



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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WAS DR. JOHN GILL A PREMILLENNIALIST?

By Wayne Camp

Was Dr. John Gill a Premillennialist? This is a question with an answer that will doubtless be disputed regardless of how one answers it. I have no desire to start a dispute with anyone over this question. But, I recently started preaching a series of sermons at Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church on the book of Revelation and, as usual, I consulted Dr. Gill. Whether I agree with him or not, I like to check with Bro. Gill on nearly any verse or passage I use in a message. I especially do this when I have even the slightest question about the meaning of a verse.

When I went to Bro. Gill on some verses which I will consider in a moment, I fully expected to find a post-millennial view presented. By post-millennial I mean the

doctrine that says that we are now living in the one thousand year reign of Christ, Satan is bound, and at the end of this reign Jesus Christ will return for a general resurrection and a general judgment and the New Heaven and the New Earth will begin.

Let me quickly say that the view of a spiritual kingdom and a spiritual reign is not foreign to my thinking. I believe Jesus reigns now. I believe he has always reigned. **1 Chronicles 16:31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved. Daniel 4:17 This matter is by the** (See Gill Continued, Page 2, Left Column)

BIBLICAL MISSIONS

By Elder Bill Lee

I Thessalonians 1:1-10



BRO. ANOND BAPTIZING NEW CONVERT AT PA KOE

Recently, while preparing a sermon based upon this passage of Scripture, I was impressed with the importance of this chapter of the Bible as it relates to mission work. I have entitled this study “Biblical Missions”, but we can equally view it as “Gospel Missions”. I am now convinced that the first chapter of this epistle is one of the greatest texts in all of the Word of God concerning this subject. And as I did read and re-read this chapter I could not help but think, “this is exactly what is happening in Thailand”. And as I did read and study this more and more I became even more excited about (See **BIBLICAL MISSIONS** Cont. P. 9, Lft. Col.)

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(Gill on Pre-millennialism Cont. from P. 1)
decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

His people reign with him spiritually. We have power over sin and over Satan. The denial of this is tantamount to denying that Jesus is Lord and that he is Sovereign. I have no time for that form of ultra-dispensationalism that says that

because the Lord will yet reign in a literal kingdom on earth for a literal thousand years he cannot be reigning now and his people cannot be reigning with him.

While I do believe he reigns as Sovereign now, I believe he will reign in a visible kingdom of a literal thousand years on this earth. I believe this earth will be returned to a state superior to what it was in Eden before the fall of Adam and the subsequent curse on the material creation. I believe in a literal fulfillment of Scripture that relates to this time. ***Revelation 20:1-7 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.***

GILL'S OWN ANSWER TO OUR QUESTION

When I started studying in the book of Revelation a few months ago thinking about preaching a series on the book, I looked through my library and found that I have several good books on the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. Of course, I have Gill's Commentary on the book.

Now I will share with you some of the things I found in that commentary.

First, however, let me remind the readers that Bro. John Gill died on October 14, 1771, still sharp of mind. I do not know when, during his ministry, that he wrote his commentary on the Apocalypse, the Revelation of Jesus Christ. I do know that when he wrote it he was apparently premillennial.

SOME INDISPUTABLE FACTS ABOUT GILL'S POSITION ON THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

At the outset I will tell you that I will show some indisputable facts from Gill's commentary on the book of Revelation.

1. I will show that Gill did not believe that the one thousand year reign of Christ had started at the time he was writing.
2. I will show that Gill believed in a spiritual reign of Christ and believers and that he also believed in a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on this earth.
3. I will show indisputably that Gill did not believe that Satan was bound and in the bottomless pit at the time he was living and writing.
4. I will show that Gill believed that Satan would be bound and in the bottomless pit for a literal thousand years.
5. I will show that Gill held that the 1,000 year reign during which Satan is bound would not begin until three principle religious powers were destroyed from the earth—pagan religions, the papacy, and the Mohammedan (Muslim) religion. This had not happened when Gill was writing his commentary on Revelation and it has not happened at the time I am writing this article.

Postulate 1: John Gill did not believe that the one thousand year reign of Christ had started at the time he was writing his commentary on Revelation.

