

## The Testimony of Four

By Ronald L. Dart

Somewhere in the Middle East, probably near Jerusalem, an older gentleman settled himself with his writing tools and pondered how he would begin to tell his story. At one time he had been a contracted customs agent, a man well versed in the various goods transported through his jurisdiction as well as all the currencies of various peoples. Being a contractor of a foreign power made him very unpopular with his countrymen.

As life would have it, his knowledge, attention to detail, and his fluency in two major languages suited him well for the task he was about to undertake. It had been more than 30 years since the Master had called him away from his career and his wealth and had set his feet on a very different path. For the past 30 years, he and the others had been in great demand because there was only a handful of men who could tell the whole story. Many knew a part of it, but he and a select group were the only ones who could tell the whole story as eyewitnesses. And witnesses were vital. People would simply not believe the story from one man and they should not. Oh, they had told the story over and over until it was a part of them.

### Matthew Writes His Gospel

Our man's name was Levi, also known as Matthew. For the first time since it all happened, he was sitting down to write the story he had told orally so many times. Surely he didn't need any notes from which to work. We have his work in the book we call the New Testament. Scholars say his account was written no earlier than 60 AD, and the absence of any awareness of the events of 70 AD is strongly suggestive that the Temple still stood.

Why, after all these years, is he starting out to write the story? A very strong oral Gospel existed among the Christians of that age, and it would continue to be told. In an odd sort of way, Peter had

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

#### The Testimony of Four

By Ronald L. Dart ..... 1

Who Benefits from  
Your Giving?..... 1

2009 Summer Camp..... 2

CEM Statement of Cash Flows..... 2

What Our Listeners Say..... 2

In Memory..... 2

Calendar of Events..... 4

suggested the necessity in the days just after Jesus had left them. Citing the loss of Judas, he said that they had to have 12 witnesses of everything that had happened from the baptism of John to the day Jesus was taken up from them.

*continued on page 3. . .*

### Who Benefits from Your Giving? . . .

How can you give to God when He owns everything? Then when you do make your offering to God, who is the beneficiary—God or *you*? God has given you the awesome opportunity to “store up treasures in heaven” and reap eternal rewards. It takes faith, especially in hard times. But tithing is a command from God, and the obedient Christian cheerfully obeys. Christian Educational Ministries looks for every opportunity to spread the Gospel, and we can only go through the doors God opens with the resources given to us by your tithes and offerings. We are so grateful to each one of you for giving generously so everyone can benefit.

# 2009 Summer Camp

The best summer camp ever is being planned for June 21-28, 2009 for all teens who will be 13 before camp is over and have not had their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday when camp begins, regardless of their parents' or church's affiliation. Tuition remains a real bargain at only \$260. Scholarship funds are available for those who can't afford tuition. We solicit donations to this tax deductible fund.

Activities include challenging spiritual and learning experiences such as:

- Swimming, tubing, horseback riding, group initiative, arts & crafts, volleyball, and more!
- Daily Bible studies, group studies, a huddle at the close of the day with praise and worship.

You don't want to miss this camp. Reserve your spot before it's gone. Tell others and invite a friend to join you. Write Larry Watkins at PO Box 560, Whitehouse, TX 75791, or email [lsw@cemnetwork.com](mailto:lsw@cemnetwork.com) for an application and, if you can, help a deserving young person come to camp this year.

## What Our Listeners Say

"Hello, There are two reasons for this e-mail. The first is to thank you for all of the wonderful teaching you've done on your radio ministry. I listen to you quite often on the way into work at 4:30 AM in Rochester, NY. The second is a request on how I might be able to receive your study on 'Is there only one chance at salvation?' I found the show this morning on it quite interesting."

"I first thought that my navigation battery died, but when I tried to change the channel none of the buttons would work. So I parked into the parking lot and finished your program. Then I learned that this was a program of born to win. Now I am usually not a believer of unusual occurrences but having to experienced this it opened my eyes. I truly feel in my heart that the Lord is trying to tell me something. He is trying to say that I am one of those people that call them self a Christian but does not fallow the law. I now have listened to the whole program online and the others and wanted to express my thanks to your program. I do not know how God works but I do now know that he does love me for he has opened my eyes, I not even three days ago was questioning his existence. I want to thank you and tell you your program is a wonderful program may God bless you and your family. Thank you" (NS).

