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# TAKING THE **WHOLE WORD** TO THE **WHOLE WORLD**

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*Come to Jesus —*  
NOT BY THE CRADLE, BUT BY THE CROSS—  
AND RECEIVE THE GIFT WRAPPED  
IN SWADDLING CLOTHES ON THAT FIRST  
*Christmas day.*

J. VERNON MCGEE



THRU the BIBLE



# WHERE THE RUBBER MEETS THE ROAD



## THE FIRST PERSON TO WORSHIP JESUS: ELIZABETH'S STORY

Dr. J. Vernon McGee

*Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." –Luke 1:39-45*

Luke was the only one who recorded the real songs of Christmas, sung by Elizabeth, Mary, Zacharias, Simeon, the angel Gabriel, and the angelic host. The events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ was the time for people to break forth in song—beginning with one

older woman who understood something of the mystery of what was happening in her womb and the womb of her young relative from Galilee named Mary.

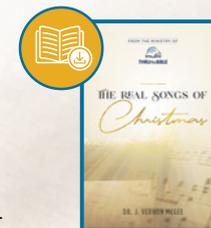
If you remember, after the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary she traveled about 100 miles from Galilee to the hill country of Judah, to the home of Zacharias and Elizabeth. Gabriel had told her about Elizabeth's miracle pregnancy (Luke 1:36). Now Mary needed a safe place where she could think. After all, a tremendous thing was happening to her. She needed human help, someone to talk to, someone who would listen to her with understanding. Who was there better to do that than Elizabeth?

Since Elizabeth was six months along by that time, John the Baptist was to be born within three months. But the interesting thing is, Zacharias couldn't speak, since he was made dumb by unbelief. So Elizabeth is the one who did the talking. And what sweet fellowship these mothers would have together, one of the loveliest meetings ever recorded.

**May I say to you, the only explanation of the Christmas story is that it's supernatural. And either you believe it or you don't believe it, which means either you believe God or you don't believe God.**

God has laid it right out there for the unbelieving world today.

I'm not trying to explain this, but when Mary arrived unannounced and entered Elizabeth and Zacharias' home and called out a greeting, the babe in her womb leaped for joy! Elizabeth, knowing what God was preparing to do, was filled with the Holy Spirit. She recognized that the baby Mary was forming beneath her heart was the human Jesus, the Savior, the Son of God. As Elizabeth called her, "The mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43).



Download "The Real Songs of Christmas" for free here.

Mary was just a tabernacle. Back in the days of the tabernacle of old, the children of Israel did not believe they were to worship it, and they did not. Later, once they had built the temple, they didn’t worship it, either. They worshiped the One who met with them in the temple. And Elizabeth did not worship Mary. She said to her, “Blessed are you *among* women,” not above women. Just because Mary brought the Savior into the world did not put her on a pedestal, but she lifted up all womanhood and all motherhood! The Christmas story is a woman’s story. A man had nothing to do with it.

Elizabeth was carrying in her womb the last prophet of the Old Testament dispensation. The last voice of the Old Testament was John the Baptist. And I tell you, what a voice he was! “Prepare the way!” he thundered.

But here at the very beginning, Elizabeth, John’s mother, worshiped the One who was to usher in the new dispensation. She sang the first song of worship, this beatitude, and it’s lovely. “Blessed is the fruit of your womb”—that is, “*Blessed is this little one who is coming into the world! And you, Mary, are His tabernacle, the mother of my Lord.*”

*Blessed is  
this little one*

WHO IS COMING INTO  
THE WORLD!

—  
AND YOU, MARY,  
ARE HIS TABERNACLE,

*the mother of  
my Lord.*

You don’t go in on Sunday to worship the church building, do you? It may be a lovely auditorium, but I hope you’re not worshipping the structure. I hope you worship the Savior who is to be proclaimed in His church. This is exactly what Elizabeth was doing.

Little is said in Scripture about Elizabeth. She sang the first song of the New Testament, and when you have a soloist like this, you shouldn’t ignore her. She was a remarkable person. She had faith when her husband Zacharias did not. He was struck dumb because of his unbelief, but Elizabeth was not. She believed God. Now as an older woman, she encouraged Mary, a young woman. Elizabeth had walked with God for many years, and she assured Mary that the things which had been revealed to her would indeed happen.

