

The Robinson's Herald

For October to December 97

Dear Friends And Supporters Of The Robinsons

Greetings from the beautiful Caribbean! As of writing this report for the fourth and closing quarter of 1997, we are enjoying cooler temperatures and gorgeous scenery. Carriacou is absolutely beautiful!

The work at Windward Bible Church continues to make progress. Last Sunday morning we had 27 in our service! There were fifteen children and twelve adults. On the average our morning attendance runs 20 to 25. There are times it is a little higher, while at other times it is a little lower. **We are thankful for the current numbers and the growth when we consider that we were running only 12 to 15 right after we returned from furlough last year.**

Our current numbers are really a blessing especially since we stopped running one bus that traveled through the eastern central side of the Island. That one formally brought in some 40% to 60% of our attendance, but the number of riders had dropped off severely by the time we returned from furlough last year. It often did not run at all simply because no one showed up on its route. This bus cost us nearly twice that of the other one that transports people from the northern side. Thus we could no longer justify the expenditure.

The northern side of Carriacou is where the villages of Windward, Dover, Belair, Meldrum, Belvedere, Bogles, Sea View, Craigston, and Limlair are located. This is also the specific area to which we believe the Lord called us to serve. Initially, we began running the other bus to the eastern central side five or six years ago. We did this only after several people from that area had expressed a desire to attend our services.

Unfortunately, one the most faithful families who had been attending from that area split up a few months back. This was due to the unsaved husband allegedly raping his wife's twelve year-old sister. The wife has subsequently moved to the mainland. The husband had only come to our serves perhaps two or three times since we began holding services in 1992. The few others who had been attending from that area were children who had become very unfaithful. They were also frequently attending another church in that area with which we do not cooperate.

From the beginning we have taught believers to be faithful to one local church. We believe that church roving and hopping leads to a lack of discipline and stunted spiritual growth. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

After being involved in the work here since 1992, it became apparent that a few people had begun attending our services merely to get back at some in another church that they had previously attended. If something did not go the way they liked, or if one of the leaders said or did something that upset them, they would begin attending Windward Bible Church—for a while. But they would always return after someone in their former church reached out to make amends. This is plain old-fashioned politics, and it is something biblical pastors should not condone or promote.

Moreover, there are two families living in that area who work at the local Christian radio station. One is a leader in another local church. The

other man is holding services near Hillsborough, which is located near the central part of the island. It seems he basically inherited the work after an Independent Baptist missionary began it some two years ago. However, the missionary permanently returned to the US earlier this year and this man has stepped in to carry on the work. Thus the people in Grand Bay and Mount Pleasant now have two local options available if they really want to attend services somewhere. Nevertheless, I will consider running a vehicle into that area once more if some express a sincere desire to faithfully attend Windward Bible Church.

We are now focusing entirely on the northern region of Carriacou. We are often amazed and thankful when the bus comes in fully loaded several times a month. This includes two new families that began attending just this year! **When we consider that our attendance before furlough was in the high 30s and low 40s—and that included two buses bringing in full loads—we are thankful for the numbers we are now seeing. Please pray that the growth will continue.**

Now on a different note. . . . Missionaries often have to deal with various kinds of new contingencies and situations. As I believe you will see, this sometimes includes that which is really out of the ordinary.

A few weeks ago a young man stopped by our home. He had made a profession of receiving Jesus Christ as his Savior some six to eight weeks earlier. He also had the appearance of being a "Rastafarian" as are many young men on Carriacou and in the West Indies.

Rastafarianism is much more than an African Hippie movement. It is also a religion that has roots that go back to Jamaica and the 1930s. Rastafarians believe the Messiah is Haile Selassie (hay'-lee sə-lah'-see), the last emperor of Ethiopia. As emperor, Selassie was actually called "Ras Tafari." One of the outgrowths of Rastafarianism is its heavy influence in Raggae music, which was made popular and gained worldwide recognition through the late Bob Marley. According to 1995 statistics, Rastafarianism had some 180,000 adherents worldwide.¹ A documentary I saw a year or two ago showed how Rastafarianism was rapidly growing among people of all cultural and ancestral backgrounds.

Early Rastafarians considered Selassie the living God who fulfilled a prophecy of Marcus Garvey. In the early 1900s, Garvey was an American black nationalist who tried to form a "back to Africa movement." He hoped this would culminate in the establishment of an independent African country made up of Americans who have African ancestry. Garvey's prophecy reportedly said, "Look to Africa, where a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near."²

Those who heeded Garvey's words and looked to Selassie—or rather "Ras Tafari"—withdrew from mainline Jamaican society. They also deemed traditional Christianity to be "white religion"—and rejected it as such. They also rejected Western culture because they considered it to be the modern "Babylon." Some Rastafarians also adopted *ganja* (i.e., marijuana) as their sacred "herb." Some Rasta extremists also turned to acts of violence to further their goals.³

My personal investigation has revealed that Rastafarians consider smoking the "Holy Herb" to being filled with the Holy Spirit. The

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² *The People's Chronology*, Licensed from Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright © 1994 by James Trager. All rights reserved.

