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But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.” Luke 2:10-14 NIV

The Pastor's Place

by Pete Maldonado, Pastor, Hampden Heights SDA Church

Take Heed

This phrase is repeated and comes up often in the Bible. It can easily be overlooked but we should “take heed” when we come across it. This word is translated from the Greek language, which it simply means we should give our undivided attention to what we are about to read or learn.

Whenever we encounter this phrase, we find something that God considers significantly vital. For example, in Hebrews 2:1 it says:

“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.”

What the writer of Hebrews is telling us is that you and I need to give our attention to the things that we have heard “lest we drift away.” Many of us who are God's people don't realize the treasures they have in God's word. If we were to realize how vitally important are the words spoken by God we would live a much happier life. His Word is said to be the bread of life, the living water, the everlasting Gospel.

There are many things we can say about the Word of God. For me, by far the most important thing is when He warns me about what is to come. I love everything He says, especially how much He cares for each of us. His warnings are a clear indication of how much He wants us to pay attention to what He says. He does not want or care for us to be deceived. Just look at what He says in Matthew 24:4:

“And Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you.”

Here we read a clear warning; to pay attention that we should not be deceived. I'm not sure how many of you know that God is actually telling us not to be deceived by Satan himself. If you read the scripture closely, the very next verse shows that He uses “Christ” referring to Satan's deception being so close to the real thing. If you didn't read in the book of Mark 13:9 again there is a very important warning for us:

“But take ye heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils;

This is a warning that clearly tells us we should be on our guard because troubled times are coming. The Word of God is able to build us up in order that we may receive the inheritance which God has set aside for those who are sanctified according to His Word. Remember, He is the bread of life, He is the living water, He never fails us nor forsakes us.

It is my prayer that you would adhere to His warnings, maintain a steadfast path, do not divert to the left or to the right, keep His Word in your heart and on your mind at all times.

May the Lord bless you always!
Pastor Pete

P.S. Don't forget you live in my heart, you don't pay rent, I'm never kicking you out.



Youth Rally at RJA



On Saturday, November 11, over 80 young people from Reading, Allentown, Mifflintown, BMA, and surrounding areas came to an Ignite Event sponsored by the Pennsylvania Conference. The morning began with Pastor Pete Maldonado leading the group through a Sabbath School discussion. Samuel Rivas was the guest speaker for the day and shared a message of God's saving grace mixed with personal testimonies. During the afternoon, Pastor Tom Stone led participants to go out into the surrounding neighborhood. The youth knocked on doors and asked people to take a short health survey and invited them to the health fair that was occurring at RJA the next day. Afterwards, the young people shared their experience before eating supper. After supper Blue Mountain Academy presented a concert with strings and choir, before Samuel Rivas' closing message. The evening ended with some fun games and activities in the gymnasium.

RJA 5K / Health Fair / Family Fun Day

It was an exciting day on Sunday, November 12. Reading Junior Academy held its first 5K run/walk that also included a 1K run/walk on a cold brisky morning. While runners and walkers were few in number, the amount of people that came out to the health fair and family fun day was very good. Adventist Whole Health Network helped organize and sponsor the event. Additional help was provided by RJA and Blue Mountain Academy students and members of the Kenhorst SDA Church. There was a variety of tables that focused on healthy, living with games and activities for everyone, including a bounce house for kids to jump in and get some good exercise. Members of the BMA gymnastic team put on a clinic that enabled kids to learn some gymnastic skills. The day ended with a free meal sponsored by Subway.

Kindergarten Visits Nursing Home, submitted by Cindy Eisenhardt



Ms. Cindy's class was very excited to be visiting the Genesis nursing facility on Thursday November 2nd. Annette and Clarence Wilson invited us to perform songs for a group of about 25 patients, as part of their ongoing ministry. The children had a great time, and the patients loved having the Kindergarten kids there. We hope will get to visit again sometime soon. This outreach was in conjunction with our weekly prayer meetings with the Wilsons and several other members at the Kenhorst Blvd. S.D.A. church on Wednesdays at 11:00 A.M.

Smile.Amazon.com

It's holiday season once again, and many of us will be shopping online for gifts. Please consider naming RJA as the charity you sponsor when shopping at Amazon. We receive a small donation for every purchase made through Smile.Amazon.com if you choose RJA as your charity. Every little bit helps! Thank you for keeping us in mind, not just this holiday season, but whenever you shop Amazon. Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Reading Junior Academy...Educating Today and for Eternity!

Grace's Outpost by Ashley Richards

I love stargazing. At a much younger (and lonelier) point in my life, I would spend my time before bed stargazing and talking to Jesus. It made Him feel closer, seeing those stars and knowing Jesus was beyond them, talking to me and straightening out my world. I love picking out constellations, learning about astronomy, how space works.

So for that very reason, the account of the Magi has particularly caught my attention this Christmas season. What was going through their heads as they went on this epic adventure? I've read speculation that they could've come from India, from Persia, and from Babylon, so not all of them would've been under the rule of Rome. Some accounts call them kings; others wise men. Regardless, it seems like they were men of repute and honor, men used to being given praise, rather than giving it to one more worthy than they. When did they first notice the star? These days, it's so easy to miss, depending on the moon, city lights, weather, and a million other things, but how long did it take them to notice? A night? A fortnight? Half a year?

