



December 2020

A Message of Life Ministries Newsletter

Christmas Greetings

Our Messiah and Savior was born to die, so believers would be born from above to live eternally. Have a blessed Christmas and a prosperous new year in the Lord. These are crazy times, but God is still in control.

Fifteen Months Closer

As many of you know, Diane and I lost our younger son (Joseph) and his wife (Missy) fifteen months ago. They lost their battle with alcohol. They believed Jesus for His promise of everlasting life, so they are with the Lord.

We take much comfort in Paul's words about grieving. In contrast with the world (which grieves without hope: 1 Thess 4:13), the grief of believers is moderated by certainty: the certainty of resurrection and the certainty that believers already possess everlasting life (John 5:24). We know that we will see them again. I look forward to Joseph saying, "Dad, let me tell you some things I learned from Jesus."

A YouTube video by Susan Delaney, "Grief, It's Complicated...10% of the Time," has a helpful perspective on grief. She contends that grief does not gradually shrink and eventually go away (like a cold). Rather than grief shrinking, we grow, enabling us to deal with the grief. She does not attribute the growth to the Lord, but Diane and I do. When believers are serious about God's word, He uses it to strengthen them for severe trials.

The pain is great; both our family and Missy's have suffered major loss. At times the emotions hit really hard. It never vanishes, but is always in the background. Simple things bring back memories. Through it all we have found the Lord to be faithful. His word has been our anchor. Jesus' sure promise of everlasting life is guaranteed. This is a great comfort to us. It lets us live for the Lord one day at a time.

2020

COVID restrictions reduced our travel. Before the Wuhan virus we had many in-person (seminary, at church, and home classes). We switched to "Zoom" classes as well as for weekly Bible-Curriculum meetings for the Denver Rescue Mission. I even taught some Zoom classes for Victor Street Bible Chapel (Dallas, TX). We have (despite the epidemic) prepared fifty new lessons for MOL316.com. These include studies on these books: Bob Wilkin, *Is Calvinism Biblical?*; Shawn Lazar, *Chosen for Service*; Steve Elkins, *The Roman Road Revisited*.

Despite COVID, we continue to provide *Living Waters* to people. The numbers are down, but believers are still sharing the Message of Life in this strange year.

COVID brought classes to a halt at Rocky Mountain Seminary and there was a leadership transition. We decided (in light of our plans for 2021) against staying on at the school.

Our big trip for 2020 was the GES conference in October. I presented three papers on outline issues in John's Gospel. This was part of the ongoing preparation for the commentary on John. A reduced travel schedule has given additional time for revising the translation, outline, and chronology of John. I have written some appendices and have collected notes summarizing planned arguments. Next year will see the start of commentary writing. Hallelujah!

Planning to Move to Knoxville, TN

Colorado is centrally located between family in the Northwest, the Southwest, and the central Appalachian region. Before-COVID we were able to see family on various ministry trips around the country. Travel restrictions have brought home just how many miles lie between us and our family.

Our son (George) and his wife (Becky) are encouraging us to move near them (Knoxville). That's great. We yearn to be near family again. We plan to sell our home next spring and move east.



Masks Don't Stop the Message*



Buddy, Roger, and Steve Studying John



Steve and Buddy

*We bought these tee shirts through our church, Crosspoint Community Church, Centennial, CO.

John 1 and Jesus' Baptism

Earlier, I mentioned my work on both the outline and chronology of John's Gospel. The following is a condensed version of part of one of my papers at GES. This is groundwork for our commentary.

People usually do not ask, "Where would Jesus' baptism fit within John 1?" Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record it, but not John. Kurt Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* entitles John 1:29-34 as, "The Baptism of Jesus," even though John's Gospel says nothing about Jesus' baptism.

Actually, Jesus' baptism must precede the start of John's narrative. If not, then John and Mark would contradict each other. John 1:18-2:11 sets forth a sequence of days: 1:18ff is the first day. Then the phrase "on the next day" appears in 1:29, 35, 43, with "on the third day" in 2:1.

However, Mark 1:12 demonstrates that no sequence of days occurred between Jesus' baptism (1:9-11) and the temptation (1:12-13). Specifically, Mark says "Immediately [after Jesus was baptized] the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness [to be tempted]."

How do John and Mark reconcile? Jesus was baptized right before He went into the wilderness. Then at 1:15 (not 1:19) John's narrative begins. The events of John 1:15-28 occur near the end of Jesus' temptation. Then, in John 1:29, Jesus returned to John the Baptist, who proclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

This offers a straight-forward chronology. It also clarifies how the Baptist could be so knowledgeable about Jesus this early (in 1:15-18). John 1:15 says, "This is He of whom I said [aorist tense]..." He spoke of what he **had been saying** during the forty days while Jesus was being tempted in the wilderness. The commentary literature cannot imagine the Baptist speaking the words of 1:16-18. Translations (other than the *Living Water*) end the quotation marks at 1:15. Most translators assign vv 16-18 to the apostle.

Few scholars recognize that the Baptist has had forty-plus days to reflect upon what likely was a lengthy conversation with Jesus on the day of His baptism. The Baptist was a recipient of revelation from God, so he was capable of saying 1:16-18, despite most Biblical scholars denying that he did or even could have spoken those words.

We Will Keep You Updated

Moving is always a challenge. We plan newsletters or brief notices to keep you informed. Once we have a Tennessee address, we will let y'all know it.

Thank you for your prayers and support. 2020 has been a most-unusual year, but God has faithfully provided our needs through His people. We are most grateful.

Prayer

For continued ministry opportunities, despite COVID. For health and safety. For a smooth transition to Tennessee. For good progress on the commentary and other projects.

Lifeline

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