



LEGACY INSTITUTE

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20,000 feet over Bay of Bengal

October 1, 2002

Dear Fellow-workers in God's fields,

We are flying over the Bay of Bengal on our way back to Thailand from one of the most exciting Feasts I have had in years! So much has happened since my last letter to you over 1 month ago! I will backtrack and write you directly from my notes. God's spirit is moving powerfully across the face of Asia. Things are happening so fast it is hard to keep up!

***Wat Phrachedupon Temple (Wat Po),
Ratanakosin Island, Bangkok Sept, 2002***

We are at the largest Buddhist temple in Thailand in honor of a longtime dear friend, Abbot Phra Dhammarajuanwat (formerly known as Abbot Phra Thepsopon.) The abbot died of a heart attack only a few days ago. The King is sponsoring his funeral program and his body is lying in state in a golden urn surrounded by flower wreaths sent from each member of the royal family. For 100 days, monks from various temples throughout Thailand will come and chant Buddhist funeral mantras in his honor. Since the abbot was from a royal temple, it will be up to the King's Brahmin astrologers to decide when he will be cremated.

We have met many here who flew over from Los Angeles who knew Phra Dhammarajuanwat when he was Abbot of Wat Thai Temple in North Hollywood. All have been sobered by the death of this man who did so much for the Thai community in Los Angeles.

Gloria and I first met the Abbot in the early 1970's when we visited the LA Thai Temple with our close Thai friend and my old teacher, Sawat Yingyuad. At that time the Abbot was called "Phra Thepsopon" which is a royal title for a high-ranking monk. We got to know him quite well over the years and a very close relationship between Wat Thai and Ambassador Foundation developed. When Mr. Herbert Armstrong started traveling and visiting heads of state again after a long hiatus because of his heart attack, it was the Abbot who made the call to arrange a meeting with King Bhumibol. And it was the Abbot who arranged a visit to Ambassador College by the Thai Buddhist Supreme Patriarch which led to our first overseas student project teaching Laotian refugees in Thailand.

Over time, many may have forgotten Phra Thepsopon. But he never forgot about his old friend Herbert Armstrong and the friendship with God's people forged through the years. He especially liked Gloria's special cakes she would bake for him. Every time we visited him in his office at Wat Prachedupon, he would remind us how much he enjoyed her cakes. He would also reminisce about the "good old days" at Ambassador and how much he had admired and respected Herbert Armstrong. He remained a loyal and trusted friend.

We all will miss him very much.

***20,000 feet over Gulf of Martaban
September 17, 2002***

Gloria and I are both very excited, having spent the weekly Sabbath and Day of Atonement in Rangoon (Yangon) with Church of God brethren from various parts of Kachinland and Burma. Atonement was an historic day this year because it was observed for the first time among the Church of God 7th Day brethren in Rangoon. This small group of believers, led by Pastor David Ye Gyan, has now fully accepted the Annual Holy Days and is eager to learn more about why we observe them. Most of these brethren fasted for the first time.

Joining us in Rangoon were Evangelist Lazum Brang, who pastors the Church of God in Kachinland, the China border and Central Burma; Saw Thoo Saw and his son, Eh Klo Kwe from Central Burma; and 2 men from the Chin Hills of western Burma, Pastor Peter Zemung and Mr. Rachung of the Kalaymyo Church of God. These 2 Chin men had traveled for 4 days to reach us. A landslide caused by heavy rains had washed away the railroad tracks from Kalaymyo, so they had to walk over 40 miles on mountain trails to reach a point below the landslide where they could pick up the train again.

Saw Thoo Saw, a Karen from the Shan States of Central Burma, is 60 years old. He is a graduate of the Baptist Theological Seminary of Burma and was a Lay Pastor in his church for over 30 years. He and his entire family have now accepted the True Sabbath, Holy Days and other Church of God doctrines. Saw Thoo Saw and his son came to Rangoon to keep Atonement and be baptized.

Peter Zemung was Pastor of the *True Jesus Church* in Kalaymyo, Sakiang District of Burma. The True Jesus Church is a sabbatarian church numbering into the millions in China. After studying Church of God literature sent to him by Lazum Brang, Pastor Zemung and the majority of his congregation came to the conclusion that a number of doctrines of the True Jesus Church, including the name of the church, were unbiblical. They then tore down the old sign on their church building, put up a "*Church of God*" sign and kept Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread. Now, both Chin men were here to observe Atonement and keep the Feast of Tabernacles with other Church of God brethren in the Irrawaddy Delta region so they could learn more about the True COG doctrines.