Were they elated? Puzzled? Terrified? Did they immediately know what it meant? Were they aware of the Hebrew prophecies that foretold the birth of the Savior? Did they know to connect the star to Jesus' birth?

And on their trip? Did they know each other beforehand and discover the star together? Did one discover the star and write feverish letters to the others? Or did they all discover it on their own, head off on camels with maps and lots of food and the best gift they had in their possession?

Did they suspect it was a new baby born into Herod's household at any point in their journey, or did they know they'd be heading to the poor house of a carpenter in Bethlehem? Was the visit to Herod just a diplomatic formality?

What was it like, meeting the Savior of the world in child-form? Was He sleeping? Did He wake up and grin, grab their noses with His little hand in a vice grip and coo, delighted at His discovery? Did He cuddle into their arms, or toddle toward them, extending the wooden donkey Joseph had just finished whittling for Him mere hours ago? Did Mary and Joseph cry?

What was it like, not being offered more than a blanket on a floor, maybe, for hospitality? Did they realize what a privilege they had, meeting the Savior of the world? Did they doubt the vision they received to go back another way? Were they superstitious men, believing in omens and signs?

And what about *after*? Did they ever cross paths with Jesus ever again? Did they hear about His crucifixion? Did they accept His death on their behalf? Will they go to heaven again when Jesus returns? Or is there some chance they passed away before Jesus' death on the cross and they were some of the few resurrected and already taken to heaven? Did they flock to see Jesus, maybe at His Sermon on the Mount? Did they recognize their weakness and His powerful strength?

At this point, there's little that can be done but speculate, but I can only wonder. What was it like for them? It astounds me how they got from where they were to the point where they were worshiping the Baby King, and it's such an awe-inspiring reminder. *Am I seeking Jesus like the Magi did, so many years ago?*

I can't wait to find Him. Every day. In a million new ways.

And I pray the same for you, in the new year.

Nature and Revelation Alike... A Story of God's Creation (Part 1) by Barbara Snyder

"Nature and Revelation alike testify of God's love." This is an oft used quote from Ellen White's book, "Steps to Christ" and holds profound importance for us today. God must be working with me on this principle. Looking back, I can trace events and thoughts that give personal impact to its meaning.

At least a decade ago I was watching the Westminster Dog Show. Many of the dog breeds were from Eastern Europe, new to the competition, large, with long wiry coats. They were, in my estimation, not "cute", but they were regal; tall, rough, sinewed, strong.

At these world class dog shows, when individual breeds come out with their handlers, the master of ceremonies reads a script about the breed's history. Scripts about these newer breeds often included the words "almost extinct in the 1940's." World War II exterminated many living creatures in the 1940's! Such pain. I have owned only 2 dogs in the last 20 years, having been blessed with Pomeranians with thick long coats, little bodies, curled tails, and licking tongues. They were very different, one certainly easier to train and get along with than the other, but still such unique personalities, like children (all of whom are unique).

Because I have had the privilege of being licked, sat on, snuggled up with, nuzzled, and slept with, I have received more love and loyalty than I gave. I can hardly begin to imagine the

suffering and tragedy of those war days to all of God's creation. "All of nature groans and travails in pain," Paul says. The Sabbath is a celebration of God's work, all of His work, from Day 1 to Day 6, proof that He likewise groans and travails in pain with the suffering of any of His creatures.

Remember back to September 11, 2001. I had taken the day off. Our youngest daughter, Kate, was in 7th grade at RJA. My husband and I had an appointment at 9am. We dropped Kate off, went to breakfast, and then to the appointment. As we pulled into the parking spot, I put my hand on the doorlatch to be prepared to open the door and I felt a fluttery, fearful feeling in my chest. My immediate thought was, "Why am I nervous? I shouldn't be nervous about this." When we entered the office and checked in, 3 receptionists were in the hall talking, nothing I had ever seen before, but I never gave it a second thought. Later, appointment concluded, we drove home, talking the entire time. I only noticed a comment on our car radio (which was turned very low) "...all planes were grounded." I said aloud, "I wonder why that is?" Still talking, we pulled into our garage. I immediately checked the caller ID and became alarmed. In 45 minutes we received 6 calls, 2 of which were from Maryland, from my sister's school. I thought something had happened to my parents! I went to the bedroom to check the

answering machine for messages.

Hers was the 3rd message, the 1st two were from my brother in-law, and my son-in-law. Everyone wanted to know where John, my son was. "I hope he's not there." My son had worked at the World Trade Center on the 99th floor of Tower 2. When my sister came to the phone the question was essentially the same, "Where is John? Please tell me he is not there." Then I heard my husband yell. He had turned the TV on and saw NYC on that fateful, never to be forgotten day. We saw the first tower fall together as I talked to my son-in-law and my daughter. My son-in-law said there could have been 30,000 people in that one tower. My mind refused to believe it. That same fluttery, fearful feeling was back in my chest. My body knew what was going on before my mind did. I started shaking, grabbed my Bible and went outside. "God, there is nothing I can do about this. You will have to help them." I then felt peace come over me like a blanket.