"When I was going through a study in the past which included the origins of this nation, you advised me to stick my nose in the book of Kings and after listening to your presentation, I can now understand why. My, what parallels to our once great nation and its swift demise with that of ancient Israel and Judah. From striving to set up a godly nation (even though the form wasn't the same) to this now heavily secular one is quite startling" (DS).

### Christian Educational Ministries

Statement of Cash Flows  
For the Three Months Ended  
January 31, 2009

Receipts:	
Contributions	\$329450
CEM Bookstore	29996
Other Income	2080
	<u>\$361526</u>
Expenses:	
A/V Supplies	\$ 8706
Occupancy	7495
Office & Adm. Expenses	5160
Mailing Expenses	3816
Postage	17780
Printing	13431
Radio Expenses	182257
Telephone & Utilities	4115
Editorial Services	1494
CEM Bookstore	6377
Employee Benefits	14923
Wages & Payroll Taxes	78605
Total Operating Expenses	<u>344159</u>
Decrease in Fund Balance	(\$17637)

### *In Memory*

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges the very generous donation made in memory of John and Pam Gendreau's mother and father, on behalf of Jobe and Joe Stengel, who so tirelessly gave of their time, emotion, and care.

Our prayers and deepest sympathies are extended to them at this time of such great loss.

*The Testimony of Four  
continued from page 1 . . .*

Up to a point, they might have thought it was unnecessary. Perhaps the Master would return in their lifetime. But if one or two of the original 12 had died by this time, the realization would have begun to dawn that, should the Master delay his coming, only a written testimony could survive the ongoing necessity of witnesses to the event. So, Matthew sat to write his story.

### **Mark Tells His Story**

Ironically, at about the same time, and for many of the same reasons, Mark was taking the same steps to tell the story as he knew it. If I were to guess, I would say Mark was likely in Rome in the mid 60s. Luke may have been there at the same time, or he may have gone on. Evidence mounts that John also wrote his Gospel in that same decade—probably for many of the same reasons—and he was somewhere in Asia Minor. One might think that the Holy Spirit had decided the time had come to record the depositions of these men, but their testimony would have been of little value if it had not been transmitted elsewhere.

So, Matthew finished his original manuscript. It appears to have been written in Greek, although one ancient source says Matthew wrote a Hebrew Gospel. If he did, it has long since been lost, but in any case, a Hebrew Gospel would not have served the purpose intended. This Gospel was not just for Hebrew speaking peoples, but for mankind. All three of the other Gospels were written

in Greek as well, for the purpose of the widest distribution possible in that world.

So, we return to Matthew to see what he might have done with the autograph of his Gospel, because the same pattern would have prevailed in the others as well. Considering the purpose of the document, one can hardly doubt that it was immediately copied, systematically or spontaneously, and sent to the known Christian communities in the ancient world. Copies of the manuscripts, or fragments of them, have been found in widely scattered places. This leads one to conclude that the manuscripts of the books of the New Testament originated in various places, were copied with greater or lesser care, and became scattered all over the known world.

While this may seem chaotic, but there was a method to it. Imagine for a moment that each had been written in Jerusalem and that the church there had maintained full control of them. Given the persecution of the church in that era, this would have been a risky approach. It would have been possible for an enemy to destroy the entire record. Moreover, it would have defeated the purpose of the witnesses in making the story known throughout the world and to all generations.

As it played out, there is no doubt about this whatsoever. No one person or any group ever had any book of the New Testament, much less all of them, under exclusive control. I cannot overstate the importance of this. To borrow a phrase from God, “the word of God is not bound.”

### **Separate Witnesses**

Another interesting thing was accomplished by the way all this came down. The witnesses, at the time of writing, were separate—much like witnesses in a trial who are not allowed to hear the testimony of other witnesses. I am aware of the scholars’ opinion that Mark’s Gospel was written first and that Luke and Matthew borrowed heavily from Mark. The result is the term synoptic—seeing with one eye—to describe the first three Gospels. One scholar postulated a source document he called Q to account for the similarities. Q, of course, is not assumed to exist in written form, but the very strong oral tradition developed by the early church could easily account for the similarities. Memorization was a cultivated skill—a skill that has all but vanished since the invention of printing—and the oral Gospel of the First Christians accounts fully for Q.