Gill held that the saints are kings and reign now but will be even more kingly when they reign on earth with Christ a thousand years. On a discussion of Revelation 1:6 he wrote,

The saints are made "kings" by Christ; they are so now; they have received a kingdom of grace, which cannot be taken away; and they have the power of kings over sin, Satan, and the world, and all their enemies; and they live and fare like kings, and are clothed like them, in rich apparel, the righteousness of Christ; and are attended as kings, angels being their lifeguards; *and they will appear much more so hereafter, when they shall reign on earth with Christ a thousand years, shall sit upon the same throne.* (Emp. mine, RWC), (Taken from a CD of Gill's Work but found also in Vol. 9, P. 685, 1809 AD Edition reprinted in 1979 by Primitive Baptist Library, Streamwood, Illinois).

Please note the following from this quote:

1. Gill believed that the saints during the time he lived and wrote enjoyed a reign of grace and that they had received a kingdom of grace. "They have received a kingdom of grace, which cannot be taken away; and they have the power of kings over sin, Satan, and the world, and all their enemies."
2. Gill believed that there was a time that was yet future in which the saints would enjoy an even greater rule as kings. "*and they will appear much more so hereafter.*"
3. Gill held that this time in which the saints would appear much more like kings was for a time after that in which he was writing and would be when the saints rule and reign with Christ during the earthly millennium. "*when they shall reign on earth with Christ a thousand years, shall sit upon the same throne.*"

Postulate 2: Gill believed in a spiritual reign of Christ and believers; he also believed in a literal 1,000 year reign of Christ on this earth that was yet future.

This premise is clearly proven from the quote above so I should not need to repeat it. It will also be proven from other quotes that I will shortly give. It is so obviously proven from the quotes above that one would have to be blinded

by prejudice to not see it.

But let us consider another quote from Gill. Commenting on Revelation 5:10 He wrote,

"And we shall reign on the earth'; meaning not merely in a spiritual sense, through grace reigning over sin and corruption, through Satan being bruised under their feet, and through the victory they have in Christ over the world, but in the millennium state, in the thousand years' reign with Christ in the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Note the two senses in which the saints reign according to Bro. Gill.

1. Gill declares that there is a spiritual reign of the saints in the time in which he wrote. "And we shall reign on the earth'; meaning not merely in a spiritual sense, through grace reigning over sin and corruption, through Satan being bruised under their feet, and through the victory they have in Christ over the world."
2. Gill declares that there is a future reign that is more than spiritual; it is a literal reign on the earth. It is "not merely in a spiritual sense . . . but in the millennium state, in the thousand years' reign with Christ in the new earth."

The earth will be new during this reign in a similar sense as it was new after the flood. There will be a renovation by fire at the end of the millennial reign. The points that should not be missed in this statement from the pen of Bro. Gill is that he held to a spiritual reign of the saints in his time and until the second coming of Christ and a reign that is not "merely in a spiritual sense" that will come during the millennium on earth. This latter reign of the saints was a reign that was not going on at the time Gill wrote but was yet future in his thinking.

Postulate 3: Gill did not believe that Satan was bound and in the bottomless pit at the time he was living and writing.

Commenting on Revelation 20:1-2 Bro. Gill wrote:

From the spread of errors and heresies of all kinds ever since, and especially in our age; and

from the general profaneness and infidelity of the times, which, when considered, no man in his senses can ever think that Satan is bound; nor indeed will he be bound, or these thousand years begin, till after the conversion of the Jews, and the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, and the destruction of all the antichristian powers, Pagan, Papal, and Mahometan, as appears from the order of this vision, and its connection with the preceding chapter.

From this we can see that Gill felt that no man in his senses could believe that the binding of Satan set forth in Revelation 20:1-2 was in effect at the time. He had gone back and discussed the heresies that came into the world during the early years of the Lord's churches on earth. He went on to mention heresies that came along later up to his own time. With those heresies in view he wrote, "From the spread of errors and heresies of all kinds ever since, and especially in our age; and from the general profaneness and infidelity of the times, which, when considered, no man in his senses can ever think that Satan is bound."

Postulate 4: Gill believed that Satan would be bound and in the bottomless pit for a literal thousand years.

First, space will not permit me to include all that Gill said on these matters. But, it is obvious that he believed the binding of Satan was for a literal thousand years. Of this thousand years he said, "These are to be understood literally and definitely, as before, of just such an exact number and term of years."

Gill taught also that there would be a literal one thousand years between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked. "There will be such an exact term of years between the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the wicked."

