ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 18, 1988

# WHEN GOD APPEARS

TITUS 2:11-14

THE WRITER OF HEBREWS WROTE OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST FROM THE STANDPOINT OF "THREE APPEARINGS." "HE HATH APPEARED - 9:26; HE NOW APPEARS - 9:24; HE SHALL APPEAR - 9:28." THERE ARE SOME 6 OR 7 GREEK WORDS TRANSLATED "APPEAR" IN THE KJV. THE ONE IN OUR TEXT MEANS "BRIGHTNESS" OR "TO GIVE LIGHT." (LUKE 1:79: "TO GIVE LIGHT TO THEM THAT SIT IN DARKNESS AND OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, TO GUIDE OUR FEET IN THE WAY OF PEACE." WHEN JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH, HE BROUGHT MORAL AND SPIRITUAL LIGHT TO MAN'S MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DARKNESS. HIS COMING WAS BOTH HERALDED AND HUMBLE. ISAIAH 53:2: "FOR HE SHALL GROW UP BEFORE HIM AS A TENDER PLANT, AND AS A ROOT OUT OF A DRY GROUND...." THE TEXT TODAY SPEAKS OF THREE WAYS GOD MANIFESTS HIMSELF ON EARTH. THERE ARE OTHERS, THE TEXT MENTIONS THREE.

## I. WHEN GOD APPEARED IN GRACE - 2:11 (JUSTIFICATION)

THE WORDS GRACE AND SALVATION ARE LINKED TOGETHER AND TO CHRIST. THE WORD GRACE APPEARS THREE TIMES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, ALL RELATED TO CHRIST. (JOHN 1:14, 16, 17) SIMEON SAW THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL AND THE WORLD IN A PERSON WHOM HE HELD IN HIS ARMS. (LUKE 2:29-30 "LORD NOW LETTEST THOU THY SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE, ACCORDING TO THY WORD: FOR MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THY SALVATION...." GOD LINKS SALVATION TO GRACE, MAN LINKS SALVATION TO GUESSES. VERSES ON

"It was nothing you could or did achieve. It was God's gift to you. No one can pride himself that he earned the love of God." (Phillips Trans.)

GRACE: (1) II COR. 8:9; (2) EPH. 2:8; (3) ROMANS 3:24 "BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS." (4) ACTS 18:27. IT SAYS OF APOLLOS AND HIS MINISTRY..."WHO WHEN HE WAS COME, HELPED THEM MUCH WHICH HAD BELIEVED THROUGH GRACE FOR HE MIGHTILY CONVINCED THE JEWS AND THAT PUBLICALLY SHOWING BY THE SCRIPTURES THAT JESUS WAS CHRIST." THE SONG AMAZING GRACE IS A FAVORITE OF MANY. OTHER GREAT SONGS ON THE SUBJECT ARE GRACE! 'TIS A CHARMING SOUND, GRACE GREATER THAN OUR SIN. THE WORD GRACE REFERS TO GOD'S FAVOR TOWARD THE SINNER WHOSE NEED IS BEYOND HUMAN ABILITY. IT WAS A FAVORITE WORD OF A BRITISH SAILOR WHO DESERTED TO GO TO AFRICA AND DID SO BY JOINING A PORTUGUESE SLAVE TRADING VESSEL. HE SUFFERED GREATLY AT THE HANDS OF THE MEN ON BOARD SHIP. THROUGH MANY SINFUL ACTIVITIES AT SEA AND SPECIFICALLY ON ONE OCCASION HE WAS KNOCKED OVERBOARD AND SAVED ONLY WHEN THE CAPTAIN SPEARED HIM WITH A HARPOON WHICH LEFT A HIDEOUS SCAR FOR LIFE. EVENTUALLY JOHN NEWTON WAS SAVED AND WROTE ONE OF OUR MOST FAMILIAR HYMNS - AMAZING GRACE.

## II. WHEN GOD APPEARS IN THE GODLY - 2:12

THE BIBLE IS A MYSTERY BOOK TO MOST. THE POPULAR STORIES ARE GENERALLY KNOWN BUT EVEN THOUGH THE BIBLE IS A BEST SELLER IT IS NOT A BEST KNOWN BOOK. THE BOOK FOLK OBSERVE MOST CAREFULLY IS THE BIBLE "ACCORDING TO THE BELIEVER." THEY READ THIS BOOK VERY CLOSELY, CRITICALLY AND CONSTANTLY. THIS VERSE DEALS WITH THE SUBJECT OF SANCTIFICATION. (EXPLAIN IN TERMS OF A BOAT.) A. H. STRONG WROTE THAT THE OCEAN VESSEL WHOSE MACHINERY IS OLD AND BROKEN DOWN MAY MAKE IT INTO PORT AND TIE UP SAFELY AT THE DOCK. THE VESSEL

IS SAFE BUT NOT SOUND. REPAIRS MAY LAST A LONG TIME. JUSTIFICATION MAKES THE BELIEVER SAFE AND SANCTIFICATION MAKES HIM SOUND. JUSTIFICATION IS THE GATE THROUGH WHICH WE ENTER ONTO A LONG AND DIFFICULT ROAD CALLED SANCTIFICATION. THE DESTINATION OF THE ROAD IS CALLED GLORIFICATION. GODLY LIVING ON THE PART OF THE BELIEVER IS A TESTIMONY TO THE CHARACTER OF GOD. IF WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE THEN WE SHOULD STUDY TO BE GODLY. THE PHRASE "TEACHING US" IS THE IDEA OF PEDAGOGY. IN OTHER WORDS, THE BELIEVE IS IN GOD'S SCHOOL OR CLASSROOM AND UNBELIEVERS ARE WATCHING TO SEE IF HE IS MAKING PASSING GRADES OR PLAYING HOOKEY, IF HE IS A GOOD STUDENT OR GOOFING OFF! SERIOUS STUDENTS IN GOD'S ACADEMY PRACTICE TWO "ING" WORDS:
(1) DENYING - THIS IS THE BIBLE WAY OF SAYING NO OR HAVING NOTHING TO DO WITH CERTAIN THINGS. "UNGODLINESS" - THIS IS A REFERENCE TO UNGODLIKE LIFESTYLE WHICH IS BASICALLY A WRONG ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD. THE WORDS "WORLDLY LUST" DO NOT PRIMARILY REFER TO SEXUAL MISCONDUCT. IT IS A REFERENCE TO STRONG DESIRE FOR THE THINGS THIS WORLD SYSTEM EXALTS WITH NOTHING TO SHOW TO GOD FOR A LIFE LIVED ON THIS PLANET. IN OTHER WORDS, WHEN A PERSON GETS SAVED HIS DESIRES CHANGE. (I PETER 2:2) (2) LIVING - THERE IS A "NOW AGE" MENTALITY THAT WAS DEMONSTRATED IN THE LIFE OF DEMAS. THE WORD "SOBERLY" MEANS SENSIBLY OR WE MIGHT SAY TO HAVE ONE'S HEAD ON STRAIGHT. THE WORD "RIGHTEOUSLY" MEANS TO WALK THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW. (COMMENT REGARDING STEVE LARGENT - SEATTLE SEAHAWKS REFERENCE TO HIMSELF AS A "STRAIGHT ARROW.") "GODLY" - JUST AS JUSTIFICATION TAKES ONE OUT OF EGYPT SO SANCTIFICATION TAKES EGYPT OUT OF THE BELIEVER. WHEN WE SAY I DON'T DRINK, I DON'T SMOKE, I DON'T CHEAT ON MY COMPANION AND I DON'T CARE WHO KNOWS IT, ONE IS APT

TO BE CALLED A HOLY ROLLER OR A HOLY JOE. ANSWER: HOW CAN ONE BE INFLUENCED BY A HOLY BIBLE AND INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND INVOLVED WITH HOLY PEOPLE AND NOT BELIEVE IN HOLINESS OR GODLINESS! THE LIFESTYLE OF THE BELIEVER WILL BE UPSTREAM NOT DOWNSTREAM, UPBEAT NOT DEADBEAT! (MATTHEW 7:13-14) IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MEN TO SEE GOD IN THE PAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BUT THEY WILL LOOK MOST OF ALL AT THE PEOPLE WHO PROFESS TO BE HIS.

## III. WHEN GOD APPEARS IN GLORY - 2:13

GRACE AND GLORY ARE UNSEPARABLY BOUND TOGETHER. THOSE WHO ARE SAVED BY GRACE ARE SURE FOR GLORY. ROMANS 8:30 DOES NOT USE THE WORD "MAY" OR "WILL" WITH REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE. IT IS SIMPLY "GLORIFIED." IT IS IN THE AORIST TENSE BUT REFERS TO COMPLETED ACTION IN THE PAST, THAT IS, GOD SEES THE BELIEVER'S GLORIFICATION AS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED! CHAFER SAYS: "GOD STARTS OUT WITH 100 SHEEP AND ARRIVES IN GLORY WITH 100 SHEEP - NOT 99! THERE IS AN INTERESTING TEXTUAL CONSIDERATION REGARDING THE TRANSLATION OF THE TWO WORDS AND FROM THE GREEK KAI. (THE SECOND IS AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO THE DEITY OF CHRIST.) SCHOLARS HAVE BEEN ARGUING OVER THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BLESSED HOPE AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF CHRIST WITH REFERENCE TO TIME SEQUENCE. MANY ANTI-DISPENSATIONALISTS LIKE TO LINK THESE TWO PHRASES AS OCCURRING AT THE SAME TIME. DISPENSATIONALISTS SEE THE PHRASES REFERRING TO ONE EVENT BUT TWO ASPECTS OF THE EVENT SEPARATED BY SEVEN YEARS TIME. IN OTHER WORDS, ONE A REFERENCE TO THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH, THE OTHER A REFERENCE TO THE REVELATION OF MESSIAH. THE BLESSED HOPE IS ESPECIALLY MEANINGFUL TO THE BELIEVER WHEREAS THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF CHRIST

AS KING RELATES TO HIS JUDICIAL FUNCTION IN THAT CAPACITY. THERE IS ONE WORD THAT IS SOMETIMES OVERLOOKED IN THIS VERSE, IT IS THE TERM HOPE. THE ONLY HOPE FOR THIS PLANET, BOTH PERSONALLY AND POLITICALLY IS BOUND UP IN JESUS CHRIST. JUST AS JESUS' FIRST COMING BROUGHT HOPE TO THE WORLD, SO HIS SECOND COMING WILL DO THE SAME AGAIN. IN 1965, DR. LEHMAN STRAUSS PUBLISHED A BOOK ON PROPHECY. THE LAST CHAPTER OF THAT BOOK IS ENTITLED "OUR ONLY HOPE." IT IS STILL TRUE.

VONNA—

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 17, 1989

# SOMEONE IS COMING AND IT ISN'T SANTA CLAUS

"SOMEONE'S COMING" WERE EXCITING WORDS WHEN I WAS GROWING UP IN THE COUNTRY. THE FAINT HUM OF AN AUTOMOBILE ENGINE IN THE DISTANCE, EVEN BEFORE IT CAME INTO VIEW, THE SOUND OF AUTO TIRES ON A GRAVEL ROAD, A DOG BARKING AND LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD, WERE ALL SIGNS THAT SOMEONE WAS APPROACHING THE HOUSE. WE COULD OFTEN TELL WHO WAS COMING BEFORE THEY ARRIVED BY THE MAKE AND COLOR OF THE AUTOMOBILE, IF WALKING THE NATURE OF THE WALK, COLOR OF THE CLOTHES OR SOUND OF THE VOICE. IT WAS ALWAYS A SPECIAL TIME WHEN "COMPANY WAS COMING." THERE IS A RECURRING THEME IN THE BIBLE THAT SOMEONE IS COMING. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THE EMPHASIS IS SIMPLY "HE IS COMING." IN THE GOSPELS, "HE IS HERE." THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION - "HE IS COMING AGAIN!" TODAY, WE WILL EXAMINE SEVERAL PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE THAT SPEAK OF MESSIAH'S COMING TO EARTH TWICE. (BY THE WAY, MESSIANIC EXCITEMENT WAS ALIVE WHEN JESUS CAME THE FIRST TIME AND WILL BE SO WHEN HE COMES THE SECOND TIME. THE WORD MESSIAH SIMPLY MEANS "ANOINTED ONE." IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, PEOPLE AND THINGS WERE ANOINTED FOR SACRED PURPOSES. PRIESTS AND KINGS WERE CONSECRATED WITH OIL. ISRAELITES DID NOT CROWN A KING - THEY ANOINTED HIM!)

## I. SOMEONE WHO IS ETERNAL YET VIRGIN BORN - ISAIAH 7:14

IN THE TEXT, THE "SIGN" WAS SOMETHING SUPER-NATURAL FROM GOD. THE USAGE OF THE PLURAL WITH "YOU" GOES BEYOND AHAZ TO THE WHOLE HOUSE OF DAVID. THE TERM "IMMANUEL" REFERS TO GOD IN FLESH. (JOHN 1:14) IN ISAIAH 9:6,

Prophets material

"one who inhabits eternity"

9:6

ONE OF THE NAMES ATTACHED TO OUR BLESSED LORD IS "THE EVERLASTING FATHER." THE LITERAL REFERENCE IS "FATHER OF THE AGES." THE WORD FATHER IS HERE APPLIED TO THE SON BECAUSE HE ALONG WITH GOD THE FATHER SHARED ETERNITY. THE HEBREWS USED THE WORD FATHER WITH GREAT VARIETY. IT COULD REFER TO A LITERAL FATHER, ANCESTOR, RULER OR INSTRUCTOR. THIS PHRASE REFERS TO THE SAVIOUR, NOT ONLY AS TO HIS EVERLASTING NATURE AND DURATION, BUT ONE WHO IS STRONG IN THAT CAPACITY OR ROLE. JESUS TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES REGARDING HIS ETERNAL BEING. (I JOHN 1:2 STATES "FOR THE LIFE WAS MANIFESTED AND WE HAVE SEEN IT, AND BEAR WITNESS, AND SHEW UNTO YOU THAT ETERNAL LIFE WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER AND WAS MANIFESTED UNTO US." JESUS STATED OFTEN THAT HE GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES ETERNAL LIFE. QUESTION? HOW COULD A FINITE BEING GIVE OTHER FINITE BEINGS SOMETHING OF INFINITE QUALITY - NAMELY ETERNAL LIFE? ANSWER: HE COULDN'T UNLESS HE WERE ETERNAL! THE VIRGIN BIRTH WAS GOD'S WAY OF BRINING A PERSON TO EARTH WHO WAS NOT TAINTED WITH ORIGINAL SIN AND COULD THUS REDEEM SINFUL MANKIND. EVERY PERSON FROM ADAM ON IS BORN A SPIRITUAL CASUALTY. THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS WAS JESUS CHRIST. (PSALM 51:5, 58:3) IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE TO PROVE OR DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH. (EXPLAIN THAT THIS DOCTRINE TEACHES THE SINLESSNESS OF JESUS, NOT MARY.) THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR BELIEVING THE VIRGIN BIRTH APART FROM THE CLEAR DECLARATION OF SCRIPTURE. (MATT. 1:18-21, LUKE 1:35)

(1) IF THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS NOT TRUE - MARY LIED. (LUKE 1:34)

(2) THE CHRISTMAS STORY - THIS IS THE PRIMARY STORY AND THE HIGHLIGHT OF FAMILY LIFE. IT IS NOT THE KIND OF STORY WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO KNOW IF THERE ARE IMMORAL CONNOTATIONS.

(3) MARY COULD HAVE SAVED JESUS' LIFE BY ADMITTING HER OWN IMPROPRIETY.

## II. SOMEONE WHO WOULD BE BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE - ISAIAH 9:6

HOW A PERSON COULD BE BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE WITHOUT A DUAL PERSONALITY IS A MYSTERY BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION. MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS SUPERSTITION TAUGHT ABOUT FREAKISH GODS WHO CAME DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS BEARING THE APPEARANCE OF PART MAN AND PART ANIMAL. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS THE GOD WHO WAS HALF MAN, HALF HORSE, ANOTHER HALF WOMAN, HALF FISH. BUT THESE FANCIFUL AND GROTESQUE ABSURDITIES ARE MISSING FROM THE BIBLE PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST WHO WAS BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE IN PERFECT BALANCE. IN CHURCH HISTORY, THERE WERE 7 ECUMENICAL COUNCILS IN THE THIRD AND FOURTH CENTURIES TO DEAL WITH DOCTRINAL PROBLEMS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE BEST KNOW IS THE COUNCIL OF NICEA IN 325 HAVING TO DO WITH THE DIETY OF CHRIST. THE CONFLICT WAS BETWEEN ARIUS AND ATHANASIUS OVER TWO WORDS REFERRING TO OUR LORD'S DIETY, THE WORDS SIMILAR AND SAME. THE FOURTH OF THESE COUNCILS WAS IN 451 A.D. AT CHALCEDON. SIX HUNDRED THIRTY BISHOPS MET TO DEAL WITH A RECURRING PROBLEM CENTERING AROUND A MAN NAMED NESTORIUS, A LEARNED AND ELOQUENT MONK FROM ANTIOCH WHO WAS CORRUPTING THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO NATURES OF CHRIST. THE COUNCIL WAS FRAUGHT WITH DISORDER AND TUMULT. SIMPLY STATED THE SUBSTANCES OF THEIR CONCLUSION WAS THAT OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS PERFECT IN DIETY, PERFECT IN HUMANITY, ONE PERSON. THEY SAID THAT "HE IS ONE CHRIST EXISTING IN TWO NATURES WITHOUT MIXTURE, WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT SEPARATION, THE DIVERSITY OF THE NATURES NOT BEING DESTROYED BY

THEIR UNION IN THE ONE PERSON, BUT THE PECULIAR PROPERTIES OF EACH BEING PRESERVED AND CONCURRING TO THE ONE PERSON." LET US EXAMINE ISAIAH 9:6 IN THIS REGARD:

(A) HIS HUMANITY - "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN." JESUS CHRIST BEGAN HIS LIFE AS A BABY IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER, GREW AND DEVELOPED INTO PERFECT MANHOOD. HE HAD EVERY ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN NATURE WITH ONE EXCEPTION - HE HAD NO SIN NOR THE CAPACITY TO COMMIT SIN. SIN IS AN ABNORMALITY AND NOT ESSENTIAL OR NECESSARY AS PART OF TRUE HUMAN NATURE. JESUS WAS BORN WITH A PURE HUMAN NATURE. IN THE FINEST SENSE OF THE WORD, HE WAS THE TRUE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL HUMANITY. BECAUSE HE WAS HUMAN, HE IS ONCE AND FOREVER LINKED TO THE HUMAN RACE AND ASSURES ALL MEN EVERYWHERE OF HIS INTEREST IN AND SYMPATHY FOR THEM FOR HE IS KNOWN EVEN TODAY AS "THE MAN CHRIST JESUS." OUR LORD MANIFESTED TRUE HUMAN EMPTIONS IN THAT HE WAS GRIEVED, LOVED, WAS WEARY, THIRSTY, SLEEPY AND HUNGRY.

(B) HIS DIETY - "UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN." JESUS CHRIST DID NOT BEGIN HIS EXISTENCE IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER FOR HE WAS ONE WHO HAD EXISTED FOR ALL ETERNITY. BETHLEHEM WAS HIS INCARNATION, THAT IS WHERE HE BECAME FLESH, BUT IT WAS JUST A DOOR THROUGH WHICH HE ENTERED INTO HUMAN EXISTENCE. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT JESUS' DIETY WAS NOT ONLY DEMONSTRATED BY WHAT HE DID BUT BY WHAT HE PERMITTED. (COMPARE ACCEPTANCE OF WORSHIP. EITHER JESUS WAS GOD OR HE WAS A CHARLATAN OF THE HIGHEST OR LOWEST ORDER!) TIME WILL NOT PERMIT AN EXAMINATION OF THE NAMES IN THE TEXT. WE

WILL LIMIT IT TO PRINCE OF PEACE - THIS PHRASE DESCRIBES THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF MESSIAH'S RULE. HE WILL BE A PEACEFUL PRINCE WHO WILL BRING PEACE TO EARTH. THIS PHRASE DISTINGUISHES THIS KING FROM ALL OTHER KINGS AND PRINCES IN HUMAN HISTORY. MOST HAVE DELIGHTED IN TAKING TERRITORY BY THE SWORD AND THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD. HOWEVER, MESSIAH WILL PROMOTE UNIVERSAL PEACE AND HIS REIGN WILL PUT AND END TO WAR AND BRING PERMANENT HARMONY AMONG THE NATIONS OF EARTH. PEACE IS AND HAS BEEN THE THEME, THE KEYNOTE OF MOST ADMINISTRATION IN AMERICAN DURING MY LIFETIME.

III. SOMEONE WHO IS BOTH SERVANT AND SOVEREIGN - ISAIAH 52:13-15, 53:11

THIS TEXT TEACHES THAT MEN WERE ASTONISHED AT JESUS' FIRST COMING AND THEY WILL ALSO BE ASTONISHED AT HIS SECOND COMING. (EXPLAIN) IN THE NEW TESTAMENT PHILIPPIANS 2:6-9 PRESENTS THE STEPS OF OUR LORD FROM SOVEREIGN TO SERVANT. (MARK 10:45, JOHN 13) CHRIST CAME TO EARTH NOT AS AN ARISTOCRAT BUT AS AN ARTISAN. THE PURPOSE OF THIS GREAT DESCENT IS REVEALED IN MATTHEW 1:21.