³ *Ibid.*

ancient Greeks and Romans held to similar concepts. They sought alcoholic intoxication at the Bacchanalian Festivals in order to become possessed by Bacchus (Roman) or Dionysius (Greek)—the god of wine, revelry, orgies, and ecstasy. Likewise, American Indians took peyote or mescaline while Timothy Leary took LSD to reach “spiritual highs.” However, Paul stressed being “filled with the Holy Spirit” in contrast to the contemporary and ungodly religious practices of his day by saying:

- ¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess (*ἀσωτία*, literally “unsavedness”); but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (Ephesians 5:18–19)

Rastafarians regard Africa—Ethiopia in particular—as the “Promised Land” of Moses.⁴ They also view themselves as the true descendants of David and children of God as defined by the Old Testament. This may be partially due to the traditional belief, that in the 10th century B.C., the kingdom of Ethiopia was supposedly founded by Menelik I. Accordingly, Menelik was Solomon’s first son who was conceived by the Queen of Sheba.⁵ This supposedly occurred when his mother visited Solomon in Israel. Before she left Israel, 1 Kings 10:13 reports how, “. . . king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.” Some have suggested by interpolation that her “desire” was also to conceive a son by Solomon, the wisest man in the world.

This tradition has some respected acceptance as demonstrated by the 1984 and 1991 airlifts of thousands of Ethiopian “Falashas” to Israel. Upon arrival they were given full citizenship and privileges. This is usually granted only to those who can prove their Jewish ancestry.

Many rigorous adherents of Rastafarianism seek to follow the law of Moses and are strict vegetarians who actually shun alcohol—the leavened fruit of the vine. They have also adopted the “Star of David” and the “Lion of Judah” as key religious symbols of identity.

Rastafarians usually focus on the following for biblical authority:

⁴I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, **with Ethiopia; this man was born there.** ⁵And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her. ⁶The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that this man* was born there. (Psalm 87:4–6) [emphasis mine]

Rastafarians argue that Psalm 87:4 is a prophetic reference to Haile Selassie being born in Ethiopia as the Messiah. Yet, they have ignored the basic grammatical structure of the overall passage.

Psalm 87 speaks of the love the Lord has for Zion (Jerusalem) and its inhabitants. However, the Lord also inspired David to write about a day in which *all* people would know the Lord and acknowledge Him as such. The Lord then directs His attention to Rahab (Egypt) and Babylon (modern Iraq). He then says He will also speak of them as being among those who will also know the Lord.

The Lord then refers to another group who would one day also know Him. This one consisted of Philistia (southwest Palestine), Tyre

(ancient Phoenicia, which is modern Syria and Lebanon), and Ethiopia. *Ethiopia is not singled out, but actually included in the group.* It is to this *group* that He will also acknowledge some singled out from those regions as knowing Him. Verse 4 indicates this by literally saying, “. . . this one he was born there.” (The is the actual Hebrew rendering.)

The prophecy then focuses on Zion and acknowledges that many there will also know the Lord. This is so indicated by His stating, “This and that man was born in her . . .” Thus, the Psalmist was not pointing to any one particular individual as the coming Messiah. That interpretation would indicate there would be a Messiah from each region mentioned in the Psalm as a whole!

The Psalm was actually referring to a day in which people from every nation and all families would gather in Jerusalem and acknowledge Yahweh (Jehovah) as their Lord. That is why verse six adds, “The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that this man* was born there.” Bearing in mind that *italicized* words were added by the translators to hopefully clarify the passage, this verse could actually read, “The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, this [each one singled out] was born there.”

The Rastafarians have not only misinterpreted Psalm 87, they have also overlooked the other Scriptural references to the bodily return of the Messiah. (*This is referring to the Lord’s coming at Armageddon—not the “catching away” to take place at least seven years earlier.*) These passages indicate the Messiah will return to Earth at the Mount of Olives—*not Ethiopia!* One such passage is found in Zechariah:

- ¹Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. ²For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. **⁴And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east,** and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be* a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. (Zechariah 14:1–4) [Emphasis mine. Also see Acts 1:9–12]

Not only does the Bible indicate the Messiah will bodily return to the Mount of Olives, it also indicates He will be recognized by the visible stigmata (*i.e.*, the visible marks) of His crucifixion;

- ¹⁰And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: **and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,** and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10) [Emphasis mine. Also see Revelation 1:7]

Unfortunately, many Rastafarians are violently antagonistic toward the Gospel! In June of 1992, my family and I personally discovered this when we preached in the Village of Windward for the first time. There were two Rastafarians present who immediately made their hatred for our message known. *If there was ever a time I experienced fear for the cause of Christ, that was it!* However, God is faithful and we now have a good relationship with these same men—and also many other Roman

⁴ *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition* copyright © 1992 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Electronic version licensed from InfoSoft International, Inc. All rights reserved.