I screened 17 calls that day, all from people looking for my son John. I could not get hold of John. I got through to my parents and said "Remember, Dad, John is not there. He left there months ago." (The only way John would have been in those buildings is if he had a meeting there.) Dad said, "I know. John called us at ten minutes after nine. He's OK." John thought of his aged grandparents, and called them first.

How my whole family has been grateful to John for that consideration. The peace lasted a whole week. I did not watch TV. No panic, total gift.

Oftentimes there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, our fellow man, and fellow creatures from the realities of this sin filled world. We can only notice and hold on to the reality of our weakness and our need of a Friend and Savior. We can only run to, or better yet, stay in the secret place of the Most High (Ps.91).

Here is that scripture again: Romans 8:22, "All creation groans as in the pains of childbirth right up to this present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?" In all things God shows His mercy and His comfort. I felt it. I do not assume that I will feel it the next time a tragedy comes so close. I do not know if I would have felt it if my son was one of those 3,000 people. I do not assume that I can even be the messenger of comfort to others. But I do know, for now, that my Father reigneth and that He has promised to bring us from glory to glory within His presence.

Alleluia, God with us. And Amen.

Recipe of the Month by Elizabeth Hill

I bake pies very rarely, but Thanksgiving is one of those times. My son, Bob, requested this recipe for this month's column, as it is one of his favorites. (He said it was "pretty good".) It does have a secret ingredient that makes it different from other apple pies, and gives it a unique, subtle nuance. I will let you guess what that is.

Beth's Apple Pie

Pie Pastry

- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 3/4 teasp. salt
- 1/2 cup cold shortening
- 2 tbsp. cold butter
- 5 to 6 tbsp. ice water

Mix flour and salt on low speed of electric mixer for 15 seconds. Add shortening and butter and mix until particles are pea size. Add water one tbsp. at a time until all particles are moistened and dough begins to hold together. Divide dough into thirds using 2/3 for bottom crust and 1/3 for top crust. Roll between 2 sheets of waxed paper or parchment paper to 1/8 inch thickness. Ease into pie pan pressing against sides and bottom. Add apple pie filling and cover with top crust or lattice crust. (I like less crust, so I always use a lattice crust.)

Apple Pie Filling

- 7 cups thinly sliced, peeled, and cored apples
- 3/4 cup sugar (brown or white or a mixture of both)
- 1 teasp. cinnamon
- 1/4 teasp. freshly ground nutmeg
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 2 tbsp. frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 1/2 teasp. vanilla
- 2 tbsp. heavy cream
- butter to dot pie

Combine flour, sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg in a large bowl. Add apples, orange juice concentrate, and vanilla. Toss until apples are coated. Pour into 9-inch unbaked pie shell. Drizzle with heavy cream and dot with butter. Cover with top crust. Seal and crimp edges. If using a full top crust, cut 4 to 6 slits in top crust. Bake at 400 degrees for 45 min. to 1 hour. Serve warm or cold.

Hint: If you hate to peel and core apples, or do not have the time, they are available already prepared from Dole and frozen. I found them at Glenwood Foods in Ephrata. What a time saver!

Notable Quotes selected by Bob Kondracki

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.
~Winston Churchill~

And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.
~Jesus Christ~

Maybe Christmas, the Grinch thought, doesn't come from a store after all.
~Dr. Seuss~

What will you and I give for Christmas this year? Let us in our lives give to our Lord and Savior the gift of gratitude by living His teachings and following in His footsteps.
~Thomas S. Monson~

He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree.
~Roy L. Smith~

I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.
~Charles Dickens~

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" "God with us"
~Matthew 1:22-23~

I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice.
~Abraham Lincoln~

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.
~Jesus Christ~

God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him.
~Jim Elliot~

I said to the almond tree, 'Friend, speak to me of God,' and the almond tree blossomed.
~Nikos Kazantzakis~

God loves to help him who strives to help himself.
~Aeschylus~

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.
~Jesus Christ~

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.
~Reinhold Niebuhr~

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.
~Jesus Christ~

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The Children's Page by Asley Richards

Do you know the story of baby Jesus? I'm sure you do! It is the favorite of many children, I know. (It's such a wonderful story!) In this puzzle, you will find words relating to the story of Baby Jesus, although they more refer to the part about the Wise Men than the other parts. The words have been mixed up, though! Can you fix them?

- 1. IGAM _____
- 2. ARST _____
- 3. SATE _____
- 4. EJSSU _____
- 5. ARYM _____
- 6. SEOPJH _____
- 7. TMLHHEEB _____
- 8. GELAN _____
- 9. THIRB _____
- 10. SWHOIRP _____
- 11. ENCINRFKNES _____
- 12. RMRYH _____
- 13. DGOL _____
- 14. ABBY _____
- 15. GINK FO TEH SWJE _____

