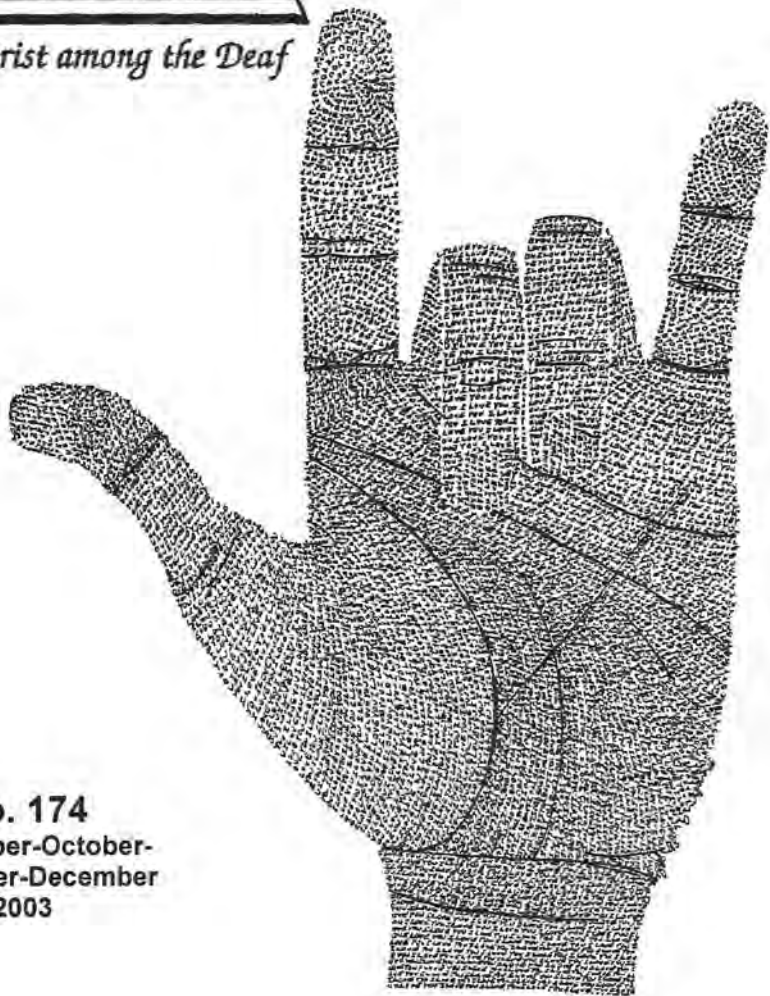




*Exalting Christ among the Deaf*



**No. 174**  
September-October-  
November-December  
2003



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Billy Leavell,  
Editor

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Page 2

We have been irregular with this periodical but still hope to return to a regular schedule in 2004.

Our front cover is unusual in that it features a drawing of an "ILY" hand. (For our readers who do not know what "ILY" means, it means "I love you", the first letters of each word being formed on just one hand.) The "shading" is composed entirely of the words "I love you" repeated again and again. This drawing was done by Marilyn Skingsley. Marilyn's son, Patrick, of Holmes Road Church of Christ in Memphis, presented us with his mother's artwork. Unfortunately Marilyn Skingsley died in 1997. But we thank Patrick Skingsley that we can present you with his mother's artwork. It reminds us God tells us everywhere... "I love you!"



Zalvin Coveyou is also back with his comic strip *Party*. He has an interesting idea in our Lord giving a party. But this is not really much different from the *feast* of which our Lord spoke in His parable. In fact I remember the first church I visited in Ghana, Africa: the ceiling was decorated with triangle flags hanging from wires above the assembly. When I saw this, I realized then they were trying to give the spirit of *celebration*. After all, our Lord is risen from the dead, and He is in heaven preparing for us a home for eternity! So our worship services should be a time of joy and praise to the Lord who saves us from sin and death!

Our *Questions and Answers* column this issue has been expanded into a full-length article. We hope that it will be of help to you.

We believe that you will enjoy the rest of the periodical with articles by Hal Suddreth, Cindy Heidecker, and Mike Atteberry. And as a bonus we have a report on our trip to Ghana.