IV. SOMEONE WHO WOULD DIE ONCE BUT COME TO EARTH TWICE - I PETER 1:9-11

OUR STATEMENT SOUNDS MORE LIKE A RIDDLE THAN REALITY. WHAT SOME OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS, AND ALL OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF JESUS' DAY MISSED IN SCRIPTURE WAS THAT MESSIAH WOULD COME TO EARTH NOT ONCE BUT TWICE. (CONSIDER TEXT) HIS FIRST COMING WOULD RESULT IN SUFFERING AND A CROSS. HIS SECOND COMING WOULD BE IN GLORY AND A CROWN.

JESUS MADE THIS DISTINCTION EARLY IN HIS MINISTRY. (LUKE 4:16-21) THE ISAIAH 61:1-2 PASSAGE CONTINUES ON "AND THE DAY OF VENGANCE OF OUR GOD...." WHERE HE STOPPED IS HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT. J. D. JONES SAID THAT WE MUST MAKE THE CHRIST OF HISTORY THE CHRIST IN OUR HEARTS. (MATTHEW 11:28, REV. 3:20)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 20, 1987

# SOMEONE IS COMING (AND IT ISN'T SANTA CLAUS)

MARK 1:1-11

THE GOSPEL OF MARK DOES NOT CONTAIN A GENEALOGY OF JESUS - A SERVANT DOES NOT NEED A GENEALOGY. THE EMPHASIS IN THIS GOSPEL IS NOT WHAT OUR LORD DESERVES BUT WHAT HE DOES. IT IS THE ACTION GOSPEL WITH KEY WORDS - IMMEDIATELY AND STRAIGHTWAY. MARK BEGINS WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT - "SOMEONE IS COMING" - AND IT ISN'T SANTA CLAUS OR THE EASTER BUNNY! IT IS SOMEONE EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW. (RELATE TO COUNTRY LIVING AND THE ARRIVAL OF "COMPANY" - VOICES, CAR LIGHTS, TIRES ON GRAVEL, DOGS BARKING - RELATE SOUND ACTIVATED DRIVEWAY LIGHTS.) IN THE BIBLE, THE OLD TESTAMENT SAYS HE IS COMING, THE GOSPELS SAY HE IS HERE, THE EPISTLES AND REVELATION SAY HE IS COMING AGAIN.

## I. THE SOMEONE THE PROPHETS WROTE ABOUT - 1:2-3

AFTER THE DEATH OF SOLOMON, THERE WAS A TIME OF POLITICAL TURMOIL IN ISRAEL CHARACTERIZED BY DECLINE AND DIVISION. GOD RAISED UP A GROUP OF MEN WHO WERE SPOKESMEN FOR HIM. THEY WERE CALLED PROPHETS. THEY SPOKE TO THE NATION'S MORAL AND SPIRITUAL SICKNESS, WARNED OF DIVINE JUDGMENT, YET SAW BEYOND THAT PRESENT AGE TO GLORIOUS DAYS IN THE FUTURE. IN THE EARLY DAYS, WHAT THEY SAID WAS LARGELY SPOKEN BUT LATER THEY BEGAN TO WRITE AND WHAT THEY SAID IS RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE. THE MESSAGE THEY SPOKE AND WROTE WAS NOT THEIR OWN, IT WAS FROM GOD TO HIS PEOPLE. (BY THE WAY, THERE ARE NO PROPHETS TODAY. SOME SAY THEY ARE BUT IT IS A SELF-STYLED, SELF-APPOINTED, AND OFTEN SELF-SERVING

AFFAIR. THE BIBLE IS COMPLETE AND GOD IS NOT ADDING ANYTHING TO THE DIVINE RECORD. ALSO, FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE THERE ARE PROPHETS STILL SPEAKING, ONE COULD UNDERSTAND THE JIM AND TAMMY DILEMMA - YOUR WORD ON THE SAME PLANE WITH SCRIPTURE! SO WHO CAN ARGUE WITH GOD!) MARK SPEAKS OF TWO PRIMARY PROPHECIES REGARDING MESSIAH'S COMING: (1) MALACHI 3:1 - (2) ISAIAH 40:3 - IN BOTH PROPHECIES A CALL FOR THE NATION TO GET READY FOR THEIR MESSIAH. BOTH PROPHECIES USE THE WORD PREPARE. IN THE ANCIENT EAST, ROAD REPAIR WAS NOT MUCH. ORDINARY ROADS WERE NOT SURFACED AND SURFACED ROADS WERE SPECIAL, BUILT PRIMARILY FOR THE KING TO USE. SUCH ROADS WERE CALLED THE KING'S HIGHWAY AND THEY WERE KEPT IN REPAIR SPECIFICALLY FOR THE KING'S JOURNEY. BEFORE A KING ARRIVED AT A CERTAIN DESTINATION, A SPECIAL PERSON WAS SENT OUT TO CHECK THE ROAD AND TO GIVE ADVANCED NOTICE OF HIS COMING AND THAT PERSON WAS KNOWN AS THE FORE-RUNNER. IT WAS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS READY AS HE ANNOUNCED THE KING'S COMING. SUCH WAS THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST. IN ONE SENSE OF THE WORD HE WAS THE LAST OF THE GREAT PROPHETIC VOICES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT ERA.

II. THE SOMEONE JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHED - 1:4-8

THE OLDEST PERSON ALIVE AT THIS TIME, HAD NEVER SEEN A REAL-LIFE PROPHET IN ISRAEL. FOUR HUNDRED SILENT YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE MALACHI SPOKE WITH DIVINE AUTHORITY BUT SINCE THAT TIME THERE HAD BEEN NO VOICE. IT WAS A TIME WHEN RELIGIOUS LEADERS EMPHASIZED RELIGIOUS RITUAL BUT NOBODY SPOKE FOR GOD. THEN FROM THE DESERT CAME

A MAN WHOSE MINISTRY WAS TO START GOD'S HIGHWAY PROGRAM FOR THE MESSIAH'S ARRIVAL. VANCE HAVNER HAS SUGGESTED THAT JOHN THE BAPTIST WOULD BE VERY UNWELCOME IN MOST CHURCHES TODAY - INCLUDING OURS!

(1) HIS DRESS (v.6)

JOHN HAD NOT READ THE POPULAR BOOK "DRESS FOR SUCCESS." THERE WAS AN AURA AND AROMA OF THE OUTDOORS ABOUT THIS STRONG PERSON. HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF BAN OR ANY OTHER LOTION OR PERFUME AND IF YOU EVER BEEN AROUND A CAMEL OR CAMEL SKINS YOU CAN IMAGINE SOMETHING OF HIS APPEARANCE AND SMELL!

(2) HIS DIET (v.6)

IMAGINE TAKING JOHN THE BAPTIST FOR LUNCH - LOCUST AND WILD HONEY NOT ON THE MENU - SNAILS INSTEAD!

(3) HIS DECLARATION (v.7)

HE CALLED PEOPLE SNAKES. HE CALLED FOR PUBLIC REPENTANCE AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD LIVING. THE WORD STRAIGHT WAS THE HALLMARK OF HIS MESSAGE. "JOHN THE BAPTIST DID NOT OFFER A FREE CAMEL RIDE TO WHOEVER BROUGHT THE MOST TO HEAR HIM PREACH." (VANCE HAVNER) HE MADE SOME PEOPLE TERRIBLY MAD, (HEROD) HE SCARED SINNERS BUT NOBODY SLEPT WHILE HE PREACHED. THROW AWAY THE "DO NOT DISTURB" SIGNS THAT HANG ABOUT THE NECKS OF SO MANY TODAY. THE PEOPLE HAD NEVER HEARD ANYONE LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST SPEAK AND IT ELECTRIFIED, EXCITED AND EVANGELIZED THE NATION. THE PHRASE "BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE" WAS A CALL TO A PUBLIC ACT TO SHOW A PRIVATE ACCEPTANCE OF WHAT JOHN WAS SAYING, THAT IS, GET READY FOR THE

MESSIAH. THE WORD CONFESSION SIMPLY MEANT THESE PEOPLE WERE WILLING TO MAKE A SPIRITUAL CHANGE AND THEY NEEDED TO QUALIFY THEMSELVES FOR THE MESSIAH'S COMING. (COMPARE MATTHEW 10:32, ROMANS 10:9-10) THE RITUAL OF BAPTISM SIMPLY POINTED TO THE REALITY OF AN INWARD CHANGE. BAPTISM SHOWED A CHANGE OF HEART, IN OTHER WORDS REPENTANCE. BY THE WAY THE SCRIPTURAL ORDER HAS NOT CHANGED. ACTS 18:8

## III. THE SOMEONE WHO PLEASED GOD - 1:9-11

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE AND ILLUSTRATED HERE AS NO OTHER PLACE IN THE BIBLE. ON THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER IT WAS TESTIMONY TIME AND OUR LORD'S BAPTISMAL SERVICE WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT GOD THE FATHER FELT COMPELLED TO PARTICIPATE AS HE DID ALSO AT THE TRANSFIGURATION. (MATTHEW 17:5) QUESTION: WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED? OBVIOUSLY HE WAS NOT BAPTIZED FOR FORGIVENESS OF SINS FOR HE HAD NONE. IT IS BASICALLY IDENTIFICATION OF THE WORLD'S SIN AND THE NATION OF ISRAEL AND INTRODUCTION INTO HIS MESSIANIC OFFICE. WITH THIS PUBLIC ACT BEGAN HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY. ALSO NOTICE THAT THE BAPTISM HERE AND IN OTHER PARTS OF SCRIPTURE WAS BY IMMERSION. (THE GREEK PREPOSITIONS MAKE THIS VERY CLEAR.) THE WORD "OPENED" IN THE TEXT IS A VERY INTERESTING WORD. IT IS THE GREEK SCHIZOMENOUS. THE PREFIX OF THE WORD MEANS TO SPLIT OR DIVIDE. WE ARE ACQUAINTED WITH THE TERM AS IT IS APPLIED TO A PSYCHOTIC DISORDER WHERE PEOPLE WITHDRAW FROM REALITY BECAUSE OF A SEVERE DISTURBANCE OF THE THOUGHT PROCESSES. "DOVE" - THE EMPHASIS IS ON A DOVE-LIKE FORM AND NOT A DOVE-LIKE WAY OR MANNER. THE DOVE IS ONE OF THE

INDUCTION

"Bodily Shape" (Lk. 3:22)

LONG, 36 FEET HIGH AND FEATURED 600 LIFE-SIZE FIGURES IN A SINGLE PICTURE. YET TO LOOK AT IT, IT WAS VERY DISAPPOINTING. IT WAS A CONGLOMERATE MASS OF CHARACTERS WITH NO CENTRAL PERSON OR PIVOTAL POINT UPON WHICH TO FIX THE EYE. BY CONTRAST WERE THE WORKS OF RAPHAEL. THE SISTINE CHAPEL ABOUNDS WITH HIS WORKS BUT ACCORDING TO THE CRITICS HE NEVER UNDERTOOK A TASK WITHOUT A DEFINITE OBJECT IN VIEW. HOWEVER DELICATE THE DETAILS OF THE BACKGROUND OF HIS WORK, THEY SIMPLY SERVED TO MAKE THE CENTRAL OBJECT MORE STRIKING. HUMAN HISTORY IS NOT A CONGLOMERATE MASS OF UNRELATED EVENTS BUT RATHER THE WORKING OUT OF THE PLAN OF GOD THROUGHOUT THE AGES. GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE FOR ALL HUMAN BEINGS AND HUMAN HISTORY IS TO HAVE THEM VITALLY RELATED TO HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. HE IS THE CENTRAL FIGURE OF HISTORY. THE GOSPEL ENCOURAGES MEN NOT TO GET RELIGION BUT TO ENJOY A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST. (THE WORD RELATIONSHIP IS A KIND OF BUZZ WORD TODAY THAT IS USED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR COMMITMENT. HOWEVER, ONE NOTABLE EXCEPTION TO THIS POOR USAGE IS AS IT RELATES TO ONE KNOWING JESUS CHRIST. CHECK YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. IS HE PLEASED WITH YOU? THE ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION HAS TO DO WITH THE LOCATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE. ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE HE IS EITHER ON THE OUTSIDE TRYING TO GET IN OR HE IS ON THE INSIDE CONTROLLING ONE'S LIFE. (REVELATION 3:20)

(3 new Mtg. (Vets) will
29 floors
Forget the key!

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 13, 1987
(Revised 1993)

# WHAT'S RIGHT ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

FOR MOST PEOPLE, CHRISTMAS IS THE FAVORITE SEASON OF THE YEAR. CHRISTMAS, AS WE KNOW IT, IS A MIXTURE OF MANY ELEMENTS - SOME RELIGIOUS, SOME CULTURAL, SOME PAGAN. YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT CHRISTMAS AS A CHRISTIAN FESTIVAL DID NOT COME INTO EXISTENCE UNTIL THE FOURTH OR FIFTH CENTURY. THEN THE DATE WAS SET AT DECEMBER 25, WHEREAS BEFORE THERE HAD BEEN A WIDE RANGE OF DATES ALL THE WAY FROM DECEMBER TO MAY. FAMILY, FOOD, FRIENDSHIP, GIFTS AND ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE CHRISTMAS SUCH A HAPPY SEASON ARE RIGHT IN OUR LIVES AND WE RECOGNIZE AND APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF THIS TRADITION. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF SOME RIGHT THINGS WITH REFERENCE TO OUR LORD'S BIRTH THAT MAY HAVE ESCAPED OUR ATTENTION. LET US EXAMINE THESE BEFORE CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR:

## I. HIS BIRTH WAS THE RIGHT TIME CHRONOLOGICALLY - GALATIANS 4:4

(Sit Dec 13:92)

ALMOST 2000 YEARS AGO, IN AN OBSCURE VILLAGE IN ISRAEL, A BABY WAS BORN IN A STABLE. HIS PARENTS WERE POOR AND BY ORDINARY STANDARDS - ORDINARY. SINCE THAT TIME, BILLIONS OF BABIES HAVE BEEN BORN YET THERE WAS SOMETHING UNIQUE ABOUT THAT CHILD TO THE EXTENT THAT WHERE HE WAS BORN AND WHEN HE WAS BORN BECAME A FOCAL POINT AND FOCAL PERSON IN HISTORY. HE WAS A GOD SEND, THAT IS THE WHOLE EVENT WAS GOD'S DOING. (JOHN 1:14, JOHN 3:16) THE PHRASE, "HIS SON". DR. JIM MCGINLAY USED TO REMIND HIS AUDIENCE THAT IT IS EASY TO HAVE A WRONG OPINION

ABOUT OUR CHILDREN OR SONS AS WELL AS AN UNSCRIPTURAL OPINION ABOUT GOD'S SON. HE RELATED THE STORY OF A MOTHER WHO HAD ASKED HIM TO PRAY FOR HER SON. HE ASKED: "WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOUR SON?" "NOTHING," WAS HER REPLY, "HE'S A GOOD BOY, HONEST, UPRIGHT AND HE HAS NEVER CAUSED ME A MOMENT'S ANXIETY." MCGINLAY THEN ASKED, "WHY SHOULD I PRAY FOR HIM?" THE MOTHER ADDED: "THE ONLY THING THAT IS WRONG IS THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW CHRIST." "IF HE IS SUCH A GOOD BOY, I SHALL NOT PRAY FOR HIM," WAS MCGINLAY'S REPLY. THE MOTHER WAS A BIT INDIGNANT AT THIS STRANGE RESPONSE. MCGINLAY EXPLAINED THAT GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF SAVING GOOD BOYS BUT RATHER OF SAVING SINNERS. THE MOTHER DID NOT REALIZE THAT HER BOY WAS GUILTY OF THE ONLY CRIME THAT WILL DAMN A SOUL FOREVER AND THAT IS REJECTION OF JESUS CHRIST. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THAT MOTHER WAS WILLING TO PRAY AND RECOGNIZE THAT ALL OF THE NATURAL QUALITIES OF HER SON HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT HE HAD REJECTED GOD'S SON! IT IS HIS SON AND WHAT WE THINK OF HIM THAT IS SO CRITICAL. (MY FIRST PASTORATE OUT OF SEMINARY WAS IN A SMALL NORTHERN INDIANA TOWN. SOME OF THE RICHEST SOIL I HAVE EVER SEEN WAS LOCATED IN THAT COUNTY. MANY OF THE PEOPLE ARE FARMERS AND CAME FROM A LONG LINE OF FARMERS WHO DELIGHTED IN THEIR FARMS. I REMEMBER ON ONE PARTICULAR OCCASION WHEN A MAN WAS SHOWING ME HIS FARM AND DESCRIBING HOW HE HAD MADE IT THROUGH THE DEPRESSION WITH A FEW COWS, PIGS AND CHICKENS. NOW THAT TINY FARM HAD DEVELOPED INTO SEVERAL HUNDRED ACRES, STANDING RICH WITH CORN, CATTLE, BARNS, EQUIPMENT, PROSPERITY EVERYWHERE. I ASKED MY FRIEND ABOUT THE FUTURE, HIS AND HIS FARM.

FUTURE

HE HAD LIVED AND WORKED HARD ON THAT PIECE OF LAND AND NOW WANTED TO PASS IT ON TO HIS SON. HIS WHOLE LIFE WAS WRAPPED UP IN HIS SON.) OUR WHOLE DESTINY IS WRAPPED UP IN GOD'S SON. THE PHRASE "MADE OF A WOMAN" SUGGESTS THE INSTRUMENTALITY OF THE INCARNATION. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE WOMAN AND NOT MAN IS MENTIONED. COULD THE REASON BE A VEILED REFERENCE TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH? HOWEVER, THE PHRASE THAT ARRESTS OUR ATTENTIONIN THE TEXT IS "THE FULLNESS OF TIME CAME...." (N.A.S.V.) WHAT TIME WAS IT? IT WAS GOD'S TIME AND HE WAS ON TIME. JESUS' BIRTH WAS NOT AN ACCIDENT OF CHANCE BUT RATHER AN APPOINTMENT OF CHOICE. THE VAST ROMAN EMPIRE WITH ITS ROADS AND LEGAL SYSTEM DOMINATED THE WORLD. THE PEACE OF ROME PREVAILED. THE GREEK LANGUAGE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY FOR MEN TO COMMUNICATE ON A WORLD-WIDE BASIS THROUGH A COMMON TONGUE. ALEXANDER THE GREAT HAD MADE THE WORLD A GRECIAN WORLD AND THAT LANGUAGE WAS SPOKEN EVERYWHERE. THE LANGUAGE BARRIER HAD BEEN BROKEN DOWN AND THE GOSPEL COULD GO FORTH UNHINDERED WITH THIS UNIVERSAL TONGUE. JUDAISM HAD PREPARED THE WORLD RELIGIOUSLY. NOW, THE WORLD WAS READY FOR A SAVIOUR. THE TERM FULLNESS MEANS TO FILL UP OR BECOME FULL. ALL OF THE EVENTS IN GOD'S DIVINE PROGRAM HAD REACHED COMPLETION, IT WAS TIME FOR JESUS TO COME ONTO THE STAGE OF HUMAN HISTORY. (THE WORD "FULLNESS" IS USED IN OTHER BIBLE PHRASES SUCH AS "THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES". THIS IS A PHRASE USED WITH REFERENCE TO THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

next "fullness"

## II. HIS BIRTH WAS IN THE RIGHT FAMILY GENEALOGICALLY - MATTHEW 1:1

IN THE BIBLE, FAMILY TREE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CHRISTMAS TREE. THE TEXT SAYS "THE BOOK OF THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST...." (FOR MANY YEARS, THE HOLIDAY SEASON WAS A TIME WHEN BOTH SIDES OF OUR FAMILY GOT TOGETHER OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. ON MY MOTHER'S SIDE, THEY NEVER TIRED OF TALKING ABOUT THEIR RELATIVES WHO CAME TO THIS COUNTRY FROM SCOTLAND AND SETTLED IN NORTH CAROLINA. IT IS A STORY I HAVE HEARD MANY TIMES. HOWEVER, ON MY DAD'S SIDE THEY DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR FAMILY ANCESTORS - THEY DIDN'T TALK MUCH ABOUT THEM AND THERE MAY HAVE BEEN GOOD REASON FOR THE SILENCE!) QUESTION: "WHY IS GENEALOGY SO IMPORTANT?" JEWS WERE INTERESTED IN GENEALOGY. FOR INSTANCE, A PRIEST HAD TO BE ABLE TO PRODUCE AN UNBROKEN RECORD OF HIS PEDIGREE ALL THE WAY BACK TO AARON. IF HE MARRIED, HIS WIFE MUST TRACE HER FAMILY TREE FOR AT LEAST FIVE GENERATIONS. THE SANHEDRIN KEPT THESE RECORDS. POINT: JESUS' TRUE GENEALOGICAL RECORD COULD BE TRACED BACK TO TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY - ABRAHAM (RACIAL LINE) AND DAVID (ROYAL LINE). THAT IS TO SAY, MATTHEW TRACES THE LEGAL LINE THROUGH JOSEPH WHILE LUKE TRACES THE BIOLOGICAL LINE THROUGH MARY. SIMPLY STATED, JESUS HAD THE LEGAL RIGHT TO THE THRONE OF DAVID - THE RECORD DECLARES THIS TO BE A FACT. IT IS IRONICAL THAT THE RECORD KEEPERS WERE THE VERY ONES WHO REFUSED TO ACCEPT HIM AS KING OF THE JEWS. JESUS WAS CHEATED BY THE RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES OUT OF THAT WHICH WAS RIGHTFULLY HIS. HE WILL RETURN FROM THE DEAD TO CLAIM

HIS THRONE FOR HE IS INDEED THE SON OF DAVID - KING OF THE JEWS! THAT STEADFAST INSISTENCE COST HIM HIS LIFE. PETER MAKES AN IMPORTANT POINT IN HIS PENTECOSTAL PREACHING ON HOW THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST COULD AND WILL TAKE HIS ROYAL THRONE - HE IS ISRAEL'S MESSIAH! (ACTS 2:24-36)

III. HIS BIRTH WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE GEOGRAPHICALLY - MICAH 5:2 (v. 30) p. 1130

QUESTION: LEFT TO CHANCE, WHAT WOULD BE THE ODDS THAT A SPECIFIC COUPLE EXPECTING A CHILD WOULD LEAVE THEIR HOME IN NORTHERN ISRAEL ENROUTE TO JERUSALEM TO ENROLL FOR TAX PURPOSES, STOPPING AT BETHLEHEM AT THE EXACT TIME WHEN THE BABY IS SCHEDULED TO BE BORN? NOTE, THEY DID NOT TRAVEL THE ADDITIONAL SIX MILES ON TO JERUSALEM EVEN WHEN THERE WERE NO ROOMS IN THE INN IN BETHLEHEM. ALL OF THESE SPECIFIC FACTS WERE WRITTEN DOWN 700 YEARS BEFORE PROPHECY WAS FULFILLED, ALL OF WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY INCREDIBLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, BETHLEHEM WAS AN UNLIKELY, INSIGNIFICANT PLACE FOR A KING TO BE BORN. JERUSALEM WAS THE CAPITAL CITY AND THAT IS WHERE ONE WOULD EXPECT ROYALTY TO APPEAR. ALSO, THERE IS NOT USUALLY A PARADE OF PEOPLE FROM OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD COMING TO WORSHIP A BABY. COULD ALL OF THIS BE LUCK OR FATE, OR HAPPENSTANCE - HARDLY. THIS CITY TOOK ON SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE BECAUSE JESUS WAS BORN THERE. POINT: GOD IS IN CONTROL OF HUMAN HISTORY. WHAT HE PREDICTS WILL COME TO PASS. IF THIS IS TRUE WITH REFERENCE TO CHRIST'S FIRST COMING, THINK HOW MUCH MORE IT WILL BE TRUE WITH REFERENCE TO CHRIST'S SECOND COMING!

