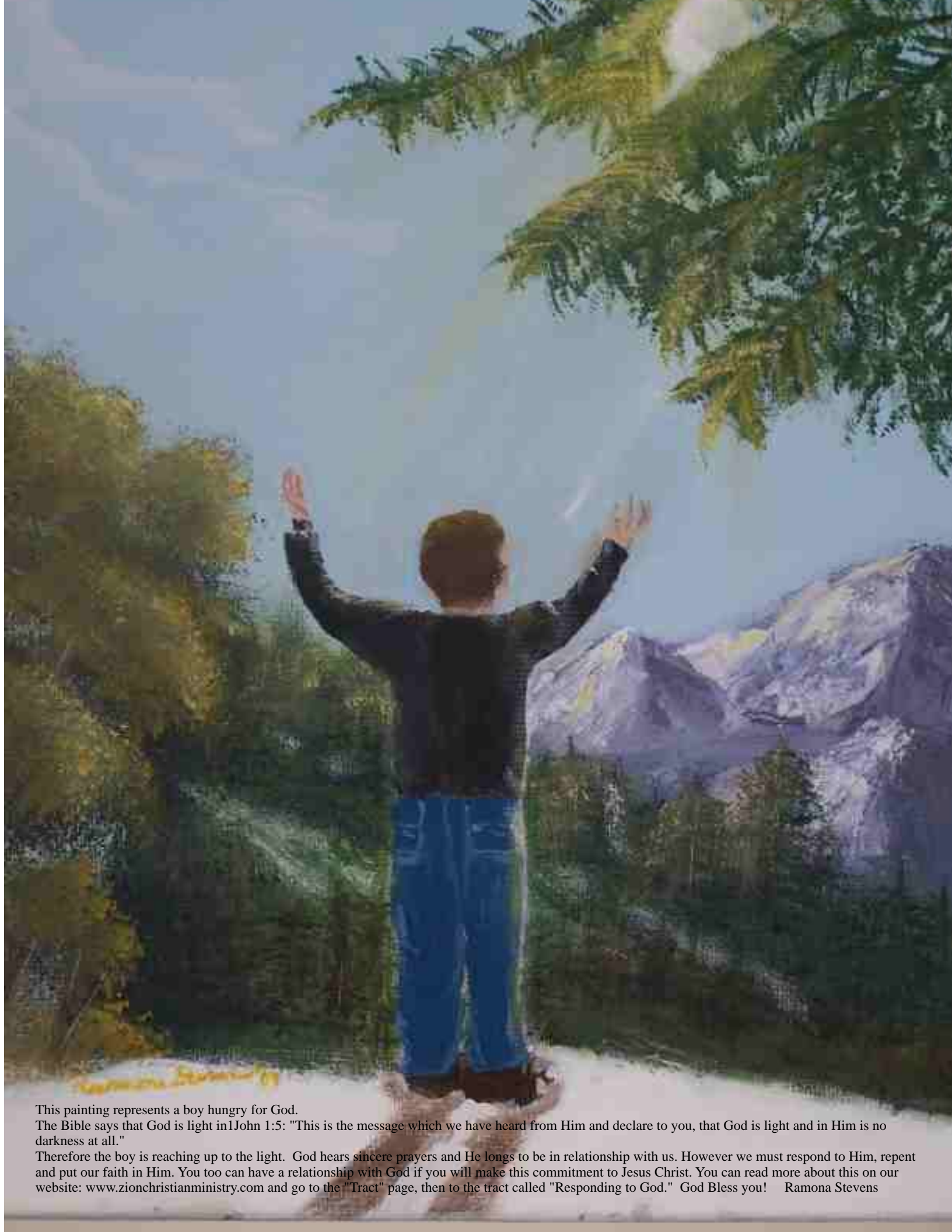
evening, in complete abnegation of self, it was revealed to me that the same power and persecutions that were in the beginning were now to be repeated for the perfecting of the Church. Would I choose it? My heart cried out, Oh, yes Lord, with [Y]our smile. And my soul was flooded with Divine love; and I commenced to speak as I would sing a new song.

It was entirely different from the way Mrs. Mead received her baptism. I was as conscious as I am at this moment, but my heart was full of praises and thanksgiving. I seemed now to have a conception of the mighty efficacy of the blood of Christ, and His omnipresence in Spirit, as never before.

Many ask, "Do you think these tongues will be used in a foreign field?" As for myself I cannot say. My God is able, this I know. The Pentecost or baptism of Divine love, that would enable a missionary to say to the poor Africans, as the Spirit did through Peter and John, to the poor cripple at the gate of the Temple, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." would mark a grand epoch in the history of foreign missions. I believe God is about to repeat many of the miracles and wonders wrought in the early history of the church. — S. J. Mead.

REFERENCE :

The Apostolic Faith, Vol.1, No. 3. November, 1906. Los Angeles : The Pacific Apostolic Faith Movement.



This painting represents a boy hungry for God.

The Bible says that God is light in 1 John 1:5: "This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."

Therefore the boy is reaching up to the light. God hears sincere prayers and He longs to be in relationship with us. However we must respond to Him, repent and put our faith in Him. You too can have a relationship with God if you will make this commitment to Jesus Christ. You can read more about this on our website: www.zionchristianministry.com and go to the "Tract" page, then to the tract called "Responding to God." God Bless you! Ramona Stevens