

REDEEMING THE TIME

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16).

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 2

◆ SPRING 2022

GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY

BY BRAD K. GSELL

For most of January and February 2022, I had the privilege of traveling across the east African nation of Kenya on behalf of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM) and the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). I was invited to preach and teach in many churches, and Bible institutes and colleges, as well as to meet with a number of Christian leaders in different ICCC denominations. In addition, other faithful pastors and denominations not affiliated with either of these organizations welcomed me to minister in their midst. What a blessing to be with dear brethren in Christ whom I have known for many years, as well as to make many new friends.

A faithful national church

The thing that most encouraged my heart and for which I praise the Lord is that a faithful witness is alive and well in the land of Kenya. Although the gospel came

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Grand OPENINGS

BY ROBERT W. ANDERSON

As we have just celebrated the Easter season, this message, based on Luke 24, gives us much to consider as we remember the glorious events surrounding Christ's death on the cross, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension into heaven.

Over the years, we have seen searchlights crisscrossing the night sky, typically advertising a grand opening of some new commercial venture. Yet none of them comes near the scale of the grand and glorious openings recounted in Luke's resurrection chapter 24:

1. the opening of a week
2. the opening of a tomb
3. the opening of the eyes
4. the opening of the Scriptures
5. the opening of the understanding
6. the opening of heaven.


1. The Opening of a Week

Luke 24:1 opens with, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them." The

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SOME TEAM 2022 - KENYA





The Scottish Reformation

PART 6

BY MARK W. EVANS

EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

A Martyr's Testimony

During John Knox's second exile, the Reformation in Scotland continued its progress. The fledgling assemblies included some of the nobility, who were able to secure places for meetings in private homes and in castles. The flock grew in numbers and spiritual strength. In the face of Rome's cruel persecutions, Scottish believers entered into "bands" or "covenants," that united them in their sacred resolve to remain faithful to Scriptural doctrine and practice. Church historian, J.A. Wylie, wrote: "[T]hey promised before the 'Majesty of God and His congregation' to employ their 'whole power, substance, and very lives' in establishing the Gospel in Scotland, in defending its ministers, and building up its 'Congregation.'"¹

In the year 1558, the Roman clergy believed they were threatened by the presence of these humble Christians and determined to return to their standard weapon — execution by fire. Although this horrendous cruelty always aided the growth of Christ's true Church, Roman clerics rushed to satisfy their hellish thirst for blood. They determined to arrest a converted priest, Walter Mill. Some 20 years earlier, Mill had narrowly escaped the fiery stake. His crime was that he refused to conduct the mass. He fled to Ger-

many and there learned the saving truths of God's Word. Around 1556, he returned to Scotland and roamed the land, rebuking sin and preaching Scriptural truth. The bishops succeeded in capturing the now elderly preacher and presented him for trial in the city of St. Andrews. At the age

"Dear friends, the cause why I suffer this day is not for any crime laid to my charge, though I acknowledge myself a miserable sinner before God, but only for the defence of the truth of Jesus Christ, set forth in the Old and New Testaments."

Walter Mill

of 82, Mill was lame and feeble. Yet, the Lord's servant remained unmoved by Rome's flatteries and threats. He was brought to trial before the papal clergy that included bishops and the Archbishop of St. Andrews. Mill's age and physical condition led the assembly to fear that his voice would be too weak to be heard. John Howie, in his book *The Scots Worthies*, wrote: "[A]s soon as he began to speak he surprised them all; his voice made the church to ring, and his quickness and courage amazed his very enemies." The accused began by kneeling in prayer. Before completing his petition to the

Judge of all the Earth, he was interrupted by his examiner, named Oliphant: "You keep my lord of St. Andrews too long here." The implacable herald of truth continued praying and then arose with these words: "I ought to obey God rather than man. I serve a mightier Lord than your lord is...."²

Howie recorded the following interrogation between Oliphant and Mill:

"Oliphant: Thou sayest there are not seven sacraments?

"Mill: Give me the Lord's Supper and Baptism, and take you all the rest.

"Oliphant: What think you of a priest's marriage?

"Mill: I think it a blessed bond ordained by God, and approved of by Christ, and free to all sorts of men: but ye abhor it, and in the meanwhile, take other men's wives and daughters. Ye vow chastity, and keep it not.

"Oliphant: How sayest thou that the mass is idolatry?

"Mill: A lord or king calleth many to dinner, they come and sit down, but the lord himself turneth his back, and eateth up all; and so do you.

"Oliphant: Thou deniest the sacrament of the altar to be the real body of Christ in flesh and blood?

"Mill: The Scriptures are to be understood spiritually, and not carnally, and so your mass is wrong, for Christ was once offered on the cross for sin, and will never be offered again, for then He put an end to all sacrifice.

"Oliphant: Thou deniest the office of a bishop?