On September 14, we had the honor of baptizing 4 persons into the Body of Christ: Saw Thoo Saw, his 21-year-old son Eh Klo Kwe, Ellen Tumar and her husband Myu Zaw.

Ellen is the sister of the COG7 pastor David Ye Gyan. Her husband Myu Zaw is a very interesting case. He is pure Burmese and comes from a very strong Buddhist family. But, like I said, the Holy Spirit is becoming very active in Asia at this time. God, in his abundant mercy, is now opening the eyes of many who were once steeped in magic and idol worship and bringing them to the True teachings of Jesus Christ. We look forward to many more baptisms in the coming months.

The Feast of Tabernacles will be observed in 3 locations in Burma this year: Rangoon, Kachinland and on the China border. Lazum Brang had wanted to have one large site, but the monsoon rains and difficulties of travel prevented this. It is probably best not to congregate as one large group because the government is stepping up its persecutions of Christian churches seen as instruments of “foreign elements.” It is now very difficult to find Burmese language Bibles. We heard a report recently that an entire truckload of smuggled Burmese language Bibles was intercepted near Rangoon and burned.

Burma is steeped deeply in demonism and black magic. The people live in a world of repressive military government, corruption and hopelessness. Pray that God will bless mightily the efforts of His true servants to continue to bring the Light of His Word to this world of darkness.

Now on to India

The Feast of Tabernacles in India with Michael Hubert was very different from any Feast I have ever kept anywhere in the over 30 years I have been in God’s Church. Why? Read on!

We arrived in Chennai (Madras) late evening September 17 and were met in the reception area of the airport by Michael Hubert and his son, Ben Hur. Mr. Hubert is a long-time deacon in God’s Church who looks after a small group of believers in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He has also started a program of translating Church of God literature into Tamil and evangelizing among the mostly Hindu population. For a number of years, Mr. Hubert has worked among the homeless street children and child prostitutes of Chennai through his Shabnam (Early Rain) Foundation, initiating self-help projects and providing education.

Legacy Institute has sponsored several of his projects such as a youth camp for street kids and a self-help sewing project for former prostitutes. We now also sponsor Mr. Hubert’s evangelistic efforts. Sometimes we as Christians in the western countries forget that Jesus not only fed the people the spiritual food of life, but also provided them with bread and fishes when they were hungry. We need to go back and read Matthew 25:31-40 (*AV throughout*):

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him. Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory:

“And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats:

“And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

“Then the King shall say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

“For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

“Naked and ye clothed me: I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

“Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

“When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

“Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

In Thailand, the people generally have sufficient food, shelter and clothing. That is not always true in places like Burma and India. When doing God’s Work in these countries, we should carry the Bible in our right hand and a loaf of bread in our left.

***Community Care Center for HIV/AIDS Infected People
Gudiyeattham, India
Thursday, September 19, 2002***

*“Money cannot help us.
Medicine cannot help us.
Only God can help us.”*

M.S. Rajendran, Sept 19, 2002

Today, Gloria, Michael and I traveled away from the coast by hired taxi over 4 hours to a town of a population of 200,000 called Gudiyeattham. Here we met Mr. M.S. Rajendran, a civil engineer infected with the AIDS virus along with his wife and young son. Four years ago, Mr. Rajendran founded a HIV/AIDS shelter for people suffering with this disease and needing medical help and support from caregivers. In India, people who have AIDS are outcasts from their society. Many times even close family members disown them; the community shuns them; and their children are deprived of education because of fear the disease will spread among their children through close social contact.

Five years ago, Mr. Rajendran contracted the disease and passed it to his wife and unborn son. The negative treatment he received from family members and the society around him prompted him to found the center for treatment and moral support of victims and their families.

The reason we are visiting the center today is to assess a very unique opportunity to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Mr. Rajendran is a Hindu. Most of his patients and their families are also Hindu. Yet, through a mutual contact, Michael Hubert was invited to visit and encourage the patients and family members. He did this by telling them about the future return of Jesus Christ and the soon coming Kingdom of God. Interestingly enough, they are NOT looking for a handout to fund their center. They already have plenty of medicines on their shelves and sufficient beds and equipment. They are NOT looking for physical support. Instead, they ARE seeking emotional support and spiritual answers.