## IV. HIS BIRTH WAS IN THE RIGHT MANNER BIOLOGICALLY - Isaiah 7:14

There is a fascinating prophecy in Jeremiah 22:30. God said of Jehoikachin that his spiritual condition and moral qualities were so low that even if he were a signet ring on the right hand of God - God would pull it off and have nothing to do with him. Also, God would hand this savory character over to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon as punishment for his sin. God said he is like a broken pot, an object that no one wants. The Lord declared not that Jehoikachin would have no children but as far as the record is concerned, none of his physical descendants would occupy a place in the chronology of Israel's kings. Therefore if our Lord Jesus Christ is to occupy the throne of David, Joseph could not be his biological father because he was in the direct line of descendancy. Therefore, God overcame this problem by making Joseph Jesus' legal, not biological, father. (I have been talking about the virgin birth in this church every year for 20 years. It is a subject of regular consideration. However, there are still some who have no idea of what we mean by this term. To be sure, we do not mean that Mary was a sinless person. That is known as the doctrine of immaculate conception which is not a scriptural doctrine. (Explain Luke 1:35) Why do men have such a problem with the doctrine of the virgin birth? They look upon this as something bordering on mythology where in the case of a centaur, one had half man, half horse or the case of a mermaid, half woman, half fish, nothing less than a grotesque

ABSURDITITY. THE VIRGIN BIRTH IN WHICH GOD BECAME A MAN IS A MYSTERY TO BE SURE BUT IS FAR FROM ABSURD! B. B. WARFIELD PUT HIS FINGER ON THE PROBLEM WHEN HE COINED THE WORD "AUTOSALVATION" IN HIS DESCRIPTION OF WHAT MAN WANTS TO DO ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE - MAINLY SAVE HIMSELF. YOU SEE, IF MAN BECOMES HIS OWN SAVIOUR HE DOES NOT WANT NOR DOES HE NEED A DIVINE SAVIOUR SO WHY IS THE VIRGIN BIRTH NECESSARY? THE VIRGIN BIRTH CENTERS ON THE KIND OF SAVIOUR MANKIND NEEDS. A SAVIOUR WHO IS HIMSELF A SINFUL CREATURE IS NO SAVIOUR AT ALL BUT A SINLESS SAVIOUR IS ONE WHO CAN SAVE SINFUL MEN.

V. HIS BIRTH WAS FOR THE RIGHT PURPOSE THEOLOGICALLY - MATTHEW 1:21

WHO NEEDS A SAVIOUR, IF NOBODY IS LOST? THE DIFFICULT IS NOT SO MUCH GETTING PEOPLE SAVED AS GETTING THEM LOST. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND A LOST SOUL! PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT PURPOSES IN LIFE. FOR SOME IT IS POLITICS, SPORTS, MUSIC, MEDICINE AND PEOPLE IN THESE VARIOUS CALLINGS MAKE A MARK IN THE WORLD AND HOPE TO GIVE BACK OR LEAVE SOMETHING BEHIND FOR WHAT THEY HAVE TAKEN FROM THIS WORLD. SUCH THINKING IS NOBLE INDEED. HOWEVER, EVERY PERSON ON THIS PLANET IS BORN WITH A MORAL CHINK IN HIS ARMOR, AN ACHILLES HEEL, A MORAL WEAKNESS THAT LEFT UNATTENDED WILL DO HIM IN! JESUS CAME INTO THIS WORLD TO DEAL WITH THAT BASIC PROBLEM. VERSES: MATTHEW 1:21, LUKE 19:10, JOHN 20:31, MARK 10:45. IF JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNER, THEN THE WORLD MUST BE FULL OF LOST SINNERS! THE PROBLEM IS

Compass
(Equipment is defective!)

THAT MAN HAS BEEN DECEIVED BY HIS OWN THINKING. INSTEAD OF ACCEPTING GOD'S JUDICIAL APPRAISAL (ISAIAH 53:6) HE, LIKE EVE, ASSUMES THAT NO RESCUE IS NEEDED. A BLIND MAN WALKING NEAR THE EDGE OF A CLIFF MAY DO SO WITH GREAT CONFIDENCE BUT THIS DOES NOT LESSEN THE DANGER. JESUS CHRIST'S PURPOSE IN COMING TO THIS EARTH WAS TO SAVE THE LOST AND THAT IS EXACTLY THE CONDITION OF EVERY PERSON OUTSIDE OF JESUS CHRIST.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 4, 1988

ABUNDANTLY (TEP 6665 only use of in John. "MORE" "beyond measure"

# WHY JESUS CAME

JOHN 10:10

MANY ~~MEN~~ ARE PERPLEXED ABOUT THEIR PURPOSE ON THIS PLANET. THEY BELIEVE THEY WERE BROUGHT HERE FOR SOME REASON BUT FINDING AND FULFILLING THAT PURPOSE IS NOT CLEARLY DEFINED. WHERE MAN CAME FROM, WHY HE IS HERE, AND WHERE HE IS GOING ARE ENORMOUS QUESTIONS IN THE MINDS OF MANY. OUR LORD KNEW HIS PURPOSE ON EARTH AND COMPLETED IT. (JOHN 10:10, MATTHEW 1:21, LUKE 19:10, JOHN 18:37, JOHN 17:4) THE TEXT STATES THAT HE CAME TO MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING. MAN'S DESTINY, DUTY AND DELIGHTS ARE BOUND UP IN HIM. ABUNDANT LIFE IS LINKED TO SHEEP WHO GRAZE IN THE SHEPHERD'S PASTURE, NOT SWINE EATING AT THE TROUGHS OF SELFISH PLEASURE. OUR GREAT SHEPHERD GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT GIVE HIS LIFE TO US. IN OTHER WORDS, THE GOD WHO MADE MAN KNOWS WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE HIS LIFE WORTHWHILE. (RELATE STORY OF HENRY FORD) THE WORD ABUNDANT IN THE TEXT IS TRANSLATED "EXCESS" OR "MORE THAN ENOUGH" ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE. WE THINK OF EXCESSES ~~IN LIFE~~ AS RELATING TO ~~THE~~ SINS OR WRONG DIRECTION IN LIFE. IT HAS NEVER DAWNED UPON THE UNSAVED PERSON WHEN HE COMES TO CHRIST HE DOES NOT SAY GOODBYE TO GOOD TIMES BUT HELLO TO HAPPINESS! GOD IS NOT THE "KILL JOY" OF LIFE, HE IS THE JOY MAKER! (COMMENT REGARDING JIM HEATON'S STATEMENT OF LIFE IN THE AVERAGE BAR.) THE "GOOD LIFE" IS THE "GOD LIFE." A LIFE THAT KNOWS GOD'S LOVE, GRACE, HOPE AND JOY IS FULL AND MEANINGFUL AND JESUS CAME TO EARTH IN ORDER THAT YOU AND I MIGHT ENJOY THAT LIFE HERE AND NOW! THE FIRST CHAPTER

Fulton Sheen

Text: To the Full (N.I.V.)

Key

is a fully and Meaningful life

If no Heaven ... still the best life to live.

God = that invisible Spirit in whom all things (Universe) have their source, support & eternal destiny. (Dr. Strong)

OF JOHN'S GOSPEL PROVIDES SEVERAL IMPORTANT REASONS WHY JESUS CAME TO EARTH.

## I. HE CAME TO REVEAL GOD - JOHN 1:18

GOD IS SPIRIT, THAT IS, A SPIRIT BEING AND IS NOT VISIBLE TO THE HUMAN EYE..... "THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD." COL. 1:15. "NOW UNTO THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, THE ONLY WISE GOD, BE HONOR AND GLORY FOREVER. AMEN." (I TIM. 1:17) "BY FAITH HE FORSOOK EGYPT, NOT FEARING THE WRATH OF THE KING: FOR HE ENDURED AS SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE." (HEB. 11:27) IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, ANYONE WHO SAID: "I HAVE SEEN GOD" REALLY HADN'T! THEY MAY HAVE SEEN SOMETHING BUT THAT SOMETHING WAS NOT THE SOMEONE WE KNOW AS GOD. QUESTION: IF GOD IS INVISIBLE, HOW COULD MOSES, JACOB AND ISAIAH DECLARE THEY HAD SEEN GOD? (EXODUS 33:23, ISAIAH 6:1-3) ANSWER: GOD PERMITTED A FEW PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TO SEE A MANIFESTATION OF HIS PRESENCE, BUT NOT HIMSELF. THEY SAW HIS GLORY, THE PLACE WHERE HE DWELT, BUT NOT HIM.!

### (A) "NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD"

THIS IS A STATEMENT OF FACT. HOWEVER, THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF GOD'S HANDS, ARMS, FEET AND EYES BUT THESE ARE EXPRESSIONS OR WAYS OF REVEALING THE INFINITE GOD TO FINITE BEINGS. THAT IS, AN INVISIBLE SPIRIT MAY MANIFEST HIMSELF IN A VISIBLE FORM. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLY SPIRIT DESCENDED UPON JESUS IN THE BODILY FORM OF A DOVE. RELATE TO ANCIENT OF DAYS IN DANIEL 7:9.

"one of a kind"

(B) "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON"

THE WORDS ONLY BEGOTTEN ARE THE GREEK MONOGENAS. THE NIV SAYS, "THE ONE AND ONLY." THIS IS A REFERENCE TO THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST. (2) ANGELS, (1) ADAM AND BELIEVERS (3) ARE ALL CALLED SONS OF GOD. CHRIST ALONE IS UNIQUE - THAT IS THE ONE AND ONLY, NONE OTHER LIKE HIM! THE WORD SON HAS BEEN THE TARGET OF SOME INTERESTING TEXTUAL VARIATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE NESTLE'S GREEK TEXT THE WORD SON OR WIOS IS TRANSLATED GOD OR THEOS. IN OTHER WORDS, SCHOLARS BELIEVE THAT THE PHRASE COULD BE AND MAYBE SHOULD BE TRANSLATED "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN GOD." (NASV)

(C) BOSOM -

THIS IS A HEBREW PHRASE WHICH SPEAKS OF INTIMACY. THROUGH CHRIST, GOD WAS BROUGHT NEAR TO MEN AND ALSO MEN WERE BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD.

LK. 16:22

"IS" not "was" = an eternal intimacy never changed at the incarnation

(D) DECLARED

THE GREEK WORD IS EXEGESATO WHICH IS A COMBINATION OF THE WORD EX WHICH MEANS OUT AND AGO WHICH MEANS TO LEAD OR BRING. THE WORD LITERALLY MEANS "TO BRING TO VISIBILITY." THE ENGLISH WORD EXEGESIS IS A TERM USED BY BIBLE TEACHERS. FOR SOME TEACHERS IT LITERALLY MEANS "EXIT JESUS!" HOWEVER, IN THE PURE SENSE OF THE TERM IT REFERS TO SHEDDING LIGHT ON A TEXT OF SCRIPTURE TO BRING TRUTH TO THE SURFACE, TO MAKE IT CLEAR SO PEOPLE MAY UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF THE BIBLE. JESUS CHRIST REVEALED OR BROUGHT GOD TO VISIBILITY SO MEN MIGHT LOOK UPON GOD AND LIVE. (JOHN 14:9) THERE IS A GRAPHIC

"To Explain"

(*) John 14:8-9

(Phil 2:6-8) Jesus

OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION IN GENESIS 45:1. EXAMPLE: AN ELECTRICAL TRANSFORMER IS AN APPARATUS FOR TRANSFORMING ELECTRICAL CURRENT FROM A HIGH TO A LOW POTENTIAL OR FROM A LOW TO A HIGH POTENTIAL WITHOUT CHANGING THE CURRENT ENERGY. ONE MIGHT SAY THAT IN HIS INCARNATION, JESUS CHRIST "STEPPED DOWN" HIS DIETY SO TO SPEAK WHEN HE TOOK UPON HIM A HUMAN BODY BUT IN THAT ACT IT WAS DONE WITHOUT CHANGING HIS DIVINE NATURE.

II. HE CAME TO RESIDE AMONG MEN - JOHN 1:14

A MOTHER ONCE SAID TO HER CHILD WHO WAS AFRAID TO SLEEP IN A ROOM BY HERSELF: "THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR IN THE DARK AND BESIDES THE ANGELS ARE NEAR YOU." THE CHILD ANSWERED THAT SHE DIDN'T WANT ANGELS TO BE NEAR HER BUT RATHER: "I WANT SOMEONE WITH SKIN ON HIS FACE." THIS VERSE DESCRIBES GOD COMING TO MAN WITH SKIN ON HIS FACE.

(A) THE WORD

COMPARE JOHN 1:1-2, REV. 19:13.

(B) "WAS MADE FLESH"

THE WORD MADE IS LITERALLY BECAME AND IS USED TO DESCRIBE BIRTH. GOD CAME TO MEN IN A REAL HUMAN BODY. STORIES ARE TOLD OF ANCIENT RULERS WHO SEEMED TO ENJOY WALKING AMONG THEIR SUBJECTS INCOGNITO. FOR EXAMPLE, PETER THE GREAT OF RUSSIA WAS A MAN OF GREAT ENERGY AND STRANGE MOODS. HE LEARNED THE SHIP-BUILDING TRADE BY WORKING AS AN ORDINARY LABORER IN THE SHIPYARDS. HE REFUSED A COMMISSION IN THE ARMY UNTIL HE HAD WORKED AS A PRIVATE. ON ONE OCCASION HE DECIDED TO PLAY THE PART OF A BEGGAR IN A CERTAIN

VILLAGE BY GOING FROM DOOR TO DOOR AND ASKING FOR HELP. QUEEN VICTORIA WAS ALSO FAMOUS FOR SIMILAR ACTS. SHE OFTEN DISGUISED HERSELF AS AN OLD WOMAN AND WALKED AMONG HER PEOPLE.

(C) "DWELT AMONG US" 2 Cor. 5:7

THE WORD DWELT MEANS TABERNACLED OR TO PITCH A TENT. JUST AS THE TABERNACLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS A TENT, A SYMBOL OR MATERIAL REPRESENTATION OF GOD DWELLING IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE, SO CHRIST TABERNACLED AMONG MEN. LIKE THE OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE, HE WAS TEMPORARY; GLORY WAS ON THE INSIDE, THE PLACE WHERE GOD AND MEN MET, THE PLACE WHERE ATONEMENT WAS MADE. THE PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION MAY BE ILLUSTRATED AS FOLLOWS: THE STORY IS TOLD OF A FATHER AND SON WHO WERE WALKING ALONG THE ROAD AS THE FATHER CARRIED A WALKING STICK IN HIS HAND. THE SON BECAME INTERESTED IN THE CANE AND ASKED IF HE MIGHT USE IT FOR A LITTLE WHILE AND WAS GIVEN PERMISSION TO DO SO. HE PROMPTLY BEGAN HITTING STONES AND BUSHES AND WHACKING AT ANYTHING IN HIS PATH. AS THEY LEFT THE ROAD AND WALKED ACROSS AN OPEN MEADOW, THE BOY SPOTTED AN EMPTY BIRD'S NEST AND DISCOVERED THAT THE SMALL BIRDS IN THE NEST HAD BEEN KILLED. THE BOY WAS SAD AND EXPRESSED THE DESIRE TO RECTIFY THE SITUATION — BUT WAS POWERLESS TO DO SO. IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE BOY TO EXPRESS HIS GRIEF TO THE MOTHER BIRD BECAUSE HUMAN BEINGS CANNOT COMMUNICATE WITH BIRDS IN THIS CAPACITY. IN ORDER TO DO SO, ONE MUST BE A BIRD HIMSELF. "IN THE INCARNATION, THE SON OF MAN BECAME A MAN TO ENABLE MEN TO BECOME SONS OF GOD." (C. S. LEWIS) → what an exchange !!!!

(D) "BEHELD HIS GLORY"

THE WORD BEHELD IS THE GREEK WORD FOR THEATER. THE GLORY MENTIONED IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE OLD TESTAMENT SHECHINAH OR THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG MEN. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THE GLORY OF GOD CAME AT TIMES WHEN GOD WAS VERY NEAR AND VERY CLOSE TO HIS PEOPLE. THE GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST MEANT THE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG HIS PEOPLE. WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS ON EARTH, MEN SAW THE SPLENDOR OF GOD IN A PERSON. THAT GLORY OF CHRIST IS DESCRIBED THEOLOGICALLY AS HIS ESSENTIAL, OFFICIAL AND MORAL GLORY.

(E) "FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH"

THINK OF THE THINGS MEN ARE FULL OF - SELF, LIES, VANITY. BUT GRACE AND TRUTH WERE IN PERFECT BALANCE IN CHRIST.

III. HE CAME TO RESCUE MEN FROM SIN - JOHN 1:29

Blood Sacrifice
Gen 22 1 Boy
Ex. 12 2 Family
Lev. 16 3 Nation
4

THE WORDS "LAMB OF GOD" WERE FAMILIAR TO JEWS. THE STORY OF THE PASSOVER AND THE BLOOD OF A LAMB SACRIFICED TO PROTECT THE FAMILY FROM DEATH WAS A WELL-KNOWN STORY. TWENTY NINE TIMES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, JOHN USED THE WORD LAMB TO FOCUS THE MINDS OF HIS READERS UPON THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE, NAMELY, THE CROSS OF CHRIST. THERE IS NO HELP OR HOPE FOR MANKIND APART FROM THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. "TAKETH AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD" OUR SIN AND OUR SAVIOUR ARE LINKED FOREVER. THE CROSS AND THE BLOOD ARE THE ONLY BASIS FOR FORGIVENESS AND CLEANSING. THE PHRASE SPEAKS OF SUBSTITUTION AND EXPIATION. ISAAC ASKED THE QUESTION

29 Times

is. "to receive all who receive Him!

OF THE AGES WHEN HE SAID: "WHERE IS THE LAMB?" (GENESIS 22:7) JOHN ANSWERED THAT QUESTION FOR EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE, FOREVER.

## IV. HE CAME TO BE RECEIVED AND TO RECEIVE - JOHN 1:12

Question: If all men are elect, the choosing of God, why ask them to become what they already are?

