Urban Legends of the New Testament

A Book Review

Urban legends are pieces of information passed throughout a society. Some scare. Some amuse. Most urban legends involve curious stories passed friend to friend. While urban legends often provide amusement, what if the subject matter is mishandled Scripture? Diligent exegesis demands a much more careful handling of the subject matter. David A. Croteau put together 40 of his favorite New Testament stories, issues, and interpretations that are, well, maybe not quite what we have traditionally believed. He uses solid word studies, documented culture and archaeology, and careful examinations of passages to fact-check what we think we know! He also explores cultural issues, such as why there was no room at the in, to theological and interpretative issues, such as more carefully defining unmerited favor.

Croteau deals with each legend in a technical manner, but in such a way as to be manageable by the average layperson. He also provides links with further data available through QR codes and online posts. This book provides fascinating insights that are easily adaptable to short devotions or that provide background for a message. Even if you are a seasoned handler of the Bible, you will find this book delightfully insightful.

John T. Murray serves as pastor of First Baptist, Harthouse, New.

Sunrise Valley Baptist Church Celebrates 50 Years
By John Murray

Sunrise Valley Baptist Church on the south side of San Jose recently remembered its beginning 50 years ago and celebrated God’s working.

Pastor Al and Dodie (now Sweeney) Rutledge moved to an area in the Silicon Valley back in a time when the region still had orchards and open spaces. Al and Dodie rented a house and started a Bible study. The study progressed to become an organized church, which bought two parcels of orchard land and put up a building in 1966. God worked by drawing an atheist neighbor to salvation, baptism (the first in the church), and membership. Through the years, many more joined that neighbor, and the church grew.

Sunrise has seen the area explode to become one of the largest populations in the country. The church has worked closely with several other churches through the years, renting to a deaf church and a small independent Baptist church this past fall. The pastor of that group, John Eccles (now in his late 80s), became the interim pastor.

High points of the anniversary celebration included a number of displays featuring photos from each of the decades. The Getting Reacquainted Social on Saturday afternoon was one of the best activities. It had no format, but featured coffee and finger food, sharing memories, and storytelling. About 80 longtime members, former members, and very new members fellowshipped and shared stories of God’s work in their lives. Services on Sunday, attended by 150, included former pastors, missionaries, and longtime members.

We rejoice with Sunrise Baptist Church for five decades of ministry and God’s blessing. Pastor Gerald Ferrand (pictured at right with wife Nancy) was installed as pastor on Aug. 14, with Dr. Eccles becoming the associate pastor.

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