

## The God of Your Imagination

By Ronald L. Dart

I understand why people don't like to read the Old Testament. They have an internal image of God as a kind of Grandfather in the sky—then they read the words of a prophet like Jeremiah and they come up against a God who is rather unlike the God of their imagination.

The real God has standards. The real God is personal. The real God enters into relationships with people. Some of those men and women turned out to be prophets. One of them, Jeremiah, wrote down his conversations with God. He told us what it cost him to go down to the courthouse steps and tell the people doing business there what God had told him to say. He made a lot of enemies doing that.

Jeremiah was a very young man when God began to speak to him. He may have been just a boy. Thankfully for us, he wrote down what God had to say to him so that future generations might know and better understand the God they are dealing with.

Hard times were coming. Israel had corrupted herself beyond recognition, and the hedge God had put around them in years gone by had decayed. They had a duty to maintain that hedge but they let it go to ruin. And since they lived in a world where the neighbors were dangerous, they were headed into the worst times in their history.

“Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters in this place. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth” (Jeremiah 16 :2-4).

But why? Wasn't this Jerusalem? Weren't they God's people? Didn't they live in the shade of Solomon's temple?

Well, yes, but they were also idolaters. So, let me add a new dimension to your thinking.

“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof

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### **Scripture Spotlight**

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Deuteronomy 30:15-16

# Borrowed Prayer

By Ronald L. Dart

Not all of us have the eloquence of a David, and that may be just as well. The eloquence we read in the psalms arose from the fires of great pain, terrible loss, even of betrayal by his own son. And lacking that eloquence, it is not wrong for us to borrow his.

There was a time when I thought the speaking of a memorized prayer was unworthy. I don't think that way any longer. There are times of pain and despair when we are simply unable to pray. And there are times when we read a prayer that is so eloquent that we are moved by it. We could program our computers to pray for us, but we know that would be pointless. But when we read a prayer and make the words our own, I think God hears. I know our own souls can be lifted by it.

Not a little of the music we sing is nothing more than a prayer set to music. The music is a language, a prayer all its own, and the way we sing can convey a wide range of emotions—emotions that are good for us and pleasing to God. They are a kind of internal body language. And we all know our body language is seen by God when we pray.

From time to time, the Holy Spirit blows through this world, touches a life, and produces a great piece of music that can stir our hearts. Some terrible loss takes a man to the very bottom, where the Holy Spirit touches him and produces a song like "It Is Well with My Soul."

"Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
let this blest assurance control,  
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
and hath shed his own blood for my soul.

It is well with my soul,  
it is well, it is well with my soul."

Once in a great while, the Spirit speaks through great genius as a man with singular talent is lifted to new heights, as Bach with the St. Matthew Passion. We should never, never despise such a gift. Bach wrote at the end of every manuscript of his music with his own hand, "To God alone the Glory."

I am beginning to understand in a new way what Paul wrote about prayer and the Holy Spirit: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26-27 NIV).

When we lack the words, when all we can do is groan within ourselves, the Spirit can speak on our behalf, sometimes with groans, sometimes with words we borrow from others. We need that kind of help, hence Paul's warning: "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

So don't hesitate to borrow a prayer or a song when you are feeling low. And when you want to praise God but feel inadequate to the need, borrow a psalm of David who really knew how it was done. And listen to great music. The man who wrote it is not important. But if you listen carefully, you may hear the Holy Spirit as it moves the leaves on the tree.

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## YEA Feast Books Available Now!

The 2017 YEA Feast of Tabernacles books for students and for parents/teachers are available now. The deadline to purchase these wonderful books for your Feast site or to use at home this year is September 10, 2017.

The YEA Feast books feature lessons for kids and tweens, and a seminar format for older teens. Each lesson or seminar is targeted for their specific age group. The YEA Feast books are filled with relevant life lessons you don't want your kids to miss.

CEM takes seriously the responsibility to teach children and teens about Jesus Christ, to lead them to repentance and baptism, and to prepare them as future leaders in the church.

It is with this responsibility in mind that YEA prepares each Feast lesson and seminar. You can trust that the understanding of the Holy Days and God's plan is reflected. Yet the practical aspects of living in a world that doesn't understand these ideas are also included.