THE GIST OF 1:11 IS THAT JESUS CAME TO HIS OWN THINGS - NEUTER GENDER. THE SECOND OWN REFERS TO PEOPLE AND IS IN THE MASCULINE GENDER. THE VERSE STATES THAT JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD WHICH HE OWNED BY VIRTUE OF CREATION AND HIS OWN PEOPLE - THE JEWS - DID NOT WELCOME HIM. JESUS CAME TO A WORLD OF COUNTRY AND CITIES AND WAS NOT RECOGNIZED OR WELCOMED ON HIS OWN PROPERTY! THEREFORE, BEING REJECTED BY THE NATION, HE WAS RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUALS.

Little Boat Twice owned C&F

like (Evicted fr. own home)

### (A) "AS MANY AS"

THIS IS THE EQUIVALENT OF THE BIBLE WHOSOEVER. THERE WERE THEN, AS THERE ARE NOW, PEOPLE WHO ROSE ABOVE THE INDIFFERENCE AND HOSTILITY OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL TO RECOGNIZE AND RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS MESSIAH. THIS PHRASE IS GOD'S WAY OF PUTTING YOUR NAME AND MINE IN THE BLANK SPACE OF A BIBLE INVITATION. IN THE BIBLE, S-P-R-A-D-L-I-N-G IS SPELLED "AS MANY AS."

### (B) "RECEIVED HIM"

THE WORD LAMBANO IS TRANSLATED IN JOHN 6:11 AND 13:4 BY THE WORD TOOK. ILLUSTRATE WITH $1.00 BILL.

(COIN TO BILL)

To Teacher — "So & So attended my classes" — Never my Student!

About former Student

Believe precedes Become!

(C) "HE GAVE AUTHORITY TO BECOME...SONS"

MEN MUST BELIEVE BEFORE THEY BECOME. MEN WILL BEHAVE AFTER THEY BELIEVE AND BECOME. IN VERSE 13, JOHN GIVES THREE WRONG ROADS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS. SPIRITUAL BIRTH IS NOT THROUGH (1) PARENTS. PHYSICAL BIRTH AND SPIRITUAL BIRTH ARE TWO DIFFERENT REALMS. (2) PROGRESS FLESH CAN ONLY PRODUCE FLESH. IF A PERSON PUTS ON A POLICEMAN'S UNIFORM IT DOES NOT MAKE HIM A POLICEMAN. IF A PERSON STANDS IN A GARAGE IT DOES NOT MAKE HIM A CAR. SITTING IN A PEW DOES NOT MAKE A PERSON A CHRISTIAN. ATTENDING OR BELONGING TO A CHURCH DOES NOT MAKE A PERSON A CHRISTIAN. (3) PEOPLE THE PEOPLE HERE ARE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE AND REFER TO RELIGIOUS RITES. (QUESTION) HAVE YOU ANSWERED THE PERSON WHO IS KNOCKING AT YOUR HEART'S DOOR? THE ANSWERS TO THE KNOCK ARE TWO. (1) COME IN. (2) GO AWAY. REVELATION 3:20, "HE IS KNOCKING NOW!"

is NOT Righteousness

Why Jesus Came to Earth?
So people on earth could go To Heaven!

Israel did not welcome Him to her land. ... So many do not into their life.

3 Verbs
(1) Believe
(2) Receive
(3) Become

"Will you receive Christ - Now!
(Jn. 5:40)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 12, 1993

# "WHAT HE IS TO US"

JOHN 1:1-3, 14, 18, 29

7-9

OUR PRE-CHRISTMAS SERIES IS DEALING WITH SOME OF THE GREAT PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ON THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST. THUS FAR, WE HAVE EXAMINED PHILIPPIANS 2, COLOSSIANS 1 AND TODAY - JOHN 1. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN IS A FAVORITE OF MOST BELIEVERS. ITS SIMPLICITY IS APPEALING BUT IT IS ALSO PROFOUND IN NATURE. FOR EXAMPLE, JESUS' EXPRESSION "YE IN ME, AND I IN YOU." (JOHN 14:20) IN THIS VERSE THERE ARE SEVEN WORDS, ONE CONJUNCTION, TWO PREPOSITIONS, AND FOUR PRONOUNS. A CHILD IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COULD DEFINE MOST OF THE WORDS BUT PUT TOGETHER EVEN THE MOST PROFOUND THEOLOGIAN OR PHILOSOPHER WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY PROBING THE DEPTHS OF THE MEANING. "YE IN ME" REFERS TO SALVATION. "AND I IN YOU" REFERS TO SANCTIFICATION. TO KNOW THE MEANING OF INDIVIDUAL WORDS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THE STATEMENT IS UNDERSTOOD. THE WRITER OF THIS GOSPEL WAS THE FIRST TO FOLLOW JESUS, THE YOUNGEST OF THE TWELVE, THE LAST TO DIE. BELIEVE IS THE KEY WORD AND APPEARS NINETY EIGHT TIMES IN THE BOOK. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THIS SIMPLE YET PROFOUND GOSPEL SAVES THE SOUL, FEEDS THE MIND AND NOURISHES THE SPIRIT. IN THIS PASSAGE, LET US EXAMINE THE STATEMENTS WHICH DECLARE WHAT JESUS CHRIST IS TO US.

## I. HE IS THE WORD OF GOD - VERSE 1:1-4, 14

THESE VERSES SPEAK OF THE WORD IN THE BEGINNING AND WHAT HE BECAME. ONE WRITER SAYS THAT THE WORD EXISTED IN ETERNITY YET MOVED INTO OUR NEIGHBORHOOD! THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST. WHEN THE BEGINNING BEGAN, THE WORD ALREADY EXISTED. THE

TIMELESS EXISTENCE OF THE WORD WAS MENTIONED BY JESUS IN JOHN 8:58. THE TERM WORD WOULD CATCH THE ATTENTION OF GREEK PHILOSOPHERS FOR THIS TERM "LOGOS" REFERRED TO THE SUPREME PRINCIPLE OF THE UNIVERSE. TO THEM IT REFERRED TO AN IMPERSONAL POWER OR FORCE. JESUS GAVE THE TERM NEW MEANING REFERRING TO A DIVINE PERSON. AN INSTRUMENT OF EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION. ONE MIGHT WELL SAY THAT JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S EXPRESSION OF TRUTH TO MEN, GOD'S COMMUNICATION WITH MEN. IT IS AND THROUGH JESUS CHRIST THAT MEN CAN COME TO KNOW GOD. THE TERM "WAS" SPEAKS OF THE ETERNITY OF JESUS CHRIST CONCERNING HIS STATE OR BEING. THE PREPOSITION PROS LITERALLY MEANS FACE TO FACE. FOR ALL ETERNITY THERE HAS BEEN THE MOST INTIMATE CONNECTION AND ASSOCIATION OF THE WORD OF GOD WITH THE FATHER. THEY ARE ON THE SAME PLANE OF EQUALITY. CHRIST IS GOD'S LAST WORD TO MEN ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 1:1-3 - THE CLIMAX OR SUMMIT OF GOD'S REVELATION. THE WORD IS FURTHER DEFINED IN VERSE 14 AND ALSO REVELATION 19:13. THE WORD MADE WOULD BETTER BE TRANSLATED BECAME. IT IS SO TRANSLATED IN THE A.S.V. THE WORD DWELT LITERALLY MEANS TO PITCH A TENT A REFERENCE TO THE TEMPORARY RESIDENCE OF CHRIST ON EARTH AS OPPOSED TO HIS PERMANENCY IN ETERNITY. JUST AS THE TABERNACLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS A SYMBOL FOR MATERIAL REPRESENTATION OF THE GREAT TRUTH OF THE INCARNATION OR OF THE VISIBLE MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE, SO JESUS CHRIST IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH WAS A VISIBLE REPRESENTATION OF GOD DWELLING AMONG MEN. SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID THAT HE CAME TO DWELL AMONG MEN IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT DWELL WITH GOD. GOD CAME WHERE MEN WERE IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT GO WHERE HE IS. THIS GREAT VERSE HAS TO DO WITH THE INCARNATION. (STORIES HAVE BEEN TOLD OF ANCIENT RULERS WHO SEEMED TO DELIGHT IN WALKING AMONG THEIR PEOPLE INCOGNITO. PETER THE GREAT OF RUSSIA, A MAN OF

STRANGE MOODS AND GREAT ENERGY, LEARNED THE SHIP BUILDING TRADE BY WORKING AS AN ORDINARY LABORER IN FOREIGN SHIP YARDS. HE REFUSED A COMMISSION IN THE ARMY UNTIL HE HAD WORKED AS A PILOT. ON ONE OCCASION HE DECIDED TO PLAY THE PART OF A BEGGAR IN A CERTAIN VILLAGE, GOING FROM DOOR TO DOOR AS A TRAMP ASKING FOR HELP. QUEEN VICTORIA WAS FAMOUS FOR DOING SIMILAR THINGS THAT IS WALKING AMONG HER SUBJECTS AS AN OLD WOMAN. THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, THIS VERSE REFERS TO THAT DIVINE ACT WHEREBY THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRIUNE GOD WAS EMBODIED IN HUMAN NATURE, FLESH AND FORM. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, MEN SAW THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE SHECHINA - THE VISIBLE PRESENCE OF GOD AMONG MEN. WHEN JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH, MEN SAW THE SPLENDOR AND GLORY OF GOD IN A PERSON. IN JESUS CHRIST, MEN COULD SEE THE SPLENDOR AND GLORY OF GOD IN ALL OF HIS FULNESS. GOD'S WORD TO MEN IS JESUS CHRIST. IF MEN WILL NOT HEAR HIM, GOD HAS NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO THEM - NOTHING. "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED; HEAR YE HIM." (MATT. 17:5)

II. HE IS THE LIGHT OF GOD - VERSES 7-9

THE PURPOSE OF THE LIGHT IN COMING INTO THE WORLD WAS THAT MEN MIGHT BELIEVE. OTHER "LIGHTS" HAVE LED MEN ASTRAY. HE IS THE DEPENDABLE GUIDE TO LIGHT THE WAY TO HEAVEN. THE QUAKERS APPEALED TO THIS VERSE FOR THEIR BELIEF THAT IN EVERY MAN THERE IS AN INNER LIGHT THAT IS A SUFFICIENT GUIDE. THIS VERSE HAS SOMETIMES BEEN CALLED THE QUAKER TEXT. THERE IS SOME QUESTION REGARDING WHETHER THIS VERSE IS A REFERENCE TO THE IDEA THAT EACH PERSON RECEIVES A SPECIAL REVELATION FROM GOD. THE BIBLE DOES TEACH THAT ALL MEN HAVE A REVELATION FROM GOD HOWEVER.

(1) Nature - Psalm 19:1

(2) Conscience - Romans 2:14-15

(3) The Word of God - John 5:39

(4) Jesus Christ - John 1:18

Light and darkness are symbols of good and evil. The darkness has pursued the light for all human history but has not been able to put it out! To whatever degree ones darkness, the Light of Christ is sufficient to dispel it. (II Corinthians 4:3-4)

III. HE IS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD - 1:18

The Bible teaches that God is invisible. He is a Spirit being and therefore not seen with the human eye. "Who is the image of the invisible God" - Colossians 1:15 "Now unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only Wise God be honor and glory forever and ever." Amen (I Timothy 1:17)

Moses desired to see God. God permitted him to see a manifestation of His presence, but not Himself. In the Old Testament, men could see the glory of God and the place where he dwelt - but not Him. There is good textual evidence to support the Nestles text which says: "The only begotten God." In other words, this is a great verse on the Deity of Christ. Angels and Adam were called sons of God by creation. Sinners are sons of God by regeneration and adoption. Christ alone is God's only begotten, that is His unique son. God has many sons but none like Christ. (In Hebrew, the word bosom expresses the deepest intimacy of human

 (ἐξηγήσατο)

RELATIONSHIPS. IT SAYS OF THIS UNIQUE SON THAT HE HAS DECLARED THE FATHER. THIS IS THE GREEK WORD FROM WHICH THE ENGLISH EXEGESIS COMES. IT MEANS TO LEAD OUT, EXPLAIN OR UNFOLD. IT IS JESUS CHRIST WHO EXPLAINS OR INTERPRETS GOD TO MEN. (FOR EXAMPLE: IN A SEMINARY STUDY PROGRAM THE TERM EXEGESIS IS APPLIED TO STUDIES OF BOOKS OF THE BIBLE. IT MEANS TO INTERPRET OR MAKE KNOWN THE MEANING OF BOOKS AND VERSES BY CAREFUL AND THOROUGH STUDY OF THE TEXT.)

JESUS CHRIST BROUGHT GOD TO VISIBILITY OR MANIFESTATION IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT LOOK UPON GOD AND LIVE. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ACCURATE AND ABSOLUTE MANIFESTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF GOD.

## IV. HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD - 1:29

LAMB WAS A FAMILIAR TERM IN HEBREW HISTORY AND WORSHIP. FROM EDEN TO THE EXODUS THE LAMB PLAYED A PROMINENT PART IN WORSHIP OF GOD. EVERY JEW KNEW THE STORY OF THE PASSOVER LAMB. IT WAS THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB THAT PRESERVED THE HOUSEHOLD FROM DEATH. ACCORDING TO 1ST COR. 5:7 JESUS CHRIST IS THE LAMB OF GOD FOR THE WHOLE WORLD. THE REASON JESUS IS CALLED THE LAMB OF GOD IS NOT JUST BECAUSE HE IS MEEK AND GENTLE IN NATURE LIKE A LAMB BUT RATHER WHEN APPLIED TO CHRIST IT REFERS TO THE PRINCIPLE OF SACRIFICE IN THE BIBLE. OF THE THIRTY-ONE TIMES THIS WORD APPEARS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, TWENTY-SEVEN OF THOSE REFERENCES ARE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION. SURELY THERE IS A LESSON TO BE LEARNED BY STUDYING THE TERM. THIS TERM POINTS TO ONE SPOT IN HUMAN HISTORY WHERE JESUS CHRIST BECAME THE SUPREME SACRIFICE FOR SIN. THE CROSS OF CHRIST IS THE FOCAL POINT OF HISTORY AND THE UNIVERSE. GOD ATTRIBUTES IMPORTANCE AND WORTH TO WHAT JESUS CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED ON THE CROSS - AND SO SHOULD WE! AS A MATTER OF FACT IN THIS VERSE KEEP IN MIND THAT JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS A SON OF A PRIEST.

HE KNEW THE PLACE OF A LAMB IN THE PRIESTLY OR SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM. TWICE EACH DAY, ONCE IN THE MORNING AND ONCE IN THE EVENING A LAMB WAS SACRIFICED AND ON SPECIAL DAYS THE NUMBER WAS DOUBLED. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS FILLED WITH TYPES ALL POINTING TO CHRIST THE LAMB OF GOD. IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, THERE ARE CLEAR REFERENCES TO THE LAMB'S BLOOD - REV. 1:5, THE LAMB'S BRIDE - REV. 19:7, AND THE LAMB'S BOOK - REV. 21:27. (COMMENT REGARDING GRANDDAD AND WAGON SONG)

MANY YEARS AGO A YOUNG LADY WAS PREPARING FOR A SOCIAL OCCASION. IN ANTICIPATION AND PREPARATION SHE WENT TO HER DRESSMAKER TO PREPARE FOR THE PARTY. ON HER WAY, SHE MET A PREACHER AND AS THEY EXCHANGED GREETINGS KNOWING THAT SHE WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN HE WITNESSED TO HER ABOUT THE DANGERS OF WASTING HER TALENTS IN THE SOCIAL SWIRL OF LIFE. PUT OFF AND ANGERED SHE SAID TO THE PREACHER SIMPLY "MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS" AND WENT ON HER WAY. WHEN SHE ARRIVED AT THE PARTY DAYS LATER SHE WAS ADORED AND FLATTERED AND DANCED WELL INTO THE NIGHT. WEARY FROM ALL THE ACTIVITIES AND HAVING RETIRED TO THE PRIVACY OF HER OWN BEDROOM SHE WAS UNABLE TO SLEEP AND FAR FROM HAPPY EVEN THOUGH SHE'D SPENT THE NIGHT IN GAIETY. WHAT THE PASTOR HAD SAID TO HER WOULD NOT LEAVE HER CONSCIENCE. FOR DAYS SHE STRUGGLED WITH DEEP CONVICTION OF HER NEED OF CHRIST. FINALLY SHE WENT TO SEE THE MINISTER TELLING HIM FOR THREE DAYS SHE HAD BEEN THE MOST MISERABLE GIRL IN THE WORLD AND NOW I COME TO YOU FOR COUNSEL. WHAT MUST I DO TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN? HIS ANSWER: "GIVE YOURSELF TO THE LAMB OF GOD - THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD. GIVE YOURSELF TO HIM - JUST AS YOU ARE". THAT SIMPLE STATEMENT RESULTED IN HER RESPONSE -

~~"JUST AS I AM?"~~ BUT I AM JUST A SINNER GOD CANNOT WANT ME JUST AS I AM. THAT PHRASE "JUST AS I AM" RESULTED IN HER WRITING THE BEST KNOWN GOSPEL INVITATION SONG OF MODERN CHURCH HISTORY.

QUESTION: WHAT IS CHRIST TO YOU?

"A Christmas Carol In the Key of G."

Christmas music is special. Tastes range from "The Messiah" (Handels) to popular — Gene Autry — Crosby — White C.
Ives — Jolly, Holly
Lee — Rockin Around-Tree

"G - things"

I. Genealogys Matt. 1:16
Joseph = legal line — David — King
Mary = Biological line — To Adam
— Jesus Christ — right to David's throne
Israel's Messiah.

II. Gifts - Mt. 2:11
Gifts to Him not her!
and not to be other!
① Gold - Metal of King — Gospel of the King
② Frankincense — priests — used in Temple Service.
sweet perfume
③ Myrrh - spice use to embalm the dead.

III. Garments - Lk. 2:7/12

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 25, 1983

"Christmas Angels"

# THE ANGELS OF CHRISTMAS

1988

LUKE 1:26-35

Space - ET! No - Angels!

ARE THERE OTHER BEINGS ON OTHER PLANETS IN THE UNIVERSE? ONE CANNOT SPEAK OF THE LOCATION, BUT THERE ARE OTHER INTELLIGENT BEINGS IN THE UNIVERSE AND THEY ARE CALLED ANGELS. ANGELS OCCUPY AN EXHAULTED POSITION IN THE UNIVERSE AND ARE MENTIONED OVER 270 TIMES IN THE BIBLE. ANGELS DO NOT DIE OR MARRY. THEY WERE PRESENT AT THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND HERE AT THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. ANGELS CAME TO EARTH TO HERALD CHRIST'S FIRST COMING AND WILL DO THE SAME AT HIS SECOND COMING. (I THESS. 4:13FF, 25:31) AT CHRISTMAS, WE SING ABOUT THE ANGELS: HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING, ANGELS, WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH, ANGELS, FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY. ANGELS APPEARED TO THE SHEPHERDS AT THE BIRTH OF JESUS AND ALSO AT THE SEPULCHER AT JESUS' DEATH. WE ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT ANGELS PER SE HAVE NO WINGS, NO HALOS, AND THERE ARE NO FEMALES! WE HAVE NEVER SEEN AN ANGEL YET WE SPEAK OF GUARDIAN ANGELS, ANGEL'S SONG AND WE SOMETIMES CALL OUR CHILDREN - ANGELS! THE WORD ANGEL MEANS MESSENGER. IF ANGELS COULD BRING US A MESSAGE AT THIS CHRISTMAS, WHAT WOULD IT BE? WOULD THEY BE CAUGHT UP IN THE COMMERCE OF CHRISTMAS? WOULD THEY, LIKE C. S. LEWIS, REFER TO CHRISTMAS AS A SHOPKEEPER'S HOLIDAY WHERE PEOPLE ENGAGE IN "SANCTIFIED BLACKMAIL", THAT IS, WHEN PEOPLE ARE FORCED OUT OF EMBARRASSMENT OR GUILT TO BUY OR GIVE GIFTS THAT ARE OFTEN

J.6. 38:7

Lk 2:13

UNWANTED AND APPRECIATED SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS CHRISTMAS. THE ANGELS HAD A MESSAGE AT CHRISTMAS BUT THE MESSAGE WAS NOT ABOUT MATERIALS BUT RATHER THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTMAS.

