



Tom C. McKenney  
P.O. Box 413  
Marion, KY 42064

WORDS FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

*To Encourage... To Inform... To Teach*

Visit our Web site at [www.wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com](http://www.wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com)

Phone/Fax (270) 965-5060  
E-mail: [wflm@bellsouth.net](mailto:wflm@bellsouth.net)

*Spring 2017*

*Dear Ones,*

First I want to thank all of you for the precious cards and letters, encouraging me and praying for my recovery. I have kept them all. I have probably missed some; but I have tried to respond to them all. It took a long time, because there were between 500 and 1,000 of them (I didn't count), and writing is still difficult for me; but I think I got to them all.

My friend and neurosurgeon, Lee, who saved my life, tells me that a brain injury such as mine will require at least a year to heal; I am at the half way point. My speech is still a little slow, but it is almost normal; the speed of my brain function is almost normal. All things taken together, I am way ahead of the normal recovery pattern. In church, with the words to the songs and hymns on the screen, when it is one that I know, I can keep up with everyone else; when it is one whose lyrics I don't know, I can't read them fast enough to keep up. But within the next 6 months, I will.

I have lost much memory, including most of the first 3 months in hospitals and rehab facilities, and an unknown period of time before I got hurt. But I have a few memories, one of them precious, from my last in-house rehab facility.

One of the most difficult things to which I have to adjust (and I am not adjusted to it yet), is not being allowed to drive. I will be taking a test soon to see if my reflexes and hand-eye coordination will allow me to drive. A thoughtless, insensitive, obnoxious woman at the Neuro Center told me that I will not pass the test, no matter how many times I take it; please pray with me that I will prove her wrong.

I love physical therapy; except for the Bible class that Susan and I teach on Sunday mornings, that is the only thing that I have to look forward to.

Lying unconscious for 6 weeks, and staying in bed most of the time for months after that, I lost 40 Lbs. of muscle mass. When I went unconscious I weighed a little over 200 Lbs.; when I left the last Rehab facility I weighed 163. I now weigh 182, and the gain is

almost all muscle mass. I still have 20 Lbs. of muscle to go; and I am making progress, slowly-but-surely, thanks be to God!

Until recently I couldn't trust myself to go back to work on my unfinished book; but lately there has been a growing awareness that the time was near. Two days ago I went back to work on it. At first I couldn't find my books and other source material, because I couldn't remember what or where they were; but now it is coming back to me and, as of today, I am ready to get back to writing, glory be to our almighty God!

I am happy to announce that we are again able to send you regular newsletters like we have done before, although the content will not be so "newsy" for some time. Sally and Marty have made this possible, along with Bonnie, my office manager, book keeper, and chief secretary.

I wish that I could sit down with each one of you and talk; but that is, of course, impossible this side of Heaven. We will have plenty of time for it there.

With love and gratitude, ...Tom

PS - Since my Bible Study Guide (about 2,000 pages) is complete except for editing, some writing by Susan and me in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries), and some more art work by Joe McCormick, we are finished. Our Sunday Bible Class wanted to start over again; but, since we've done that twice (11 years the second time), we're going a different route. I'm going back and expanding--going more in depth in specific areas, and we are studying selected books; we are now studying Judges. What follows is my introduction to the Book of Judges.

### **The Book of Judges**

The Hebrew name for the Book of Judges is *Shopetim*, meaning "judges, or ruling elders." This book records the period from the death of Joshua to the time of the prophet Samuel. During this time, Israel was (theoretically) under the kingship of God, and led by a succession of human leaders called judges (hence, the name of the book). This was a dark and dismal period in the history of Israel,

relieved occasionally by periodic flashes of righteous brilliance.

**The Problem.** With the death of Joshua, things with the people of Israel soon went sour. With the tribes spread out over the Promised Land, no longer in a single encampment, no longer with a leader such as Moses or Joshua, they lost their vision of themselves as a united people with God as their King.

As the book declares four times, there was no human king in Israel; in two of these declarations, the dismal result is added, "...every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In fact, to hammer home the problem, it is with this statement that the entire book ends (21:25).

Time after time, the Israelites fell into rebellion and adopted the pagan gods of the people around them, with their heathen, idolatrous practices; and, time after time, they were then conquered and enslaved by the pagan kings around them. When their sin had gotten them into deep trouble that they couldn't handle, they would cry out to God, and He would graciously raise up a leader to rescue them. Then, after a brief period of peace and safety, they would again fall into sin, and the dismal cycle would be repeated.

They even fought against one another, in five internal wars. They were a mess!

**The Judges.** There were 14 judges during the period covered by this book; with the exception of one remarkable woman named Deborah, the judges were men. Actually, there were two more judges, men with dual functions: the High Priest Eli, and the Prophet Samuel, at the end of the period; but their stories are told in a subsequent book (I Samuel).