Order books for your kids or Feast site now! Packed with exciting, fun approaches to learning that engage kids and teens actively and encourage them to discover God's truths for themselves. Student books are priced at \$2.95; Parent/Teacher Guides are priced at \$1.95. Call 1-888-BIBLE-44 for group pricing, more information, or see the books and lessons at [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) under the Events tab at Feast of Tabernacles—Youth.

## 2017 Feast of Tabernacles Kentucky Dam Village

By Skip Martin

It has been several years since I've heard the phrase, "best Feast ever," but the Festival surveys from the Kentucky Dam Village Feast (LBL) were full of those comments. Why? What was so different that many said, "best Feast ever"? Well, first, it was because more than three groups came together to plan and execute the Feast. Brethren from CEM, CGI, and UCG, plus several independent brethren came together to build a Feast—a family friendly Feast, a Super Feast site.

Second, the model for the Feast was the brainchild of Ron Dart. Many of us had been part of planning CEM Feasts in the past, and interwove many of those ideas into the LBL Feast. We formed a "Festival Association" (FA) as had been done at CEM Feasts. The FA, as at CEM Feasts, is a group of volunteers working together to make the Feast family friendly, educational, and edifying.

We had lots of music, informative seminars, Sabbath School, youth activities, game nights, a pie and ice cream social, inspiring sermons, Bible studies, and much more.

The 2017 LBL Feast will have more of the same, improved, and some new stuff. The FA is working hard to plan another great Feast. Again this year, the same groups will be involved, but with even more emphasis on family.

The LBL Feast site itself sits adjacent to the Kentucky Lake, providing clean, crisp air, fall colors, lots of water activities, hikes, nature watching, etc.

Our emphasis, as always, is to provide sound Biblical teachings, along with lots music. We will have music for all tastes. We will have many traditional hymns, sprinkled with some contemporary Christian music, choir performances, and special music. We have many youth activities planned, a family picnic, the famous Pie and Ice Cream Social, a fun show, and a dance for all ages. Come join us at the LBL Feast this year. Special rates are available.

For more information about this Feast site, including information about the housing options, go to: <https://lblfeastoftabernacles.wordpress.com>.

## 2017 Feast of Tabernacles CEM Western Caribbean Cruise

By Linda Benton

The 2017 Feast of Tabernacles begins on the night of October 4th and goes through October 12th.

The CEM Western Caribbean Cruise on board the Royal Caribbean International vessel *Liberty of the Seas* will leave Galveston on Sunday, October 8th and return on October 15th. The cruise will make stops in Cozumel, Grand Cayman, and Jamaica.

We are invited to spend the first part of the Feast of Tabernacles with the Intercontinental Church of God on Galveston Island.

Denise Smith is our contact for booking the cruise. Her contact information is: 409-765-7759 x 602, or [denise@travel-counselors.com](mailto:denise@travel-counselors.com). You can book a room as long as

there is space on the ship. The rates are subject to availability at the time of booking.

A conference room is reserved for us that will seat from two to 80 depending on the set up. Let me know when you are booked. I will send information about the first part of the Feast and get you a service and activity schedule for the cruise.

I am booked to go on this cruise along with some of my family and will be handling the details for CEM.

You can reach me at 1-888-BIBLE-44 (office), 936-553-4787 (cell), or [lsb@borntowin.net](mailto:lsb@borntowin.net). This should be a restful and enjoyable Feast. I look forward to hearing from you and feasting with you.



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is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Luke 21:20-27).

Does this sound like a grandfather in the sky to you? More importantly, does it sound like it is all Old Testament—finished and gone? "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come" (Isaiah 41:22).

Let me tell you about the former things so you can consider them and understand the latter end of them, and order your life accordingly.

Returning to where we were in Jeremiah: "For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor bemoan them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, even loving-kindness and mercies" (Jeremiah 16:5).

This little phrase says so much: "I have taken away my peace from this people." The peace that they had enjoyed for many years was not, no matter what they thought, of their own making.

"Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: Neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother" (Jeremiah 16:6-7).

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## Who Is Your God?

By Mardy Cobb

"I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarim with the priests; And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests" (Zephaniah 1:4-7).

