



A Silent Night in the Forest

All night long the forest watched the star-like body drift slowly down from heaven. From the mouths of caves, from tents in the fields, and from their beds of straw near their flocks, shepherds stood wide-eyed as the vision lowered itself over the graceful hills. The sheep and all the nearby animals watched it too. It glowed with the colors of a rainbow, and from it emanated sounds never heard on earth. There was music and voices that were not of this world, yet they were intelligible. Each syllable exploded on the consciousness, each word detonated a full-blown revelation, as the voices sang of the coming savior. Like the many pipes of an organ, the voices had extra dimensions, and innumerable octaves. Yet they could be understood with uncommon clarity, and the songs they sang gave praises to a newborn king. For a few moments, as the brilliant object moved far overhead, the forest was aglow with light. Everything in it remained transfixed; nothing moved.



The first thought of the trees and the many forest dwellers was to fall on their faces in praise because of the sanctity of the moment. The music – so reverential and uplifting – was everywhere. Each living thing in the forest became an instrument. An unseen hand seemed to pluck the chords of their lives, like some master composer who, at least for those few bright moments, brought them into harmony with everything else. While one sensed that the music came from outside himself, another felt it came from inside himself. Though the glowing moved over them, the trees couldn't see its sources. The forest stood quiet in universal awe. Not an animal laughed or chirped or roared or whimpered or cried out. The trees, in silent repose, began lifting up their branches in submission. Many cried at the wonder of it all. The forest became a temple of praise. It began to worship, but it didn't know who or what, and it didn't know why. ...

At daybreak, the word passed like a flash of lightning through the forest: a special child was born in Bethlehem of Judea. Clearly, it had to be a most important child when angels attended and sang songs of his birth. The trees on the fringes said that the angels called the infant Immanuel – God with us. ...

(Excerpt from *The Chosen Tree* by James H. Greene, Vision Publishing. To order this book, [click here](#).)

Shop Kingdom! Is Here

TheKingdomOfGod.biz, a Southern California-based Christian search engine, has released a new service called **Shop Kingdom!**

Shop Kingdom! was born out of a need in the Christian community that the Lord revealed to businessman Greg Smith a few years ago. As the owner of a fast-growing telecommunications company, Smith had several members of his church approach him to ask advice on starting or growing their own businesses. There were so many inquiries, in fact, that it often became difficult for Smith and his family to get in or out of church services. In addition, many of these would-be businesspeople wanted to schedule a meeting with him – usually during business hours. Smith wanted to help as much as he could, but so many requests were becoming a burden, so he sought the Lord for answers. Out of that seeking, www.TheKingdomOfGod.biz was born.

With the launch of TheKingdomOfGod.biz on January 3, 2004, Smith began to address the problem by linking Christians together in a ministry/business coalition. Many Christians have been taught that God wants His children to prosper financially so the Gospel can be financed around the world. And many Christians had been seeking God for the manifestation of finances to help spread the Gospel through businesses, but were falling by the wayside before the manifestation came.

TheKingdomOfGod.biz may just be the missing link. It brings the whole Body of Christ together in one worldwide search engine. TheKingdomOfGod.biz joins ministries, businesses, missions, and provides testimonies, job listings, music, an events calendar, a newsletter, notices and much, much more, together in one search engine. Smith also designed highly affordable advertising packages for the purpose of putting these businesses, ministries and artists in an environment that gives them maximum exposure.

The next step in creating an environment in which these entities could flourish was to develop online stores that allow them to have all the benefits of an e-commerce website without the expenses of development and maintenance. The answer is **Shop Kingdom!**

Today consumers from all over the world can find Christian businesses and music artists through a search engine that offers something for the whole Body of Christ. Customers can shop, place items in individual store shopping carts and make purchases using their credit cards. From the sales transaction fee paid by the seller, customers can even send an offering to any ministry they choose. The purpose is simple: create an environment where the whole Body of Christ can be blessed! Smith thinks God would want it that way.

Log on to www.TheKingdomOfGod.biz today, and be a part of how God is networking, increasing, and uniting the Body of Christ!