I would like to give Elizabeth a little credit. She believed God and was there for Mary when she needed godly encouragement. God uniquely placed Elizabeth in the Christmas story as the first one to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.



## MY TURN

### ELIZABETH’S EXAMPLE OFFERS US SEVERAL WONDERFUL CHALLENGES:

- 1 **As an older woman, she encouraged Mary, a younger woman.** We’ve all got younger people who desperately need perspective and encouragement from us. *Who do you know who may need encouragement to believe what God has said?*
- 2 **Elizabeth had faith when her husband did not.** What a courageous example! Perhaps your family is facing some faith challenges. *Will you be the one to believe God when others’ confidence fails? Ask God for the courage.*
- 3 **Elizabeth ... sang, cried out.** When Elizabeth realized she and Mary were playing a part in God’s great story, she didn’t keep quiet. *How can you tell others of God’s goodness to you? You are part of His story, as well.*

## ONE OF THE BEST DECISIONS OF THE YEAR ... AND WE ALMOST DIDN'T MAKE IT



Gregg Harris, THRU the BIBLE President

In January 2020, we took a bold new step, praying we were following God's lead. (See page 10 for more on following

God's lead.) **The decision on the table was how to increase our ministry efforts to the Persian-speaking people of the world, most of whom live in Iran.**

For years, we kept a close eye on our radio broadcasts to Iran. With the success of THRU the BIBLE's Arabic satellite television program, *Kol el Ketab*, we reluctantly decided to discontinue the radio broadcasts in Iran and instead invest in another version of the television program—this time in Persian (also called Farsi). Once we made the switch and the program, *Tamame Ketab* ("The Whole Book"), began airing on a variety of satellite television channels covering the globe, we saw an immediate surge in response. **Our primary goal was to bring Dr. McGee's Bible teaching to Iran in the local people's heart language—through whatever medium was best. Praise the Lord, how thrilling to think more people were now being reached with the gospel and the disciple-making Bible teaching of THRU the BIBLE!** (For more on this story, see September and November's newsletters.)

Little did we know God would do that and so much more!

In August 2021, the world's focus narrowed on the great turmoil happening in Afghanistan. **The Christian world was reminded of the persecuted church still there in harm's way. Our concerns deepened as their situation became even more precarious with the Taliban taking control of their country.** Our THRU the BIBLE leadership team began consulting with on the ground experts to answer the question: *How can we more effectively bring God's Word to those who follow Jesus Christ in Afghanistan?*

Just last week while talking it over with THRU the BIBLE's board chairman, I got insight into the answer. "God is always one step ahead of the devil," he said. I'll never forget that. And now we have a perfect illustration of how God works.

Remember the Persian television program we began last year? **Last month we learned their Facebook page had over 35,000 followers in Afghanistan!** We were broadcasting in Persian, but the two predominant languages spoken in Afghanistan are Pashto and Dari, a dialect closely related to Persian. **This means most of the 39 million people of Afghanistan can readily understand THRU the BIBLE's Persian television broadcasts!** We never thought of that, but God already knew it. It's how He was providing for His own who have precious few ways to study the Bible.

Because we followed God's ways, He did something more wonderful than we ever envisioned. **His ways are perfect, His timing is perfect.** Join us in following God's lead. In your personal and ministry plans, make it the pattern of your life to surrender your own ideas for God's plans. Ask Him to show you how—it's a prayer He loves to answer.





## THE BIG DEAL ABOUT JESUS

*"What's the big deal about your Jesus?"*

That's the interesting question a listener of THRU the BIBLE in the Fongbe language of Benin, Africa, asked her best friend. Here's the rest of her story.

*"My friend would not stop talking about your program and what she was learning. It became annoying. Finally, she told me she'd stop mentioning her newfound love for God if I would agree to listen with her for one week.*

*"I must admit that the motivation for me was social rather than spiritual, but about halfway through, the lessons started to sink in. It has been four months since we started listening to the programs on a local radio station together, and I have become addicted! The explanations of each passage, especially taking into account the Hebrew or Greek meaning*

*of the words, brings me much closer to the mind and heart of our Savior. Today, I am proud to be part of the listener family of Thru the Bible and—most importantly—a child of God."*

Praise God for good friends who care about us! Pray for people in Africa who are sharing God's Word with those around them. Let's pray for each other, too. Ask God to give each of us the confidence to share the "big deal about Jesus" with those we love today.