"Mill: I affirm that those you call bishops do no bishop's work, but live after sensual pleasure, taking no care of Christ's flock, nor regarding His word."³

Oliphant concluded his interrogation with this threat: "If you will not recant, I will pronounce sentence against you." Mill replied: "I know that I must die once; and therefore, as Christ said to Judas, 'What thou doest, do quickly.' You shall know that I will not recant the truth; for I am corn, and not chaff; I will neither be blown away by the wind nor burst with the flail, but will abide both."⁴

Oliphant sentenced the faithful believer to be “delivered to the temporal judge, and burnt as an heretic.” However, the papal clergy could not find any temporal judge to condemn him. When a rope was required to bind him to the stake, no merchant or other source would provide one. The execution had to be postponed for a day. Finally, one of the Archbishop’s servants was used as a temporal judge and a rope was attained from the Archbishop’s pavilion.⁵

On the way to the stake, a voice cried for Mill to recant. He replied: “I marvel at your rage, ye hypocrites, who do so cruelly pursue the servants of God; as for me, I am now eighty-two years old, and cannot live long by course of nature; but an hundred shall rise out of my ashes, who shall scatter you, ye hypocrites, and persecutors of God’s people; and such of you as now think yourselves the best, shall not die such an honest death as I now do. I trust in God, I shall be the last who shall suffer death, in this fashion, for this cause, in the land”⁶

At the place of execution, Oliphant ordered Mill to go to the stake. The martyr replied: “No, I will not go, except thou put hands to myself; but if thou wilt put to thy hand, and take part of my death, thou shalt see

“I praise God that He hath called me, among the rest of His servants, to seal up His truth with my life; as I have received it of Him, so I willingly offer it up for His glory; therefore, as ye would escape eternal death, be no longer seduced with the lies of bishops, abbots, friars, monks, and the rest of that sect of Antichrist, but depend only upon Jesus Christ and His mercy, that so ye may be delivered from condemnation.”

Walter Mill

me go up gladly.”⁷ Oliphant placed his hand on his victim, and Mill approached the stake with cheerfulness, saying, “I will go unto the altar of God.”⁸ He was requested to speak, but Oliphant said “he had spoken too much already, and that the bishops were exceedingly displeased with what he had said.”⁹

The bystanders, however, prevailed against the cruel papists. Mill kneeled in prayer, and then arose to speak: “Dear friends, the cause why I suffer this day is not for any crime laid to my charge, though I acknowledge myself a miserable sinner before God, but only for the defence of the truth of Jesus Christ, set forth in the Old and New Testaments. I praise God that He hath called me, among the rest of His servants, to seal up His truth with my life; as I have received it of Him, so I willingly offer it up for His glory; therefore, as ye would escape eternal death, be no longer seduced with the lies of bishops, abbots, friars, monks, and the rest of that sect of Antichrist, but depend only upon Jesus Christ and His mercy, that so ye may be delivered from condemnation.”¹⁰

Christ’s martyr uttered his last prayer and exhortation in the flames:

“Lord have mercy on me. Pray, pray, good people, while there is time.”¹¹

The servant of the Lord entered eternal glory on April 28, 1558. His death was not in vain. The people were so affected that they piled a massive amount of stones upon the place of his burning to preserve the memory of this murderous injustice. Howie wrote: “[B]ut the priests gave orders to have it taken down, and carried away; denouncing a curse on any who should lay stones there again; but their anathema was so little regarded, that what was thrown down in the day time was raised again in the night, until at last the papists carried away the stones to build houses in or about the town, which they did in the night with all possible secrecy.”¹²

J.A. Wylie wrote: “The nation was roused, and Scotland waited only the advent of one of its exiled sons, who was day by day drawing nearer it, to start up as one man and rend from its neck the cruel yoke which had so long weighed it down in serfdom and superstition.”¹³ That man was John Knox. •

¹J.A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, Vol. III (London: Cassell and Company, n.d. [originally published, 1878]), p. 488.

²John Howie, *The Scots Worthies* (Edinburgh: Johnston, Hunter, and Company, 1870), p. 34.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³Wylie, p. 488.



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REDEEMING THE TIME

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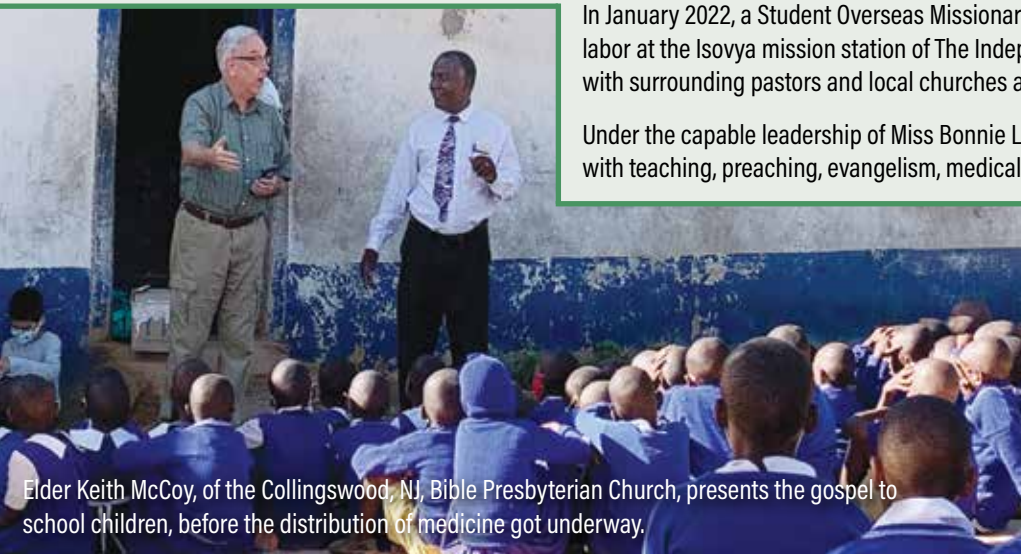
SOME TEAM 2022 – ISOVYA, KENYA



(left to right): Pastor Paul Kilonzi, Elder Keith McCoy, Elder Daniel Matamala, Dr. Marcela Arriagada and Anibal Zuñiga work together in distributing medicine to school children.