Contracting AIDS in India is devastating. Once family and friends know you have it, it is an automatic sentence of banishment from society. Children with AIDS are not permitted to attend school, not by law, but rather by social pressure to stay away. They are afraid the infected child will somehow infect their children. Many feel the disease is a curse from the gods.

Gloria and I, along with Michael Hubert, were invited by Mr. Rajendran to visit and give a talk. After a wonderful lunch of traditional south Indian food prepared by center volunteers, we were escorted to the center where we met with the patients and their caregivers (usually a spouse or other relative.) We toured the facility and then addressed a small group of about 25 patients and caregivers.

I opened my Bible and read to them Genesis 1:26-27. I explained to them (*remember, the audience was HINDU!*) that their Creator made man to be in God's image; not the image of a cow or snake or dog. I also told them we all descend from the same two created ancestors, Adam and Eve. Therefore, we share a common ancestry and a common destiny. Since God is spirit and not flesh, the image of God is also spirit. Therefore, our destiny is to become spirit just like God. But first God made us flesh so that we could go through trials and tests to learn lessons to become like Him. Different people will endure different tests and trials - but the result is the same - we someday will become just like God. They now have a difficult and terrible trial with their disease - but if they are willing to search for God and His True Way of Life - then they will be on the right path to reaching their ultimate destiny. This is the hope the Creator God holds out to the world.

Gloria then spoke briefly and told them that the way to the Kingdom of God is narrow and difficult, but that they should endure and never give up hope. And she encouraged them to read the Bible to be their guide and for encouragement.

Mr. Rajendran also spoke. I think you will find the transcript of his speech very revealing:

*“Mr. and Mrs. Sexton and our dear friend Hubert,
Let me thank you all for coming here to meet us. This day should be called the day of blessing and goodness for us. We men and women living in this area were mostly under pressure, discouragement and attack, just for the reason of a disease called AIDS. HIV affects most of us and many cases of our family, which means the wife and children too have been infected. The worst scenario takes mostly in the villages and towns where you would witness where the family loses respect, their livelihood, and where the children lose their education and finally are pushed to the verge of suicide. As a personal example, I am an educated civil engineer and am infected by this disease and also my wife and children. Even though I stand as a leader to fight against these prejudices, many times I feel like closing my life. Nobody to share well words or even a smile. We have been looked on as unwanted dust. Why, Sir, in such a situation, do we know that our Creator still love us and care for us? When we were in such a bad trauma, we met Mr. M. R. Hubert and he was our only source of contact toward love and compassion. He gave us all the care and support in the times of ebb and sadness. He shared the message how the spirit is more important than physical body. He stated the message of*

Utopia, the Kingdom of God and we would enjoy physical happiness and spiritual blessings when Jesus Christ returns to the world where He would replace all the leaders and His administration would take over and bring harmony. He shared the message to all our people where most of them are ready to commit to a new way of life. Sir, we do have many plans to concern and care for the HIV affected brethren and care givers. WE want to create an herbal village which would give these brethren a better place to live with their family and some income to live and education for their children. Sir, the most of all we would like to commit to Christ and His true teachings. Please help us. Thanks”.

They want us to return on the 29th and will gather a much larger group to hear us. We do not know where all this is headed, but we continue to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit!

Feast of Tabernacles 2002 Madras, India

As I said at the beginning of this letter, the Feast of Tabernacles was the most interesting and educational Feast I have had in years. It was different for a number of reasons.

It started out like any other Feast. Then unusual things began to happen. Visiting the HIV/AIDS center and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to them was only the beginning! The first Holy Day brought 27 adults and 4 children to gather in the rooftop hall built by Michael Hubert over his home. Included were Kevin and Sonali Fiske, Church of God members from southern California. Gloria and I were visiting from Thailand. Michael, his wife Terencia, and maybe 4 others regularly gather for Church of God services in Madras. All the rest were new -- and they were all Hindus!

I have to be candid. I was surprised by this revelation when Mr. Hubert told me. I wondered why so many in attendance were Hindus and how they had come to be at the Feast of Tabernacles! It is a long story.