This is an example of the email our World Prayer Team receives every weekday. Together, we are traveling the world on our knees, interceding for one country at a time. We invite you to join us in covering the entire earth with prayer every year.

**GO TO [TTB.ORG/PRAY](https://TTB.ORG/PRAY) TO SIGN UP.**

FOR BY *grace* YOU HAVE BEEN  
*Saved through faith,*  
AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES:  
IT IS THE *gift of God.*

-EPHESIANS 2:8



Follow along on social media throughout December as together we discover Jesus as the true Heart of Advent.



/ThruTheBibleNet

WISHING YOU A

*Merry Christmas*

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR CELEBRATING THE GRACE OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE.

WITH GRATITUDE FOR YOUR MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP.

FROM THE **THRU**the**BIBLE** TEAM



THRU the BIBLE

A WORD FROM GREGG HARRIS

### Follow God's lead ...

One of the great privileges of leading the ministry of THRU the BIBLE is watching God move in the most wonderful and extraordinary ways. (See page 6 for one specific, recent story.)

We often tell you of our passionate commitment to follow God's leading, rather than our own ideas. Not only is this conviction rooted in Scripture, it's the best way to live our lives in Christ.

The prophet Isaiah affirmed,

*"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."* -Isaiah 55:8-9

Time and again, we experience the wonder of following God's ways. When we do, we see that He always has great things in store for us—better than we could ever design for ourselves.

I trust that you, too, are finding this true in your life as you walk in step with the Lord. Certainly as a valued partner in taking the whole Word to the whole world, you can watch in wonder how each month He's doing something new. And He's using our partnership to get it done.

What a privilege. And what an honor to share this mission with you.

Grateful,

Gregg Harris  
THRU the BIBLE, President

# J E S U S I N *Leviticus*

WITH DR. J. VERNON MCGEE

### OUR SCAPEGOAT

**One of the holiest days on the Jewish calendar is the Day of Atonement, called today Yom Kippur.** It's the only day of mourning and fasting God ever gave to His people. It was the day that established fasting in the Old Testament and to mourn for sin (see Leviticus 16, 23).

On this day, the great high priest acted alone. He began with two goats. From one, he sprinkled its blood on the mercy seat. Then, with bloody hands, he held the head of the live goat and confessed the sins of Israel. **The laying on of hands identifies this goat with the sins of Israel, and like is said of Jesus in Isaiah 53:6, "the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Jesus was made sin for us!**

**Then the high priest put that "scapegoat" into the arms of another priest who took it outside the city and drove it into the wilderness.** Israelites were stationed at intervals to see that the scapegoat disappeared, never to be seen or found again. And the news that the goat was gone was relayed from station to station so that it was known a few minutes later in the temple. Their sin was atoned for ... for another year.

And just as the news was passed from station to station, so the Good News that Christ has taken away our sins has been passed from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to Paul, the apostle, the early church fathers, and finally to our day to me and to you! **Christ has put away our sins in a perfect and complete manner!**