***The day of the LORD is also  
the name given to a period of  
time within the last days,  
and the great tribulation.***

This prophecy was given directly to Judah in the days of Zephaniah. Yet it speaks of the day of the LORD. The day of the LORD is also the name given to a period of time within the last days, and the great tribulation. So it would appear that Zephaniah has some ongoing implications for prophecy in the future. Notice that God is not happy with those who are into astrology: "them that worship the host of heaven." Nor is he happy with those who mix their worship giving God some time and alternatives some time as well: "them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham." Nor is God pleased with those who ignore him: "them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him."

Today there is an increasing number of Christians who fall into these categories. It often seems harmless to acknowledge and give approval to other religious and spiritual ideas. It makes us feel that we are being generous to others, or fair-minded. But that is a mistake. There is one source of truth for us as Christians. It is the Word of God. We must seek our moral guidance from the Scripture, and from no other sources. We must follow Jesus Christ. We must not allow ourselves to be in one of these categories.

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They won't go through all the symbolic mourning. In our terms, wearing black, hugging one another, taking a dish of food to the house in consolation.

“Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride” (Jeremiah 16:8-9).

Jeremiah was not to go to any funerals, nor any parties. He was a sign to the people, and his presence would mislead them about God's intent.

“And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt show this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?” (Jeremiah 16:10).

Mind you, these are religious people, people who lived and trusted in the shadow of Solomon's Temple.

“Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me: Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night; where I will not show you favor” (Jeremiah 16:11-13).

They worshiped the god of their own imagination. Well, you say, these people were idolaters. They were breaking the Sabbath. They were causing their children to pass through the fire to another god. They were worshiping a pagan fertility goddess. All true. But let's return to the words of Jesus.

As Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives and spoke these words in Luke 21 they were less than 40 years away from total destruction. Every terrible thing that happened to Jerusalem when Jeremiah was alive was about to happen again. Why?

Why was it happening to these people? Were they Sabbath breakers? Hardly. They kept the Sabbath more rigorously than anyone I know. They started a half hour

early and ended a half hour late. They wouldn't carry so much as a blanket on the Sabbath. They wouldn't even let you heal a sick person on the Sabbath.

They ate nothing unclean. They washed ceremonially before eating. They fasted regularly and gave tithes of all they possessed. They were diligent in proselyting people to their cause.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).

And yet, Jesus said of them: “For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22-24).

I think that trusting in our own righteousness might just be a fool's game. The Israelites did it in the shadow of Solomon's Temple. But where is Solomon's Temple now? The Jews did it in the shadow of the second Temple. Where is the second Temple now? Are we doing it in the shadow of our own church? How would we know?

“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited” (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

It is a question of where you place your trust.

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit” (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

*Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD.*

*Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.*

How hard is this little couplet to understand? Nearly everything in life hinges on it. The Israelites and the Jews trusted in their temples and in their interpretation of the Law of God and they ended up in destruction.

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

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What this means is that you can't trust your own heart. You will lie to yourself as easily as to anyone else, and you are apt to believe your own lies. Who can you believe? "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD." You can believe what God tells you to be true.

How can you know that it is God telling you? Compare it to the Bible. If it doesn't match, it isn't God.

Now let me return to my original thought. Why is it that you don't read the Bible? Is it because you don't have time? Sure, that's it—the most important book ever placed in the hands of men and we can't find time for simple personal Bible study.

Is it because you can't understand it? Give me a break. The main reason the Bible is hard to understand is because we don't want to understand it.

Is it because it makes you uncomfortable? "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Anyone who reads the Bible seriously is going to bleed a little bit. Anyone who persists in reading the Bible is going to find out things about himself that he would just as soon not know.

And anyone who reads long enough is going to feel a cold breeze on his bare behind, because nothing can be covered up before God.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door,

and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22).

Now here is the burning question you have to deal with: Are you in touch with the God of your imagination or are you in touch with the Real, Personal God?

Do you know the God of all comfort AND discomfort? Do you know the God who said: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deuteronomy 32:39).

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:9-14).

How long has it been since you laid your Bible on the table in front of, bowed your head over it and prayed: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Order your free copy of this inspiring message, *The God of Your Imagination*, by returning the enclosed order form, emailing our office at [adm@borntowin.net](mailto:adm@borntowin.net), or calling us at 1-888-BIBLE-44.

## Born to Win

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*That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.*