

Of course — it's in the Bible

By Charles C. Baldwin

It was the summer of 1972. I had been stationed at DaNang Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, for several months and was settling in to the routine of being a Super Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopter pilot. Unlike our Army helicopter pilot colleagues, who were flying almost every day on very dangerous missions into the jungle of Vietnam (see Mel Gibson's movie *We Were Soldiers*), we Air Force Jolly Green pilots "sat on alert" waiting to respond to rescue calls from downed pilots. We did fly training missions on a regular basis to keep those "hover-over-the-water" and "air-to-air refueling" skills ready to use. And we also flew "on station" so we could be closer to an area our forces were attacking that day or night.

In the spring of 1972, the North Vietnamese launched a massive invasion of the South to try to take over the country. The coalition forces fought bravely to stop this invasion through the summer and fall of 1972. That enemy activity did generate several challenging rescue missions for the Jolly Greens, the Sandies, the Kings and the other rescue aircraft. I thank the Lord everyday for His loving care and protection during that time of my life.

I was so thankful for the chaplains who were taking care of our spiritual needs in the war zone. On Sundays we had worship services for the different

denominations - Catholic and Protestant (liturgical, gospel and evangelical) in the morning and a "country church" in the evening. Oftentimes Christian missionaries would speak at the evening services. They were amazing!

I met a supply officer at the chapel who asked if I would be his "prayer partner" during our tour at DaNang. I have always had Christian friends on my journey with Christ, but he was the first person with whom I "made a covenant" to pray and hold accountable as we sought to serve the Lord Jesus on the battlefield. We met once a week for an hour to pray and read the Bible. One night, he caught me by surprise when he started praying "in tongues" and then he prayed for one of the injured to be miraculously healed. I had heard of these "spiritual gifts" but had never actually witnessed them in action. It sent me on a mission to learn more about God's work



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in our world.

My quest began with a letter to my mother. Obviously, in 1972, we did not have email, calls through Skype, etc; we had "snail mail." I wrote my mother a letter about this new experience I had with my brother in Christ. My mother was the daughter of missionaries to China. She grew up on the mission field until she was 17 years old. She went to seminary to become a missionary and met my father, who was a Baptist preacher getting his seminary training as well. I was blessed to grow up in a beautiful and conscientious Christian home. But I never had the discussion with my parents, or any other church leader, about "speaking in tongues" and "miraculous healing". So I asked my mother, "Mom, do we believe in speaking in tongues and miraculous healing?"

It took several weeks to get her response, but her letter finally arrived. Her answer made a huge impact on my life. The short version (you don't want to hear all of the mushy "I love you, son" part) of her answer was "Of course, son, it's in the Bible." Let me say that again: "Of course, son, it's in the Bible." Her answer has been a tremendous help to me throughout my Christian life. I believed with all my heart that the Bible was God's word to us for all time. I now had the guidance from my mother to put it into action in the work a day world.

A couple of years ago, my wife Anne

and I attended a retreat led by Dr. Chuck Swindoll. At the Q&A time, someone asked him what I thought was a very complicated and controversial question. His answer was something like "we are people of the Book. If it is in the Bible, we believe it." Kind of like my mother's "Of course, son, it's in the Bible."

If you are one of those who "signed up" to read through the Bible this New Year, get ready. God has some great things to say to you. It is exciting to know His word is as relevant today as when the Holy Spirit first gave it to the Bible writers. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction and righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all his good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

As one of my friends put it, "I don't know how Jesus turned water into wine at that wedding, but I saw him turn beer into furniture in my home when I believed his word and followed the Savior."

As my mother used to say, "Of course, son, it's in the Bible."

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By John Parker

I recall being taught in various ways throughout many years, "God wires people to worship him in different ways." This was the principal method to describe "variety" in worship, which led from "traditional" services to "contemporary services" to "blended services" to who-knows-what today. It is an essay for another day, perhaps, but this assertion is patently false in the ancient Christian view. Although styles of singing may change according to culture and the vestments of the priest may vary according to geography and textile, priest and sacrifice, without exception, are located at the very epicenter of the Christian biblical worship of the One, True God — according to His very own command. (Should I host a public talk on this sometime?)

"Liturgical" worship, therefore, is not "the preferred style" of one Christian over another. It is, in fact, the God-spoken way to find the meeting of Heaven and Earth. The liturgical calendar, also therefore, is not just a "crutch" of some stifled traditionalists; it is not a buzz-kill of Christian freedom; rather, the liturgical calendar, the very routines of the Christian life that repeat year after year, are a gift to every Christian — indeed to every person — to find and re-find, to orient and re-orient one's life towards the Timeless One who entered Time — Jesus.

Since it is now the dawn of February, Christmas is no longer visible, even in the rear-view mirror. "Joy to the World" has faded into the routine of "the New Year," and with February — if anyone is thinking about a calendar at all (shopping venues are!) — February 14, Valentine's Day, is in the sights.