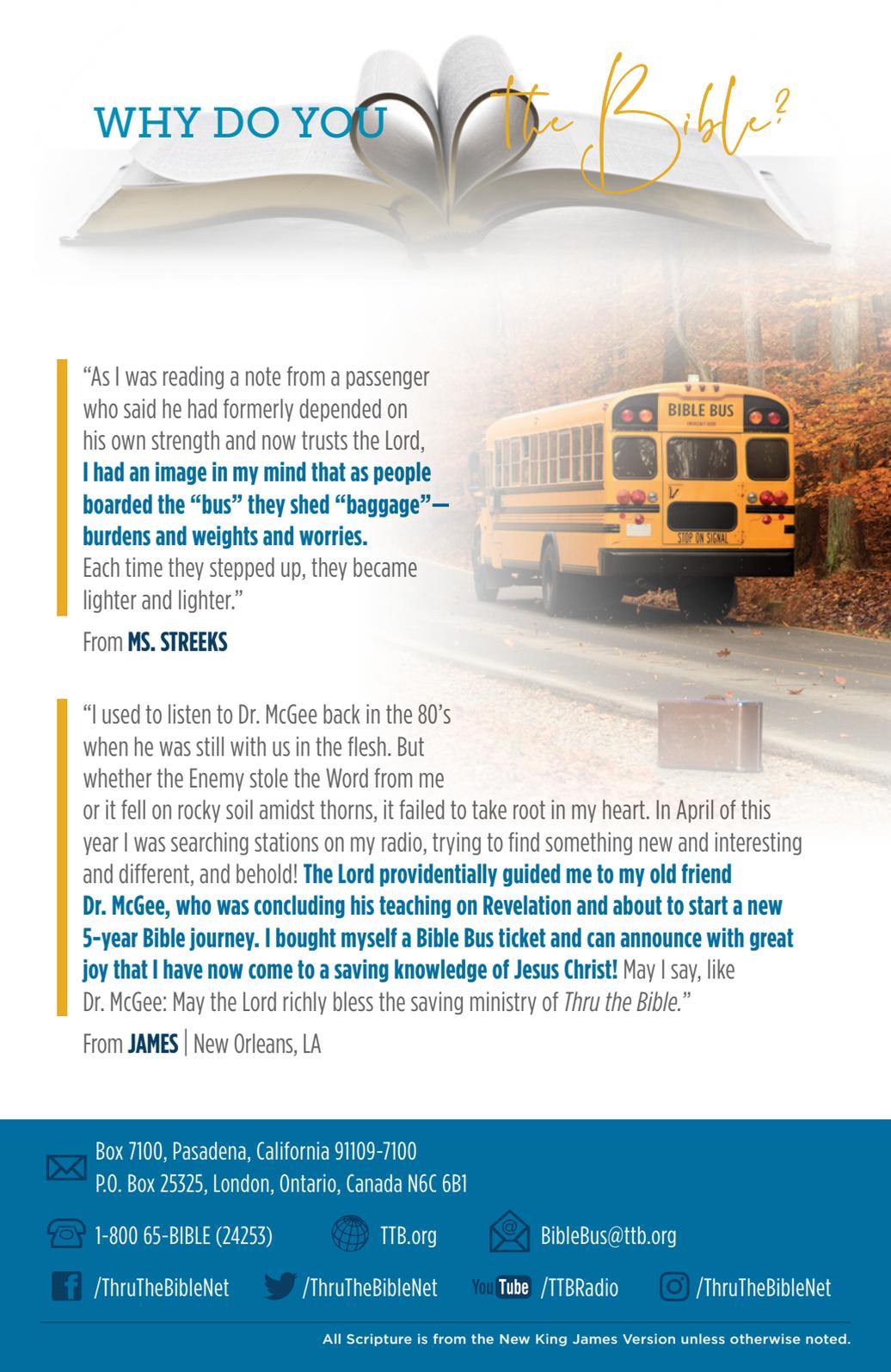
On this holy day, God was impressing on these people that they were sinners. We're all lost sinners. Our sin separates us from God, who is holy and can't look on sin. **The only way to God is through what Christ did for us on the cross. He died for our sins, and He entered into the Holy Place and offered His blood on the altar. And because of that, God has removed our sin—and not for just another year, but for eternity.**

AND THE BLOOD OF

*Jesus Christ His Son*

CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.

-1 JOHN 1:7



# WHY DO YOU

# the Bible?

“As I was reading a note from a passenger who said he had formerly depended on his own strength and now trusts the Lord, **I had an image in my mind that as people boarded the “bus” they shed “baggage”—burdens and weights and worries.**

Each time they stepped up, they became lighter and lighter.”

From **MS. STREEKS**

“I used to listen to Dr. McGee back in the 80’s when he was still with us in the flesh. But whether the Enemy stole the Word from me or it fell on rocky soil amidst thorns, it failed to take root in my heart. In April of this year I was searching stations on my radio, trying to find something new and interesting and different, and behold! **The Lord providentially guided me to my old friend Dr. McGee, who was concluding his teaching on Revelation and about to start a new 5-year Bible journey. I bought myself a Bible Bus ticket and can announce with great joy that I have now come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ!** May I say, like Dr. McGee: May the Lord richly bless the saving ministry of *Thru the Bible.*”

From **JAMES** | New Orleans, LA



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