

December 2016

*A Message of Life Newsletter*

### **Christmas Greetings**

The big event for me in 2016 was not the Denver Broncos winning the Superbowl. Neither was it the unexpected culmination of the wildest election season in my lifetime. Those were important in their own right, but my high point of the year was traversing Israel for ten days as part of a group of twenty-four pilgrims. It has given me new perspectives on the word and the world in which we live.

For example, a different visual image of Bethlehem now appears in my mind's-eye. Rather than a pastoral scene, the modern city in the distance as we neared Jerusalem (see page 4) made an indelible impression. We could not go to Jesus' birthplace; the West Bank is not safe today. In ancient times it was also perilous; Jesus' family fled Herod's wrath.

Even earlier, when Jesus was forty-one days old (compare Luke 2:22-24 and Leviticus 12:1-4) Joseph and Mary took Him to the Temple. Simeon prophesied that Jesus would face much opposition, warning Mary that a sword would pierce through her own soul as well (Luke 2:34f).

Yes, our Messiah was born to die. Luke 9:51–18:14 (the *Travel Narrative*) evidences His anticipation of the cross. This section records Jesus' last three journeys to (and time in) Jerusalem. The starting points of those trips are: Luke 9:51 ("Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"); 13:22 ("And He went

through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem"); and 17:11 ("Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee"). Throughout the Travel Narrative, Jesus headed toward Jerusalem. Luke explains His thinking. Some Pharisees tried to scare Him (Luke 13:31) by saying that Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him. Imagine their reaction to Him predicting in verses 32f that He (as a prophet) would die in Jerusalem. [He would also rise on the third day]:

And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox [Herod], 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."

Jesus faced much opposition in Israel between the day of His birth in Bethlehem and the afternoon when He was crucified. My mind's-eye image of Bethlehem in the distance is a sad one. That city, Israel, the United States, and even planet earth are filled with people rejecting Jesus' message of life. Conflict did not stop Jesus from doing what the Father sent Him to do. We, as His ambassadors, must not let opposition hinder us from carrying His message of life to a world in dire need. His promise of eternal life is the ultimate reason for the Christmas season.

### The Israel Trip

Twenty-four of us saw as much as anyone could see in a ten-day tour (see page 4). Seventeen were from our church; five from our weekly Bible study. Two were friends of our pastor from Alabama. Bonds developed and deepened as we explored together.

Earpieces allowed hearing our guide without needing to crowd around him. This freed us to take many pictures while listening to his capsulation of what we were seeing. Tour groups lacking earpieces would need to choose between listening and exploring. Either choice loses something, because in Israel: What you see is not what you get.

How is that? Two millennia have transpired since New Testament events. Wars, earthquakes, desecration of sites, erection of shrines, and building projects require looking past what now stands on a site to perceive the Biblical scene. Listening to expert-lectures by a licensed guide enabled imagining the past while viewing the present. The freedom to wander while listening allowed multiplying photographs. We have so many pictures to share. Our itinerary moved right along, so multi-tasking redeemed the time. Thanks to all who have shared pictures.

Let me illustrate a case where lecture unexpectedly gave prominence to a feature. We stood on the 2,000 year-old Herodian steps by the eastern Hulda Gates in Jerusalem. My focus, as we looked south, was upon the Hinnom Valley. Our pastor, Dix Winston, suggested a different focal point—the many ancient *mikvehs* (ritual baths) between us and the valley. He then asked where the 3,000 new believers at Pentecost might have been baptized (Acts 2:41). Though a great multitude, this question had never even occurred to me. The text is silent on the location, but such a public venue could have impacted many pilgrims entering Jerusalem. Is that not just what we would have expected?

Do I have a favorite place? Yes and no. Two really hit home emotionally: the Garden of Gethsemane and the Sea of Galilee (in reflecting upon having just taught about Jesus walking on just that sea; page 4). Yet, in another sense, many places opened vistas into passages. A number had a deep impact, especially those relating to John's Gospel.

### *Living Waters* in Traditional Chinese

John's Gospel sought to reach the world for Christ. Message of Life is committed to distributing this precious book. Tens of thousands of *Living Waters* in various languages pass through our hands each year.

Thus, we jumped at the chance to check a translation of the *Living-Water* notes into traditional Chinese. MoL was part of a team that met several times with two Taiwanese Christians as they retranslated the Chinese notes into English. We probed phrase-by-phrase to determine if the translation faithfully conveyed the meaning of the original notes. Then others further polished the translation. The transition from draft translation to final copy required many months. March 2017 is the target date for printing Chinese *Living Waters*. The goal is to raise \$34,000 for printing 200,000 copies.

All funds **designated for “Chinese Living Waters”** will go for that project; **non-designated checks** will support our ongoing ministries [Message of Life, PO Box 366, Bennett, CO 80102].

