

# IBLC Information

## **IBLC: New People, New Courses**

The International Biblical Learning Center (IBLC) produces college-level Bible courses for Sabbatharians. It was founded in June of 1996 by Dr. John Merritt, John Robinson, John-Barry Skidmore, and Dale Stogner. Dr. Donald Ward, former president of Ambassador University, was hired to manage it, having his first-year salary (\$48,000) paid as a one-time pledge by three individuals.

Lacking any such guarantee for the second year, Dr. Ward intends to depart from IBLC on June 30 in order to "earn a living for my wife and me." However, as it becomes possible he intends to continue to be involved in the production and distribution of Bible Courses, possibly starting a new organization tentatively called the "Center for Biblical Studies."

Present IBLC students need not be concerned as **all** of the courses made this first year will still be offered by IBLC (and by any new organization that Ward might start). New IBLC courses are still being produced, and new instructors are still being added.

The latest IBLC course is **Marriage and the Family: Practical Training for Good Relationships**, taught by Dr. David Antion. Some items being taught in this marriage course: preparation for marriage including date and mate selection, assertive training techniques, stages of marriage, resolving marital conflicts, role of good health, qualities in satisfactory marriages, creative ideas for teaching children, ways to discipline, recommended readings, and much more.

## **Other courses now offered by IBLC:**

The Book of Revelation: Don Ward

World Religions: Gary Antion

Life and Teachings of Paul, Part 1: Ronald Dart

The Book of Daniel: Donald Ward

Introduction to the Old Testament: Mark Kaplan

Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ: Donald Ward

Principles of Prophecy: Donald Ward

Introduction to Paul: Ronald Dart

## **Prophecy Seminars:**

Church Eras: Donald Ward

Place of Safety: Donald Ward

Seventy-Weeks Prophecy: Donald Ward

## **For Information Contact:**

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# International Biblical Learning Center

John Merritt and Barry Skidmore, founders of Friends of the Sabbath (FOS), along with Dr. Don Ward, former President of Ambassador University, John Robinson, Publisher of In Transition, and Dale Stogner announce the founding of the *International Biblical Learning Center* (IBLC). They wanted to start an institution of higher learning where a high quality of Biblical education and training can be made available to **every member** of the spiritual body of Christ and at a price that most can afford. Dr. Ward is the President of IBLC. The others mentioned comprise the initial Board of Directors. Dr. Ward is not a Board member.

While a number of (primarily young) people did benefit from Ambassador University/College, it was probably on the average of 500 - 1,000 people per year. There were no correspondence courses of an in-depth nature that could benefit the brethren at large. The old Ambassador College Correspondence Course was good for what it did, but it is not the same as taking classes covering the different books of the Bible in depth. While training our young people was and is important, think of the benefits to the spiritual body of Christ, at large, if tens of thousands had been so trained. It goes without saying that an in depth knowledge of the Bible is immensely valuable to a Christian engaged in doing God's work. The days of the Greyhound Church of God (get on and leave the driving to us) are over. With 20/20 hindsight it did not make sense to only train an "elite" few.

By getting started with courses covering the entire Bible, IBLC will enable students to select those courses of particular interest to them: courses that will enable them to round out their personal character development and better prepare them to serve God.

IBLC is a virtual university, a place of learning where the faculty members, the students, and the Directors are all widely dispersed. They are not planning on having a physical campus. The courses will be either audio or video cassettes, with workbooks, and tests, where the students can use the Internet or a fax machine (or some other means) to contact the faculty members to get their questions answered. The audio cassette based courses will likely feature about 18 hours of audio tapes. The audio cassette version of courses will probably sell for \$99, plus shipping and handling. This is very inexpensive for a college level course.

This is not a course of study designed to create ordained ministers. However, the average age of the ministry in the Churches of God probably exceeds 50 years. Because of the splintering of the old WCG, it is not likely that any of the splinter groups, even the larger ones, have the funds to start a traditional college. This is an effort to use the talent of the spiritual body of Christ and modern technology to genuinely serve the spiritual body of Christ. "We are not starting a Church," says Dale Stogner, a founding member, "but are continuing in our existing fellowships. We do **not** want to control people. We love God's people and are simply trying to set up the best possible way (under the circumstances) to genuinely serve God's people and to empower them to help each and every one of them to become the best that they can be. We intend to serve across the different Sabbatarian denominations and are hopeful that we can be of service to the different splinter groups who cannot afford to start a college of their own. When there are multiple doctrinal opinions held by Sabbath-keepers on a subject, we hope to explain the varied viewpoints

and not condemn others for seriously held beliefs." Nevertheless, instructors will be free to state which view they believe is correct and why.