May God bless you as you read!



by Zalvin Coveyou



LUKE 14:17



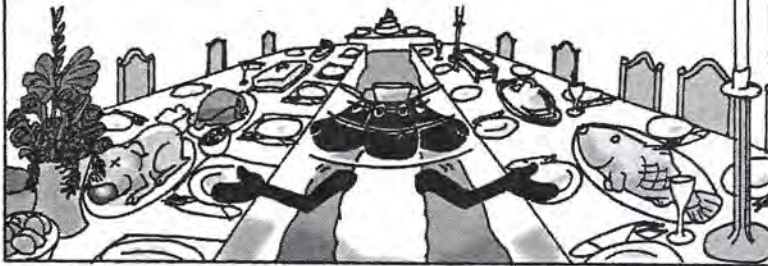
BUT THEY ALL ALIKE  
BEGAN TO  
MAKE  
EXCUSES!

LUKE 14:18





THE SERVANT CAME BACK AND REPORTED THIS TO HIS MASTER.



THEN THE OWNER OF THE HOUSE BECAME ANGRY AND ORDERED HIS SERVANT--



GO OUT QUICKLY INTO THE STREETS AND THE ALLEYS OF THE TOWN AND BRING IN--

THE POOR--



THE CRIPPLED--



THE BLIND--



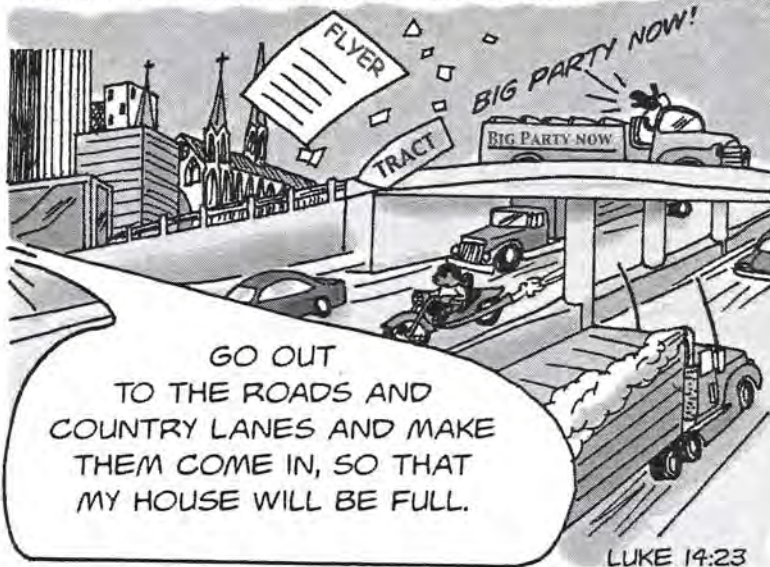
AND THE LAME.