Gill did not believe that the first resurrection was a resurrection from sin experienced in regeneration, as some hold. He held that it was a bodily resurrection at the second coming of Christ. Of the expression, "**this is the first resurrection,**" Gill wrote,

"This is the first resurrection, which is not to be connected with the living again of the rest of the dead at the end of the thousand years, for that will be the second and last resurrection; but with the witnesses of Jesus, and the true worshippers of God living again, in order to reign with Christ a thousand years; for this resurrection is not meant of a resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace; though the work of grace and conversion is sometimes so represented, it cannot be designed here; for such a resurrection the above witnesses and worshippers were partakers of before their sufferings, and which was antecedently necessary to their witness and worship; besides, this resurrection was future in John's time, and was what was to be done at once, and was peculiar to the commencement of the thousand years; whereas the spiritual resurrection was before his time, and has been ever since the beginning, and is successive in all ages, and not affixed to anyone period of time, though there may be more instances of it in one age than in another; nor is this ever called the first resurrection, nor can any reason be given why it should; for though one man may be converted before another, his conversion cannot be called the first resurrection, since there are many instances of this nature before, and many more after; besides, at this time, there will be none of God's people to be raised in this sense; they will be all quickened and converted before; the nation of the Jews will be born again, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; to which may be added, that if the first resurrection is to be understood in a spiritual sense, then the second resurrection of the wicked dead, at the end of the thousand years, must be understood in like manner."

Note particularly these words, "This resurrection is not meant of a resurrection from the death of sin to a life of grace; though the work of grace and conversion is sometimes so represented, it cannot be designed here."

Gill argued that the first resurrection of which John wrote in Revelation 20:5 was still in the

future at the time of John's writing. He said, therefore, that it could not refer to the work of regeneration as some argue because that has happened from the beginning of human history and had already happened to John when he wrote and to the suffering Christians before they suffered for Christ. "This resurrection was future in John's time, and was what was to be done at once, and was peculiar to the commencement of the thousand years; whereas the spiritual resurrection was before his time, and has been ever since the beginning, and is successive in all ages, and not affixed to anyone period of time."

He also wrote that this first resurrection was "was peculiar to the commencement of the thousand years." This agrees with his comments on that well-known passage in I Thessalonians. **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

On these verses Gill said,

"These will rise "first", before the wicked, which is the first resurrection, (Revelation 20:5, 6) even a thousand years before them; the righteous will rise in the morning of the resurrection, and so will have the dominion in the morning, (Psalm 49:14) even at the beginning of the thousand years, as soon as Christ will come; but the wicked will not rise till the evening of that day, or till the close of the thousand years: and this agrees with the notions of the Jews, who thought that some will rise before others."

Postulate 5: Gill held that the 1,000 year reign during which Satan was bound would not begin until three principle religious powers were destroyed from the earth—pagan religions, the papacy, and the Mohammedan (Muslim) religion.

Not only did Gill deny that Satan was bound during all those centuries of the church age to

his day and time, he did not believe that the thousand years referred to six times in Rev. 20:1-7 had begun when he was writing. In his interpretation, they were yet future.

Gill wrote, "No man in his senses can ever think that Satan is bound; nor indeed will he be bound, or these thousand years begin, till after the conversion of the Jews, and the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, and the destruction of all the antichristian powers, Pagan, Papal, and Mahometan, as appears from the order of this vision, and its connection with the preceding chapter.

This view of Gill is clearly pre-millennial. These three false religious powers are still around on August 29, 2003, as I write the closing portion of this article. According to Gill, as long as these three false religious systems are still alive and functioning though they are dead while they live, Satan is not bound and the thousand years have not begun.

Paganism is alive and well in many parts of the world. Approximately 94% of the population of Thailand is Buddhist. Every time I preach in the men's prison in Chiang Mai there is a statue of Buddha behind and to the right of me. The same is true in the women's prison.

Roman Catholicism is active but struggling to deal with a priesthood that has a large percentage of its members that are bent on molesting young boys. It is just Christianized paganism. It's admitted unscriptural practice of demanding celibacy of its priests is a failure and has resulted in this influx of sodomizing priests. This is nothing new in the Roman Catholic Church. I could show that it goes back for several centuries. But that is not the import of this article. Since Gill held that Catholicism must be destroyed before the millennium begins or Satan is bound, it would be Gill's position that we are not yet in the 1,000 year reign of Christ and his saints.