⁵ *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia.*

Catholics in the village as well. PTL! **Please pray for us as we continue to reach out to Rastafarians with the Gospel.**

Considering the background and beliefs of Rastafarianism, we are amazed and rejoice whenever some visit our services. One man named George even professed to have received Christ as his Savior about four years ago! We also have had a few others to visit. One even sought an opportunity to express *his* beliefs in *our* service! Of course we did not permit him to do so and he has never returned.

Another Rastaman who has come our way is the young man I mentioned earlier. He is the one who came by our home a few weeks ago. As I also mentioned before, this man had professed to have received Christ some six to eight weeks prior. Even though he had secretly expressed his new faith in Jesus to me, he continued to wear the traditional Rastafarian "dreadlocks" hairstyle. Yet he claimed he had not been into the Rastafarian practices as a whole.

This hairstyle often makes the "Rastaman" have an unscrupulous and ferocious appearance. As a result, many remain leery and respond negatively toward them even though many are honest, hardworking, family oriented, and charitable. I have also discovered that some of them are not racists as many of those were in the early stages of the movement.

In any case, when this particular young man came by our home he gradually got around to stating the purpose for his visit. *It turned out that he wanted me to cut off his dreadlocks!* Not being a barber, I was very hesitant because I did not know how he would react if I messed up his head. I even tried to persuade him to go to someone who was a barber. However, he explained that cutting his locks was something very special to him, and he did not feel comfortable having someone else doing it.

"Let me also thank you for your diligent work in your prayer letter on Promise Keepers. We have had to deal with this in our church. Needless to say, there are some that do not understand the issues of ecumenicalism, but we continue to pray and trust the Lord to do a work in their hearts and lives. Your prayer letter will be shared so that those involved with this might know."

Such notes are encouraging and let me know the extra work is providing some benefit to the body of Christ. **Please ask the Lord to give me wisdom as I also continue to labor in this ministry.**

Tabitha is doing fine and has thoroughly enjoyed her first semester that is now coming to a close at Appalachian Bible College. She has made several new friends and is now looking forward to Christmas break and returning to school next semester. **Please pray for the Lord to provide the remainder of the finances she still owes for the closing semester.**

Jeshua is looking forward to Christmas with all the excitement and anticipation of most eleven year-olds. He also has a grasp on spiritual things and a sensitivity toward the lost that is unusual for someone his age. **Please pray for Jeshua's continued growth and learning.**

Linda is still working hard home-schooling, working at playing the piano, leading a weekly women's Bible study, and sharing the

Finally, with a silent prayer—and with a lump in my throat—I cut his dreadlocks! He looked like a different man afterwards! Many residents of Carriacou have told him that he really looks much better. As a result, he has expressed his pleasure with what God is doing in his life. **Please remember to pray for this man's spiritual growth.**

Thankfully, things are not always so strange and trying here. We also engage in the more routine activities of many pastors and churches.

We are currently making preparations to provide Christmas services and hand out goody baskets to those in the two nursing homes and the one hospital on Carriacou. For the last two years this has become a tradition to which our church and the institutions look forward.

I respond to email letters daily—averaging over 70 per month! I am usually studying and reading to "stir up my gifts" as a minister of the word. I also do needed vehicle maintenance, provide weekly counseling sessions, and conduct a men's weekly Bible study. During our three weekly services I have been teaching through Hebrews, Mark, and Romans. **Please pray for the Lord to give me wisdom in all.**

I am doing more visiting as I am still trying to get back into the full swing of things. As many of you know from my prior letters, I have a health problem that has nagged me for some twelve months. Thank God I am better this year! **Please pray for this healthier trend to continue.**

Lastly, I have begun the final editing of *Apollo's Revival* with the help of a professional editor whom the Lord has graciously provided. PTL! **Please pray for us both as we continue this work.**

Thanks to all of you who offered gracious comments concerning the information I shared on Promise Keepers in the previous Robinson's Herald. All responses were positive for which I am very thankful! One pastor even wrote; teaching of children's Sunday School—on top of all her other responsibilities. **Please pray for the Lord to help her also.**

We are indeed thankful for all financial and prayer support. The work here is possible because of it. *The Robinsons wish all a happy holiday season as we remember the Lord and His imminent coming!*

Maranatha (*The Lord is Coming!*),
Walter Robinson II

Please send all support to:

Holy Mount Baptist
Missions Helps
P.O. Box 4177
Kingsport, Tennessee 37662
Tel. 423-247-1212

Tabitha's address is:

Tabitha Robinson
P.O. Box ABC
Bradley, West Virginia 25818
Tel. 304-877-3760, ext. 1202

Our field address is:

Walter and Linda Robinson
Hillsborough P.O.
Carriacou, Grenada
West Indies
Tel. 473-443-7764 NOTE AREA
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Our E-mail Address is:

robins@caribsurf.com