Matt Smith, from Tipton, IA, brings forth the Word of Life at the Isovya Independent Presbyterian Church.

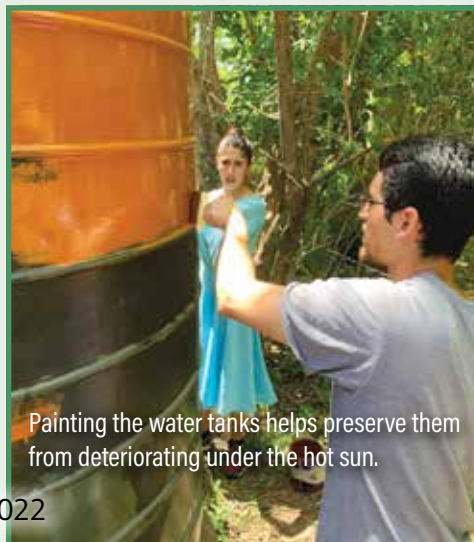


Elder Keith McCoy, of the Collingswood, NJ, Bible Presbyterian Church, presents the gospel to school children, before the distribution of medicine got underway.

In January 2022, a Student Overseas Missionary Endeavor (SOME) team traveled to Kenya, East Africa, to labor at the Isovya mission station of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM), and with surrounding pastors and local churches affiliated with the Independent Presbyterian Church of Kenya.

Under the capable leadership of Miss Bonnie Leithman, of the IBPFM headquarters, the team was involved with teaching, preaching, evangelism, medical work, and doing numerous repairs and maintenance.

The team included 13 from Chile, led by Miss Becky Rodriguez, and five from the United States.



Painting the water tanks helps preserve them from deteriorating under the hot sun.





Pastor Daniel Mwinzi and others arrived on motorcycles to take team members to minister in various churches.



Anibal Zuñiga teaching Sunday school, with Pastor Daniel Mwinzi translating.



The SOME Team included several with medical training and experience. Dr. Marcela Arriagada, whose parents served as medical missionaries under the IBPFM in the 1970s, was on the team with her family, as was Elder Daniel Matamala and his family. Both of the Matamalas are nurses. Dr. Arriagada coordinated the distribution of Vitamin A and anti-parasite medications at a local public school, with several hundred children. The Team was able to give the gospel to the students before the distribution of the medicine.

The medications were also given to the teachers of the school. In the process, the teachers all asked for Bibles, which we readily procured for them!



SOME TEAM 2022 – ISOVYA, KENYA



Dedication service of the new building of the Mukaini Independent Presbyterian Church. Rev. Brad Gsell gave the dedicatory message from the book of Nehemiah. The SOME team provided musical selections. Above, Pastor Paul Kilonzi with Elder Gary Johnson at a plaque honoring those who gave to make this building project possible.



Upon the arrival of the SOME Team in Isovya, we were greeted by (left to right): Pastor Daniel Mwendwa, Rev. and Mrs. Joel Mueke (Purity), Rev. and Mrs. James Mwangangi (Franciscar), and Rev. Paul Kilonzi.



Philip Wambua has been a tremendous blessing to the IBPFM. Many times he has given of his time and many talents to help with various needs of the Board and its missionaries. It was a privilege to finally get to meet him upon our arrival in Kenya.

Bethel Bible and Technical Schools, Isovya, Kenya





Elder Gary Johnson with Pastor Daniel Mwinzi.



Pat Johnson with a patient at the Clinics of Care.



SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL HEALING

Gary and Pat Johnson first went to Kenya as medical missionaries with The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions in the mid-1960s. Gary's skills as a lab technician and Pat's as a nurse, together with their love for lost souls, were of tremendous value at the IBPFM's Roland K. Armes Memorial Hospital in Mwingi, Kenya. Since that time, the Johnsons have served as missionaries in the Holy Land, and other areas of Kenya.

Before moving back to the United States, the Johnsons spent their last years on the field starting and operating a medical work in Isovya, a town out

in the bush, near Kitui. The Clinics of Care provided greatly needed medical services to the people in the surrounding area for a number of years. The gospel was given to all who came for help.

The Johnsons also worked in a number of the surrounding congregations of a group of Independent Presbyterian churches. They have mentored a number of the pastors in the area, and continue to be very involved with seeking to help them. Teaching, preaching and evangelism were at the center of their work.

In addition, the Bethel Bible and Technical Schools were started across the road from the mission

station. This endeavor continues today under national leadership.

The 2022 SOME Team to Isovya would not have been possible without the years of sacrificial service to the Lord by the Johnsons. Please be in prayer that the Lord would send forth laborers to continue this important work to lost souls in eastern Kenya..



Elder Gary Johnson speaking at a meeting in the Isovya Independent Presbyterian Church, with Pastor James Mwangangi.



The 2022 SOME Team preparing to eat supper at the Team House. Bonnie Leithman (standing, left), prepared all of the meals, not always under optimal circumstances.

SOME TEAM 2022 – ISOVYA, KENYA



Pastors Conference of Independent Presbyterian churches in the region.



Free dress shirts and neckties were made available for the pastors.



Rev. Brad Gsell teaching courses to the pastors on how to conduct weddings and funerals and how to handle conflicts and discipline within the church. Pastors Paul Kilonzi (standing) and James Mwangangi translated it into the Kikamba language.



Maize and beans were made available to the pastors, most of whom receive very little financial remuneration for their labors.



Daniel from Kenya welcomes Juakin from Chile.