Traditional Chinese writing is distinct from simplified Chinese that was created on the mainland in recent years. Older people on the mainland and people of all ages elsewhere (including Taiwan) read the traditional.

MoL hopes to be part of repeating this for simplified Chinese someday. Several other languages are in the offing. We would love to see it in Hebrew; let *Living Water* flow in a dry and thirsty land. Pray that the Lord will open the door for these languages and others.

### An Unexpected Treat

At Tel Dan, near the 1949 Israel-Syria border, I saw a bulldozer that the Syrians had hit with artillery in 1967. The brand of the tractor is unclear. The blade itself is classic LeTourneau, but the supporting structure seems to be homemade. Two Australians saw me investigating the dozer. They were familiar with LeTourneau and his love for the Lord. I gave them *Living Waters*, telling them that John's Gospel was written for those not yet believing Jesus' promise of eternal life. The Lord can use even an old destroyed bulldozer to spread His word. We should look for doors the Lord opens and be ready.



### 2016 in Review

John spoke at eleven churches in California, Colorado, Nebraska, Texas, Washington, and Wyoming. Three of these were for Bible conferences, involving speaking on more than one day.

Our pastor invited John to teach a monthly lunchtime-class called: *The Pastor and the Professor*. Next year it will be twice a month. John also addressed a breakfast meeting of the *Butterfly Effect* in Castle Rock, CO.

Our weekly Bible study in Lakewood continues, as it has since February 2013. Five people from that loyal group accompanied John to Israel. What a blessing!

John taught three courses at Rocky Mountain Seminary this year (New Testament introduction, second-year Greek, and an internet first-year Greek class). What a joy it is to prepare men for ministry.

John presented a plenary message and a workshop at the Grace Evangelical Society conference in Fort Worth. GES published some of his articles in 2016; others will follow.

We continue diagramming the Greek *Majority Text* in an effort to produce an accurate translation of it. The *Majority Text* is wonderful, but only certain portions have been translated into our language. English speakers should have access to the riches that derive from this text of the New Testament.

### Prayer Requests

For our nation again to respect marriage as designed by God, to protect life (both in and out of the womb), to recognize our right to openly proclaim the Lord and His word.

That we may acquaint many with Jesus' message of life through the *Living Water*.

For the printing and distribution of *Living Waters* in traditional Chinese.

For opportunities to assist in bringing about translations of the *Living Water* into more languages (including simplified Chinese).

For the Lord to open doors for Message of Life to minister far and wide.

For continued health, strength, and safety.

For the Lord to enable translating and diagramming the rest of the New Testament.

For completion and publication of other research projects.

For the Lord to raise \$6,000, so Message of Life ends the year in the black.

### Lifeline

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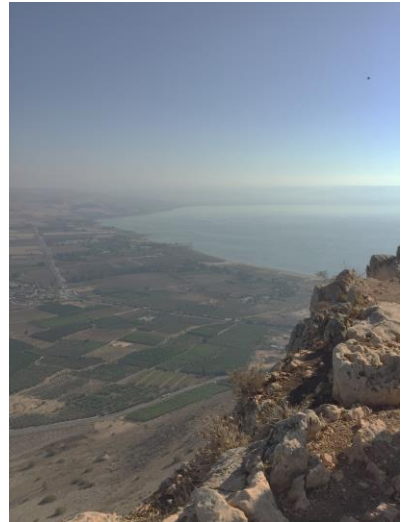
Website: [www.TheMessageOfLife.com](http://www.TheMessageOfLife.com).

To subscribe for free, e-mail Diane at: [mrslangprof@gmail.com](mailto:mrslangprof@gmail.com) or send contact information to: PO Box 366, Bennett, CO 80102





Front: Avi (guide), Reuben (driver); Middle row (left): Pastor Dix



Sea of Galilee from Mt. Arbel



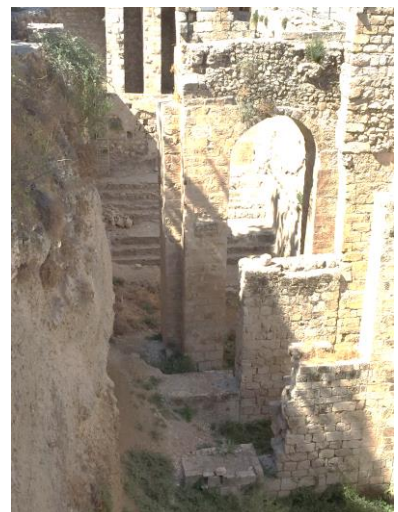
Teaching on Sea of Galilee



Bethlehem in the distance (Palestinian controlled)



A recovered first-century Galilean fishing boat



N. end of Bethesda Pool (John 5)