I. AN AGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE THAT CLEARED UP A MYSTERY - MATTHEW 1:18-21

Joseph Matthew (See notes)

JOSEPH WAS A REMARKABLE MAN. FACED WITH SOCIAL DISGRACE AND SLANDEROUS GOSSIP, JOSEPH DECIDED TO TAKE PRIVATE STEPS TO SPARE MARY PUBLIC DISGRACE BEFORE THE COURTS. (EXPLAIN) JOSEPH PONDERED MARY'S CONDITION AND WAS EVEN MORE PERPLEXED BECAUSE HE KNEW HER CHARACTER. AS JOSEPH THOUGHT ABOUT THE PROBLEM, HE COULD FIND NO ACCEPTABLE ANSWER. POINT: THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE CANNOT FIGURE OUT SITUATIONS IN LIFE. THERE ARE MYSTERIES IN LIFE WHICH SIMPLY DO NOT OPEN TO OUR INQUIRIES. WE APPLY ALL OF THE TOOLS AT OUR FINGER-TIPS BUT NOTHING YIELDS. FACED WITH THE MOST DIFFICULT DECISION OF HIS LIFE, JOSEPH MADE NO ACCUSATIONS, HE QUIETLY PREPARED TO DO WHAT WAS RIGHT. WHAT APPEARED TO BE A SOCIAL DISGRACE AND THE RUINATION OF JOSEPH AND MARY'S LIFE TURNED OUT TO BE THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN HUMAN HISTORY! JOSEPH WAS PART OF THAT GREAT EVENT! GOD WAS DOING SOMETHING ON EARTH NEVER DONE BEFORE IN HUMAN HISTORY AND JOSEPH WAS PERMITTED TO SHARE IN THAT EXPERIENCE. WE NEED TO KEEP IN MIND THAT GOD IS MOVING AND WORKING ON EARTH AND SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE BEYOND OUR LIMITATIONS AND OFTEN OUR COMPREHENSION. LET US TRUST THE LORD TO DO HIS WORK IN AND THROUGH US IN A WAY THAT WILL BRING HONOR TO HIM.

II. AN ANGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE THAT LED JOSEPH'S FAMILY TO SAFETY - MATTHEW 2:13FF

ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS IN SCRIPTURE, ANGELS HAVE CARRIED MESSAGES OF WARNING. (COMPARE GENESIS 19, REVELATION 6FF) EGYPT HAD HISTORICALLY BEEN A PLACE OF REFUGE FOR JEWS IN TIMES OF DISTRESS. HOWEVER, FLIGHT TO EGYPT WAS OFTEN AT A HIGH PRICE FOR THERE WERE MANY DANGERS IN THIS LAND OF STRANGE GODS. (COMPARE ABRAHAM AND JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHERN.) HEROD HAS BEEN CALLED A MASTER IN THE CRAFT OF ASSASSINATION. HISTORY RECORDS THAT HEROD KILLED MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN, OVER 300 COURT OFFICERS, HIS WIFE, MOTHER-IN-LAW AND 2 OF HIS 3 SONS. THIS MAN SIMPLY WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE NEWS THAT A NEWBORN KING COULD SURVIVE IN HIS JURISDICTION. HE TOOK STEPS TO SLAUGHTER EVERY BABY TO SAFEGUARD HIS OWN POSITION. HEROD REPRESENTED A CLASS OF MEN WHO WILL GO TO ANY EXTENT TO GET RID OF JESUS. THEY LOOK UPON HIM AS A THREAT, AN OBSTACLE TO BE CRUSHED AND WILL SPARE NO TACTIC IN THEIR TYRANNICAL RAGE. HEROD WAS ONE LINK IN A CHAIN OF GODLESS MEN WHO TRIED TO RID THE WORLD OF GOD'S REDEMMER. (COMPARE PHAROAH, HAMAN AND HEROD ALL OF THE SAME ILK.)

III. AN ANGEL BROUGHT A MESSAGE CONCERNING THE ARRIVAL OF A MUCH DESIRED BABY - LUKE 1:11 - 13

GABRIEL IS ONE OF THREE HIGH-RANKING ANGELS CALLED ARCHANGELS EVEN THOUGH THAT TERM IS NOT USED IN THE BIBLE TO DESCRIBE THIS

mystery
Salvation
Love
Glory

CHIEF PERSON IN THE RANK OF ANGELS. GABRIEL HAS A UNIQUE RESPONSIBILITY IN HIS PROXIMITY TO THE THRONE OF GOD. ON THIS OCCASION, GABRIEL'S MISSION WAS TWO-FOLD IN NATURE. (1) HIS MESSAGE TO ZACHARIAH, (2) HIS MESSAGE TO MARY. HE APPEARED TO ZACHARIAH WHILE HE WAS GOING ABOUT HIS PRIESTLY DUTIES AND THE MESSAGE WAS SIMPLY THAT ZACHARIAN AND ELIZABETH'S PRAYERS HAD BEEN ANSWERED AND THEY COULD NOW FIX UP THE NURSERY! I AM IMPRESSED WITH HOW GOD APPEARS TO MEN. MOST MEN WILL SEE NO BURNING BUSH OR VOICE FROM THE HEAVENS BUT AS THEY GO ABOUT THE ORDINARY ROUTINE DUTIES OF LIFE, MAKING THEMSELVES AVAILABLE TO THE LORD, IT IS THERE THAT HE SPEAKS TO THEM. IT WAS AS THE SHEPHERDS WERE GOING ABOUT THEIR ORDINARY WORK IN THE FIELDS THAT THEY HEARD FROM HEAVEN. ONE WRITER HAS SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY HAD STAYED HOME THAT NIGHT, TAKEN THE NIGHT OFF OR BEEN DOING SOMETHING ELSE, THEY WOULD HAVE MISSED THE GREATEST NIGHT OF THEIR LIVES. IT IS AS WE GO ALONG DOING WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO THAT THE LORD MAKES HIMSELF AND HIS WILL KNOWN TO US.

IV. AN ANGEL BROUGHT THE MESSAGE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S GLORY - LUKE 2:8-15

HISTORY RECORDS A PARADE OF EVENTS DESIGNED TO BRING GLORY TO MEN. (RECENTLY RECAPS OF HITLER'S THIRD REICH DESIGNED TO LAST 1000 YEARS. THE REAL "GLORY" OF THAT HORRIBLE AFFLICTION TO HUMANKIND WAS MORE LIKE A THOUSAND DAYS BUT NOT BEFORE IT HAD PLUNGED THE WORLD INTO THE WORST WAR IN HUMAN HISTORY WITH [redacted] MILLION CASUALTIES! BARCLAY

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HAS WELL SAID: "PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR THEIR OWN HONOR AND GLORY SELDOM FIND ANY REAL JOY IN THEIR WORK OR IN LIFE." MEN WANT TO HEAR AND BELIEVE PART OF THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE, THAT IS, MEN GREATLY DESIRE TO HAVE PEACE ON EARTH. HOWEVER, PEACE ON EARTH IS LINKED TO THE GLORY OF GOD. AND FRANKLY, THERE IS NOT MUCH CONCERN ON PLANET EARTH ABOUT GOD'S GLORY. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE NO LASTING PEACE ON EARTH UNTIL THE GLORY OF GOD IS MAN'S GREAT CONCERN. I WAS SURPRISED TO READ A RECENT ARTICLE IN U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT WHICH SIMPLY SAYS "EVEN IN PEACETIME, 40 WARS ARE GOING ON." THE ARTICLE POINTS OUT THAT AROUND THE GLOBE FIGHTING NEVER STOPS. THE OPENING SENTENCE IN THE ARTICLE SAYS, "AT A TIME WHEN MUCH OF THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE AT PEACE, NO FEWER THAN 1/4 OF THE NATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE ARE CAUGHT UP IN ARMED CONFLICT." MORE THAN 40 COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED IN HOSTILITIES OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER. ALL BUT A HANDFUL OF THESE ARE IN THE THIRD WORLD. THE ARTICLE LISTS IRAQ-IRAN WHERE AT LEAST 100,000 HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE HOSTILITIES BEGAN IN 1980. AFGHANISTAN, LEBANON, YEMEN, NOT TO MENTION CONFLICTS IN THE FAR EAST, LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA, AND EVEN IN EUROPE WHERE VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS CONTINUED FOR MANY, MANY YEARS.) THE BIBLE HAS A GREAT DEAL TO SAY ABOUT PEACE. IT IS PERSONAL FOR HERE AND NOW, IT WILL BE POLITICAL IN THE FUTURE WHEN MESSIAH COMES. JESUS' LEGACY TO HIS DISCIPLES WAS AS FOLLOWS: "PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU, MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU. LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED,

NEITHER LET IT BE AFRAID." (JOHN 14:27)

THE WORD PEACE IN THE N.T. IS A GREAT WORD. IT BRINGS WITH IT THE SAME IDEAS AS THE HEBREW WORD SHALOM...EVERYTHING THAT MAKES FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD IN A PERSON'S LIFE. FOR MANY, PEACE MEANS SIMPLY THE ABSENCE OF TROUBLE PERSONALLY AND WAR POLITICALLY. THE GREEK WORD EIRENE IS A WIDE RANGING WORD WHICH APPEARS 88 TIMES IN THE N.T. - IN EVERY BOOK. IT MAY REFER TO A COMMON GREETING OR A COUNTRY WHERE CONFLICT HAD CEASED. HOWEVER, THE TERM MEANS A PROPER OR RIGHT RELATIONSHIP IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE...HOME, WORK, CHURCH, GOD. PEACE WITH GOD REFERS TO A CORRECT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. PEACE COMES FROM GOD...IT IS NOT THE WORK OF HUMAN HANDS - IT IS A GIFT FROM HIM. IT IS NOT SOMETHING MAN ACHIEVES BY WORK BUT RATHER ACCEPTS BY FAITH. WHEN JESUS LEFT THIS EARTH, HE LEFT THE DISCIPLES NO MATERIAL POSSESSIONS BUT RATHER HE GAVE THEM - PEACE. ACCORDING TO ROMANS 5:1 A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD COMES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. SIX TIMES IN THE N.T. GOD IS CALLED THE GOD OF PEACE - THOSE WHO WOULD KNOW PEACE MUST KNOW CHRIST.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 16, 1990

# SPEECHLESS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

LUKE 1:5FF

"merry christmas"!
"Happy Holiday"

IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE ANYONE HAVING NOTHING TO SAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS - ESPECIALLY THE VERY FIRST CHRISTMAS. USUALLY IT IS A TIME WHEN EVEN TOTAL STRANGERS TALK TO EACH OTHER. SPEECHLESSNESS IS NOT A COMMON MALADY. (1) (RELATE STORY OF PREACHER WHO COMPLAINED TO HIS DENTIST ABOUT HAVING A MIX-UP IN HIS FALSE TEETH. THE PREACHER COMPLAINED THAT HE HAD BEEN GIVEN WOMEN'S TEETH - HE COULDN'T STOP TALKING!) (2) (THE STORY IS TOLD OF THREE HERMITS WHO DETERMINED TO LIVE IN A CAVE. AFTER HAVING LIVED THERE FOR A FULL YEAR, ONE LOOKED OUT AT A COW GRAZING IN A NEARBY PASTURE AND COMMENTED THAT THE COW REMINDED HIM OF HIS BOYHOOD. A SECOND HERMIT AGREED SAYING: "ME, TOO." THE THIRD COMMENTED: "IF YOU TWO ARE GOING TO TALK ALL THE TIME, I'M LEAVING!" THE STORY BEFORE US CENTERS AROUND A PRIEST WHO HAD NOTHING TO SAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

## I. A MAN CALLED ZACHARIAS - VERSES 5-10,18-21

YOU MAY KNOW SOMEONE NAMED ZACHARY. ZACH FOR SHORT. YOU MAY KNOW ABOUT ZACCHAEUS. BUT I DOUBT SERIOUSLY IF ANY OF US KNOWS ANYONE NAMED ZACHARIAS. IT IS NEW BUT NOT NOVEL IN NATURE. THE TEXT INTRODUCES THE READER TO HEROD THE GREAT - THAT CRAFTY, CRUEL RULER WHOSE NAME MEANS "HERO" BUT HE WAS ANYTHING BUT. HE IS ONE OF FOUR MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. ("Herod the Hero = Zero!")

First Name this s.b. of others

(1) A PRIEST - EVERY DESCENDANT OF AARON BECAME A PRIEST AUTOMATICALLY BY VIRTUE OF HIS FAMILY TREE OR BLOODLINE. HIS FAMILY TREE WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HIS CHRISTMAS

TREE. THERE WERE A SURPLUS AND NOT A SCARCITY OF PRIESTS IN THAT DAY - SOME 20,000 DIVIDED INTO 24 GROUPS EACH SERVING ON AN 8-DAY ROTATION SYSTEM - TWICE A YEAR. IN A SENSE, THESE PRIESTS WERE THE TECHNICIANS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS TEACHES THAT WE NO LONGER NEED SUCH A SPECIAL GROUP BECAUSE WE HAVE ONE GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE, ONCE FOR ALL, FOR ALL OUR SINS. NOW, EACH BELIEVER ACTS AS HIS OWN PRIEST, THAT IS WHY THIS CHURCH HAS A PASTOR AND NOT A PRIEST. SUCH SERVICE WAS CONSIDERED SACRED SERVICE AND A PRIVILEGE EVEN WHEN THERE WERE LARGE NUMBERS. SOME WHO SERVED SAW NOTHING EXCEPT THE MECHANICS OF THEIR OFFICE OR SERVICE. HOWEVER, THERE WERE MEN LIKE ZACHARIAS WHO FOUND SPECIAL BLESSING IN THIS ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE.

(2) A MARRIED PRIEST - HIS WIFE WAS FROM A PRIESTLY FAMILY. THE WORD ZACHARIAS MEANS GOD REMEMBERS AND ELIZABETH MEANS GOD'S OATH. BOTH OF THEIR NAMES REFLECT A GODLY HERITAGE. THIS DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT HAVING A BIBLE OR RELIGIOUS NAME HAS ANYTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH ONE'S SPIRITUAL INTERESTS OR CHARACTER BUT IT DOES SUGGEST THAT ZACHARIAS MARRIED WELL AND THAT THE MARRIAGE WAS COMPATIBLE.

(3) A HAPPY MARRIAGE - VERSE 6 THE WORD HAPPY DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE TEXT BUT THE WORDS RIGHTEOUS AND BLAMELESS IMPLY SUCH. THE WORD RIGHTEOUS SUGGESTS ONE WHO IS RIGHT OR IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. BLAMELESS DOES NOT MEAN SINLESS OR FAULTLESS BUT RATHER ONE WHO LIVES UP TO HIS REQUIREMENTS BEFORE GOD. THAT IS, NOT ONE WHO IS PERFECT BUT WHOSE LIFE ONE CANNOT POINT A FINGER AT GLARING DEFECTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. THEY LIVE PRAYERFULLY, CAREFULY AND BLAMELESSLY BEFORE GOD. "THAT YE MAY BE BLAMELESS AND HARMLESS, THE SONS OF GOD WITHOUT REBUKE,

"Both" =

"ADVANCED IN YEARS" nice way to say... growing old... Nobody aged!

IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE NATION, AMONG WHOM YE SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD." (PHILIPPIANS 2:15) SURELY THIS IS A GOOD BEGINNING OR FOUNDATION FOR A HAPPY HOME.

(4) A CHILDLESS MARRAIGE - VERSE 7
CHILDLESSNESS WAS CONSIDRED A TRAGEDY IN THESE TIMES. A JEWISH FATHER WANTED A SON TO CARRY ON HIS NAME AND THE FAMILY TRADITION. IN SOME PLACES, CHILDLESSNESS WAS GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE. AT A TIME ZACHARIAS SHOULD HAVE HAD GRAND-CHILDREN HE HAD NO CHILDREN. INFERTILITY AND AGING WERE TWO GREAT OBSTACLES IN THEIR MARRIAGE. (THERE WERE NO SIGNS OR SOUNDS OF CHILDREN IN THE HOME. NO SIGNS OF SMALL HAND-PRINTS, TOYS IN THE CHAIR, CRIBS, BOTTLES, ALL THINGS THAT SPEAK OF CHILDREN. SUCH A DILEMMA AFFECTED GREAT WOMEN SUCH AS SARAH, RACHEL, AND HANNAH. THEY ALL CRIED OUT FOR DIVINE ASSISTANCE IN THEIR CHILDLESS CONDITION.

(5) A SPEECHLESS MARRIAGE - VERSE 20-22
BECAUSE OF ZACHARIAS' UNBLIEF, A TEMPORARY CONDITION THAT PROHIBITED COMMUNICATION EXISTED. ALL COMMUNICATION MOVED FROM VERBAL TO WRITTEN FORM. A CASUAL GLANCE AT THE TEXT WOULD SUGGEST THAT THERE IS NO REASON FOR SUCH A SEVERE PENALTY. QUESTION: WHAT DID ZACHARIAS SAY OR DO THAT WAS SO WRONG? THE QUESTION SHOWS HOW SUBTLE IS THE SIN OF UN-BELIEF. WHEN GOD SAYS SOMETHING HE DOES NOT NEED TO DOCUMENT IT WITH MULTIPLE WITNESSES OR PAGES OF DOCUMENTATION. WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE BECAUSE HE SAYS IT. UNBELIEF IS SIMPLY A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD. EVEN IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS THERE CAN BE NO LASTING RELATIONSHIP WHERE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IS ABSENT. IF ONE PERSON CANNOT ACCEPT THE STATEMENT OF ANOTHER PERSON AS CREDIBLE, THEN

WILL NOT

IT IS DIFFICULT OR NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP ON SUCH A BASIS. IF ONE CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS AND IF ONE PAYS NO ATTENTION TO WHAT GOD SAYS, THERE CAN BE NO STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO. ZACHARIAS WOULD LEARN THAT ONE CANNOT SPEAK FOR GOD WHEN HE DOES NOT BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS! THE PENALTY FOR THIS UNBELIEF WAS SPEECHLESSNESS FOR A NINE-MONTH PERIOD. SO SERIOUS IS THIS SIN THAT IT IS THE SIN THAT WILL KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF HEAVEN - NAMELY, NOT TAKING SERIOUSLY WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY! (JOHN 5:24) THE REASON PEOPLE ARE NOT SAVED IS (1) THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS, (2) THEY DO NOT BELIEVE WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

## II. AN ANGEL CALLED GABRIEL - VERSES 11-19

TO MY KNOWLEDGE, THERE IS NO ASSOCIATION BETWEEN A TRUMPET AND GABRIEL. THERE ARE TWO ANGELS MENTIONED BY NAME, GABRIEL AND MICHAEL. MUCH OF THIS IS RELATED TO PROPHECY. (DANIEL 8:16, 9:21, CHAPTER 10) THIS IS A VERY SIGNIFICANT MEETING AND CONVERSATION. IF YOU THINK NOT, WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU TALKED WITH AN ANGEL? THIS MESSENGER CAME ALL THE WAY FROM HEAVEN TO SPEAK TO A PRIEST ABOUT DOING HIS DUTY FOR GOD. GOD OFTEN SPEAKS TO PEOPLE AS THEY GO ABOUT THEIR DUTIES IN LIFE. GOD SPOKE TO MOSES FROM THE BURNING BUSH WHILE HE WAS ACTING AS A SHEPHERD AND HE SPOKE TO THE SHEPHERDS ON THE NIGHT OF CHRIST'S BIRTH AS THEY WENT ABOUT THEIR DUTY. ZACHARIAS WAS BUSILY ENGAGED IN A ONCE IN A LIFETIME TASK WHEN HE WAS GIVEN ONCE IN A LIFETIME TALK. GABRIEL KNEW WHERE TO FIND ZACHARIAS - NAMELY, IN THE HOUSE OF GOD. SUPPOSE ZACHARIAS HAD NOT TAKEN HIS SACRED RESPONSIBILITY SERIOUSLY. SUPPOSE HE HAD CALLED IN SICK OR OVERSLEPT OR SENT A SUBSTITUTE TO DO HIS WORK. THE POINT: HE WAS WHERE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE WHEN HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THERE. THE LORD OFTEN SPEAKS TO US IN THE PLACE OF DUTY.