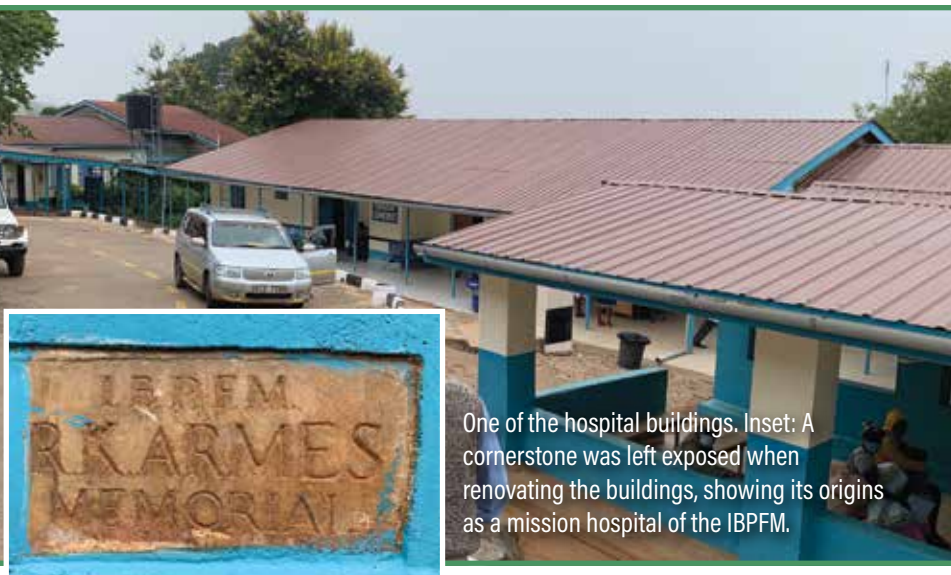
Becky Rodriguez with school children.



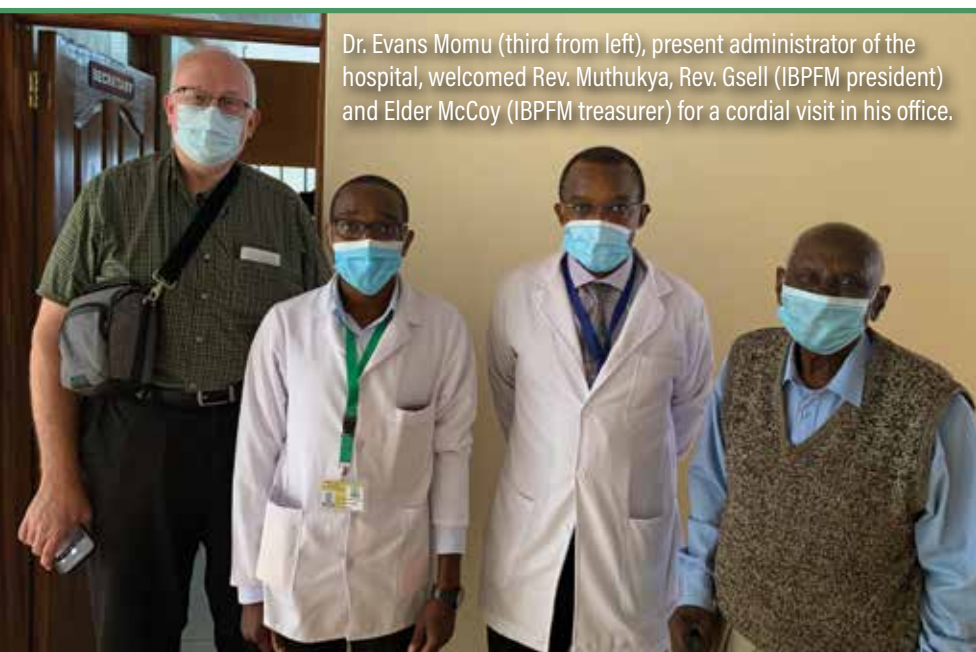
Maize was given to the widows in the Isoya IPC church.



A VISIT TO MWINGI



One of the hospital buildings. Inset: A cornerstone was left exposed when renovating the buildings, showing its origins as a mission hospital of the IBPFM.



Dr. Evans Momu (third from left), present administrator of the hospital, welcomed Rev. Muthukya, Rev. Gsell (IBPFM president) and Elder McCoy (IBPFM treasurer) for a cordial visit in his office.



With the Muthukya family. Rev. and Mrs. Muthukya are in the center of the front row.

One of the earliest works of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions (IBPFM) was the Roland K. Armes Memorial Hospital in Mwingi, Kenya. Miss Marian McNeil, a nurse from the Collingswood, NJ, Bible Presbyterian Church, sailed for "Kenya Colony" in 1936, serving with the Gospel Furthering Fellowship. Within a few years, she came with the IBPFM. She and Miss Dorothy Roberts served in Mwingi for many years, beginning under very primitive conditions. Through the decades, dozens of missionaries served at Mwingi hospital, including doctors, nurses, preachers, and teachers.

The mission station was built near the side of a rock "mountain," with cisterns built at the base to collect the rain water running off of it. These ladies did whatever it took to serve their Saviour. Miss Roberts studied auto mechanics and had construction skills. She pitched right in with the arduous tasks of building the hospital and missionary homes, and fixing the vehicles! The hospital was taken over by the Kenyan government in 1983.