Last Passover, Gloria and I visited India and observed the Passover and Days of UB in India. The day before Passover evening Michael Hubert asked us to travel with him 5 hours by hired taxi to a small village southwest of Madras. Here we met a group of 4 or 5 Hindu farmers and briefly talked to them and their wives in their simple homes. Mr. Hubert explained to us that this group of men were interested in hearing about the Christian God. We could only spend a little over an hour with them before we had to head back to be in Madras before the Passover. I didn't think much about the meeting then. I was more worried about making it back in time for the Passover ceremony.

But they invited Mr. Hubert back to talk to them several times over the course of the 6 months between the Spring and Fall Holy Days. The result was that 11 men from this small village had come to Madras to keep the Feast of Tabernacles to learn more about the Kingdom of God.

The others in attendance (1 man and 8 women) were local people who were either relatives of those already attending services or people that had participated in one of Michael Hubert's Early Rain Foundation projects.

Only a few in attendance had ever had Bibles, so one of the first things we did was go look for Tamil language Bibles. We bought all we could find. We passed out 18 Bibles on the first Holy Day. Several feast-goers more familiar with Bibles helped them learn to look up scriptures. By the second day they all were enthusiastically finding scriptures and taking notes. The third day they were singing hymns in Tamil and reading scriptures aloud when called upon in services. The fourth day they were giving opening and closing prayers and writing poems to God. During the Q and A sessions after services, they were asking very thoughtful questions such as, “Where is Jesus now and what is He doing?”

I had to throw out all my notes and rework every sermon for an audience of people who were hearing the Gospel of God for the very first time! It was an incredible and humbling experience. Wade Fransson, a Church of God elder from California, came over from the Feast site in Thailand to give me a hand. Kevin Fiske pitched in with several messages. All of us experienced the same phenomenon, seeing God’s Holy Spirit at work changing hearts and minds in people who were discovering the True God for the first time.

Don’t ask me to explain where all this is going. I am still trying to digest it all myself! But if I am reading my Bible correctly (and I believe I am), this is not the first time pagan Gentiles have been called by God to receive salvation. In Acts 13, the Apostle Paul and Barnabas were asked to preach about Jesus in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. When the Jews left the synagogue to return to their homes, “***the Gentiles besought that the Gospel might be preached to them*** the next Sabbath”. The next Sabbath “***came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God***” (verse 44.) Then the Jewish leaders, out of envy, spoke against what Paul was preaching. Now let’s look at what happened next. Verses 46-49:

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, ‘I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.’ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.”

I never understood the power of these words in the book of Acts ... *until now*. After the Feast in Madras this year, I understand better what was taking place then, and what looks like is taking place again today.

Is the arm of God shortened that He cannot call people directly out of the pagan religions in this sick world? Can God only call people who come from what we understand to be Israelitish nations today? Will God only call Gentiles with Christian backgrounds? Must they speak the English language before God can call them?

I keep reminding myself that God is far, far greater than the box we keep trying to put Him in.

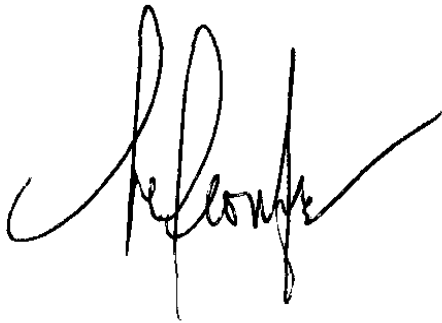
What will happen next in India? We will keep you posted. Meanwhile, Gloria and I are heading back to Chiang Mai, Thailand, for the Legacy sponsored *Christian Leadership*

Training Program and to find out how things went at the Feast in Thailand. Please pray that God continues to bless our efforts to take His Word to the people He chooses to call in Asia. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans, chapter 10, verses 12-15,

“For there is no difference between the Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. ‘For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Until next time, God be with all of you,

In service to Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leon Sexton', written in a cursive style.

Leon Sexton

WHAT IS LEGACY INSTITUTE?

LEGACY INSTITUTE is a private, non-profit, charitable foundation and is not affiliated with any human church organization. Legacy Institute seeks to serve and help mankind in the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. His instructions were to freely give. This means without discrimination and without prejudice. Your donations to Legacy Institute are tax deductible in the USA.