Jr. Calvin, KNOX Wesley Apostle "Sent From God"

## III. A BABY CALLED JOHN - VERSES 57-80

IN PALESTINE, THE BIRTH OF A SON WAS AN OCCASION FOR GREAT JOY. FRIENDS, NEIGHBORS AND MUSICIANS GATHERED TO ADD MUSIC AND SONG TO THIS JOYFUL AND FESTIVE OCCASION. IF THE BABY WERE A GIRL, THE MUSICIANS SIMPLY LEFT WITHOUT A SOUND. THERE WAS A SAYING THAT THE BIRTH OF A MALE CHILD BROUGHT UNIVERSAL JOY BUT THE BIRTH OF A FEMALE BROUGHT UNIVERSAL SORROW. THE BIRTH OF JOHN WAS THE TIME OF GREAT BLESSING. ZACHARIAS PROVED THAT HE HAD LEARNED HIS LESSON WHEN HE CONFIRMED ELIZABETH'S NAME TO HER SON. THE NEIGHBORS SAID: "LET'S CALL HIM JUNIOR - AFTER HIS FATHER." ELIZABETH SAID NO AND SO DID ZACHARIAS. IT WAS A GOOD NAME BUT IT WAS NOT GOD'S NAME. THE PARENTS SAID, "LET'S CALL HIM WHAT GOD CALLED HIM - JOHN." (JOHN 1:6) LIKE ZACHARIAS, WE CONFIRM THAT WE BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS WHEN WE DO WHAT GOD TELLS US TO DO. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, HE LOOSES THE SILENT TONGUE AND MEN HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY FOR GOD. UNBELIEF STOPS THE MOUTH, BELIEF OPENS IT. THAT IS HOW PEOPLE COME TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR BY OTHERS DELCARING THEIR FAITH IN HIM. IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE SERIOUSLY WHAT GOD HAS TO SAY. SEVERAL YEARS AGO, PERHAPS 15 NOW, A MAN DRESSED IN A SWEATER, OVERALLS AND BOOTS ENTERED A CAR DEALER'S SHOWROOM AND EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO PURCHASE 16 CARS, ALL WITH IDENTICAL EQUIPMENT. THE SALESMAN WHO LOOKED AT THE SHABBILY DRESSED MAN SAID, "I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR SILLY JOKES - BUZZ OFF!" THE MAN WALKED ACROSS THE STREET TO ANOTHER AUTOMOBILE DEALER, MADE THE SAME REQUEST AND THE SALESMAN SOLD 16 CARS TO ONE MAN WHO PAID CASH FOR THEM! IT SEEMS THAT THIS MAN WAS IN THE FISHING BUSINESS AND THEY HAD HAD A RECORD YEAR

THE CARS WERE A BONUS FOR THE EMPLOYEES AND THE BOSS HAD DECIDED TO BUY ALL OF THEM AT ONE TIME IN ORDER TO GET THE BEST POSSIBLE DEAL. QUESTION: WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO CAR SALESMEN? ONE BELIEVED A MAN, THE OTHER DID NOT. OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD IS EXACTLY THAT WAY - SOME BELIEVE HIM AND SOME DO NOT. (JOHN 3:36)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 16, 1984

MAW Revised Dec 1990

# THE PRIEST WHO HAD NOTHING TO SAY AT CHRISTMAS

LUKE 1:5-21

A DENTIST TOLD ME A STORY ABOUT A PREACHER WHO COMPLAINED TO HIM ABOUT HAVING WOMEN'S TEETH. (EXPLAIN) SOME FOLK ARE THAT WAY, THEY CAN'T STOP TALKING, OTHERS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO START. (THE STORY IS TOLD OF THREE HERMITS WHO DETERMINED TO LIVE IN A CAVE. AFTER HAVING BEEN THERE FOR OVER A YEAR, ONE STOOD LOOKING OUT AT A COW IN A NEARBY PASTURE. HE COMMENTED THAT THE COW REMINDED HIM OF HIS BOYHOOD. THE SECOND HERMIT REPLIED "ME TOO." THE THIRD COMMENTED: "IF YOU TWO ARE GOING TO TALK ALL THE TIME I AM GOING TO LEAVE!" IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE A PREACHER OR PRIEST WHO WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO SAY AT THIS TIME OF YEAR BUT THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FATHER OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

## I. ZACHARIAS: WHO HE WAS - VERSES 5-7

ZACHARIAS LIVED IN THE "DAYS OF HEROD THE KING OF JUDAEA." THE WORD HEROD MEANS "HEROIC" BUT THAT IS NOT THE WORD TO CHARACTERIZE THE FAMILY FOR THEY WERE ANYTHING BUT HEROES. IT IS SAID OF THE KINGS OF THE HOUSE OF HEROD WHEN THEY DIED THEY WERE UNMOURNED AND UNMISSED. THE FAMILY WAS CALLED BOTH CRUEL AND CRAFTY. OF THE 7 OR 8 MEN BEARING THAT NAME, THIS ONE WAS CALLED HEROD THE GREAT. ZACHARIAS WAS A PRIEST. EVERY DESCENDANT OF AARON WAS AUTOMATICALLY A PRIEST IN THE SERVICE OF GOD. AT THIS TIME THERE WAS A SURPLUS OF PRIESTS. THERE WERE SO MANY THAT THEY WERE DIVIDED INTO 24 GROUPS AND SERVED

ON AN 8-DAY ROTATING BASIS TWICE EACH YEAR. IN A SENSE, THESE MEN WERE THE TECHNICIANS OF AN OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS TEACHES THAT WE NO LONGER NEED SUCH A SPECIAL GROUP IN THAT WE HAVE ONE GREAT HIGH PRIEST WHO OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE ONCE FOR ALL FOR OUR SINS. NOW, EVERY BELIEVER ACTS AS HIS OWN PRIEST AND THAT IS WHY THIS CHURCH HAS A PASTOR AND NOT A PRIEST. ZACHARIAS THE PRIEST WAS MARRIED. HIS WIFE WAS FROM A PRIESTLY FAMILY. ZACHARIAS MEANS GOD REMEMBERS AND ELISABETH MEANS GOD'S OATH. IN OTHER WORDS, THEIR NAMES REFLECT THEIR GODLY HERITAGE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT HAVING A BIBLE OR RELIGIOUS NAME HAS ANYTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH ONE'S SPIRITUAL INTEREST OR CHARACTER. THE TEXT SAYS THAT BOTH OF THEM WERE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD. MANY ARE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE MEN BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD IS NOT WIDELY UNDERSTOOD. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF TWO KINDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS - OURS AND GOD'S. SIMPLY STATED, RIGHTEOUSNESS MEANS TO BE STRAIGHT OR RIGHT IN ONE'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. THE NATURAL MAN HAS A WRONG RELATIONSHIP TO GOD BY VIRTUE OF HIS NATURE AND CONDUCT. HE HAS OFFENDED GOD AND THIS ALIEN SITUATION MUST BE CORRECTED. PAUL DEVOTED THREE CHAPTERS IN ROMANS ON THIS SUBJECT. (ROMANS 3-5) AS A MATTER OF FACT IT IS THE THEME OF THE BOOK OF ROMANS - HOW MEN MAY BE RIGHT OR RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD. FOR SOME, THIS WORD IS NOT RELEVANT UNTIL THE SICK BED OR DEATH BED ARRIVES. NOT MANY CARE TO TALK ABOUT RIGHTEOUSNESS WHEN THEY ARE IN GOOD HEALTH. TOO MANY PEOPLE GUESS OR HOPE OR CROSS THEIR FINGERS OR BELIEVE

THAT THEIR GENEROUS DEEDS WILL MAKE THEM RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S EYES AND THAT HE WILL OVERLOOK WHATEVER WRONG MIGHT HAVE BEEN DONE. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THESE TWO WAS REFLECTED IN THEIR WALKING IN ALL THE COMMANDMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE LORD. THIS MEANS THEY OFFERED PROPER SACRIFICES, THEIR LIVES MANIFESTED A DEEP-SEATED CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN GOD. THEY WALKED IN PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. THE WORD BLAMELESS DOES NOT SUGGEST SINLESS OR FAULTLESS BUT RATHER LIVING UP TO ONE'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S REQUIREMENTS. THEY WERE NOT PERFECT BUT THEIR LIVES WERE WITHOUT REPROACH, THAT IS NO ONE COULD POINT A FINGER AT THEM AND POINT OUT GLARING DEFECTS IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. THEY LIVED PRAYERFULLY, CAREFULLY AND BLAMELESSLY BEFORE GOD. (COMPARE PHILIPPIANS 2:15) "THAT YE MAY BE BLAMELESS AND HARMLESS,THE SONS OF GOD, WITHOUT REBUKE, IN THE MIDST OF A CROOKED AND PERVERSE NATION, AMONG WHOM YE SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD." THE WORD CHILDLESS SPEAKS OF THE TRAGEDY IN THE FAMILY. A JEWISH FATHER WANTED A SON TO CARRY ON HIS NAME AND FAMILY TRADITION. IN SOME QUARTERS CHILDLESSNESS WAS LEGAL GROUND FOR DIVORCE. IT CONTINUED TO BE A MATTER OF CONCERN EVEN WHEN THESE TWO "ADVANCED IN THEIR DAYS." (A.S.V. MARGIN)

II. ZACHARIAS: WHAT HE DID FOR GOD - VERSES 8-13

THE WORD "EXECUTE" DOES NOT MEAN TO DO AWAY WITH - IT MEANS TO SERVE. ZACHARIAS SERVED AS A PRIEST IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD. IT WAS CONSIDERED A SACRED PRIVILEGE EVEN

WHEN THERE WERE TOO MANY PRIESTS. SOME WHO CAME TO SERVE FELT AND SAW NOTHING ONLY GOING THROUGH THE MECHANICS OF THE OFFICE. HOWEVER, FOR SOME LIKE ZACHARIAS THIS WAS A WONDERFUL PRIVILEGE AND IN IT HE FOUND SATISFACTION AS IN NO OTHER WORK. TO BE SURE, THERE IS A SPECIAL FREEDOM AND BLESSING IN THE SERVICE OF GOD THAT IS FOUND NO PLACE ELSE. THE BURNING OF INCENSE IN THE TEMPLE OR LITERALLY THE "HOLY PLACE" WAS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME EXPERIENCE. (IT MIGHT BE WELL TO LOOK AGAIN AT THIS WORD SERVE. IN OUR SUPERSTAR, TOP DOG, NUMBER ONE, CELEBRITY SYNDROME SOCIETY THIS WORD HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS MEANING EVEN IN CHRISTIAN CIRCLES AND YET IT IS A WORD WE ALL APPRECIATE WHEN WE SEE GENUINE SERVICE.) WHILE ZACHARIAS PERFORMED THIS SERVICE, GABRIEL APPEARED TO HIM. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE LORD OFTEN APPEARS TO MEN IN THE ORDER OF THINGS, THAT IS WHILE THEY ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY TASKS OR RESPONSIBILITIES. EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ADVANCED IN YEARS HE HAD NOT SHUNNED HIS PRIESTLY RESPONSIBILITY. (IT IS INTERESTING THAT GABRIEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE HOUSE OF GOD AND NOT IN HIS OWN HOUSE, AT THE SUPERMARKET, OR DRIVE-IN BUT IN THE TEMPLE.) THE ANGEL'S PREDICTION HAD TO DO WITH A LONG-DESIRED CHILD, NAMELY A SON WHOSE NAME CAME FROM HEAVEN - JOHN. "THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM GOD WHOSE NAME WAS JOHN." (JOHN 1:6) THE NEIGHBORS WANTED TO CALL HIM JUNIOR BUT GOD CALLED HIM JOHN. HIS MINISTRY WOULD BE TO TURN MANY TO GOD. THERE HAVE BEEN FEW SPIRIT-FILLED PEOPLE TO RISE TO THE GREATNESS OF THIS ONE CALLED JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Why ... Trouble

## III. ZACHARIAS: WHAT HE DID WRONG - VERSES 18-20

A CASUAL GLANCE AT THE TEXT WOULD SUGGEST THAT THERE IS NO INFRACTION INTENDED AND THE ANGEL'S REACTION IS TOO SEVERE. QUESTION: WHAT DID ZACHARIAS SAY OR DO THAT WAS SO WRONG? THE VERY QUESTION SHOWS HOW SUBTLE IS THE SIN OF UNBELIEF. WHEN GOD SAYS SOMETHING HE DOES NOT NEED TO DOCUMENT IT WITH MULTIPLE WITNESSES OR PAGES OF DOCUMENTATION. WHAT HE SAYS IS TRUE AND WILL COME TO PASS. UNBELIEF IS SIMPLY A LACK OF TRUST OR CONFIDENCE IN GOD. WE KNOW IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS THAT THERE CAN BE NO LASTING GOOD RELATIONSHIP WHERE TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IS ABSENT. IF ONE CANNOT ACCEPT THE STATEMENT BY A PERSON AS CREDIBLE THEN IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP UNTIL THIS HAPPENS. IF ONE CANNOT BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS AND IF ONE PAYS NO ATTENTION TO WHAT GOD SAYS, THERE CAN BE NO STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. ZACHARIAS WOULD LEARN THAT ONE CANNOT SPEAK FOR GOD WHEN HE DOES NOT BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS! THE PENALTY FOR ZACHARIAS' UNBELIEF WAS TO BE SPEECHLESS OR DUMB FOR 9 MONTHS. FOR ALMOST A YEAR, ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH WOULD COMMUNICATE BY WRITING AND NOT BY SPEECH. (Unbelief silences the tongue re God)

## IV. ZACHARIAS: WHAT HE DID RIGHT - VERSES 57-65

IN PALESTINE, THE BIRTH OF A SON WAS AN OCCASION OF GREAT JOY. FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS CAME TO SHARE THE JOY AND MUSICIANS GATHERED TO ADD MUSIC AND SONG

TO THE HIGH HOUR. IF THE BABY WAS A GIRL THE MUSICIANS SIMPLY LEFT WITHOUT A SOUND. THERE WAS A SAYING THAT THE BIRTH OF A MALE CHILD BROUGHT UNIVERSAL JOY BUT THE BIRTH OF A FEMALE CAUSED UNIVERSAL SORROW! THE BIRTH OF JOHN WAS A TIME OF GREAT JOY AND BLESSING. ZACHARIAS PROVED THAT HE HAD LEARNED HIS LESSON WHEN HE CONFIRMED ELISABETH'S NAME FOR THEIR SON. WE CONFIRM THAT WE BELIEVE WHAT GOD SAYS WHEN WE DO WHAT GOD TELLS US TO DO. WHEN THAT HAPPENS, HE LOOSES THE SILENT TONGUE AND MEN HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY FOR GOD. UNBELIEF STOPS THE MOUTH, BELIEF OPENS IT! AS A MATTER OF FACT, THAT IS HOW MEN COME TO FAITH IN CHRIST, BY DECLARING THEIR BELIEF IN THE FINISHED WORK OF HIS SON. "HE THAT BELIEVETH ON THE SON HATH EVERLASTING LIFE: AND HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT THE SON SHALL NOT SEE LIFE; BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDETH ON HIM." (JOHN 3:36) SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT THE CROSS OF CHRIST ACTS AS A LIGHTNING ROD FOR THE PENALTY OF DIVINE WRATH. WRATH CANNOT TOUCH THE BELIEVER WHOSE SINS ARE UNDER THE BLOOD OF CHRIST. "THAT IF THOU SHALT CONFESS WITH THY MOUTH THE LORD JESUS AND BELIEVE IN THY HEART THAT GOD HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, THOU SHALT BE SAVED." (ROMANS 10:9) SOME FOLK COMPLAIN THAT THEY DO NOT KNOW WHY GOD IS SO HARSH WITH UNBELIEF. ONCE AGAIN, IT IS A MATTER OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST. FOR EXAMPLE, THE STORY IS TOLD OF A MAN DRESSED IN A SWEATER, OVERALLS AND BOOTS WHO ENTERED A CAR DEALER'S SHOWROOM AND EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO PURCHASE 16 CARS WITH SIMILAR EQUIPMENT. THE SALESMAN WHO

LOOKED AT THE SHABBILY DRESSED MAN SAID: "I'VE GOT NO TIME FOR SILLY JOKES - BUZZ OFF!" THE MAN WALKED ACROSS THE STREET TO ANOTHER AUTOMOBILE DEALER, MADE A SIMILAR REQUEST AND THE SALESMAN SOLD 16 CARS TO ONE MAN - AND HE PAID CASH FOR THEM ALL. IT SEEMS THAT THIS MAN WAS IN THE FISHING BUSINESS AND THEY HAD HAD A RECORD YEAR. THE CARS WERE FOR A BONUS AND THE EMPLOYEES DECIDED TO BUY THEM ALL AT ONE TIME IN ORDER TO GET THE BEST POSSIBLE DISCOUNT. QUESTION: WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO CAR SALESMEN? SIMPLY STATED ONE BELIEVED THE MAN, THE OTHER DID NOT. IT IS THAT WAY IN MAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO GOD, SOME BELIEVE HIM AND SOME DO NOT. LOOK AT JOHN 3:36 AGAIN.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 23, 1984

# A CHRISTMAS THEME

## LUKE 2:10-20

THE YEAR JESUS WAS BORN, PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT TAXES. THE TAX INVOLVED THE WHOLE ROMAN EMPIRE. THE BIRTH OF A BABY BOY TO AN OBSCURE COUPLE, IN AN OBSCURE STABLE, IN AN OBSCURE PART OF THE WORLD WAS SCARCELY NOTICED. MEN OVERLOOKED THAT BIRTH BUT THE IMPACT OF HIS LIFE AND DEATH CANNOT BE IGNORED. SOONER OR LATER, MEN MUST FACE THE ISSUE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST. THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT RELATIONSHIP IS BOUND UP IN OUR THEME.

## I. THE GO OF CHRISTMAS - LUKE 2:15

WE SPEAK OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD GO AS IT RELATED THE MESSAGE OF REDEMPTION. THE LETTERS GO COMPRISE THE FIRST SYLLABLE OF THE WORD GOSPEL. ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN GO'S IN SCRIPTURE IS MATTHEW 28:19, "GO YE THEREFORE AND TEACH ALL NATIONS...AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY...." (OLD B.C.C. MOTTO IN THE TOWER - "COME AND GO TO CHURCH") I WAS SURPRISED TO NOTICE THAT THERE ARE 88 DIFFERENT GREEK WORDS BOTH SIMPLE AND COMPOUND TO EXPRESS THE IDEA GO. REGARDING THE CHRISTMAS STORY, THERE ARE TWO WELL-KNOWN USAGES OF THE TERM:

(A) THE GO OF DUPLICITY. WHEN HEROD INSTRUCTED THE WISE MEN TO SEARCH FOR THE YOUNG CHILD IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT COME AND WORSHIP ALSO ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 2:8, IT WAS ALL A SMOKE SCREEN TO HIDE A PLOT TO KILL JESUS. THE WISE MEN REFLECTED

THEIR WISDOM IN NOT OBEYING THAT ROYAL COMMAND AND SEEING THROUGH HEROD'S DUPLICITY. (B) THE GO OF SINCEREITY - WHAT THE SHEPHERDS SAW AND HEARD PROMPTED THEM TO IMMEDIATE ACTION. THE WORDS NOW AND HASTE SUGGESTS THE IMMEDIACY OF THEIR OBEDIENCE. SOME MIGHT HAVE SAID THERE WAS NO REASON TO GET EXCITED OR HURRY. THEY MIGHT HAVE LOOKED UPON THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM AS A WASTE OF TIME AND EFFORT. SOME MAY HAVE DOUBTED AND DELAYED BUT WHEN GOD SPOKE TO THESE HUMBLE SHEPHERDS THEY QUICKLY OBEYED. THERE WERE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE IN PALESTINE IN THOSE DAYS, POWERFUL LEADERS, RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS, SOLDIERS, FISHERMEN AND FARMERS BUT GOD MADE THE NEWS OF HIS SON'S ARRIVAL KNOWN TO SIMPLE SHEPHERDS AS THEY WERE GOING ABOUT THE ORDINARY TASKS OF LIFE. MORRISON HAS WELL SAID, "IT IS ON SIMPLE BEAUTY THAT GLORY FALLS." (WHEN GOD WANTS EARTH TO KNOW OF HEAVEN'S ACTIVITY, HE OFTEN MAKES IT KNOWN THROUGH ACTIVE CONSCIENTIOUS PEOPLE AND NOT THE LAZY GOOF-OFFS OF THE WORLS. COMPARE ZACCHAEUS AND HIS ENERGETIC APPROACH TO CHRIST. BETHLEHEM IS APPROXIMATELY 6 MILES FROM JERUSALEM AND WAS MADE FAMOUS BY TWO WELL-KNOWN WOMEN IN THE BIBLE - RACHEL WHOSE TOMB WAS THERE AND RUTH WHO SETTLED THERE WITH BOAZ. BETHLEHEM WAS ALSO DAVID'S HOME TOWN. AS A MATTER OF FACT, AFTER DAVID NOT MUCH IS SAID ABOUT THIS TOWN UNTIL JESUS WAS BORN THERE. MICAH 5:2 PREDICTED THIS EVENT AND ISAIAH 53 SPOKE OF MESSIAH'S COMING OUT OF AN UNNOTICED AREA OF THE WORLD. THE REASONSWHY PEOPLE WERE IN BETHLEHEM THAT NIGHT WERE DIFFERENT RANGING FROM TRAVEL, TAXES OR TRADE BUT THESE MEN CAME TO WORSHIP.

IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE HOW THEY KNEW ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST - BY REVELATION! LIKE THE SHEPHERDS, SOME SEE CHRISTMAS AS A TIME TO WORSHIP CHRIST WHILE OTHERS SEE AND HEAR NOTHING. THEY HAVE NO IDEA WHAT GOD IS DOING IN HISTORY IN OR HOW JESUS CHRIST RELATES TO THEM. FOR SOME CHRISTMAS IS NO MORE THAN A HOLIDAY, GIFTS, DECORATIONS AND A TIME FOR FAMILY GET-TOGETHERS. HOWEVER, THE PERSON WHO MISSES CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS MISSES EVERYTHING.

II. THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS: MATTHEW 2:11

IF EVER MEN HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP MARY AND THEREFORE ESTABLISH A PATTERN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO FOLLOW, IT WAS HERE. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOT HER BUT HIM THEY CAME TO WORSHIP AND THAT HAS NOT CHANGED. ALSO, THEY GAVE THEIR GIFTS TO HIM, NOT HER, AND NOT TO EACH OTHER! IT WOULD SEEM THAT WE HAVE THE GIFTS OF CHRISTMAS ALL MIXED UP. SELDOM DO WE SENSE OR SEE PEOPLE EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO GOD IN GIFTS AT CHRISTMASTIME. IT IS USUALLY GRATITUDE TO SELF OR SOMEONE ELSE. THE GREAT GIFT OF CHRISTMAS IS CHRIST. (JOHN 3:16, II CORINTHIANS 9:15) THE GIFTS THEMSELVES WERE SIGNIFICANT. AS MOST PEOPLE KNOW, GOLD IS THE METAL OF DIETY. MATTHEW WRITES OF CHRIST THE KING. FRANKINCENSE SPOKE OF HIS FRAGRANT LIFE AND MYRRH HIS SACRIFICIAL DEATH. THE GIFTS BORE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE. A GREAT LESSON OF CHRISTMAS TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS VERSE IS THAT WORSHIP IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN GIFTS. A QUESTION THIS CHRISTMAS: WHAT HAVE I GIVEN CHRIST?