The Rev. Solomon Muthukya was one of the first Sunday school students of Miss McNeil, and worked closely with Board missionaries Rev. and Mrs. Victor Hall. At 86, Rev. Muthukya and his wife still reside near Mwingi, and he is pastor of the Mathyakani Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC). At his invitation, Elder Keith McCoy and I were able to travel from Isovya to Mwingi for an overnight visit, thanks to transportation provided by two of his sons.

It was a real blessing to be welcomed to the Muthukya home, and for him to take us on a tour of some of the earliest IPC churches, and the Mwingi Hospital. We visited the grave of the Rev. Samson Kilolo, one of the earliest IPC pastors, and met some of his family. Also, we visited the family and grave of the Rev. Samsoni Ngovu, who studied under Rev. Hall.

When we arrived at the hospital, a large new building had been constructed in recent years. We were welcomed into the office of the administrator, Dr. Evans Momu. He talked with us for some time, and sent one of the nurses to give us a tour of the property, including some of the original buildings, and missionary homes. Later, he sent a letter requesting that we send him a copy of Miss McNeil's book, *Lord, "Give Me This Mountain,"* and any photos of the missionary work there. He is planning to create a historical display about the hospital.



Dorothy Roberts (left) and Marian McNeil
in the early days of their missionary service.



Marian McNeil treating a patient in the early years of the Mwingi Hospital.

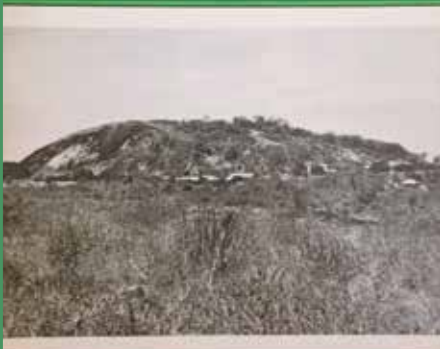


Rev. and Mrs. Victor Hall, in the early 1960s, with students.

Dorothy Roberts fixing the truck.

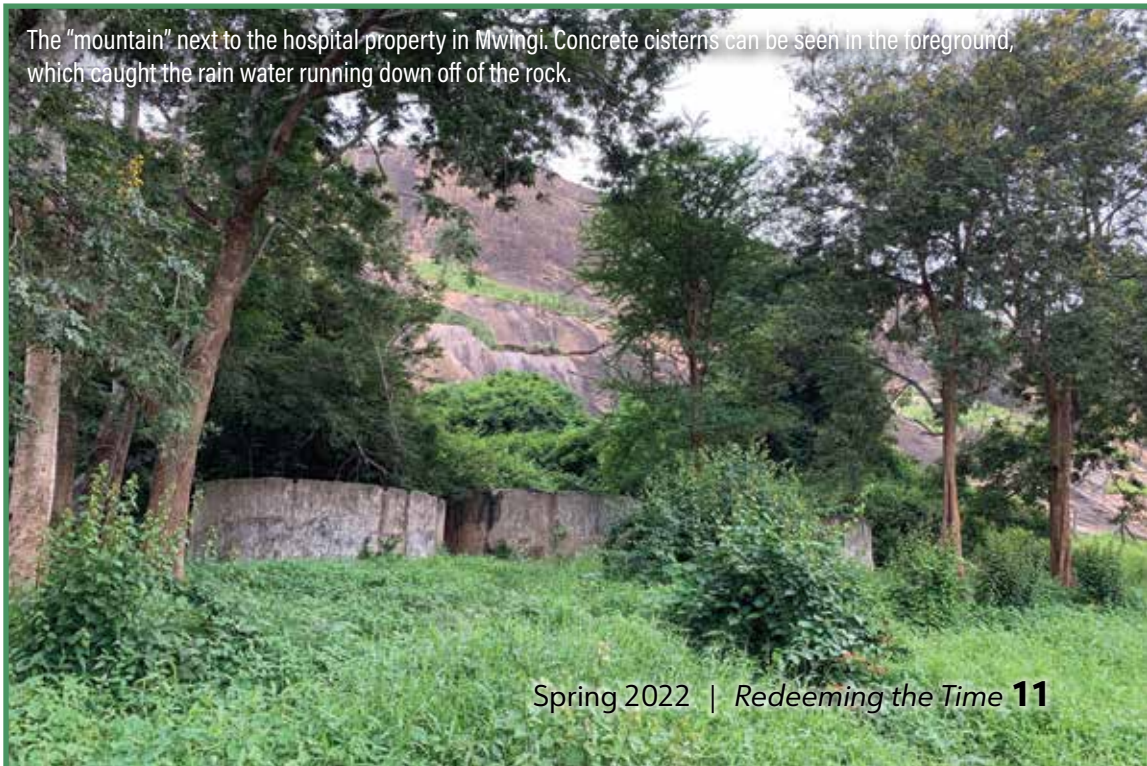


Lord, "Give Me This Mountain"



Marian W. McNeil

The "mountain" next to the hospital property in Mwingi. Concrete cisterns can be seen in the foreground, which caught the rain water running down off of the rock.



GRAND OPENINGS

Continued from page 1

word “opening” is not used of this early morning visit, but 1 Chronicles 9:27 does speak of “the opening thereof every morning” in reference to the duties of the Levites.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a real date and time event that occurred at a specific location — Jerusalem. By Samuel Andrews’ computation, the morning is April 9, A.D. 30.¹ The day in view is the Sunday following the Friday when Jesus was crucified. However, opinions vary as to the exact time of these early morning hours.