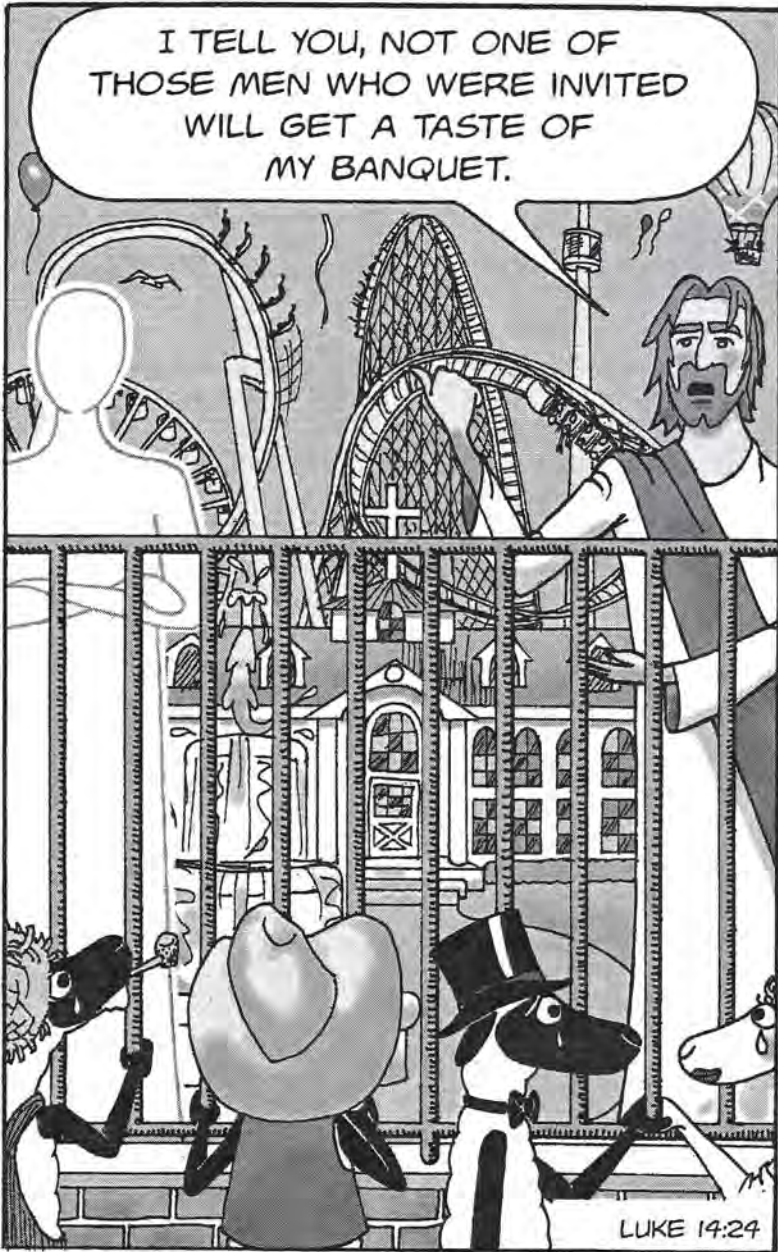


LUKE 14:21



THEN THE MASTER TOLD HIS SERVANT--







# Mission to Ghana, Africa

by Billy Leavell



I have made several trips to Africa before, but only to Kenya and Uganda. This year I made two trips to both these countries, but also went to Ghana.

In the trip to Kenya and Uganda, a small team went from the U.S.A. Dr. Jerry Drennan and Steve Greek and myself were on this team. We helped in a seminar for the deaf. Six baptisms resulted from this seminar. Charles Otieno is a deaf Kenyan who is very enthusiastic about spreading God's gospel among his people.

Lee Dial is a hearing preacher from California who has gone to Ghana many times. In fact this was his 19th trip. It was my first trip, but Lee and I teamed up very well. In Ghana we

Continued on page 22

# WAR

by Cindy Heidecker

War is a word none of us like to hear. It brings tears to our eyes, fear to our hearts and our minds quickly go to God in prayer. Yes, it's sad that this war has taken place.

However like the story of the virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), five were ready and five were not. We can each be very thankful that **America, our soldiers, our President and all who are involved are ready and very prepared.**

Let's each say a special prayer for the safety of our **nation** for the wisdom of our **President** and for the courage of each and every **American soldier.**

It's wonderful to be an **American** and even greater to be a **Christian**. We are warned in the Bible to be ready at all times and prepared for whatever happens. Today my prayer is that each of you readers are ready, strong and faithful. If not then turn to Jesus now. Ask forgiveness. If any of you readers have not been baptized then call your local Church of Christ and get someone to help you. I am here to talk with anyone that has questions and needs someone to talk to. All of your emails are a joy to me.

**Be strong, stay safe, be wise.**

A favorite verse of mine is Proverbs 3:7, EVD: *"Don't depend on your own wisdom, but respect the Lord and stay away from evil."*

NKJV: *"Do not be wise in your own eyes: Fear the Lord and depart from evil."*

**Hugs to you all.**

# I love the Church, but...

by Hal Suddreth



*"To live with saints above will be eternal glory. But to live with saints below, now that's another story!"*

*"I love the church, it's my brothers and sisters I can't stand!"*

Maybe you've felt like that before. Sometimes we Christians can get on one other's nerves. When that happens, we get in trouble. We react, over react, and say or write things we later regret.

So how do we handle ourselves when we get upset with brothers and sisters? Check James 1:19. I am going to break it down into three points.

- 1. Be quick to listen.** No matter how much we disagree with our brothers, we should be courteous enough to listen to what they have to say. Listening may help us to better understand their reasonings.
- 2. Be slow to speak.** We should practice patient restraint from harsh verbal attacks on those with whom we disagree. Sometimes we speak before we think, and pass judgment (John 7:24)
- 3. Slow to anger.** Many brotherhood problems could be avoided if we follow James' advice about being slow to anger. When we are mad, we are not thinking clearly or act with love. Man's anger does not bring righteousness out of his mouth (James 1:20).

*Love the Brotherhood!*

# Was the Kingdom Old

In the beginning God (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) made a plan before the creation of the world and man. This plan, also referred to as the "*mystery*", was the best kept secret throughout Old Testament times. The secret truth about God's plan was hidden from His people the Israelites (Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 1:9; 3:5,9-11). Even the angels in Heaven wanted very much to know the secret plan of God, but it was also hidden from them (see 1 Peter 1:10-12).