## III. THE GLORY OF CHRISTMAS - LUKE 2:14

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME WHEN MEN GLORIFY MEN. IT IS A TIME WHEN PRAISE IS HEAPED UPON THE LARGEST GIVERS. TALENTED TRADERS AND MERCHANTS MAKE THEIR GREAT PROFIT AT CHRISTMAS TIME. THE WORDS "GLORY TO GOD" TO SOME SOUNDS LIKE THE LANGUAGE OF FANATICS OR TENT-MEETING TERMS FOR SNAKE HANDLERS OR HOLY ROLLERS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THIS HIGH PRAISE MIGHT RESULT IN A COLD STARE OR EMBARRASSED SILENCE IF SPOKEN IN SOME CHURCHES. MODERN MAN HAS GREAT IDEAS ABOUT MAN AND HIS GREATNESS BUT SMALL IDEAS ABOUT GOD AND HIS GLORY. THE WORDS GOD AND JESUS ARE OFTEN THE LANGUAGE OF PROFANITY AND EXASPERATION. THE WORD GLORY IS THE GREEK WORD DOXA FROM WHICH WE GET THE WORD DOXOLOGY. WE SING THE DOXOLOGY AS A PART OF WORSHIP WHEN MEN PUBLICALLY RECOGNIZE AND PRAISE THE WORTH OF GOD IN SONG. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD'S GLORY WAS SEEN IN THE EXODUS, TABERNACLE, TEMPLE AND ACCORDING TO JOHN 1:14 IN FLESH. THE GLORY OF CHRISTMAS IS SEEN IN THE FACT THAT MEN RECOGNIZE THE MAJESTY AND MORAL BEAUTY OF THE SON OF GOD AND GIVE HIM THE PRAISE WHICH IS DUE HIS NAME. LUKE 17:15-18 IS A PASSAGE USUALLY RESERVED FOR THANKSGIVING BUT IT RELATES AS MUCH TO CHRISTMAS AS TO THANKSGIVING! THE GENUINELY GRATEFUL LEPER "GLORIFIED GOD" AS AN EXPRESSION OF HIS HEARTFELT APPRECIATION FOR THE HEALING AND CLEANSING HE RECEIVED AT THE HAND OF JESUS. HE FELL ON HIS FACE AT JESUS' FEET IN TRUE WORSHIP AND ADORATION. (IF YOU THINK THAT IS UNUSUAL HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU HAVE SEEN ANYONE ON HIS KNEES BEFORE GOD?)

IV. THE GRACE OF CHRISTMAS - LUKE 2:40

THE WORD GRACE IS A FAVORITE BIBLE WORD. IT EXPRESSES GOD'S GREAT GENEROSITY TOWARD MANKIND - A GENEROSITY THAT IS BOTH UNDESERVED AND UNMERITED. GOD IS KIND TO US NOT BECAUSE WE DESERVE IT BUT BECAUSE HE IS GENEROUS. GOD'S LOVE TOWARD MANKIND IS NOT GIVEN BECAUSE MAN IS GOOD BUT BECAUSE GOD IS! THE GRACE OF CHRISTMAS IS REFLECTED IN JOHN 1:14-17. SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT GOD BECAME WHAT WE ARE, THAT IS EARTHLY, THAT WE MIGHT BE WHAT HE IS, THAT IS, ETERNAL. THIS PASSAGE STATES THREE GREAT IDEAS ABOUT GRACE:

(1) JESUS CHRIST WAS AND IS FULL OF GRACE. GRACE SPEAKS OF WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR US. (II. COR. 8:9)

(2) IN JESUS CHRIST MANKIND HAS RECEIVED GRACE FOR GRACE. THERE ARE MANY OPINIONS CONCERNING THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS INTERESTING PHRASE. THE WORD FOR IS THE WORD ANTI WHICH MEANS INSTEAD OF, IN PLACE OF, OVER AGAINST. BARCLAY SUGGESTS THAT WHEN A PERSON ENTERS THE STUDY OF A GREAT SUBJECT THAT THE MORE HE LEARNS ABOUT IT THE MORE HE SEES AND UNDERSTANDS AND EVERY NEW VISTA OF TRUTH PROVIDES A NEW AND FRESH EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING REGARDING THE BEAUTY OF THE SUBJECT. (COMPARE CANADIAN VACATION AND EVERY TURN IN THE ROAD.) THE MORE ONE LEARNS ABOUT CHRIST THE GREATER HE BECOMES AND THE MORE LIMITLESS HE IS. ALSO, THE PHRASE MAY SUGGEST THAT FOR EVERY DIFFERENT SITUATION IN LIFE THERE IS GRACE TO MEET THE NEED. THERE IS GRACE TO SAVE,

GRACE TO STAND, TO BE STRONG AND GRACE THAT IS SUFFICIENT FOR OUR EVERY NEED. WHETHER IT BE POVERTY OR PROSPERITY, ADVERSITY OR ADEQUACY, WE HAVE ALL RECEIVED GRACE FOR GRACE!

(3) GRACE AND TRUTH CAME BY CHRIST IN CHRIST THESE TWO GREAT IDEAS ARE INTERTWINED. TO SPEAK OF TRUTH IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE. WE DO NOT DEAL WITH ABSTRACT TERMS WELL. FOR EXAMPLE, THE WORD BEAUTY IS HARD TO DEFINE BUT A BEAUTIFUL PERSON HELPS US UNDERSTAND WHAT IT MEANS. JESUS DID NOT SAY I KNOW, SPEAK, SEARCH FOR, VALUE, RESPECT OR DEFEND THE TRUTH. HE SAID I AM THE TRUTH. HE WAS TRUTH PERSONIFIED. JESUS CHRIST WAS NOT A MAN WHO WOULD NOT LIE HE COULD NOT. THAT IS TRUE OF NO OTHER PERSON YOU AND I KNOW. JESUS SPOKE THE TRUTH GRACIOUSLY AND HE MANIFESTED GRACE TRUTHFULLY IN PERFECT BALANCE. HE SPOKE GOD'S TRUTH IN THE MESSAGE OF GRACE. THE REAL MESSAGE OR THEME OF CHRISTMAS IS A MESSAGE OF GOD'S GRACE. (TITUS 2:11-13) THE MESSAGE OF GRACE SAYS STOP WORKING, SCHEMING, CLIMBING ONE'S WAY TO HEAVEN AND COME BY GOD'S WAY OF GRACE. THE WORD GRACE WHICH IS THE GREEK WORD CHARIS AND THE WORD CHARISMA THE WORD FOR GIFT, ARE RELATED. WE UNDERSTAND THAT CHARISMA IS A GIFT ONE RECEIVES AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY EARN. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF SALVATION AS A GIFT FROM GOD NOT TO BE EARNED BUT FREELY RECEIVED. (ROMANS 6:23) SOMEONE HAS SAID THERE IS A PACKAGE FROM GOD NOT UNDER THE CHRISTMAS TREE BUT IT HAS TO DO WITH A TREE - A CROSS AT CALVARY. IT IS TRULY A GIFT WHICH MAN DOES NOT DESERVE BUT IT TO BE

RECEIVED AS FREELY AS ANY GIFT IS RECEIVED. THE BIG QUESTION AND THEME THIS CHRISTMAS IS: HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED GOD'S CHRISTMAS GIFT TO YOU - THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 12, 1982

A.M.

# THE MAN WHO HELD GOD IN HIS ARMS

## LUKE 2:25-35

THE CHARACTERS IN THE CAST OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY ARE VARIED AND INTERESTING. MARY AND JOSEPH, THE INNKEEPER, HEROD, THE SHEPHERDS, WISE MEN, ANGELS -- THESE ARE ALL VERY FAMILIAR BUT SIMEON IS NOT SO FAMILIAR.

EIGHT DAYS AFTER JESUS' BIRTH, HE WAS BROUGHT TO JERUSALEM AND TO THE TEMPLE FOR THE PROPER JEWISH COVENANT RITES AND SACRIFICES. OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO CAME AND WENT TO THE TEMPLE TO WORSHIP GOD ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY, ONLY TWO RECOGNIZED AND IDENTIFIED THE BABY JESUS AS ISRAEL'S MESSIAH. WHEN SIMEON TOOK THE BABY JESUS IN HIS ARMS, HE COULD APPRECIATE JOHN'S STATEMENT: "THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING, WHICH WE HAVE HEARD, WHICH WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR EYES, WHICH WE HAVE LOOKED UPON, AND OUR HANDS HAVE HANDLED OF THE WORD OF LIFE...." (I JOHN 1:1)

SIMEON UNDERSTOOD THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TOUCHING GOD IN FLESH. JESUS WAS NO PHANTOM OR IMAGINARY MYTH, HE WAS HUMAN FORM AND FLESH; BOTH GOD AND MAN. (JOHN 1:14)

THE PASSAGE DEALS WITH FOUR KEY IDEAS
(1) HOPE, (2) DEATH, (3) WORSHIP
(4) SALVATION.

## I. SIMEON WAS HOLDING THE PERSON WHO WOULD GIVE HOPE TO THE WORLD -- VERSES 25, 31

THE WORD WAITING CARRIES THE IDEA OF EXPECTATION OR STANDING ON TIPTOES. (RELATE TO PARADE -- TIM LEHMANN)

SIMEON WAS LOOKING FOR ISRAEL'S MESSIAH AND THE IMPACT HIS APPEARANCE WOULD HAVE ON THE WHOLE WORLD. MESSIAH WAS NOT JUST A KIND OF TRIBAL DIETY BUT THE BABY HELD IN HIS ARMS WAS THE HOPE OF THE WHOLE WORLD! SIMEON RECOGNIZED THAT THE ANSWER TO ISRAEL'S PROBLEMS WAS NOT PRIMARILY POLITICAL IN NATURE BUT INDEED RELIGIOUS AND PERSONAL.

JEWS LIKE SIMEON UNDERSTOOD THAT ISRAEL'S MISSION IN THE WORLD COULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED BY HUMAN MEANS. THAT GREAT DAY OF WORLD SUPREMACY AND LEADERSHIP WOULD COME ONLY WHEN THEIR MESSIAH CAME TO EARTH. THE MESSIANIC HOPE WAS IN SIMEON'S HEART AND THE BABY WHO CAME TO THE TEMPLE THAT MEMORABLE DAY, HE RECOGNIZED AS THAT MESSIAH! SIMEON SAW BEYOND THE [redacted] POWER OF ROME TO THE SPLENDOR OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE KING. WE LIVE IN A DAY WHEN HOPE IS IN SHORT SUPPLY, AS IT WAS WHEN JESUS WAS BORN. WITH 12-MILLION PEOPLE IN AMERICA UNEMPLOYED, ANOTHER 12-MILLION ALCOHOLICS, AND AN UNDISCLOSED NUMBER OF DRUG-ADDICTS (BUT CERTAINLY NUMBERING IN THE DOUBLE-DIGIT MILLIONS), WITH 20-MILLION PLUS WHO HAVE VARIOUS FORMS OF V.D., TO MENTION BUT A FEW OF AMERICA'S PROBLEMS AND NOT TO MENTION THE ENORMOUS ONES OF OTHER COUNTRIES, HOPE IS NOT A PREVALENT ATTITUDE. HOWEVER, HOPE TOWARD THE FUTURE IS NOT A FORM OF ESCAPISM OR WISHFUL THINKING BUT IT IS PART OF THE CHRISTIANS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE!

THIS ATTITUDE HAS ALWAYS PREVAILED AMONG THE SAINTS. WHEN THE APOSTLES WERE PREACHING IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, THERE WERE 60-MILLION SLAVES; WHEN LUTHER BEGAN THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION, THE WORLD WAS GENERALLY IN A MESS! ENGLISH EVANGELICALISM ABOLISHED THE SLAVE TRADE THROUGH ITS PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD!

C.S. LEWIS REMINDS HIS READERS THAT WHEN THE CHURCH CEASED TO THINK AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND TOWARD HEAVEN, IT BECAME INEFFECTIVE ON EARTH. AIM AT HEAVEN, HE SUGGESTS, AND YOU GET EARTH THROWN IN: AIM AT EARTH AND YOU WILL GET NEITHER.

LEWIS COMPARES OUR HEAVENLY HOPE TO THE SUBJECT OF HEALTH. HEALTH IS A GREAT BLESSING, BUT MAKE IT YOUR PRIMARY AIM AND OBJECT IN LIFE, AND ONE BECOMES A CRANK AND HYPOCHONDRIAC. GOOD HEALTH COMES BY FOLLOWING CERTAIN GOOD RULES OF LIFE, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS PURSUIT OF HIGH GOALS. OF ALL PEOPLE IN THE WORLD, CHRISTIANS MUST HAVE HOPE.

WITHOUT HOPE IN GOD, ONE MIGHT ADOPT THE FATALISTIC AND PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE THAT MEN AND THE WORLD ARE DESTINED TO COSMIC INSANITY AND CHAOS.

(RELATE TO THE MAN AND WASHINGTON MONUMENT THIS WEEK...)

A FRIEND OF MINE PREACHED A SERMON SOME YEARS AGO ENTITLED "OUR ONLY HOPE." THE OPENING PARAGRAPH READS AS FOLLOWS:

"WE ARE WITNESSING, IN THIS 20TH CENTURY, THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT WE ARE ADVANCING TOWARD THE END OF THE WORLD. SCIENCE CAN OFFER NO HOPE FOR THE FUTURE BLESSING AND SECURITY OF HUMANITY, BUT INSTEAD IT HAS PRODUCED DEVASTATING AND DEADLY RESULTS WHICH THREATEN TO LEAD US TOWARD A NEW DARK AGE. THE FRIGHTFUL UPRISING AMONG RACES, THE UNBELIEVABLE CONQUESTS OF COMMUNISM, THE GROWING ANTI-RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, ALL SPELL OUT THE FACT THAT DOOM IS CERTAIN. I SEE NO BRIGHT PROSPECTS, THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF MAN, FOR EARTH AND ITS INHABITANTS. ONE RAY OF HOPE SHINES THROUGH THE MURKY DARKNESS OF THE PRESENT WORLD CONDITIONS...." MY FRIEND HOLDS UP THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SURE AND BLESSED HOPE. (TITUS 2:11-14, I JOHN 1:1-3, I PETER 1:3, COLOSSIANS 1:27) BY CONTRAST, EPH. 2:12 DESCRIBES THE CONDITION OF THE UNSAVED AS HAVING "NO HOPE."

WE LIKE SIMEON HAVE A CONFIDENT EXPECTATION OF SOMETHING GOOD COMING TO EARTH IN THE FUTURE AND THAT SOMETHING IS INDEED SOMEONE AND HIS COMING TO EARTH AGAIN.

II. SIMEON WAS HOLDING THE PERSON WHO WOULD ENABLE MEN TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF DEATH -- VERSES 26-29

NO PERSON IS READY TO DIE UNTIL HE HAS SEEN JESUS!

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT BETWEEN 60 AND 70-MILLION PEOPLE DIE EACH YEAR ON EARTH.

TWO-THIRDS OF THESE ARE IN ASIA, ONE-SIXTH IN EUROPE, ONE-TENTH IN AFRICA, ONE-TWELFTH IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. TWO PEOPLE DIE EVERY SECOND, BY CONTRAST, THREE ARE BORN EVERY SECOND. BIRTHS NUMBERING BETWEEN ONE HUNDRED AND ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN MILLION ANNUALLY.

DEATH IS NOT A SUBJECT WE DWELL UPON, AND RIGHTFULLY SO, BECAUSE THE BIBLE IS NOT A BOOK OF DEATH, BUT OF LIFE. THE HEALTHY PERSON WANTS TO LIVE BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY. YET, IT IS A FACT THAT THE OLD MUST DIE AND THE YOUNG MAY.

THE COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT SIMEON WAS PROBABLY AN OLD MAN AND HAVING SEEN JESUS HE WAS THEN READY TO DIE. THE LAST ENEMY WE MUST FACT IS DEATH (I CORIN. 15:26) WE, LIKE SIMEON, ARE NOT AFRAID OF THIS GREAT, MYSTERIOUS INTRUDER WHEN ONE KNOWS CHRIST (JOHN 5:24, HEBREWS 2:9, 14-15, JOHN 11:25, PHILIPPIANS 1:20)

J.I. PACKER REMINDS HIS READERS: "ALL AGES AND CULTURES HAVE FOUND THE THOUGHT OF DEATH TRAUMATIC: IT SHOCKS, UPSETS, UNNERVES. ALL THE WORLD OVER, PEOPLE ARE EMBARASSED AND RATTLED IF YOU TALK TO THEM ABOUT DYING. EVERYWHERE, THE EXPERIENCE OF BEREAVEMENT, OR THE DEATH OF A FRIEND, SHAKES PEOPLE TO THE CORE; EVERYWHERE THE EXPECTATION OF DYING CASTS INVALIDS INTO APATHETIC DESPAIR. THAT IS WHY OUR DOCTORS AND HOSPITAL STAFFS, OFTEN CRUELLY, TRY TO HIDE FROM THE DYING THEIR REAL CONDITION."

DAILY, YOU AND I MARCH TOWARD DEATH AND EVENTUALLY ITS SHADOW WILL CAST ITSELF OVER OUR LIVES. SOME MAY SHRUG IT OFF, SOME MAY REACT VIOLENTLY, SOME ARE ENRAGED, BUT WHATEVER OUR ATTITUDE IT DOES NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT MEN MUST DIE AND LIFE'S MOST IMPORTANT DECISION IS TO PREPARE FOR THAT INEVITABLE HOUR. UNLESS ONE KNOWS JESUS CHRIST HE DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THE SUBJECT AND IS NOT READY TO DIE. SIMEON WAS READY. (RELATE CONVERSATION WITH HOWARD SUGDEN REGARDING "GRACE PERIOD," BECAUSE OF THE 70 YEARS ALREADY...)

THERE IS A SENSE, IN THE WORDS OF GEORGE WHITEFIELD, IN WHICH MAN IS IMMORTAL UNTIL HIS WORK IS DONE BUT HE SHOULD LIVE EACH DAY AS IF IT WERE HIS LAST AND SEEK TO LIVE LIFE TO ITS FULLEST AND TO THE GLORY OF GOD, THAT WHENEVER THE LORD CALLS WE ARE READY.

## III. SIMEON WAS HOLDING THE PERSON WHO WOULD BE THE OBJECT OF MAN'S TRUE WORSHIP -- VERSE 27

THE CHRISTMAS SCENE IS FILLED WITH WORSHIPPERS. THE SHEPHERDS, THE WISE MEN, AND THE ANGELS FROM HEAVEN ALL WORSHIPPED JESUS. SIMEON LIVED IN JERUSALEM AT A TIME WHEN TEMPLE ATTENDANCE WAS LOW. MANY PEOPLE HAD ABANDONED THE HOUSE OF GOD AND THERE WAS LITTLE LEFT BUT BLIND LOYALTY TO RITUAL AND RELIGIOUS RITES. THE WORD WORSHIP SUGGESTS "THE ADORING CONTEMPLATION OF GOD AS HE WAS REVEALED IN JESUS CHRIST."

THE OLD ENGLISH FORM OF THE WORD CARRIES THE IDEA OF "WORTH-SHIP" OR ASCRIBING WORTHINESS TO SOMEONE. THE ASCRIPTION OF PRAISE TO GOD FOR WHAT HE IS WITH A SPIRIT OF REVERENCE ON OUR PART IS THE ESSENSE OF WORSHIP.

THE WORD ASCRIPTION -- WE WORSHIP THE LORD WHEN WE ASCRIBE VENERATION AND ADORATION TO HIS NAME. WE WORSHIP GOD WHEN WE THANK HIM FOR WHAT HE IS AS WELL AS WHAT HE DOES. MUCH OF WHAT WE CALL WORSHIP TODAY IS SIMPLY RELIGIOUS GATHERING AND ACTIVITY TO SATISFY THE LONGINGS OF THE FLESH, RATHER THAN THE PROMPTINGS OF THE SPIRIT. IN MY OPINION, NOWHERE DO WE REFLECT THE POVERTY OF OUR OWN SPIRITUAL BARRENNESS THAN OUR LACK OF WORSHIP IN MUSIC AND STUDY OF THE WORD OF GOD. THE POET HAS SAID IT WELL, AS FOLLOWS:

SOME GO TO CHURCH JUST FOR A WALK,
SOME GO THERE TO LAUGH AND TALK;
SOME GO THERE TO GAIN A LOVER,
SOME GO THERE THEIR FAULTS TO COVER.

SOME GO THERE FOR OBSERVATION,
SOME GO THERE FOR SPECULATION,
SOME GO THERE TO SLEEP AND NOD,
BUT FEW GO THERE TO WORSHIP GOD!