But before then, we are coming to the 40th day after Christmas — another of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Christian Year.

"And when the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.'" (Luke 2:22ff).

"When the time came for their purification ..." What does this mean? We find this in Leviticus 12, the whole, short chapter:

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, if a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as at the time of her men-



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then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying for 66 days.

"And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring to the priest at the door of the tent of meeting a lamb a year old for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering and he shall offer it before the Lord and make atonement for her; then she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, either male or female. And if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for her and she shall be clean." (Leviticus 12).

Seven days and 33 are 40 days; and that is what the Church continues to remember on February 2 — the 40th day after the Birth of Christ. To my thinking, it is even all the more powerful for the following reason: the offering to make according to the law, was, according to Luke's rendering of Leviticus, "two turtle doves, or two young pigeons." This was the gift of the poor, according to Leviticus, "if she cannot afford a lamb." And so, in all the traditional images of the Meeting of the Lord, one sees Mary and Joseph offering two small birds.

But the Lamb is there also — the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. So, while this poor woman, Mary, together with her betrothed, Joseph, offer

struation, she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for 33 days in the blood of her purifying; she shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed. But if she bears a female child,

out of their poverty the humble gift of two small birds, Mary is giving, flesh of her flesh, the one who will be both Offerer and Offered, the last and final fulfillment of the sacrificial offerings of the Old Testament.

Wow.

The Meeting of the Lord is called in the Western tradition "Candlemas," and it is customary in East and West to bless candles on this day. Why?

Again, we turn back to St. Luke, who records the beautiful Song of Simeon — sung every night in the Eastern Christians' Sunset (Vespers) service. These are the words of the aged priest Simeon, who was promised that he would not die until he had seen the Redeemer of the World. Holding the 40-day-old Jesus in his arms, he intoned these words:

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to thy people Israel." (Luke 2:29ff).

Why do we celebrate this day? First, to remember the course of the Lord Jesus Christ's earthly life. To see how His condescension in the flesh included submission to His own law (not omitting eighth day naming and circumcision). Second, to incorporate, every year, our lives into His. To be a "Biblical Christian" is not just to read it, or to memorize it, or to quote it, but to celebrate it, to live it personally — to recall it, to bathe in it. Third, Christians still have eighth day prayers for naming newborns (all newborns become "sons" by baptism, heirs of the Promise), following not the Mosaic Law, but the example of Christ. Further, at least in the Christian East, we still read the 40th Day prayers for newly delivered mothers. And we still bless candles on February 2 to remember, as we do, that Jesus is the Light of the World, "a light for the revelation to the Gentiles." The Light who shines into the darkness of the winter of the sin of our lives, the Light which that same darkness has not, will not and cannot overcome.

Hallmark does a nice job printing calendars. But it is far, far more profound and the call of every Christian, to mark the passing of days according to the very life and actions of Jesus Christ — the liturgical calendar of the ancient, undivided Church.

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Dating equals frustration

By Debbie Martinez

None of us here thought we would be where we are in our lives at age 40s, 50s or 60s, yet here we stand, divorced, kids, angry ex-spouse and dating again. This whole scenario has disappointment and frustration written all over it but here is a little dose of reality: Disappointment is inevitable and with the wrong perspective, frustration is sure to follow.

Webster defines frustration as "the feeling of being upset or annoyed, especially because of the inability to change or achieve something." We have our plan, it's not going the way we want it to so what do we do? We try and force it. You are interested in someone but that person is not interested in you so you try to force a relationship that clearly is not in the plan. And then the inevitable creeps in ... frustration.

At that point, we are forgetting that our plan might not jive with God's plan. We are living our lives and making choices based on our will and not His. Wrong move! Here is a point I would like for you to remember, when you are frustrated, it is because you are not walking in faith. Joshua 1:9 says, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

If we are constantly walking in faith, then we have the mindset of trusting that God has our back and if something doesn't work out, than it is in our best interest.



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Hebrews 11:1 (New Living translation) reads: "Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see."

Dating can be difficult for a variety of reasons but don't get jaded. If you have been divorced and are back in the dating world and relationships haven't worked out, take on a different perspective. One that says, "God has a

plan." "God is bringing me closer to the kind of relationship I really need," "I am opening myself up to what He has planned for me," and "Good things take time and I'm walking in faith."

Don't get frustrated in God's timing. I read a quotation once that said, "Faith in God includes faith in His timing." They go hand in hand so stop knocking on a door that has been closed or better yet, has been slammed and bolted from the other side. Don't waste another minute on someone who you think is 'perfect' for you but God knows otherwise, move on in faith. Habakkuk 2:3 says "For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end — it will not lie. If it seems slow wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay."

Sometimes, to gain a new perspective, we have to step away from our daily routines, take a deep breath and regroup. For me, being in nature is the key to getting my mind clear so I can hear God's words of wisdom and encouragement. I know what God has planned for me can only be seen with my eyes of faith.

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