

The Memorial Service of R. B. Thieme, Jr.

On Sunday, 16 August, Robert B. Thieme, Jr., went to be with the Lord at age 91. He was born on April 1, 1918 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. At the age of 8 his family moved to Beverly Hills, California, where he was enrolled in the Beverly Hills school system and graduated by Beverly Hills High School in 1936.

From there he attended the University of Arizona where he majored in classical Greek and in 1940 was graduated magna cum laude. While at Arizona, he was invited to join the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He enrolled in Dallas Theological Seminary in 1940 but, after one semester, withdrew due to the United States' involvement in World War II and assumed active duty with the U.S. Army Air Corps. During the war he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Following the war he returned to Dallas to continue his studies which emphasized Greek, Hebrew, systematic theology, history, and textual criticism. While a student, the Colonel served as interim pastor for Reinhardt Bible Church in Dallas, Texas. He was graduated summa cum laude by Dallas in May 1949 with a Master of Theology. The following year he assumed the pastorate of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas where he served for 53 years.

During that time, he developed a system of biblical instruction that captured the attention of believers throughout this nation and in many foreign countries. His systematic theology was dispensational including a pre-Tribulational Rapture, a pre-Millennial Second Advent of Christ, and a literal-grammatical-historical approach to the interpretation of Scripture. This latter approach emphasized the development of categories of doctrine developed from an exegesis of the Bible from its original languages of Hebrew and Greek while observing the history, culture, and circumstance of the time in which it was written.

This detailed, scholarly approach captured the attention of believers who with a hunger and thirst for the Word found the instruction they were then receiving from their local churches inadequate for a rapid advance in their spiritual growth. The tape recordings of his verse-by-verse Bible studies as well as publications excerpted from them became the source of spiritual food for thousands of believers who responded to his teachings. From that came the development of R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries.

One of the major developments of the Colonel's ministry was the ordination of men who discovered from his teachings that they were imputed the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher at salvation. Through consistent, thorough study under his mentorship, they acquired a substantial understanding of systematic theology and the techniques of biblical analysis that they sought ordination at Berachah. The process required the completion of a doctrinal questionnaire which, if passed, qualified them to attend an oral examination before the Colonel, Berachah deacons, and a council of selected pastors. Upon completion, the examiners then met to determine whose responses were sound enough to warrant ordination. If approved, successful candidates were ordained at a special Sunday service the following morning.

In 1975 a number of believers in the St. Louis area formed a tape group and joined together for scheduled Bible studies from recordings obtained from Berachah Church. Within a few months they had retained a pastor and secured the use of the gymnasium of Chesterfield Day School as their meeting place. The church was formed and given the name of Grace Doctrine Church.

Its first pastor was Robert W. Bidlack who served from 1975 through 1984. Upon his resignation the church sought a replacement. I had been involved in preparation at Berachah Church as a pastoral candidate since late 1976. After observing a series of trial sermons given in late 1984, Grace Doctrine Church officially called me to become its second pastor. I began my tenure here on January 25, 1985. Both Bob and I were ordained at Berachah Church.

It is the system developed and taught by R. B. Thieme, Jr., that led to the founding and the continued prosperity of this church for the past 34 years. It is because of his leadership that over 80 men were ordained to the ministry during his tenure at Berachah, two of which became pastors of this church. It is to this man that we owe a debt of gratitude and a time of remembrance and reflection this morning. Without the Colonel we would all still be floundering our way through an unproductive spiritual life.

We will have only one session this morning. Instead of our usual Bible classes we now present the DVD recording of last Sunday's memorial service for the Colonel held at Berachah Church.

The video begins with a medley of the Colonel's favorite hymns followed by several tributes to him. It concludes with a bagpipe solo by Alex Lubrano who entertained this congregation on two recent occasions when he and his sister, Lindsay, were in town participating in the Highland Games at Forrest Park.

And now the Memorial Service of Robert B. Thieme, Jr.

If you would like a DVD or an MP3 audio of the Colonel's Memorial Service you may order it from either R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries or Berachah Church. This ordering information will be posted on the Web site as a visual with this lesson bearing today's date.

Copies of the Colonel's new book, *The Unfailing Love of God* are available on the desk in the dining room. There are a few order blanks and envelopes there as well.

Shall we close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are extremely grateful for the grace you have provided for us through your servant, Robert B. Thieme, Jr. Your grace provision, the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, and the Colonel's love for us has enabled us to know the mysteries of godliness revealed in your immutable Word. Today we salute this man for his contributions to the betterment of our temporal life and our eternal future. May we always remember this man who made it possible for us to become serious students of Your Word. May his passing give us more motivation to continue our pursuit of truth; to hold fast to those things we have learned and to increase our interest in learning more. Your call of the Colonel home has ended a magnificent era in the history of Protestant theology. We must now continue the advance. A new era has begun. We must not waver nor be found wanting. As we leave here today may we return to you our gratitude for what we have received and resolve to fulfill the obligation imposed upon us by our Lord: "to whom much is given, much will also be required. We lift our prayer in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."