But God did reveal a small piece of the puzzle of the secret plan to the prophet Daniel about the coming kingdom. Daniel lived about 500 years before the birth of Christ. While he served under the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, the king had a nightmarish dream about a giant statue, causing him great distress. This king called his wise men together to explain or interpret the meaning of the dream. These wise men could not interpret the king's dream so he gave an order to have them killed.

God revealed the meaning of the king's dream to Daniel. Daniel went to Nebuchadnezzar and explained the meaning of his dream about the giant statue. Daniel explained that the head

# foretold in the Testament?

By Mike Atteberry

of gold represented the Babylonian kingdom, and three other kingdoms would come after this kingdom (Daniel 2:36-43). *But during the days of the fourth kingdom*, God would set up another kingdom that would continue forever. This kingdom would never be destroyed and would crush all the other kingdoms of the world (Daniel 2:44).

It was God's plan through Christ to establish His kingdom during the days of the Roman Empire. Notice what Paul says in Ephesians 1:9-10, God finished His secret plan at the right time when He put it all together through Christ and made Him head of all things. This brought glory and praise because everything worked out as He had planned (Ephesians 1:11-12). It was also God's plan that His kingdom would begin in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3, 9:6-7; Micah 4:6-8).

As you can see, all the things God planned were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles spoke to the Jews about the Christ who came to establish His kingdom (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47).

# What about the 144,



## QUESTION

What about the 144,000 in heaven? Will only 144,000 go to heaven and the rest stay on earth?

## ANSWER

First, we read what Jesus said in John 14:1-3:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may where I am” (NIV).

# 000 in Heaven?

by Billy Leavell



Notice Jesus said there were **many rooms** in His Father's house. This means there is plenty of room for much more than just 144,000 people!

But let's study the passages that talk about the 144,000 people. These are found in only three passages in the Bible, all of them in the book of *Revelation*—7:4, 14:1 and 3.

## Symbols

Before we proceed, we need to explain that the book of *Revelation* is a book full of **symbols**. We will understand better if we look at the editorial cartoons that appear in today's newspapers. When we see a cartoon of an elephant fighting a donkey, we un-

derstand it means the Republicans and Democrats are racing for election in the U.S.A.

Another cartoon shows a man grinning with his arm around a pretty woman on a sofa. The man is labeled "John Q. Public", representing all people. The pretty woman is labeled "Spring". In the window behind them is an old angry woman. She is labeled "Winter". This cartoon is clear, it means that people thought the cold of Winter was gone for good, and from now on it would be beautiful Spring! But then Winter conditions came back, and it was cold like before!



Most of us understand the meaning of the cartoons in the editorial page of the newspapers. We understand these cartoons represent something that is happening. We will understand the book of *Revelation* if we think of it as using **cartoon language**. If Jesus were a cartoonist, He would draw King Herod like a fox (Luke 13:31-32).



cartoonist, He would draw King Herod like a fox (Luke 13:31-32).

### Example of a "cartoon" in *Revelation*

Here is an example of a "cartoon" in the book of *Revelation*: "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head" (Revelation 12:1). Can a woman really be clothed with



the sun? Can a woman be large enough so that the moon is like a small ball under her feet? No, we understand the woman represents *God's people*. She looks bright because people follow Jesus. See Matthew 5:14, John 8:14, and Ephesians 5:8.

Now the picture changes in this same chapter (Revelation 12). We see the same woman lying on her back. Her stomach is large with her unborn baby. It is obvious she is entering labor and is ready to give birth to her baby. See verse 2. Then we look up, and wow! A giant red dragon with seven heads stands over the woman. Its mouths are slobbering, ready to gobble up the baby when it is born. See verse 4. But when the baby is finally born, it is caught up to heaven, verse 5. So the child is safe.



Who is this child? Obviously **Jesus**. But who is this woman? Mary? No! The woman represents **Israel**, God's people. Remember Jesus was born from the Jewish nation. The picture changes when the dragon chases the woman into the wilderness. She still represents God's people, but this time she

represents **the persecuted church**.

### **The Passages showing the 144,000**

You get the picture now. Now let's look at the passages about the 144,000. As we have said before, there are only three passages that mention the 144,000—7:4, 14:1 and 3.

Let's first look at the passage from Revelation 7:

Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel" (verses 2-4).

Hold it, hold it!

144,000 from all over the world? No! Look again. *From all the tribes of Israel.*

That means no Americans, no Chinese, no Russians, no British, no Africans—only people from Israel. Does this passage mean *only Israelites can go to heaven?*

Hold again! Remember that the book of *Revelation* uses "**cartoon language**"! The Israelites in this passage from Revelation 7 are a "**cartoon image**" like many passages are in other parts of the book of *Revelation*. Go back to Revelation 7:2-4) again and re-read it slowly and carefully. You will be surprised at what *people have put into this passage!* We must find only what **God** puts into this passage.

