

5B

RELIGION

Life 1B



How to get us to think

Few books of the Bible are as misunderstood as Ecclesiastes. This is a shame, for it is a divinely inspired meditation on the most profound of questions: What is the meaning of life?

One factor in the regrettable neglect of Ecclesiastes is the mistaken notion that the book is just a collection of uninspired musings (contemplations) about life from a writer who deliberately left God out of the equation. In this view, Ecclesiastes is in the Bible solely to show us how not to think.

At first glance there seems to be ideas in Ecclesiastes that are difficult to reconcile with Christian truth. But this just shows that we need more than a first glance when we study Scripture! When examined carefully, the book presents what amounts to a biblical philosophy of life. The well-known passage that closes the book (12:13-14) is not just an inspired exhortation tacked on to a book of worldly thoughts; it is a conclusion toward which the whole book points.

One of the lessons of Ecclesiastes is that life is meaningless apart from God. This week's passage from John complements this truth by showing that a life of purpose comes through the resurrection of Christ.

Today's passages will let Solomon pose some problems then let Jesus propose some solutions. Our teachers will be the wisest men on the face of the earth (1 Kings 4:29-34) and God's own Son, whose wisdom surpasses even that of Solomon (Luke 11:31).

LIFE WITHOUT GOD IS MEANINGLESS (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

1. Who is the presumed author of Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 1:1)?

Students debate the identity of the author of this book. But the opening words surely make Solomon the most obvious choice, even though he is not mentioned by name. In fact we would be hard-pressed to make the words point to anyone other than Solomon. He is attributed also as the author, or primary author, of Proverbs and Song of Solomon (also called Song of Songs).

You will recall Solomon's role as the third king of Israel. He was a son of David and Bathsheba. Many students believe that the book of Ecclesiastes represents Solomon's musings in old age. These are the words of a man who has tried it all and is weary of his attempts to understand any meaning in

Please see A LOOK/7B

Tackling HIV

Friendship Missionary Baptist arms kids with wellness seminar



By Cheris F. Hedges
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What do your kids know about HIV?

Friendship Missionary Baptist Church will host a youth wellness seminar on May 13, the second sponsored by the church, its theme is "Keeping it Clean."

The seminar will address the gravity of HIV/AIDS through workshops and a panel discussion.

Mecklenburg County leads North Carolina in the number of HIV and AIDS cases reported. In 2003, African Americans accounted for more than half of all AIDS-related

deaths.

Every day, according to the Centers for Disease Control, 72 black people in the U.S. become infected with HIV.

Friendship saw a need to bring interfaith communities together to foster support for young people to make good decisions, said Michelle Jones, associate minister of spiritual guidance and wellness.

Community leaders and organizations like Gang of One will attend, hosting workshops on self-esteem, gang and peer pressure.

"HIV/AIDS is a pandemic," Jones said. "While we concentrate on pro-

viding support for those infected in our community, we cannot forget to pray for and to work with our youth. It is important that we provide them with information and tools to help them make good decisions in the face of peer pressure and mixed messages from society."

According to the Balm in Gilead, a growing number of black churches have AIDS ministries and are making a difference in the lives of people who have HIV and around the world. However, that hasn't always been the case.

When Pernessa Seale started

Please see FRIENDSHIP/6B

Celebrating 100 years of Pentecostal revival

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES—It was 1906 when William Seymour, the son of slaves, traveled to a small church to preach that speaking in tongues was the ultimate path to salvation. The congregation rejected his message and promptly kicked him out.

But that wasn't the end of the story.

Committed to his belief, Seymour started his own prayer group—first at a friend's house and then at an abandoned church in northeast Los Angeles. Within weeks, people of all races were streaming to the City of Angels to see the services where worshippers fell to the ground and uttered strange, unintelligible sounds.

The boisterous, three-year revival that followed made international headlines and is widely credited as the birth of modern-day Pentecostalism. The movement, once relegated to the theolog-

ical fringe, now claims up to 600 million followers worldwide and remains one of the fastest-growing sectors of Christianity, according to Vinson Synan, dean of Regent University's School of Divinity and an ordained minister of the Pentecostal Holiness Church.

Starting this weekend, up to 60,000 followers will descend on Los Angeles to mark the movement's 100th birthday, a celebration that begins with a visit to the street corner where the revival church once stood. The Azusa Street location, now in the heart of Little Tokyo, bears a commemorative plaque.

"We see the centennial as a homecoming for the movement, a wonderful memory of what God did 100 years ago," said the Rev. Billy Wilson, executive director of the Center for Spiritual Renewal, the celebration's sponsor. "We want to show the world that Pentecostals are about more than just feeling good and speaking in tongues."