J. Gresham Machen’s words help us appreciate the larger picture for these women: “Up to the age of about thirty years, He [Jesus] lived an obscure life in the midst of an humble family. Then He began a remarkable course of ethical and religious teaching, accompanied by a ministry of healing. At first He was very popular. Great crowds followed Him gladly, and the intellectual men of His people were interested in what He had to say. But His teaching presented revolutionary features, and He did not satisfy the political expectations of the populace. And so, before long, after some three years, He fell a victim to the jealousy of the leaders of His people and the cowardice of the Roman governor. He died the death of the criminals of those days, on the cross. At His death, the disciples whom He had gathered about Him were utterly discouraged. In Him had centered all their loftiest hopes. And now that He was taken from them by a shameful death, their hopes were shattered.”²

The world to which the women awoke that morning was, so they thought, without its “bright and morning star.” They, as well as the disciples, were dejected and utterly discouraged, and their hopes were shattered.

Thankfully, the women were not ready to throw off everything to do with Jesus. We are moved to see them

going about in their grief to minister to Him in His death, as they had in His life.

Concerning the woman who anointed His feet, Jesus had said, “Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her”

Why was the tomb opened? Not to let Jesus exit, but to let the witnesses in to see that Jesus was not there. Jesus did not need anyone to “unlock” the tomb. Later that same day, when the disciples were behind locked doors, He appeared in their midst (John 20:19,26).

(Mark 14:9). So it would be with these women who came to anoint His body for burial.

Because of what took place on that first day of the week, every Sunday came to be known as the “Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10), and it has been observed as such in all subsequent ages.

2. The Opening of a Tomb:

Occasionally we hear of a disinterment, the opening of a grave. In all four gospel accounts we learn of the opening of the tomb in which Jesus had been buried, but there is no removal of a body.

Before we deal with the open tomb, we reckon with its closing. Luke does not record that specific detail, but his fellow evangelist Matthew does. After Jesus’ burial, the chief priests and Pharisees entreated Pilate: “Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure [secure] until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.” Pilate replied, “Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can” (Matthew 27:64,65). They

did as directed. A “No Trespassing!,” “No Tampering!” seal was affixed to the stone.

Let the enemies of Christ do their best. God was going to make “the devices of the people of none effect” (Psalm 33:10). “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh” (Psalm 2:4).

On the third day, the women, with fright and tears as they came to the tomb, found the stone rolled away. The empty tomb is the centerpiece of all the gospels’ resurrection accounts.

Matthew writes of the angel’s words, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6). Mark 16:6 and Luke 24:6 speak to the same effect. John records, “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (John 20:1). The tomb was open and it was empty.

Where was this tomb? There is no absolute certainty where the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea stood. At any rate, it was located somewhere outside Jerusalem.

In our ordinary thinking, the reality of events is tied down to where they occurred. We know where we were born, attended school, were married, and where we went to church. The open and empty tomb belongs to that category of places. Take away the “where” we were born and schooled, and “life is but a dream.” Cut away the tie of the resurrection from the place where it occurred and the reality of the event is undermined with uncertainty. Thanks be to God that He bolts down the resurrection event to a place and time where eyes at that time could bear witness to an empty tomb.

Who opened the tomb? Here we return to Matthew, who writes, “And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it” (Matthew 28:2). The resurrection was a stupendous event accompanied by another supernatural

occurrence: there was a great earthquake — not supernatural of itself, but supernatural as to its place and time.

God turned the world of the Jewish Sanhedrin and of the Roman governor upside down by sending an angel to the scene. After the angel appeared, the guard members, when they had recovered from their shaking and falling to the ground as dead men, deserted their post for the city.

Angels are described by Psalm 103:20, as those “that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearken[ing] unto the voice of his word.” That angel “came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it” (Matthew 28:2). On that stone he sat with greater state and dignity than a Caesar on his throne. The angel, as God’s seal, invalidated the one affixed to the stone at the direction of Pilate. God’s angel kept the tomb and resurrection site uncompromised and uncontaminated.

Undeterred by the quake, the women made their way to the tomb. Upon their arrival at the site, they found matters different than they had left them and than they expected to find them. They had wondered among themselves who would roll the stone away (Mark 16:3), but it was already rolled away! They might have expected guards to be present (if they knew of the arrangement), but that contingent was nowhere to be seen!

The angel does double duty: he is guard and he is guide. He is there to tell the women, “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6).

Why was the tomb opened? Not to let Jesus exit, but to let the witnesses in to see that Jesus was not there. Jesus did not need anyone to “unlock” the tomb. Later that same day, when the disciples were behind locked doors, He appeared in their midst (John 20:19,26).

Two thousand years after the open, empty tomb was first seen, it is still an inviolate witness to the event of utmost importance to us and to our salvation. Benjain B. Warfield writes, “His resur-

rection drags ours in its train.”³ The tomb that was opened to show itself empty has been called “Exhibit A” for the historicity of the resurrection.

We have the when, the where, and the why of Christ’s resurrection. This supernatural event is inextricably woven into the fabric of history. Paul testifies to the importance of that event: “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.... If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” (That would be a calamitous!) “But now is Christ risen from the dead!” (1 Corinthians 15:14,17,20).

3. The Opening of the Eyes

We suspect the third grand opening, the opening of eyes, would have been of special interest to Luke as a physician. This opening involves two people on a late afternoon seven-mile walk (perhaps three hours) from Jerusalem to Emmaus (exact location unknown).