Stogner continues, "When I was first called into the spiritual body of Christ, I was just completing my B.S. degree from a California State College. I immediately enrolled into Ambassador College and took, over a two year time period, various classes covering the entire Bible. Some of the classes were surveys, e.g., a panorama of the old testament. And some of the classes were a very detailed coverage of specific books of the Bible, e.g., the General Epistles, i.e., James, I & II Peter, I & II & III John, and Jude. All of these Bible oriented classes were immensely valuable to me. And, I must tell you, that the in-depth study of the Bible, for these two years, was one of the happiest times of my life. I personally needed the teaching that was available at Ambassador College to help me learn more in a shorter period of time. And I know from personal experience that I may never have learned some of what I learned at Ambassador College had I not had skilled teachers."

Some of the initial classes that IBLC hopes to offer are as follows:

- Introduction and Origin of the Bible
- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- History of Ancient Israel
- Hebrew I
- Harmony of the Gospels
- Acts
- Epistles of Paul
- General Epistles
- History of Biblical Festivals
- Typology of Biblical Festivals
- Biblical Prophecy
- Minor Prophets
- Revelation
- Sabbath & the Early Church
- Israel in Prophecy
- Modern Sabbatarian History
- Marriage & Family Relations

Some of you may ask, "What about making classes available to those who would like to learn, but cannot afford to pay the modest fee per class?" They are immediately setting up a scholarship fund where those wishing to help pay all or part of the cost of a course for another less fortunate can do so. As the funds come in, they will be earmarked into a separate bank account to be used to pay the course cost of those requesting to take a course, but who cannot pay all of the costs.

If the average member of the spiritual body of Christ took even one course each six months, over a ten year time period, they would have received the benefit of in-depth teaching covering the entire Bible. In other words, even a modest study schedule of two courses per year, over time, (in my example ten years), would add up to a total of 20 courses taken. This would represent a significant amount of Biblical teaching and training. The total cost to a Bible student would be less than \$20 per month.

IBLC is structured to be a nonprofit corporation and is applying for tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. Any contributions to it will be tax deductible and you will receive the appropriate contribution receipt.

The Board of Directors are serving without pay, at least for the foreseeable future. In fact, the initial Directors, have already pledged almost \$50,000 of support to IBLC, should that become necessary. And, several of the Directors will be making actual cash contributions of about \$12,000 just to get it started. Will IBLC succeed or fail? Stogner answers, "This largely depends on how well we actually serve God's people. We are trying to structure IBLC in such a way so it will achieve maximum results for minimum overhead. We will not need an \$8 million per year subsidy in order to teach only 500 to 1,000 students. For the first year, if we are fortunate enough to attract even \$250,000 in donations, we can probably do the rest through course sales. This is even though the price per course is very modest. We are hoping that we can eventually teach thousands upon ten thousands of students."

Starting such an effort is a daunting task. However, the upside is great. "We have faith that Christ is the head of the spiritual body of Christ. We have faith in God's Spirit working through the average church member. We have faith in freedom. We believe in the free market approach to this endeavor. If we do not deliver the services promised, then we deserve to go out of 'business'. We do not have, nor do we want, control over God's people," says Dale Stogner.

They have started a charter donor program for any of you who might be interested in supporting IBLC. Each donor who contributes at least \$250 in the next 90 days will receive a certificate of appreciation designating them as a charter donor of IBLC. (Of course contributions of any kind are valued and welcome especially in this start up phase). If any would like to make a tax deductible donation, you may send it to the below address:

**International Biblical Learning Center**

27068 La Paz, #488

Laguna Hills, CA 92656

They intend to have an annual audit of IBLC's books and records and offer to publish the results in In Transition. The financial reports will also be made available, on a periodic basis, to any donors or students who request them. Board meetings are open to the public, and minutes will be made available to those who request them.

More details will follow later. Stogner adds, "We will do the best that we can, with what we have to work with, in order to provide a heritage of training for God's people— **all of them!** It is a college-level learning center for the people of God. Please be patient with us and please pray for our humble efforts that some good might come of them."

# IBLC Off to a Good Start

The International Bible Learning Center reports that as of this month of operation, 1,000 have responded and the number is growing daily. This is an opportunity to take Bible classes or courses right in your own home via VCR or cassette tapes.

The IBLC is a nondenominational, nonprofit institution of higher learning dedicated to the restoration of the faith once delivered to the saints. One of the goals of IBLC is to make collegiate - level Bible courses available to persons of all ages and educational backgrounds.

