Oldest Torah found

In 1889, a librarian at the University of Bologna in Italy was cataloguing ancient Hebrew manuscripts, and he dated a sheepskin Torah scroll (the first five books of the Old Testament) to the 1600s. In a note, he said that it was written in “an Italian script, rather clumsy-looking, in which certain letters . . . show uncommon and strange appendices.” However, recently university professor Mauro Perani looked at the scroll, and he recognized that, far from being strange, its script had all the features of Hebrew writing from the late 1100s and early 1200s. So he commissioned a couple of carbon-14 tests. The result: instead of the scroll being 400 years old, it is about 800 years old, making it the oldest complete Torah scroll in existence.

— National Geographic

Lac-Mégantic memorial service

On July 6, a 73-car runaway train carrying at least 1.5 million gallons of crude oil crashed into the city center of Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, destroying more than 30 buildings and killing 47 people. On July 27, more than 1,000 people packed into Sainte-Agnès Catholic Church for a memorial service and mass honoring the victims, and hundreds more stood outside, lining the streets for several blocks. The service began with a recitation of the names of all 47 victims and a reading of Isaiah 49:15, 16: “I will not forget you! . . . I have engraved you
on the palms of my hands." Among those attending the service were Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper. At a news conference following the service, Harper said that he was there to express "the solidarity of all Canadians with the people of Lac-Mégantic." — CBC News

**Very religious populations in U.S. cities**

Provo-Orem, UT - 77%
Jackson, MS - 64%
Augusta, GA - 55%
National average - 40%
Madison, WI - 26%
Portland, ME - 22%
Boulder, CO - 17%

*Source: The Gallup Organization, based on surveys conducted between January 2 and December 29, 2012.*

**Brave Chinese pastor dies**

Chinese pastor Samuel Lamb spent more than 20 years in Chinese prisons, much of it doing hard labor in coal mines. The reason: he refused to merge his illegal house church with the government’s official church called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. After his release in 1978, he restarted his church in the city of Guangzhou. Today, the weekly attendance is more than 4,000. And while his church still has not been registered with the government’s official church, it is tolerated. “We must be prepared to suffer,” Lamb said. “Before I was sent to prison, I already prepared a bag with some clothes, shoes, and a tooth-brush. When I had to go to the police station, I could just pick it up. I was ready.” Pastor Lamb passed away on August 3 at the age of 88.—Christian Post

**An atheist chaplain?**

Jason Heap earned master’s degrees from both Oxford University in England and Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. Now he’s applying to be a chaplain for the United States Navy. There’s just one problem: he’s an atheist, which means he isn’t affiliated with any of the religious organizations that are approved by the U.S. military. Humanists claim that considerably more than 10,000 active servicemen are atheist or agnostic, and Heap believes they deserve to be represented by like-minded chaplains. He insists that he would not try to push his religious values onto others. He said, “I [just] want to use my skills on behalf of our people in the service.”—Religion Today
Confronting church shooters

The United States government recently released a 32-page guidebook for churches on developing an action plan for confronting violent people. Jimmy Meeks, a Southern Baptist preacher who is also a police officer, says the guidebook offers the same recommendations he’s been giving churches for many years. Meeks says, “The truth is . . . you just have to have some men in place in your congregation who’ve made up their mind if a shooter comes in, I’m going after him. I’m going down.” Meeks has tracked 433 deaths in churches since 1999, which he says is about 100 less than have died in schools.

—Baptist Press

Is Jesus Enough?

In his new book Elder Dan Jackson, President of the North American Division, shares that as we behold the cross of Christ we will be taken by His matchless charms. It’s an important question - “Is Jesus enough?” And the answer is a truth every person needs to hear - no matter how little or how much you have, Jesus is enough for today and for eternity.

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Scientists are proclaiming ever more boldly that the stories and promises in the Bible are just fables. So how can we know with certainty that Jesus is coming soon?

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Share it with family, co-workers, and friends.

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**As Quoted**

“More persecution, more growth.”

—Chinese Pastor Samuel Lamb’s explanation for the explosive growth of the Christian church in China during the Communist era.

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**Signs Special Issue**

This NEW addition to the Signs of the Times® Life Matters series is just in time to meet the surging interest in healthy living.

*Why Be a Vegetarian?* examines the advantages of being a vegetarian and describes how proper diet helps prevent heart disease, avoid cancer, defeat diabetes, and increase life span. Perfect for sharing! Quantity Pricing

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- New Believers
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