In verse 13, Luke writes “two of them went that same day.” The word “them” associates the two travelers with the apostles and the women

“These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

Revelation 3:7

mentioned in the previous verses. Unrecognized by the two (either two men or husband and wife), Jesus fell in with them, conversed with them, and queried them. In effect, he asked them, “What are you talking about and why are you sad?” They showed surprise — was He a complete stranger in the area, not knowing what everybody was talking about, the things that had recently transpired? They told him about Jesus of Nazareth, His

reputation by word and deed, and His death by crucifixion caused by the clamor of the nation’s leadership. They added that some of their number early that very same day had gone to the tomb and seen an angel who told them that Jesus was alive. Stunning! Here the two travelers were talking to Him of whom they spoke. Scarcely can we wait for their eyes to be opened.

How did Jesus of Nazareth, physician of souls that He is, deal with these two in their despondency? Did He assure them of God’s love and better days ahead? Did He add “facts” that would give them a new perspective on recent events? Those things were true enough, but were not their need of the moment. His first words concerned the dullness of their spiritual understanding. He chided them: “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (verse 25). Proverbs reminds us, “Reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23).

We do not know of their initial response to this “liberty” of a complete stranger to reflect negatively on the poverty of their spiritual understanding.

Having found fault with their relative dullness of mind, Christ proceeded to correct their deficiency by teaching them, assuming the Chair of Old Testament prophecy: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?” — the sufferings of which they had spoken as they walked together. He pointed out the necessity of Christ’s sufferings: “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (verse 27). Jesus was not carrying scrolls of the Scripture. He knew them verbatim.

Arriving at their destination, they implored Jesus to stay the night, to which He acceded. They had heard Him teach, now they heard Him pray. From that moment, not either of them,

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GRAND OPENINGS

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but Christ, was the head of the home. He, not they, led in prayer. He broke the food. He passed it. So familiar, so memorable, were His actions and manner of speaking, that in a moment “their eyes were opened, and they knew him” (verse 31). What a happy and glorious event! Scripture had been opened. Eyes had been opened!

God “formed the eye[s]” (Psalm 94:9) — not evolution — and He ultimately employs them as He wills. He miraculously gave sight to the blind (Luke 18:42) and blinded the eyes of those who saw, such as Elymas in Acts 13:11. God has given us eyes to witness a sunrise, behold the beauty of the flower, delight in the face of a grandchild, and read the words of the Bible. We join the Psalmist in praying, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psalm 119:18).

4. The Opening of the Scriptures

Closely linked with the opening of the eyes is the fourth one, the opening of the Scriptures. After Jesus had vanished from their sight, they remarked one to the other, “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (verse 32). In opening the Scriptures, Jesus was handling only what He Himself had given men by the Holy Spirit.

We notice two texts from the epistles of Peter that bear upon the source of the Scriptures. In 1 Peter 1:11, the apostle writes that it was “the Spirit of Christ, which was in them ... when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

The “Spirit of Christ” is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who is “sent by, acts for, and reveals both the Father and the Son.”⁴ The ease and familiarity with which Jesus

commented on the Scriptures was owing to His having sent the Spirit to reside in and lead the prophets as they wrote of His own sufferings and glory. The Scriptures in the highest sense were His Scriptures. He was the author.

The second passage from Peter to which we turn is 2 Peter 1:20,21: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Warfield, with customary clarity, comments on these verses in his article on “Inspiration.” We snatch a few of his lines: “‘every prophecy of scripture’ — the exact equivalent, it will be observed ... of Paul’s ‘every scripture’ (2 Timothy 3:16).... What he says of it is that it does not come ‘of private interpretation’; that is, it is not the result of human investigation into the nature of things, the product of its writers’ own thinking. This is as much as to say it is of Divine gift.... No prophecy ever came ... by the will of man, but it was as borne by the Holy Spirit that men spoke from God.... It was spoken by men, indeed, but the men who spoke it, ‘spoke from God.’”⁵

“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”

Luke 24:32

Warfield adds that God produced the Scriptures “through an operation of the Holy Ghost on these men, which is described as ‘bearing’ them.... What is ‘borne’ is taken up by the ‘bearer’ and conveyed by the ‘bearer’s’ power, not its own, to the ‘bearers’ goal, not its own. The men who spoke from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of his choosing. The things which they spoke under this operation

of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs.”⁶

After 70 years, I still recall frames from a Moody science film showing the slow motion opening, the unfolding, of the petals of a rose blossom. As a student in seminary in the 1960s, I attended the Collingswood Bible Presbyterian Church, where I heard Dr. Carl McIntire open passages of Scripture. It was like watching the opening of the rose in the Moody film. Word by word, phrase by phrase, the Doctor would open a text unlike anyone I had ever heard before. The Lord Jesus would have been the very best “opener” ever to any audience.

5. The Opening of the Understanding

Opening the understanding is a fifth opening in Luke.

Jesus said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:44,45). In verse 32, Jesus outwardly opens the Scriptures. In verse 45, He inwardly opens the understanding. The two openings are related, but distinct actions. Both works are potent — according to the working of His mighty power. Both are incredible, such as no man can do, but God alone. Both are particular and personal, as when the heart of Lydia in Philippi was opened.

Our seminary Professor Robert Dunzweiler lectured somewhat extensively on the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith. In his meticulous way, he ably and interestingly dealt with both Hebrew and Greek words for justification. I shall never forget the day when, under his instruction, what the Bible says about justification by faith alone broke upon my understanding like the morning sun soaring up over the horizon. It was a blessing

never to be forgotten. My understanding was opened. On the basis of that experience, I can relate in some measure to the experience of the disciples.

