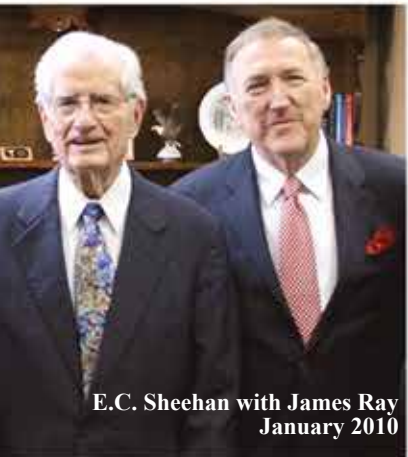


Great Lives

BLAZING THE PATH IN MISSIONS
By James Ray

The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there (Psalm 87:6).

Recently, I again saw Dr. E. C. Sheehan. Dr. Sheehan is the last living founding member of Baptist International Missions. He was also one of the founders of the Congo Gospel Mission—the forerunner of Baptist International Missions, Inc. I heard Dr. Sheehan speak at a special occasion in Byron, Georgia. He stood, at 95 years of age, as straight as an arrow and spoke with complete clarity. Just that morning, he had risen early and walked a mile in 23° weather. He was a man used of God along with Dr. Lee Roberson and others in the founding of BIMI. I was reminded again that God uses men in building His Kingdom.



E.C. Sheehan with James Ray
January 2010

When the great men of an era exist no more and no one follows in their wake to take up the mantle, truth and righteousness die. The sense of holy presence diminishes and what once seemed to be a holy place becomes just a place and symbol of what has been. How many churches and schools have we seen in our day from which the “*glory has departed*” because there are no men whom God can bless?

God does not bless places—God blesses men and women. It was not London that God blessed but **Charles Spurgeon** and **Joseph Parker** and **Martin Lloyd Jones**. It was not Leicester that God blessed but

F. B. Meyer. It was not Dundee that God blessed but **Robert Murray M’Cheyne**. It was not India that God blessed but **William Carey**, **Amy Carmichael** and **Alexander Duff**.

Places are incidental. Bethel was special because God did business with Jacob there. What made Jerusalem so special? Certainly not the brick and mortar and stone and rubble. Jerusalem was special because DAVID ruled there and God’s great people worshipped there and JESUS died there. Without these lives the city would be only “another city.” **Even Mount Sinai gained its significance only because the God of Heaven met Moses there and gave the Ten Commandments—otherwise, it would have been just another rugged piece of geography.**

Take the famous little village of Bethlehem. Realistically, some in modern times might call it a “hick town.” There never has been a lot going in Bethlehem. However, God changed everything when He fulfilled prophecy about a Person who would be born there.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.
Micah 5:2

Think of the kings following the star to Bethlehem. Think of the parade of dignitaries, the horses, camels and mules draped in silk and laden with treasures. There would have been numerous servants accompanying the delegation. When this delegation descended on Bethlehem in full dress with trumpets blazing, the locals were in awe. Why had such a group come to their small, insignificant village? One reason—a man who would be blessed of God. *That man, that name...* was what mattered...*not the place*. God blesses men and women—not places. Places receive blessings as an overflow of God-filled lives.

The same truth can be cited with Lee Roberson and Chattanooga, Harold Sightler and Greenville, E. C. Sheehan, J. R. Faulkner, Dolphus Price, Bill Rice and Bruce Talley...all who were founding trustees of Baptist International Missions. It was not an organization that received power from on high, but these men...and the organization followed.

It was July 3, 1959. These men met to conduct the business of the then “Congo Gospel Mission.” It is recorded in the minutes:

“After some discussion, it was moved by Dr. Roberson...that a committee be appointed to survey the possibility of broadening the sphere of work of the Mission to embrace the world needs. The vote was unanimous.”

That vision of those men in that meeting gave birth to what became Baptist International Missions. *God blesses men.*

Through the years since 1960, God has sent other godly leaders and pastors to lead BIMI—men who have followed in the steps of those original men of faith. From the original nine missionaries, the missionary force has grown during those fifty years to over 1,000 missionaries in 97 countries around the globe. Without reservation, I can say that some of the most dedicated, faithful and tenacious servants of God since New Testament days have served with this Mission.

In June of this year, 2010, Christian leaders and friends will gather to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Baptist International Missions. We will, yes, celebrate the organization, but more. We will celebrate those men and women who with burning hearts circle the earth. The passion and fire of those original trustees in 1960 continue to engulf the earth with the flame of the Gospel and the Lord of the Harvest.

A few strike out, without map or chart,
Where never a man has been,
From the beaten paths they draw apart
To see what no man has seen.
There are deeds they hunger alone to do;
Though battered and bruised and sore,
They blaze the path for the many,
Who do nothing not done before.

Edgar Guest