Gill also held that the continued existence of Mohammedan (Muslim) religion at the time he was writing was evidence that Satan was not bound and that the millennium had not started. Has anyone heard about this religious group lately? Are they still around? Here in our own country this group is the second fastest growing

religious group. They are only outstripped by the Mormons.

According to Gill's position, Satan is not bound today nor has the 1,000 year reign of Revelation 20:1-7 started. According to his position we are still in the pre-millennial time in prophetic history. The first resurrection at the second coming of Christ has not taken place.

CONCLUSION

Before anyone gets a notion to tell me, "Bro. Camp, it makes no difference if Gill was premillennial, it is not what Gill taught that should govern our thinking. What we believe should be governed by the Word of God."

I say a hearty "Amen." But, since some quote Gill in favor of non-premillennial positions I think it is worthwhile to notice his pre-millennial position when he was writing the commentaries on Revelation and First Thessalonians. I am convinced that he was decidedly pre-millennial at that time, if not all his ministerial life, and that I have successfully proven my five postulates.

EDITORS NOTE: Since writing this article I have continued my studies in Revelation. I found another statement by Gill that further indicates that at the time of the writing of his commentary on Revelation he held to views that were distinctly pre-millennial. Commenting on Revelation 1:9 he said concerning the saved that they are "in the kingdom of grace now, being all of them made kings and priests unto God, and in the kingdom of Christ on earth, where they will all reign with him a thousand years, and in the kingdom of glory, where they shall reign together to all eternity."

1. Gill said the saints in the kingdom of grace now.
2. The saved will be "in the kingdom of Christ on earth, where they will all reign with him a thousand years."
3. The saved will be "in the kingdom of glory, where they shall reign together to all eternity."

It would be hard to find statements by anyone that are any more decidedly premillennial than these by Bro. Gill. This just further demonstrates what I have already proven in this article—at the time of writing this commentary Gill was clearly a premillennialist.



SOVEREIGN GRACE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY 2002-2003 STUDENT BODY AND FACULTY

This picture was made near the end of the school session last year. Twenty students were present when the picture was made. We had a very good year and are looking forward to another good year this year. Of course, we are trusting God concerning that.

The students are apparently eager to get another year under way. In fact, as soon as Bro. Anond returned to Thailand in the early part of June, the brethren started asking him when Bro. Camp would be returning to start another year of school. The interest seems to be high and it appears there will be more students this year than last.

For any who may not know, due to the financial status of our students, we must provide housing for them. In fact, I sent money out of school funds a couple of months ago to build a second student house and to enlarge and repair

the house we built last year. I will try to publish pictures in the next issue of these two student houses.

We also must provide travel money for the students to return to their churches on the weekend and to school on Monday. While they are at the school, we must provide their food and we supply some rice and funds for some students so that they and their families can survive while they attend school.

An example from last term of the funds I pay out of the school fund:

| | | | |
|---------|----------------------|-------------|---------|
| 1/19/03 | Students Food | 2,400 bahts | \$57.15 |
| 1/22/03 | Students Food | 1,100 bahts | 26.20 |
| 1/24/03 | Students Travel | 2,600 bahts | 61.91 |
| 1/24/03 | Students gas-cooking | 450 bahts | 10.71 |
| 1/24/03 | Students support | 4,160 bahts | 99.05 |
| 1/24/03 | Students Food | 220 bahts | 5.24 |
| 1/24/03 | Students Blankets | 850 bahts | 20.24 |
| 1/25/03 | Students gas-cooking | 500 bahts | 10.71 |
| 1/27/03 | Students food | 3,500 bahts | 83.34 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------|
| 1/28/03 Rice-student | 1,000 bahts | \$ 23.81 |
| 1/28/03 Fan for school | 530 bahts | 12.62 |
| 1/29/03 School supplies | 593 bahts | 14.12 |
| 1/30/03 Students food | 500 bahts | 11.91 |
| 1/30/03 School supplies | 114 bahts | 2.75 |
| 1/30/03 Travel-1 student | 90 bahts | 2.14 |
| 1/31/03 Students travel | 2,850 bahts | 67.86 |
| 1/31/03 Students support | 2,720 bahts | 64.76 |

These figures do not reflect such things as 11,000 bahts spent to put electricity in the students house with a couple of florescent fixtures. They do not reflect the purchase of mattresses and the first supply of blankets or about \$200 for notebooks and \$40 for pens and pencils. I just wanted to give an idea of the day by day expenses of operating the school. Nor does it account for my living expenses or travel expenses for my wife and myself.