*NOTE: The total length of the period of the Judges is difficult, if not impossible, to state with certainty; as a result, estimates vary widely, from about 300 years to more than 400 years. Jephthah, a judge who lived near the end of the period, spoke of it as 300 years (11:26), but there were four more judges after Jephthah, whose periods are included in this book.*

*Some commentators believe that, because of the extreme disunity among the tribes of Israel during the period, there were, at times, periods of overlap, when portions of the Promised Land were governed by more than one judge at the same time. One thing about which we may be certain concerning the length of this period, is that we cannot know its length with certainty. Perhaps a safe estimate for the total period of the judges would be 350-400 years. To keep things as simple as possible, let's just say 400 years.*

**A. Author.** According to Jewish tradition, the author was the prophet Samuel, the last of the judges of Israel, who anointed Saul as the first king. Since the book covers a period of at least 300 to 400 years, no one person would have lived through the entire

period; thus the author would have compiled records, kept by others, during the period of the judges.

**B. Place and Date.** It is clear that it was written during the reign of Saul, Israel's first king, for it refers to the period before Israel had a king. And, it was written before David was king, because the Tabernacle is still at Shiloh when the book ends (later, when David is king, he will move the Tabernacle to Jerusalem). The Book of Judges was written somewhere in the Promised Land, about 1100 BC.

**C. Occasion.** Moved upon by God, the record of this dismal period in the history of the Israelites was probably recorded by scribes, and consolidated by the Prophet Samuel after the separated tribes were unified as one nation under King Saul.

**D. Theme.** The theme of Judges is the need for political unity and obedience to the Word of God. When "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," only apostasy, conflict, tragedy, and failure were the predictable results.

This entire book is a dismal lesson in human nature.

### Prologue

Chapter 1 and the first 10 verses of Chapter 2 summarize the events of Joshua in conquering the Promised Land, and make it clear that most of the people of that generation, which had participated in the wandering and the conquest of Canaan, have died out. The Philistines were not entirely conquered because of their iron chariots, and they will continue to be a thorn in Israel's flesh; and the Jebusite fortress at Jerusalem will remain in the hands of the Jebusites, until finally conquered by King David. The rest of Chapter 2 (vs 11-23) summarizes the dismal pattern of the period of the Judges.

The entire Promised Land was never fully conquered and possessed by the Israelites until the time of David.

#### NOTES:

*a. It seems strange that a significant and unconquered portion of Jerusalem could survive in the hands of Pagans, in a hostile relationship with the Israelites, who occupied the rest of Jerusalem and surrounded the Jebusite fortress; but that is what the Bible record tells us.*

**The Jebusites and Their Fortress.** *The ancient name of Jerusalem was Jebus, and its people were thus called Jebusites. They built a small (not more than eight acres) fortress in Jerusalem, on virtually impregnable terrain. It was an elongated triangle, surrounded by valleys, on a hill with sheer rock escarpments, and with walls that were unassailable with the technology of that time.*

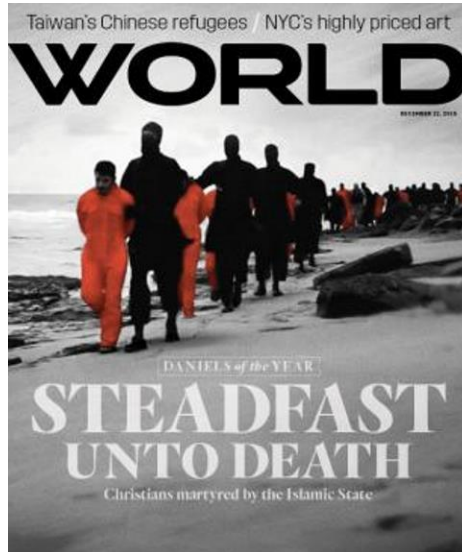
*The wall enclosed the great spring of Gihon, providing the Jebusites with water, and making them self-reliant. Although the Israelites conquered the rest*

of the city of Jerusalem, the Jebusite fortress was never conquered until besieged and conquered by King David, about 1000 BC. Modern time archeological discoveries indicate that the Jebusite fortress had existed for about 1,000 years before it was conquered by David.

*b. It is important to read the first two chapters; but they are a summary of events already dealt with-- events that preceded the period of the Judges*

*--Tom*

## Worldwide Persecution of Christians



**Christians are the most persecuted Group in the world** for the second year in a row. The advocacy group Open Doors USA released the latest edition of its annual World Watch List, which ranks countries based on the treatment of their Christian populations. The group said the increase in incidents considered persecution was alarming and getting worse, making these the **worst** levels of persecution in modern times. “The spread of persecution has gotten worse, now hitting nearly every continent in the world,” said David Curry, President of Open Doors, and “there were 23 Christians killed in Mexico specifically because of their faith....Our report is conservative because it only calculates incidents that are reported and can be validated,” Curry told Fox News. “It is likely that there are thousands of incidents that are never reported and nobody knows because Christians are often fearful to tell anyone – even their own family members.”