The educational philosophy and purpose of the IBLC is guided by Christ's statement that the "worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

Therefore, the IBLC is committed to providing sound biblical instruction that respects and reflects the biblical teachings of the first-century Church of God. These doctrines of the Apostolic Church can be gleaned only from Holy Scripture. They are not the domain of any corporate or organizational structure. All organizations and corporate structures should rejoice in the efforts of any person or group that is committed to teaching and publishing the truth of the Bible.

Since the IBLC is not a church, we do not publish a codified statement of beliefs; we seek to explain and defend the doctrines of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures, not tradition or orthodoxy, serve as the authority for determining the veracity of any viewpoint. The only requirement for enrollment in the IBLC is a teachable heart and determined dedication to intellectual honesty.

**Our Mission Statement:** The mission of the International Bible Learning Center is to provide Bible courses relevant to the educational needs of Christians regardless of their church affiliation, age, educational background or socio-economic status for the purpose of educating, edifying and strengthening the faith and practice of Christians.

## **Current Course Offerings:**

Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ—Don Ward

Principles of Prophecy—Don Ward

Introduction to Paul—Ron Dart

Current Prophecy Seminars:

Church Eras -Don Ward

Place of Safety—Don Ward

Seventy-Weeks Prophecy—Don Ward

These courses will address some recent changes and doctrinal issues that concern many of us.

The three minicourses and the three prophecy seminars, 15 two-hour video-tapes, can be ordered for \$146. The same courses and seminars on audiotape can be ordered for a cost of \$94. The cost of the minicourses on an individual basis is \$39 for video and \$25 for audio.

The cost of the prophecy seminars on an individual basis is \$10 for video and \$7 for audio.

## **Future Courses:**

Introduction to the Old Testament—Mark Kaplan

World Religions and Catholicism—Gary Antion

Book of Daniel—Don Ward

Book of Revelation—Don Ward

Life and Teachings of Paul—Ron Dart

Stewardship in the Churches of God -C. Wayne Cole

These Courses will be available by December 1, 1996.

The "course of the month" offered this month is Introduction to the Old Testament by Mark Kaplan, formerly an Orthodox Jew with a history degree from Brooklyn College.

Those interested in the Bible courses can contact:

IBLC, 7 Berean Way, Hawkins, Texas 75765 or call 903-636-4155, FAX 903-636-4098 or E-mail: IBLC@aol.com.

# Current Course Offerings

For tuition fees and registration information, please visit the Registration area.

The Center provided on-site mini-courses and prophecy seminars (August 5-9, 1996) in Big Sandy, Texas. These courses and seminars were recorded on video and audio cassette tapes and form part of IBLC's offerings. Courses currently available include the following:

## Full-Length Courses:

Book of Daniel, taught by Donald Ward.

Introduction to the Old Testament, taught by Mark Kaplan.

Life and Teachings of Paul I, taught by Ronald Dart.

Life and Teachings of Paul II, taught by Ronald Dart.

Full-length courses are available on video or audio cassette tapes. The courses include testing and interaction with the instructor via mail, E-mail, fax or cassette tape. Those taking courses at this level will be awarded certificates of completion.

The same courses can also be taken on an audit basis. Students will receive the same instruction but will not be tested and thus will not receive a certificate of completion. This audit level is provided for those who desire the precious instruction and knowledge, but do not want to be burdened with the pressure of taking tests.

## Mini-Courses:

Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, taught by Donald Ward.

Principles of Prophecy, taught by Donald Ward.

Introduction to Paul, taught by Ronald Dart.

## Prophecy seminars:

Church Eras, presented by Donald Ward.

Place of Safety, presented by Donald Ward.

Seventy-Weeks Prophecy, presented by Donald Ward.

Again, for tuition fees and registration information, please visit the Registration area.

## Future Courses

The first round of full-length courses is in the process of being developed. The objective of this first set of courses is to familiarize students with the whole Bible, the issues that face the Christian faith and how Christians can be profitable stewards in God's service. In addition to those currently available, these courses include the following:

## Full-Length Courses:

World Religions and Catholicism, taught by Gary Antion.  
Book of Revelation, taught by Donald Ward.  
Stewardship in the Churches of God, taught by C. Wayne Cole.

### **What is the International Bible Learning Center?**

The International Bible Learning Center (IBLC) is a nondenominational, nonprofit institution of higher learning dedicated to the restoration of the faith once delivered to the saints. One of the principal goals of the IBLC is to make collegiate-level Bible courses available to persons of all ages and educational backgrounds. This is achieved through on-site instruction and distance-learning experiences using materials that bring the classroom to the living room.

The IBLC is nondenominational, yet designed to respect and reflect the biblically proven histories and teachings of first-century Christians. The Center is not competing with any church organization for members.

The IBLC was founded to serve the religious educational needs of anyone who has the spiritual courage to base their beliefs solely on the Holy Scriptures.