### **What does Revelation 7:2-4 really say?**

Does the book of *Revelation* say these 144,000 Israelites were in heaven? No! It only says the angels are told not to **harm the land, sea or the trees UNTIL they put a SEAL on the foreheads of God's servants**. Read the passage again and see for yourself!

Now another question: **Why this seal?** The answer is simple: **To show who are God's people**. But this passage says that 144,000 **Israelites** were sealed. No Americans, no Russians, no Africans, etc.! So we ask this question: **Will only Israelites be saved?**

No, remember this passage is using **cartoon language**. You want **"real"** language? Look at these other Bible passages:

**2 Corinthians 1:21-22:** Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, **set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit**, guaranteeing what to come.

**Ephesians 1:13-14:** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, **you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

**Ephesians 4:30:** And do not grieve **the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption**.

Notice clearly that the Holy Spirit **seals** ("stamps") Christians to show they belong to God. No matter if we are white or black or

deaf or hearing or Americans or Russians, etc.; if we believe in Jesus and obey Him and are baptized into Him, we will have the **seal of the Holy Spirit**. The Holy Spirit shows we belong to God. Peter told the Jews on Pentecost Day that they must repent and be baptized. Then they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Also check with Romans 7:9. If we let the Holy Spirit lead us through our lives, then we are true sons of God (Romans 7:14).

So the Revelation 7 passage says nothing about heaven, it just identifies who God's people are!

### **What does Revelation 14:1-5 say?**

There are more problems if we insist the 144,000 are a group that go to heaven. Turning to Revelation 14:1-5, we find they are **men who never defiled themselves with a woman**. See verse 4. That would leave out all married men! And it also would leave out women because the 144,000 are all men! Imagine, 144,000 men who never married, only they can go to heaven. But the other saved people stay on earth! Is this a correct interpretation of the *Revelation* passage? We think not!

The truth is that the book of *Revelation* never once says that a group of 144,000 will go to heaven. It only says they will be **identified** as belonging to Christ! The number 144,000 is a **cartoon phrase**. It represents **all** people who are saved by Christ.

### **Back to Revelation 7:5-8**

When we read Revelation 7:5-8, we find that **exactly** 12,000 are sealed from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Would this happen naturally? Of course not! This number is a **cartoon**. When we multiply 12 by 1,000, we get 12,000. And 12,000 multiplied by 12 is 144,000.

The number 12 is often used to mean **God's people**. Remember the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles of Christ. The number 1,000, like the number 7, is used to mean a **large number** or a **complete number**.

So we conclude that the 144,000 people from the twelve tribes of Israel represent **all** God's people, both Jew and non-Jew. In the book of *Revelation* the 144,000 Israelites represent **all people saved by Christ**. After you have read Revelation 7:2-8, you will come to the remarkable verses 9-10:

"After this I looked and there before me was a **great multitude that no one could count**, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

It is clear that the picture changes here to show John seeing many, many people from all races, nations, languages, etc., wearing white clothes and waving palm branches before the Throne and praising God!

The 144,000 Israelites are symbols of the church saved by Christ!

**A REMINDER:** Remember that it costs us when you move and don't tell us your new address. So please do let us know, and save us a bit money. Thank you!

also had a seminar, but had no baptisms. This is because all who attended were Christians. Half were deaf and half were hearing. At this seminar I got to meet Edward Baine, a deaf evangelist of Ghana. We show you several pictures from our trips.



*These beautiful Acacia trees in Kenya are very typical of Africa.*

*Goats run free in the streets of Kenya.*



*Joy comes as our Kenyan brothers and sisters open a box of EVD Bibles from the U.S.A.!*

*A lady awaits her turn for baptism in one of the brooks of Kenya.*



*Billy Leavell, Jerry Drennan, and Steve Greek pose with Kenyan preacher and interpreter Simeon and his wife in their home.*



*Kenyan deaf preacher Charles Otieno stands by the church sign in Kampala, Uganda.*



*Participants chat happily away in sign language during a break at the seminar in Ghana.*



*A solemn moment as Ghana deaf observe the Lord's Supper.*



*Billy Leavell poses with deaf evangelist Edward Baine of Ghana.*



*Fred Asare, hearing evangelist, addresses the seminar in Ghana.*

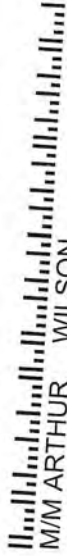
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