The Center for Studies on New Religions reported that nearly 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in 2016 and as many as 600 million

were prevented from practicing their faith through intimidation, forced conversions, bodily harm and death.

As Robert Nicholson of Philos Project, an advocacy group for Christians in the Middle East, said, “There are many places on earth where being a Christian is the most dangerous thing you can be. Those who think of Christianity as a religion of the powerful need to see that in most places it is a religion of the powerless.” --Marty



**Unconquered: 21 Christians on a Libyan beach just before being martyred by the Islamic State.**

## Thoughts on the Atonement and the Resurrection

Why the Cross? Why the Empty Tomb? I used to experience a feeling at Easter that was difficult to explain. I knew that Jesus’s death on the cross paid for my sins, and I knew I should feel good about that, but I vaguely wondered why God didn’t just forgive us, without Jesus having to die on the cross. If He were disposed to forgive us anyway, why wouldn’t He just do it?

One day it occurred to me to wonder what things would have been like if Jesus had not died on the cross. What if there had been no atonement? What would things be like? I would pay the price for my sins myself, I thought. Then what? What would my punishment in hell accomplish? Would it fix things? My punishment would be fair and just, but would it change anything? Could it make things right? Would it clean up the ugliness or damage brought about by even just one sin of mine? Every sin of mine distorts me and usually damages others too. I finally came to see--once I thought about what sin actually does--that sin had to be atoned for, not because God randomly wanted it that way or because a formula had to be followed, but because sin changes things for the worse and in a way which only God could undo.

When I consider how much one sin on the part of Adam and Eve changed our world, it gives me pause. Sin transformed our world from one of perfection and beauty to one where death and destruction prevail—because sin changes things (it is its nature). In ways large or small, sin always brings

about some sort of distortion, destruction, or theft. It cannot be otherwise. Eden became a place where tigers rip apart lambs, a place where some animals eat their own young, a place where people make car bombs and rape children. This transformation did not occur because God demanded it; it is simply what sin does. It is the way sin changes things. I realized that if God punished me for my sins, my punishment would be deserved and would be just. But my punishment could not accomplish anything beyond that. My punishment could never fix what my sins have marred. It would take something on a cosmic level to do that. Only Jesus could do that.

Not only is the guilt of our sins washed away by Jesus in a way which our own punishment could never accomplish, but because He is the one who paid for our sins, one day we will also see the injury sin has caused be erased, undone, reversed, healed. It is because of His sacrifice that one day our world will be cleaned up and recreated as a "new earth," one in which there is no more disease or death, an earth where lambs and lions will sleep together, where sorrow and sighing will have fled away, and where we will sing new songs. It is because of what Jesus accomplished on a cosmic level that Jesus will be able to fulfill His promise to wipe away every tear. Our death, our eternal punishment, could never have accomplished this. His was the only punishment that could accomplish it all. And He did it. He chose to.

And when we remember that in his death he was both the sacrifice and the priest, his resurrection takes on new meaning as well. If, in the Mosaic sacrificial system, the priest made the yearly sacrifice for Israel and then came out of the Holy of Holies alive, then it meant his sacrifice had been accepted. If something went wrong with the sacrifice, then the priest would die, and his body would have to be pulled out by a cord tied to his leg. But Jesus, our priest, offered Himself and then three days later came out of the tomb alive as the priest whose sacrifice was accepted! So when we celebrate and remember the resurrection, we can celebrate that not only is the resurrection a reminder that Jesus is divine and not only a reminder that there is life after death, but that it is also proof to us that His sacrifice worked. It did not merely fulfill the requirements of some dry, abstract formula; it was effectual in reality! It worked! The priest came out alive!

--Sally McKenney Mahoney

## MILESTONES

**Births:** Two grandsons for Susan (McKenney) and Pat Jarvis: Benjamin "Mac" Jones (27 July 2016) and Asher Mendoza (10 August 2016), Ocean Springs, MS.

A granddaughter for Jane Hill:

Lillian Josephine (Lily) Cartner (8 April 2018). Lexington, Ky.

**Died:** 21 July '16 – Dr. Howard Thomas, husband of Ann, long-time Christian friend, in Savannah, TN.

16 Aug '16 – Thomas R Graley, long-time Christian friend, husband of Martha Graley, Purcellville, VA.

13 Feb '17 – Sam Winston, husband of Miriam Winston, of Germantown, TN.

17 Feb '17 – Mrs. Cavita Barnes, age 101, of Union City, TN. Born in Union City she was a faithful member of the Monday night Bible study there and a precious Christian friend. She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, and all 7 of her siblings.

We also want you to know that Theresa Weis (John Weis's wife); Carroll Risley of Mount Carmel, IL., Bobby Wiggins of Millersburg, KY and Bill White are now rejoicing with the Lord in Heaven.

## A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.