Kingdom Briefs

'Chip' Murray Out, New Pastor in at FAME

After 27 years at the helm of Los Angeles' famous First AME Church in Los Angeles, the Rev. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray has stepped down as pastor. The new pastor is the Rev. John J. Hunter, formerly of Seattle. Rev. Murray had reached the mandatory retirement age of 75. Under Rev. Murray, the church known as FAME "grew from a small congregation to a religious and civic force with influence well beyond the black community." (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

Bishop to Observe Moratorium on Same-Sex Unions

In a mild retreat, the Episcopal bishop of Los Angeles has announced that he will observe a personal moratorium on blessing same-sex unions. The Rt. Rev. J. Jon Bruno heads the six-county Los Angeles diocese. Bruno was among a majority of U.S. Episcopal bishops who consented to the election by the Dioceses of New Hampshire of an openly gay priest in a long-term relationship with another man, the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson. Bruno has also presided at a same-sex blessing of a male couple. After these actions, three parishes unilaterally declared that they were leaving both the diocese and the U.S. Episcopal Church in protest. (Source: **Los Angeles Times**)

Supreme Court Won't Enter Gay Marriage Fray

The United States Supreme Court rejected a challenge by conservative groups opposing Massachusetts' right to sanction same-sex marriages. In doing so, it declined to enter a simmering national dispute over gay marriage. The justices had been asked to overturn a decision by the Massachusetts high court that legalized gay marriage. At least 3,000 gay Massachusetts couples have wed since the ruling in November 2003. Critics of the ruling by the highest court in Massachusetts argued that it violated the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of a republican form of government in each state. The lawsuit was filed by the Florida-based Liberty Counsel on behalf of Robert Largess, the vice president of the Catholic Action League, and eleven state lawmakers. The conservative law group had persuaded the Supreme Court in October to consider another high profile issue: the constitutionality of Ten Commandments displays on government property (Source: **MSN**)

(Continued on page two)

What's Inside?

- Cave Is Proof of John the Baptist, Archeologist Says – Page 2
- Bishop Wants Black Americans to Increase Support of African Orphans – Page 2
- Texas Board of Education Members Demand and Get Textbook Revisions – Page 3

Advertise in The Kingdom today!

Visit www.TheKingdomOfGod.biz
or call us at 800-455-9998!





Archeologist Says Cave Is Proof John the Baptist Existed



A British archeologist says a cave uncovered in the mountains near Jerusalem proves that John the Baptist existed, according to an AFP report on Yahoo!

"The first concrete evidence of the existence of John the Baptist has been found on site," said Shimon Gibson, a 46-year-old biblical

archeologist. Gibson holds a degree from University College London and has written several books on biblical archeology. He believes the discovery is "the first archeological proof of the historical veracity of the Gospel."

Although most Bible-believing Christians have never questioned whether John the Baptist actually existed, some scientists apparently have. Some archeologists believe Gibson goes too far in drawing the conclusion that the prophet actually lived. They say the discovery of an ancient place of worship linked to the prophet does not prove that he actually existed.

The cave is located on the grounds of a kibbutz, about an hour's donkey ride from Ein Kerem, the village where John the Baptist is said to have been born. It is in a pine forest on the edge of the Judean desert. The prophet was known to hold spiritual retreats in the area.

Members of the kibbutz had told Gibson of the cave in 1999. He started excavating after discovering a crudely drawn picture of the John the Baptist "dressed in camel hair robes" carved into the limestone walls. Several crosses and a rough drawing of a severed head were also carved into the walls.

Bishop Wants Black Americans to Increase Support of African Orphans

A well-known Pentecostal bishop is pressing African Americans to rev up their commitment to help African children orphaned by the AIDS and HIV pandemic. According to an article in the December issue of Charisma magazine, the disease has taken the lives of about 17 million Africans and left 14 million children orphaned.

Save Africa's Children was founded three years ago by Bishop Charles E. Blake Sr., senior pastor of West Angeles Church of God in Christ in Los Angeles, after a tour of the continent.

"I am appealing to African Americans – but not just African Americans exclusively," Bishop Blake told Charisma.

Save Africa's Children is supporting 28,000 children in 160 "orphan-care projects" across Africa, the article said. But Bishop Blake wants to raise enough money to support at least 1,000 orphan-care projects.

"I saw a continent of people who are hard-working and struggling to enhance themselves, but without the resources," Bishop Blake said. He is appealing to Christians over the Trinity Broadcasting Network, which regularly televises from his church, and to 60,000 other black churches for support.



The Charisma article said Bishop Blake is among about 10 prominent African American ministers who helped persuade President Bush to pledge \$15 billion in aid for Africa in 2001.