In view of the educational needs that have been expressed by hundreds of God's people scattered around the earth, the IBLC stands in a unique position to serve Christians around the world. Since the IBLC is nondenominational, we will provide Bible students with a bold alternative to denominational and organizational traditions and preconceived scriptural interpretations. All viewpoints will be honestly examined in light of the Scriptures.

If you are a student of the Bible who is courageous enough to prove all religious beliefs from the Bible, you may want to become a charter sponsor of the IBLC.

### **Purpose and Philosophy of the IBLC**

The educational philosophy and purpose of the IBLC are guided by Christ's statement that "the worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24).

But what is truth? Christ responds, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

At this critical juncture in human history, we see a world ravaged and in the throes of human suffering in all its sordid forms. We see a world held hostage by fear, ignorance, superstition and the dogmas of man. We see a world that desires peace and freedom, but we live in a world that knows not the way to peace and freedom.

Jesus proclaimed: "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Peace and freedom can be achieved only through the knowledge and practice of the truth of the Word of God. Therefore, the IBLC is dedicated and committed to the development and dissemination of educational programs that will enrich the knowledge and strengthen the faith and practice of Christians.



Jude, writing toward the end of the first century, admonished his audience to earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. The success of the vicious onslaught against the truth during the first and second centuries makes it difficult to find records of scattered peoples who continued in the faith Christ delivered to the apostles. When one compares the teachings of the Bible with tradition and orthodoxy, the contrast is shocking. Paul wrote that "the mystery of lawlessness is already at work" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The attacks have continued for 2,000 years, and they have been intensified in recent years. These vicious and relentless attacks have brought forth several "winds of doctrine" (Ephesians 4:14), causing great confusion among God's people. The IBLC was founded to provide Christians with sound Bible-based courses to help them to be reestablished in the faith once delivered so they will no longer be tossed to and fro by very wind of doctrine.

Therefore, the IBLC is committed to providing sound biblical instruction that respects and reflects the biblical teachings of the first-century Church of God. These doctrines of the Apostolic Church can be gleaned only from Holy Scripture. They are not the domain of any corporate or organizational structure. All organizations and corporate structures should rejoice in the efforts of any person or group that is committed to teaching and publishing the truth of the Bible.

Love rejoices in the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6). Thus, any person who is motivated by God's love will rejoice in those who teach the truth.

Since the IBLC is not a church, we do not publish a codified statement of beliefs; we seek only to explain and defend the doctrines of the Bible. The Holy Scriptures, not tradition or orthodoxy, serve as the authority for determining the veracity of any viewpoint. The only requirement for enrollment at the IBLC is a teachable heart and determined dedication to intellectual honesty.

The students of the IBLC are encouraged to search the Scriptures daily to find whether any teaching of any person or group is true (Acts 17:11). We know that each person stands daily before the judgment seat of Christ and must give a personal account of his faith and practice to Him (Romans 14:10-12). The Father seeks those who are willing to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

The founders of the IBLC believe individual responsibility for the truth is one of the paramount lessons God desires His people to understand and internalize at this critical point in human history.

As a nondenominational institution, the IBLC welcomes the support of all who desire to see a viable institution of higher learning grow and develop to serve all of God's little ones regardless of their church affiliation, age, educational background or socio-economic status.

### **Mission statement**

The mission of the IBLC is to provide Bible courses relevant to the educational needs of Christians regardless of their church affiliation, age, educational background or socio-economic status for the purpose of educating, edifying and strengthening the faith and practice of Christians.

### **Objectives of the IBLC**

The IBLC seeks to fulfill its mission and purpose by:

Providing high-quality biblical instruction dedicated to the restoration of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Making college-level biblical courses available on video and audiotapes.

Providing on-site mini-courses at various locations around the world.

Developing challenging courses designed to educate, edify and confirm the faith and practice of Christians.

Providing students with basic principles for rightly dividing the word of truth.

Designing courses that challenge and encourage students to develop critical-thinking skills.

Developing courses that will enable Christians to provide an answer for the hope that lies within them.

Developing courses that will enable Christians to cope with the problems of this life and thus live happier more productive lives.

Developing courses that encourages Christians to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **Administration of the IBLC**

The IBLC was founded June 23, 1996. Since that time great strides have been taken toward fulfilling its mission and purpose. The Board of Regents--consisting of John Merritt, M.D., chairman; Linda White; John Robinson; John Barry Skidmore; and Dale Stogner--has adopted articles of incorporation and a set of working bylaws. The regents have contracted with Donald Ward, Ed.D., to serve as president of the IBLC. The board provides visionary direction for the Center in its formulation of policies and programs.