I spend money for paper, overhead projector transparencies, colored pens, and other necessities for presenting the material.

When we go to some of the more remote villages where we have to walk a ways to get to the villages, we sometimes take a couple of students with us to help carry our ice box, my chair, bibles and hymnbooks, and other things we may be taking to the village. When we do that, I pay for their food out of the school fund as well as mine and Bro. Anond's. Of course, we have to buy ice, my drinking water and other things for school, when we go to the villages, etc. Nearly every morning on the way to school we buy some fruit, water, and ice. In my records I have expenses such as 10 bahts for ice, 50 bahts for water, 40 bahts for tangerines, etc.

I do not want to burden the readers with these details but wanted to give you some insight into what is involved in this school work. When I first arrived last year I was keeping records in a spread sheet my wife sent me but through a dumb error on my part, I lost the account of expenses for the month of November 1, 2002 through December 8, 2002.

Realizing I was missing some items—10 bahts for ice is an example—I bought a handy-sized journal and started writing everything down when I spent the money. This year, I will continue to keep careful records of all that I spend and will be glad to open them for any supporting church or any supporting individuals. Just glancing through my journal I see and item

of 35 bahts for a student's transportation to the hospital. On another occasion we visited a five-year-old orphan boy from the children's center who had broken his arm. One of the older boys from the center had stayed the night with him and needed to go to the center to take a shower and get some clean clothes on. I gave him 70 bahts for taxi fair. Another was staying and I gave him 100 bahts for food.

I must confess that sometimes the sheer task of being sure to write down all these expenditures overwhelms me. I appreciate the trust of our supporters and assure you that I am very careful with the money you give for this work.

In my reporting on the work, I have sought to follow the example of the Apostle Paul. When he and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey there is no record of their giving any accounting of the finances the various churches had sent them. They simply reported what the Lord had done with them. ***Acts 14:26-27 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. ²⁷And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.***

Within the next two weeks I plan to send out an e-mail concerning my plans. I will be sending it to those that I have on a group mailing list that I used last year. If you do not receive one of these e-mails, and would like to be included in the list to receive reports on the work at least once each week while I am there, please contact me at Rwcamp@cris.com and I will be glad to add your e-mail address to the list.

As I prepare to go back, please keep my wife, Pilgrims Hope Baptist Church, me, Bro. Anond, and the students in your prayers. Pray for another fruitful year of school. Pray for my safety as I travel over. As I mentioned last issue, I will be going a little later than Bro. Bill Lee and his wife Janice. A doctor from Tupelo, MS, will be with them and he must go earlier than I am going. They leave on October 15 and I leave on October 27. We will work together about a week before they return. May God bless all of you as you labor for him. —Wayne Camp—

(BIBLICAL MISSIONS, Continued from Page 1)

how what I was reading in the Bible was such an accurate description of the Lord's work in Thailand. I even picked up the phone and called Bro. Wayne Camp to share this with him. It was this conversation that we had concerning "Biblical Missions" that has led to this article.



Before I relate how the mission work in Thailand is a mirror image of this passage of Scripture, let me first say a few things concerning some doctrines necessary for sound mission work. Earlier I used the phrase "Gospel Missions" and I used these words purposely. Bro. Wayne Camp and myself are thoroughly convinced that true mission work must be based upon and centered on the gospel of Jesus Christ. True mission work will either stand or fall with the gospel. Also we are convinced that the doctrines of grace are essential to true mission work. I really pity the church or the man who seeks to do mission work and does not believe in the doctrines of grace. A belief in the absolute sovereignty of God in all things is essential to Biblical missions. This is our strength and refuge in troubles, conflicts, opposition and even failures. We know our God is still on His throne. As we journey half way around the world and travel through the jungles and mountains of northern Thailand, we are convinced and assured by the Scriptures that God does have an elect people.