In any case, the way the documents were scattered and copied has left a fertile field for scholarship, as they try to get as close as they can to the content of the original documents. It is a real challenge, and one totally unfamiliar to most of us in these days of the computer and copy machines. Those of us who are old enough to remember writing letters by hand know how easy it is to make a mistake. And if you took many notes while doing research in the days before these great tools came along, you made many of the same mistakes the early copyists made.

I never pursued textual studies very far, but I can see how they

*continued on page 4 . . .*

*The Testimony of Four  
continued from page 3 . . .*

can capture a man completely as he tries to track a manuscript back to its source. Take a simple grammatical error for instance. Suppose that Matthew himself failed to match the subject and verb in one of his sentences; he had a singular subject with a plural verb. Chances are, you got caught out for that in some paper you wrote for your English class. I have proofreaders catching me on this even now—not so much agreement in number as in tense. I have a tendency to put myself back in the time I am writing about and then write in the present tense. My editors tell me I shouldn't do that.

Now, imagine you are copying Matthew's Gospel, and you come across a disagreement between subject and verb—a grammatical error. It is possible that you will correct it in your head and never know you did. It is also possible you might correct it on purpose as an editor might. Your copy is being made to go to Alexandria in Egypt, and off it goes with that small lapse in grammar corrected. In the cubicle next to you, another copyist is working on a manuscript destined for Ephesus. He notices the error, but makes the decision not to correct it but to be faithful to Matthew's hand. His copy, error and all, is sent off.

### **Old Manuscripts Have a Family Tree**

Now we come forward in time where a scholar examining the two manuscripts notices that they differ in the way they treat this error. He doesn't have any way of knowing for sure which version is what

Matthew wrote in his own hand. It doesn't matter much, because what Matthew was saying is unaffected by it. What does matter, though, is that the scholar is able to conclude from this and other clues that one of the manuscripts before him came from Alexandria, and the other came through Greece. Thus, the old manuscripts of the New Testament have a family tree.

And, you may be comforted to know that most of the variances in the text are merely grammatical variations. Moreover, if there is a significant variance, any good study Bible will have a marginal note on it. I could cite numerous examples of this and I do in a new presentation titled, *The Testimony of Four*, the four being Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

I would like very much to send you, *FREE* of charge, an advance CD of the program. It may be several weeks before it airs, but you don't have to wait. Just check the box on the enclosed card and send it back to us.

We know times are hard for many these days, and we want you to know that we remember you regularly in our prayers. If you can't afford to give right now, don't let that stop you from requesting the CD. Others are giving so we can do this. And our special thanks to those who help us in this way. We are all in this together, so let's support one another.

## **Calendar of Events**

### **Branson, MO - April 9-12, 2009**

Come join us for the Feast of Unleavened Bread Extravaganza at the Thousand Hills Golf Resort. Ronald L. Dart of the *Born to Win* program and George and Pam Dewey of Oasis Ministries will be speaking. Enjoy a full four-day schedule of fellowship, worship, education, inspiration, and fun. Registration is not required, but it would be helpful if you would email [positivedennis@yahoo.com](mailto:positivedennis@yahoo.com). Check out [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) for more information.

### **Family Bible Retreat, Paris Landing State Park, Buchanan, TN, May 22-25, 2009**

Come one, come all, and join us for another outstanding spiritual retreat over Memorial Day weekend. A full range of events including an inspirational sermon by Ronald L. Dart, interactive seminars on urgent and relevant subjects, exciting YEA youth classes for five age groups (3-20), and fun activities for everyone. You will also love the fellowship opportunities to bond with other Christians. You will leave with your cup running over from delving deeper into God's word and experiencing God's Spirit working in you. For reservations, call toll free: 1-800-250-8614 and mention CEM's reservation number 3669.

*Christian Educational  
Ministries*

PO Box 560  
Whitehouse, Texas 75791  
**phone:** 1.888.BIBLE.44  
**fax:** 903.839.9311  
**email:** [adm@borntowin.net](mailto:adm@borntowin.net)  
**website:** [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net)

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