The opening of the understanding, which the disciples experienced, is an ongoing opening that Christ performs by the inward, gracious operations of the Holy Spirit as the Word is read and preached. The prayer of Paul for the Ephesians testifies to this when he writes in Ephesians 1:18, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”

6. The Opening of Heaven

The final opening is the opening of heaven at the ascension of Christ. Though the word “opening” is not employed, the idea seems present. “And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50,51).

W.H. Griffith Thomas remarks that the ascension “is the consummation of His redemptive work.” He notes that Ephesians has a special emphasis on the Ascension: “In [Ephesians] 1:20 God’s work wrought in Christ is shown to have gone much farther than the Resurrection, and to have ‘made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places,’ thereby constituting Him the supreme authority over all things, and especially Head of the church (1:20-23). This idea concerning Christ is followed in 2:6 by the association of believers with Christ ‘in the heavenly places,’ and the teaching finds its completest expression in 4:8-11, where the Ascension is connected with the gift of the heavenly Christ as the crowning feature of his work.”⁷

Charles Hodge wrote about the ascension in his *Systematic Theology*: “It was expedient, our Lord said, that He should go away; ‘for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send

him unto you’ (John 16:7). It was necessary that redemption should not only be acquired but applied. Men if left to themselves would have remained in their sins, and Christ had died in vain. The great blessing which the prophets predicted as characteristic of the Messianic period, was the effusion of the Holy Spirit. To secure

Jesus said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”

Luke 24:44,45

that blessing for the Church his ascension was necessary. He was exalted to give repentance and the remission of sins; to gather his people from all nations and during all ages until the work was accomplished. His throne in the heavens was the proper place whence the work of saving men, through the merits of his death was to be carried on.

“Again our Lord told his sorrowing disciples, ‘I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also’ (John 14:2,3). His ascension, therefore, was necessary for the completion of His work.”⁸

The week opened with the women going to the empty tomb, while the prior week had closed with Jerusalem thinking it was done with Jesus once and for all — having consigned Him to “everlasting infamy.”⁹ The tomb was opened, though Pilate and the Jewish leaders thought it was shut for all of time. Eyes were opened, yet Paul quoted Isaiah, “For the heart of this people is waxed gross ... and their eyes have

they closed” (Acts 28:27). The Scriptures were opened to the believing, but they were twisted and effectively closed to and by others. While minds were opened, yet “the god of this world ... hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Heaven opened, but, still on earth, men wickedly, foolishly, and to their own infinite hurt do their best to shut the doors against the gospel, the only hope of heaven — even to this day.

However, for all that men do to counter the Grand Openings of the Triune God, Revelation 3:7 remains in force: “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

¹Samuel J. Andrews, *Life of Our Lord Upon the Earth* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891), p. 589.

²J. Gresham Machen, “The Resurrection of Christ,” in *What is Christianity?*, edited by Ned Bernard Stonehouse (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1951), p. 88.

³Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1950), p. 545.

⁴A.A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1961), p. 60.

⁵Benjamin B. Warfield, “Inspiration,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. III, general editor James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915) p. 1474.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 1475.

⁷W.H. Griffith Thomas, “Ascension,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. I, pp. 263-264.

⁸Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 635.

⁹J.A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1956), p. 68.



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GOOD NEWS ...

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to Kenya through thousands of missionaries over the last several centuries, and although missionary labor is still greatly needed, we rejoice that the Lord has raised up many faithful national leaders to lead the work of God in this country. A number of denominations exist which have not bowed the knee to Baal, in the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Anglican traditions, among others.

A major focus has been the education of young people in the things of God's Word, so that they can become "approved workmen," who are able to "rightly divide the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). I was able to teach and preach at Bible colleges and institutes in Isovyia, Nairobi, Kyeleni, Bomet, Kisumu and Eldoret. Young men and women, with a love for the Lord and zeal to spread the Gospel of Christ, are studying diligently in these and other institutions. Students in all of these schools excitedly told me of going out on gospel teams on the weekends, giving the gospel in secular and public schools, teaching in churches, and so forth. They were not doing this just out of duty or requirement, but displayed a genuine desire from the heart to do that which is pleasing to God.

Sadly, many Bible-believing churches and schools in the missionary-sending countries of Europe and North America are shrinking in size, with many church buildings being sold to secular businesses, or being torn down. In contrast, it is a great joy to see new churches springing up across Kenya. Whereas many Christians in the West sense a spiritual deadness or coldness pervading their countries in recent decades, with many fewer young people giving their lives to serve the Lord, I believe the days ahead will undoubtedly see many missionaries going forth from countries in Africa, South America, Asia, and so forth. Indeed our



Independent Board is thankful to God for the faithful missionaries who are serving under our banner from other continents besides North America, and doing a marvelous work to the glory of God!

It also is a joy to see Bible-believing churches in Kenya making their own plans to send missionaries to other countries, even those where Christians are suffering persecution at the hands of Muslims.

Please be in prayer for the work of the Gospel in Kenya! •

RENDILLE OUTREACH

It was a joy to spend time with Independent Board missionary Judith Collins and Mr. Peter Lkayo. Together they operate the Rendille Outreach ministry in the Kaisut Desert of northern Kenya, to a previously unreached tribe. The Baalah Primary School has provided a Christian education to hundreds over the past few decades. Also, the Baalah Bible Presbyterian Church was established for those who have come to know the Lord through this ministry.



My wife, Sheila, and I traveled there in 2009. It is quite rewarding to see those who were in the school then now going on to Bible college, university and so forth! As technology has become more available there, some even communicate with us via WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. •