I would never have the heart to do this kind of mission work if I did not firmly and unshakably believe in the doctrine of unconditional election. I believe the gospel being preached in a given location is no more than an indication that God's elect are there. As Bro. Wayne and I have given ourselves unto this work in Thailand, we also find great comfort in the knowledge that "salvation is of the Lord." It is our privilege and duty to preach and to teach the Word, but we do so knowing that if any are saved, God must do

it! We do not have to resort to the gimmicks and schemes that many resort to in order to obtain "decisions" and in order to have the glowing reports that impress so many. Believing the doctrines of grace and being sent and supported by churches and individuals who believe the doctrines of grace, is one of the greatest helps and blessings we have in this mission work.

Now let's notice some things about our text. Verse 1. Three missionaries working together, "**labourers together with God**" and fellow servants of our Lord. What a blessing it is for ministers of the gospel to be able to work together in the service of the Lord. None seeking their own glory, but all seeking only the glory of their God. None seeking to have the preeminence but all knowing that preeminence belongs to Jesus Himself. Verse 2. You will notice that they are praying missionaries. Paul said, "**We give thanks....in our prayers.**"

Those involved in "Biblical Missions" not only need the prayers of others, but they themselves need to pray. I will not list here all of the things that we should pray for, but let it be sufficient to say that we ought to pray. You will also notice in verse 2 that Paul said, "**We give thanks to God always.**" Believers in grace will always do this. Believers in God's sovereign grace will be the most humble and thankful people you will find anywhere. And we know Whom to thank. We know that first and foremost we must thank God. Paul also said, "**making mention of you in our prayers.**" We need to pray for new believers, especially the new believers like those in the villages of Thailand who are trying so hard to learn the things of the Word of God among so many trials, hardships, and oppositions. I don't know the names of all of the believers in Thailand. I could not even tell you the names of all of the villages where there are now churches located in Thailand. But yet, I do make mention of them daily in my prayers. And I remember their "**work of faith, and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

Then Paul says something in verse 4 that might startle some people. Paul said, "**Knowing brethren beloved, your election of God.**" And I do not think it is so much the doctrine of

election that Paul mentions here that would surprise people. Anyone familiar with the writings of Paul would already know that he taught the doctrine of election. But notice Paul said that he knew their election of God. There are some who say that you cannot even know your own election and then there are some who say you can know your own election and even make it sure, but you certainly cannot know and be certain about anyone else's election. This statement by Paul sort of refutes that notion. Paul said **"Knowing . . . your election of God."**

From here through the remainder of the chapter, Paul gives reason after reason that he could know their election of God. It is in these reasons that are listed from verse 5 through verse 10 that I see so many similarities between the saints at Thessalonica and the saints in Thailand. Let's go over these.

First in verse 5 there is **how** the gospel came unto them. The gospel did not come unto them as a discourse only. At Thessalonica the gospel came unto them in 1. Power 2. The Holy Spirit 3. Much Assurance. In like manner the gospel has come to the Lahu, Lisu and other Hilltribe groups in northern Thailand. And there is ample and sufficient evidence that the gospel being preached in the jungle villages was not in **"word only"**, but rather it was connected by God to the dynamic power of Almighty God as it was used of the Holy Spirit of God, to first bring a conviction and guilt of sin, followed by the **"much assurance"** only salvation can give. For next the Apostle Paul said, **"ye became followers of us and of the Lord."** Those who received the gospel in this manner became followers or imitators of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, even as they became followers or imitators of the Lord.

We must remember that there is nothing wrong with people following us, as long as we are following the Lord. (See I Corinthians 11:1). We will also point out in verse 6 that these at Thessalonica received the Word, not only in much affliction, but also with joy of the Holy Spirit.

All of those who are familiar with the mission work in Thailand are aware of the many afflictions these new saints have had to endure.

Many have suffered physical abuse and beatings; others have been forced from land and homes. Their unbelieving family members and neighbors consider them as outcast or even as dead. Some have seemingly suffered the loss of all things, yet they retain the joy of the Holy Spirit, which Paul speaks of in verse 6. They remain faithful in their worship of God and study of His Word. They refuse to recompense evil for evil, but are remaining faithful to Him who has called them by His grace. Even to the extent of verse 7 of our text where Paul said, **"So that ye were examples to all that believe . . ."** What a wonderful testimony to the power and grace of God! The ones, who were **"followers"** or imitators in verse 6, have become **"examples"** in verse 7.

Again the similarity to the work in Thailand is amazing. I cannot help but think of the first churches that were organized in the villages. We often refer to these as the "older churches", even though none of them are over a few years old. But nevertheless, these older churches served as examples for the newer churches. And as the newer were eager to learn, the older churches were equally eager to help them and to teach them what they had learned thus far.