Kingdom Briefs

Continued from page one

Lesbian Minister Defrocked by United Methodists

A lesbian minister in the United Methodist Church was found guilty of violating a ban on actively gay clergy and defrocked. A 13-member jury made up of Methodist clergy convicted the Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud, who lives with her partner. The jury voted 12 to 1 to find Stroud guilty. The Methodist are just one of several mainline Protestant denominations in the United States – including the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches – which are undergoing turmoil over the role of gays and lesbians in the church, particularly gay clergy. Stroud, an associate pastor at Philadelphia's First United Methodist Church of Germantown, announced to her bishop and congregation last year that she was living in a committed relationship with her partner. (Source: AP)

Lesbian Pastor costs Lutheran Mission Its Sanction

The Central City Lutheran Mission in San Bernardino, California, has been stripped of its official recognition because it installed an associate pastor who is in a committed lesbian relationship. Bishop Murray Finck said Central City violated the church's constitution when it installed Pastor Jenny Mason in April. The Evangelical Lutheran Church allows gay clergy only if they are celibate. (Source: Los Angeles Times)

ZOE Ministries to Hold Purpose Conference

The Association of ZOE Christian Fellowship Ministries International will hold its Purpose Conference 2005 on January 19, 20 and 21 at ZOE Christian Fellowship of Whittier. The church is located at 10252 Mills Avenue in Whittier. Among the speakers will be Bishop Frank L. Stewart, founder of the association. Dr. Myles Munroe will be the keynote speaker. The theme of the conference is "Born for Purpose." For further information, call 800-478-3523.

On the Trail of Good News

Hey, we're sniffing around for news and other uplifting information that might appeal to our national audience. If you know of a unique Christian business, ministry or personality, or of something happening on the news front, give us a heads-up. You might want to send a clipping from your local newspaper or invite us to track down a story from the details you provide. Remember, all our stories are Christ-based and nationally oriented, though they may cut across entertainment, business, lifestyle, political or other lines. E-mail us at newsletter@tkog.biz or mail us your clippings at The Kingdom of God, P.O. Box 1147, Claremont, CA 91711.



It's time to Bless the Body!

TheKingdomOfGod.biz is blessing the Body – with money and GIFTS!
Participate in our weekly Bible trivia game and register to win at "Let's Bless The Body."

You'll also receive a free gift from each of the following partners:





KINGDOM VOICE

Texas Board of Education Members Demand and Get Textbook Revisions



Christian conservatives on the state Board of Education in Texas have succeeded in changing references to marriage and sexuality in new health textbooks for high school and middle school students. The changes could have a wide-ranging impact on students throughout the nation.

According to a report in the Los Angeles Times, one publisher "agreed to define marriage as a 'lifelong union between a husband and a wife.' Another

deleted words that were attacked by conservatives as 'stealth references to gay relationships'; 'partners,' for example, was changed to 'husbands and wives.' A passage explaining that adolescence brings the onset of 'attraction to others' became 'attraction to the opposite sex.'"

Terri Leo, a board member who represents 2.5 million people in East Texas, explained that she pushed for the changes "to combat the influence of 'liberal New York publishers' who by 'censoring' the definition of marriage were legitimizing same-sex unions."

The article in the November 23 issue of the Times cited education advocates who have criticized the board's decision. Gilbert Sewall, director of the American Textbook Council in New York, was quoted as saying: "I have very little use for this religion-driven curriculum. This confuses sex and moral education."

"Texas is the second largest buyer of textbooks in the nation, after California," the article reported. "Books purchased here [in Texas] wind up in classrooms across the nation, because publishers are loath to create new edition for smaller states."

*

Another Times article reported that a group of parents in Cobb County, Georgia, sued the school district, claiming it mingled religion with science because of a sticker the district authorized to be placed on the inside cover a biology textbook. The sticker warns that "evolution is a theory, not a fact."

The group that is suing the district is backed by the American Civil Liberties Union. Judge Clarence Cooper was weighing whether or not the sticker violated the First Amendment by endorsing religion or entangling religion with government.

Although similar disclaimers are used in school districts throughout the country, their constitutionality has never been tested in court, said an attorney representing the group.

*

Meanwhile, in Grantsburg, Wisconsin, the school board revised its science curriculum to allow creationism to be taught. The move prompted an outcry from more than 300 educators who urged that the decision be reversed, according to another report in the Times. School board members decided that a state law governing the teaching of



evolution was too restrictive. The science curriculum "should not be totally inclusive of just one scientific theory," said the superintendent of the district of 1,000 students in northwest Wisconsin.

Advertise in The Kingdom today!

Visit www.TheKingdomOfGod.biz
or call us at 800-455-9998!

BOOKS • MOVIES • DVDs • MUSIC • CLOTHING • FOOD



Expand & grow your business with

Shop Kingdom!

Get nationwide and global exposure!

AUDIO TAPES • EVENT TICKETS • GIFT BASKETS • TOYS

Vision PUBLISHING
Carson, California

More than 30 years' experience in editing and publishing.

[> Click Here](#)

CLICK HERE

S&S
Gift Baskets

Kathy Horry
in Kingdom Music

GO TO HERE