Pentecostals believe in a personalized commitment to Christ and a second experience known as "baptism in the Holy Spirit." That baptism is most commonly accompanied by speaking in tongues, though other "gifts" from the Holy Spirit can include faith healing, the casting out of demons and modern-day prophecies. Followers base the practice on Acts 2:1-4, in which Jesus'

apostles were "filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

Mainline Christians had rejected speaking in tongues for more than a thousand years, believing that the Holy Spirit's gift stopped with the apostles. But when Seymour came to Los Angeles in 1906, conditions were ripe for the long-forgotten message.

The rough-edged town of 240,000 residents had doubled its population in just six years, and the city sprouted so many new churches that modern-day experts have called it an "American Jerusalem."

Hundreds of Christians were so concerned about the freewheeling mentality of the rapidly growing city that they had broken away from mainstream denominations to pray for a massive spiritual revival.

See CELEBRATING/8B

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcements to the calendar is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail your announcement to cheris.hedges@thecharlottepost.com.

April 27
The Kingdom of God Christian Fellowship Ministries will host its sixth annual women's conference through Saturday. Services begin nightly at 7 p.m. with a Saturday morning seminar at 10 a.m. This event, which will be held at 4837 South Tryon St., is free and open to the public. For more information call (704) 713-4862.

April 29

Addie L. Robinson Ministries of Philadelphia will host a Holy Ghost Boot Camp Spiritual Warfare Conference at the Ramada Limited,

located at 7900 Nations Ford Road at 9 a.m. and 7 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call (215) 574-7888 or log on to www.addierobinson.com.

• Women of all faiths are cordially invited to attend "The Power of Pink," a luncheon program on breast cancer in the African American community. It will be held at Little Rock AME Zion uptown at 401 N. McDowell Street on Saturday. Registration and seating begin at 11 a.m. The MC is Lenise Ligon, WBTV anchor/reporter. Speakers are Dr. Beverly Belle, ob/gyn, and Deidre Mack Lynch, a breast cancer survivor.

• Johnson C. Smith University will celebrate spring with its annual concert by the University Choir at 6 p.m. Saturday. The event will be

held inside the Jane M. Smith Memorial Church on campus.

The free event will feature various songs from the University Choir, which will be professionally recorded for sale at a later date. Although the event is free, opportunities will be available if concert-goers would like to donate to help the choir fund its live taping.

April 30

The District III Ushears Revival Service Musical Concert will be held at 5 p.m. at Second Calvary Baptist Church, located at 114 Nelson Ave. For more information, call (704) 392-2885.

• The St. Phillip Missionary Baptist Church will host its "Annual Friends and Family Day Celebration" at 11 a.m. Dinner will be served

at 1 p.m. The church is located at 400 Dellwood Drive, Huntersville. For information, call the church at (704) 875-6180.

May 4

Trinity Park Baptist Church, located at 9115 Trinity Road, will host a free Medicare D (Prescription Drug) Information Seminar for Senior Citizens and their families at 7 p.m.

For additional information call the church at (704) 393-0130.

May 6

Seige Avenue First Church of God Girls in Action for Christ presents the first mother and daughter luncheon, "Empowering Another

Please see MEDICARE/6B



'This Time,' Allen goes it alone



Bruce Allen
Just B. Allen
This Time
Produced by Bruce Allen
Meridian Music Group



Bruce Allen spent most of the last decade or so as half of Allen & Allen, a jazz/gospel duo which has almost an equal amount of fans in both genres.

Allen decided that after nine releases it's time to explore his craft deeper with a solo effort. "Just B. Allen This Time" finds him at the top of his game.

Allen's named his new style "praise-instrumental" - the combination of modern praise & worship and inspirational jazz. This isn't new. Pamela Williams, Jeff Majors and a host of others offer religious-sprinkled jazz. Coining the phrase is a good idea, however.

Allen leans more toward jazz on this release. There are the obvious gospel choices, such as his remakes of "Going Up Yonder," "He Looked Beyond My Fault" and the contemporary "More Than Anything (Lamar Campbell)" and "I Need An Angel" (American Idol's Rubin Studdard). But Allen's original tunes could easily fit on many acoustic or contemporary jazz playlists.

Allen's piano playing seems more fluid as well. He's developed some powerful chops since the duo's first recordings. He also chose to set this live recording in what sounds like a jazz club.

"Best Praise" is decidedly urban, possibly giving Maceo Parker competition. Allen even mentions James Brown on "Focus Your Eyes," which is punctuated with staccato horns and percolating bass.

If you're looking for an all-out jazz jam session, listen to

Please see THIS TIME/6B

Ratings

Classic:	*****
Excellent	****
Good	***
Fair	**
Why?	
No stars — A mess	