But as is always the case with God, there is much more. In verse 8 Paul said, **"For from you sounded out the word of the Lord."** There are many things Bro. Camp and I have had to teach the people in the churches in Thailand, but there is one thing that we have not had to teach them and that is to share the gospel with others. From the very start of this work until now, each time God saves people in a certain village and a church is organized, the people cannot wait to carry the good news unto others. The churches that are now there are truly Missionary Baptist Churches. All of those whom God has saved have either family members, or just people they know, living in other villages. And the first thing they want to do is to get the gospel unto them. And from one village to another the gospel truly **"sounds out."**

Paul said in verse 8, **"In every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."** Think about it. The faith of these Hilltribe villagers has not only spread from village to village, but the

knowledge of their faith has even spread to the United States and to other countries. People in other parts of the world are now aware that God is doing something special in Thailand. The faith of these people, who are serving the Lord under very trying circumstances, can certainly serve as an example to people everywhere. Members of the Lord's churches here in the United States could learn a great deal about dedication and commitment from the saints in Thailand.

Paul said, ***“your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.”*** One of the most amazing things that we have experienced in the mission work in Thailand is the rapid spread of the gospel among the villages. While, as I have mentioned, each village church is eager to carry the gospel to others, there is something else that is happening over and over again and it is truly amazing. A village in a different area, or maybe even a different mountain range, will hear that something extraordinary is going on in one of those far off villages. They will hear that someone, usually Bro. Anond, has come to a village preaching things that no one there has ever heard of before. They will hear about changed lives and they will send someone to travel through the mountains and jungle to that village to find out what is going on there. Their next response is “will he come to our village and tell us what he has told you?” Someone will get in touch with Bro. Anond and tell him about the village that wants him to come. He will go as soon as possible and preach the gospel unto them. God will begin to save individuals and the next thing you know there is a Baptist church in that village, regularly meeting and worshipping God. And it will not be long until this process will be repeated again with a different village.

Bro. Anond is constantly receiving messages from different villages, and they are always the same, “Please come and preach the gospel to us also”. And Paul said, ***“from you sounded out the word of the Lord....in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.”***

But there is even more. In verse 9 of our text Paul said, ***“ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”*** This is a perfect word picture of what is happening in Thailand. Among the Hilltribe people the common religion is “spirit worship”. Among the

Thai people the religion is Buddhism. The Buddhists have their Buddha's and temples; the spirit worshippers have their spirit houses. We must never underestimate the sincerity and dedication of either of these. The religions practiced by these people have been passed down from generation to generation. It is just accepted there that the next generation will worship the same gods as the present generation worships. It would be absurd to think that any of these people would change their religion just because we thought they should or because we asked them to change. And here is one of the reasons we can say; ***“Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.”*** It is ***because “ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”***

It is not an easy thing to convince someone that they should change gods. It would be a very difficult task, but it would not be an impossible one. Some men might possess the persuasive power and ability to convince an individual to change from one false god to another false god. But to convince someone to turn to **God** from idols is impossible with men. This requires a true work of God. And when we see people in Thailand turning to God from idols, and then continuing to serve the living and true God, I think we can know their election of God.

What a blessing it is to see so many people, who were in such spiritual darkness and bondage to their false religions and false gods, turning to God. I will again say, we cannot cause such a change in individuals as this. Jesus said in John 6:29; ***“This is the work of God that ye believe.”***

There are many occasions where Bro. Camp, Bro. Anond and I have been able to destroy “spirit houses”. This will always be upon the request of an individual whom God has saved. When an individual there has experienced the saving grace of our God, immediately, even before their baptism, they will want their “spirit house” taken out of their homes. They will always want these to be burned and to be burned publicly for all to see. What a wonderful public profession of faith this is for these people. We can preach the gospel. We can tear down and burn “spirit houses”. But only the effectual

working of the Holy Spirit can cause someone to turn to God from idols. But this is exactly what is happening in village after village in northern Thailand.

And now they, along with saints all over the world, are waiting *“for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”* God’s grace is truly amazing. People who were in such darkness, many who had never even heard that there was a God, have now been brought to God’s marvelous light and are, along with all of us, waiting for Jesus, for He has saved them from the wrath to come.

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