SIMEON WAS A WORSHIPPER ABOVE ALL ELSE!

IV. SIMEON WAS HOLDING THE PERSON WHO WAS THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD -- VERSE 30

THE PHRASE "THY SALVATION" CONTINUES THE IDEA OF MATTHEW 1:21 AND JESUS AS SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.

Lifeguard Pound on ringside chair!

THE TERM SAVIOR SUGGESTS THERE IS SOMEONE WHO NEEDS SAVING! IF MEN ARE NOT LOST, THEN THEY NEED NO SAVIOR. (IT IS SILLY TO RESCUE SOMEONE WHO IS NOT IN DANGER!) FOR SOME, THE TERM SAVIOR MEANS THAT JESUS IS A KIND OF SPIRITUAL SANTA CLAUS, A RELIGIOUS LEADER, A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL EXAMPLE, A GOOD MAN, OR PERHAPS A MYTH OR FABLE. SIMEON REMINDS US THAT SALVATION IS IN A PERSON AND NOT A PROGRAM. (ACTS 4:12)

ACCORDING TO VERSE 34, FACED WITH THIS FACT SOME MEN WOULD FALL AND OTHERS WOULD RISE. SOME OF THE MEN WHO FELL BECAUSE OF JESUS WERE: JUDAS, HEROD, PILATE. SOME MEN WHO ROSE BECAUSE OF HIM WERE: PETER, SAUL, THIEF ON THE CROSS. THE POINT OF THIS PASSAGE IS THERE IS NO MIDDLE GROUND. IT IS CHRIST OR NOTHING. SIMEON'S NAME MEANS "ONE WHO HEARS." SIMEON'S EARS WERE OPEN TO THE VOICE OF GOD. I AM SURE IN THAT TEMPLE ON THAT PARTICULAR DAY, THERE WERE MANY RELIGIOUS, WEALTHY, BRILLIANT AND CLEVER PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM, BUT IT WAS SIMEON ATTUNED TO THE VOICE OF GOD AND EYES TO SEE GOD'S SALVATION IN THE MOST UNLIKELY PLACE -- A BABY IN HIS MOTHER'S ARMS!

THAT CHILD EVENTUALLY DIED AT A PLACE CALLED CALVARY. (THERE IS AN APOCRYPHAL STORY TOLD OF AN IMAGINARY SCENE IN HEAVEN. IT PICTURED GOD CALLING THE ANGELS TOGETHER AFTER THE FALL OF ADAM. AT THAT TIME, VARIOUS IDEAS WERE TALKED ABOUT TO REDEEM FALLEN MAN. (1) ONE ANGEL SUGGESTED THAT HE GO TO EARTH, LIVE A LIFE OF TRUTH AND LOVE AMONG MEN AND THUS GIVE THEM AN EXAMPLE FOR GOOD AND NOT FOR EVIL. (2) ANOTHER ANGEL

SUGGESTED THAT HE GO TO EARTH AND TEACH MEN THE TRUTH TO FILL THEIR MINDS WITH THE RIGHT PRECEPTS IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW HOW TO LIVE. A THIRD ANGEL PROPOSED ANOTHER IDEA SIMILAR TO THE PREVIOUS TWO. GOD COMMENDED THEM FOR THEIR NOBLE DESIRES AND LOFTY PURPOSES, BUT REMINDED THEM THAT SUCH SCHEMES WOULD NEVER WORK. THERE WAS A LONG SILENCE AND FINALLY GOD'S SON WAS HEARD TO SAY: "FATHER, I WILL GO DOWN TO EARTH, TAKE THE FORM OF A MAN, OFFER MYSELF ON THE CROSS, SHED MY BLOOD FOR MAN'S REDEMPTION IN ORDER TO BECOME HIS SAVIOR." TO THIS GOD RESPONDED WITH A HEARTY "YES" -- HIS ETERNAL SON ALONE HAD THE ABILITY AND CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH MAN'S SIN. THE STORY IS IMAGINARY BUT THE TRUTH IS REAL.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 22, 1985
EVENING

# A CHRISTMAS IN THE KEY OF "G"
Carol

CHRISTMAS MUSIC IS VERY SPECIAL. TASTES RANGE FROM HANDEL'S MESSIAH AND THE HALLELUJAH CHORUS TO POPULAR SONGS BY COMO, CROSBY AND AUTRY. (RELATE STORY OF RUDOLPH THE RED. ALSO, AMY GRANT.)

## I. THE GENERATION OR GENEALOGY - MATT. 1:1

THE GOSPELS RECORD TWO GENEALOGIES OF CHRIST'S LIFE. ONE IS MARY'S, LUKE 3, AND GIVES CHRIST'S BIOLOGICAL LINE TO ADAM. JOSEPH'S GENEALOGY IS CHRIST'S LEGAL LINE BACK TO DAVID AND ESTABLISHES CHRIST TO THE THRONE OF DAVID OR THE KINGSHIP. ONE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT THE THREE GROUPS OF FOURTEEN GENERATIONS DOES NOT INCLUDE EVERYONE IN THE GENEALOGY, ONLY TO KEEP THE LINE STRAIGHT. ALSO, THE GROUPS WERE FOR MEMORY PURPOSES. THE SUMMATION OF THE GENEALOGY IS THAT NO JEW ALIVE HAS RECORD OF HIS LEGAL FAMILY TREE OR GENEALOGY FOR ALL RECORDS WERE DESTROYED IN 70 A.D. WHEN THE TEMPLE WAS LEVELED. JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY JEW WHO CAN PROVE HIS RIGHT TO DAVID'S THRONE! THAT HISTORICAL RECORD HAS BEEN PRESERVED IN THE BIBLE

## II. THE GIFTS - MATTHEW 2:11

IF EVER MEN HAD OCCASION AND OPPORTUNITY TO WORSHIP MARY AND ESTABLISH A PATTERN FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS IT WAS HERE. HOWEVER, IT IS OBVIOUS THEY WORSHIPPED HIM AND NOT HER. ALSO, THEY GAVE THEIR GIFTS TO HIM AND NOT TO EACH OTHER.

1. GOLD - THIS IS THE METAL OF KINGS. MATTHEW IS THE GOSPEL OF THE KING. IT SPEAKS OF MESSIAH'S DIETY. (DANIEL 2)

2. FRANKINCENSE - A GIFT FOR PRIESTS. FRANKINCENSE IS A SWEET PERFUME USED IN TEMPLE SERVICE INVOLVING SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP. AS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST, IT IS CHRIST WHO MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO HAVE ACCESS TO GOD IN AN ACCEPTABLE FASHION. (ROMANS 5: 1-2)

3. MYRHH - A SPICE USED TO EMBALM DEAD BODIES. IT WAS A PROPHETIC PORTRAIT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S LIFE AND ESPECIALLY HIS DEATH. THESE MEN BELIEVED CHRIST TO BE WORTHY OF GIFTS AND WORSHIP AND THEREFORE GAVE HIM THE FINEST OR BEST AVAILABLE. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUE, THAT GENUINE WORSHIP GIVES OUR BEST TO GOD. BY CONTRAST, IN ISRAEL'S BACK-SLIDDEN AND SPIRITUAL POVERTY, THEY ATTEMPTED TO OFFER THE POOREST SACRIFICES TO GOD AND NOT THE BEST.

III. THE GARMENTS - LUKE 2:7 & 12

SWADDLING CLOTHES WERE USUALLY MADE UP OF A SQUARE OF CLOTH WITH LONG BANDAGE-LIKE STRIPS TIED DIAGONALLY FROM ONE CORNER AND THEN WRAPPED AROUND THE SQUARE MUCH LIKE A BANDAGE. THESE GARMENTS OR CLOTHES SPOKE OF OUR LORD'S HUMILIATION AND POVERTY. HE LAID ASIDE HIS ROYAL GARMENTS TO COME TO EARTH. (II COR. 8:9) HE WORE THESE GARMENTS THAT YOU AND I MIGHT BE PROPERLY CLOTHED IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST (ISAIAH 64:6, ISAIAH 61:10, REVELATION 19:8, 14) SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT THERE ARE ONLY THREE TYPES OF GARMENTS WHICH MEN WEAR.

(1) FIG LEAVES - THIS SPEAKS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

(2) FILTHY RAGS - THIS SPEAKS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

(3) FINE LINEN - THIS SPEAKS OF HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

IV. THE GLORY - LUKE 2:9\13-14

MEN TEND TO GLORIFY MEN. PRAISE IS PILED UPON THOSE WHO ARE PROMINENT, WEALTHY, AND TALENTED. MEN ENJOY THE IDEA OF MEMORIALIZING THEIR NAMES IN INSTITUTIONS, BUILDINGS, TRUSTS, AND SO FORTH. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF GIVING HONOR TO WHOM HONOR IS DUE BUT WHEN IT COMES TO GLORY AND WORSHIP, THAT ALONE BELONGS TO GOD. THE PHRASE, GLORY TO GOD, SOMETIMES SOUNDS LIKE THE LANGUAGE OF FANATICS KNOWN AS SNAKE HANDLERS AND HOLY ROLLERS. THE UTTERANCE OF THIS PHRASE IS OFTEN MET WITH COLD SILENCE OR A COLD STARE - EVEN IN CHURCH. THE WORD GLORY IS THE GREEK DOXA FROM WHICH WE GET OUR ENGLISH DOXOLOGY. MANY PEOPLE SING THE DOXOLOGY ON SUNDAY WITHOUT RECOGNIZING THE PURPOSE OF THE SONG WHICH IS TO SING THE WORTH OF GOD'S PRAISE. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD'S GLORY WAS SEEN IN PLACES LIKE THE TABERNACLE OR TEMPLE. THE GLORY OF CHRISTMAS, IF SUCH A PHRASE IS PERMISSIBLE, IS THAT MEN RECOGNIZE THE MAJESTY AND MORAL WORTH OF GOD AND GIVE HIM THE PRAISE THAT IS DUE HIS NAME.

V. THE GRACE - JOHN 1:17

GRACE IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S GREAT GENEROSITY TOWARD MANKIND. IT IS KINDNESS THAT IS USUALLY UNSOUGHT AND MOST SURELY UNDESERVED. GOD'S GRACE IS EXTENDED TO MAN NOT BECAUSE MAN IS GOOD BUT BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD. THAT GRACE HAS BEEN PERSONIFIED IN A PERSON. (TITUS 2:11-13)

VI. THE GOVERNMENT - ISAIAH 9:6

THIS IS A WELL-KNOWN VERSE DEALING WITH THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST. HOWEVER, ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT BIBLICAL FACT IS OFTEN OVER-LOOKED AND THAT IS MESSIAH'S FUTURE COMING GLORY AND GOVERNMENT ON EARTH. ISAIAH WAS AN ABLE EXPONENT OF THIS BIBLICAL FACT.

(1) ISAIAH 2:2-4

IN THIS PASSAGE THERE IS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL. THE LAST DAYS OF THIS PASSAGE REFER TO DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK. THE WORD TOP REFERS TO SUPREMACY OR SUPERIORITY AND THE WORD FLOW REFERS TO THE MAGNETIC ATTRACTION OF MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM TO THE OTHER GENTILE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. HIS REIGN OR RULE WILL BE ONE OF UNIVERSAL PEACE.

(2) ISAIAH 11:2-9

THIS IS A MILLENNIAL PASSAGE. A PARALLEL PASSAGE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD IS JOEL 2:28FF. THE PASSAGE IN JOEL SAYS NOTHING ABOUT SPEAKING IN TONGUES. ALL SUCH DELUSIONS

ARE DRAWN FROM PETER'S QUOTATION OF THE PASSAGE IN ACTS 2:16FF. PENTECOST WAS A PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF JOEL 2 BUT THE FINAL AND FULL FULFILLMENT AWAITS MESSIAH'S MILLENNIUM. JOEL STATES THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KINGDOM WILL BRING SALVATION AND JOY, IN FACT, THE KINGDOM AGE WILL MANIFEST CHRIST'S GRACE AND GLORY TOGETHER AND THE SPIRIT OF GRACE WHICH CHARACTERIZES THE CHURCH WILL ALSO CHARACTERIZE THE KINGDOM. WE SING ABOUT GOING TO HEAVEN BUT OUR PARTICIPATION IN KINGDOM BLESSINGS AS THE BRIDEGROOM'S BRIDE IS SOMETHING OFTEN OVERLOOKED AND UNDERSTATED.

CONCLUSION: THIS IS A VERY WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS SONG IN A KEY EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND SING.

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

DECEMBER 19, 1932
A.M.

# A PROPHETESS AND CHRISTMAS

## LUKE 2:36-38

THE TERM PROPHETESS APPEARS TWO TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, HERE AND IN REVELATION 2:20. ANNA WAS GIVEN THIS TITLE BY LUKE, JEZEBEL WAS A SELF-STYLED RELIGIOUS LEADER WHO TOOK THE TITLE BY HER OWN ASSUMPTION. (Princess \ priestess \ (between)

THE TEXT IN REVELATION SAYS "WHICH CALLED HERSELF A PROPHETESS." BARNHOUSE SAYS SHE WAS "AN IDOLATROUS QUEEN, A PROPHETESS NEVER." THE FACT THAT "MRS. AHAB" REFERRED TO HERSELF BY SUCH A TITLE DID NOT MAKE IT SO. I WAS SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THAT THE WORD PROPHETESS DOES NOT APPEAR IN EITHER BAKER'S THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OR THE DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT THEOLOGY. HOWEVER, ISBE CONTAINED ONE SMALL ARTICLE POINTING OUT THAT WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE NOT EXCLUDED FROM THE PROPHETIC OFFICE. APPARENTLY THEY GAVE FEW OF THE SEER'S INSIGHTS INTO THE FUTURE BUT THEIR POETIC SPEECH WAS CONSIDERED TO BE OF PROPHETIC NATURE.

MIRIAM, DEBORAH, HULDAH ARE AMONG THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETESSES. (EXODUS 15:20, JUDGES 4:4, II KINGS 22:14) ANNA IS NOT MENTIONED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE BIBLE. HER STORY SEEMS TO BE SAD ON THE SURFACE BUT IN SPITE OF PERSONAL TRAGEDY SHE TURNED HER LIFE INTO MEANINGFUL SERVICE TO GOD. THAT DAY IN THE TEMPLE, WHEN JESUS WAS BROUGHT AS A BABY BY HIS PARENTS, HE WAS RECOGNIZED BY ONLY TWO PEOPLE -- AN OLD MAN AND AN OLD WOMAN.

## I. ANNA: A WOMAN WITH A BIBLICAL HERITAGE

### VERSE 36

THE WORD ANNA MEANS "GRACE." THE WORD ASHER MEANS "HAPPY OR BLESSED." THE WORD PHANUEL IS THE HEBREW WORD PENUEL ALSO PENIEL. ALL OF THESE TERMS

ESTABLISH THE FACT THAT ANNA WAS A JEW WITH PROPER FAMILY TREE, OR GENEOLOGY AND IT WAS UP TO DATE. THESE TERMS SUGGEST A LONG HISTORY OF EXPERIENCE IN THE THINGS OF GOD. RELIGIOUS THINGS WERE IMPORTANT IN ANNA'S FAMILY (WE UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GRACE OF GOD IN REDEEMING ANY HUMAN BEING. HOWEVER, THERE IS ANOTHER SIDE WHICH NEEDS TO BE EMPHASIZED FROM TIME TO TIME AND THAT IS FOLLOWING GOOD BIBLICAL FAMILY TRAITS. THAT IS, IF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY ARE SAVED AND INVOLVED IN THE THINGS OF THE LORD THE POSSIBILITY AND PROBABILITY OF YOUR CHILDREN BEING SAVED IS MUCH GREATER THAN THOSE OF A FAMILY WHO HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE THINGS OF THE LORD. SOME YEARS AGO A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY WAS DONE WITH REFERENCE TO THE JUKES FAMILY WHO LIVED IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. THE FAMILY TREE WAS CONSPICUOUS WITH ITS RECORD OF POVERTY, INSANITY, PROSTITUTION, DRUNKENESS AND IMBECILITY. A TOTAL OF 1,200 DESCENDANTS WERE TRACED THROUGH THE FAMILY TREE. SOME 400 HAD DONE AWAY WITH THEMSELVES, 310 WERE PROFESSIONAL PAUPERS, 130 CONVICTED CRIMINALS, 60 HABITUAL THIEVES AND PICKPOCKETS, 7 MURDERERS WHILE OUT OF THE ENTIRE NUMBER, ONLY 20 EVER LEARNED A TRADE AND OF THESE HALF LEARNED A TRADE WHILE IN PRISON! IN CONTRAST TO THE JUKES FAMILY, SOMEONE TRACED THE FAMILY OF JONATHAN EDWARDS AND YOU GUESSED IT -- COLLEGE PRESIDENTS, JUDGES, ATTORNEYS, DOCTORS, EDUCATORS, CLERGYMEN FILLED THAT FAMILY TREE!) (RELATE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING GROOM LOOK AT HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW -- STRONGER TIES AND ASSOCIATION THAN MOST LIKE TO BELIEVE).

## II. ANNA: A WOMAN OF GREAT AGE AND GREAT HOPE

VERSE 36, 38

THE TEXT SAYS SHE WAS "VERY OLD, OR ADVANCED IN MANY DAYS." ONE IS NOT SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THERE IS A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION CONCERNING HER AGE.

IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR THERE TO BE CONSIDERABLE MYSTERY ABOUT A WOMAN'S AGE! (COMMENT REGARDING WIFE WHO DOESN'T CARE IF PEOPLE KNOW SHE IS 39! DEVELOPED A FORMULA ON HOW TO LIVE TO BE VERY OLD. IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THIS ONE MUST BE A COMPLAINING, MARRIED WOMAN WHO DOES NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC DRINKS OR SMOKE. REASON: MARRIED WOMEN LIVE LONGER THAN SINGLE WOMEN AND WIVES OUTLIVE THEIR HUSBANDS. WIDOWS OUTNUMBER WIDOWERS ALMOST 4 TO 1. THE CHANCES ARE 3 TO 5 THAT A WIFE WILL SURVIVE HER HUSBAND IF BOTH ARE THE SAME AGE. IT IS ONLY WHEN THE HUSBAND IS FOUR YEARS YOUNGER THAN THE WIFE THAT HIS CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL ARE THE SAME. THERE IS SOME MEDICAL SURVEY EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE IDEA THAT CHRONIC COMPLAINERS LIVE LONGER THAN PEOPLE WHO ARE SWEET AND NICE. THE REPORT CLAIMS THAT A CANTANKEROUS SPIRIT GIVES PEOPLE A PURPOSE FOR LIVING. EACH MORNING THEY GET UP WITH A FRESH CHALLENGE TO SEE HOW MANY THINGS THEY CAN GRUMBLE ABOUT AND HOW MUCH SATISFACTION THEY CAN DERRIVE FROM MAKING OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES MISERABLE! SOME WAG SUGGESTED THAT HE DOUBTED THE VALIDITY OF THIS REPORT, IN OTHER WORDS THAT COMPLAINERS ACTUALLY OUTLIVE THOSE WHO DON'T. MAYBE IT WAS JUST THAT THEY SEEMED TO BE AROUND SO LONG! MEDICAL REPORTS SHOW THAT A PERSON 50 YEARS OLD, WHO HAS NEVER SMOKED WILL LIVE 8 YEARS LONGER THAN A PACK-A-DAY SMOKER, OR 17 YEARS LONGER THAN A TWO-PACK-A-DAY SMOKER. ALSO, STATISTICS REVEAL PEOPLE WHO DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL TEND TO LIVE LONGER THAN THOSE WHO DO. HENCE, THE WAY TO LIVE A LONG LIFE, IS TO BE A MARRIED WOMAN WHO COMPLAINS ABOUT EVERYTHING BUT DOES NOT SMOKE OR DRINK!)

BACK TO ANNA -- SHE WAS MARRIED AND LIVED WITH HER HUSBAND 7 YEARS. THAT POINT IS CLEAR. WHAT IS NOT CLEAR IS WHETHER SHE HAD BEEN A WIDOW FOR 34 YEARS OR THAT SHE HAD NOW REACHED THE AGE OF 34 -- I PREFER THE LATTER OF THE TWO IDEAS. (1) (2)

SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID LIFE IS NOT FINISHED UNTIL IT ENDS. MANY PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO GROW OLD FOR THEY VIEW ADVANCED AGE AS A TIME OF FAILING HEALTH, STRENGTH WITH LONELINESS AND LIMITATIONS IMPOSED UPON THEIR LIVES. HAPPY IS THE PERSON WHO GROWS OLD WITHOUT GROWING COLD. HAPPY IS THE PERSON WHO CHOOSES TO WEAR OUT AND NOT RUST OUT FOR GOD. (RECENTLY WE DID A STUDY SHEET IN THE EVENING SERVICE ENTITLED "WHEN I AM OLD AND GREY" DAVID WAS DETERMINED TO WEAR OUT FOR GOD. TO LIVE HIS LIFE EVERY DAY UNTIL HE WENT TO BE WITH THE LORD.) HAPPY IS THE PERSON WHO IN GROWING OLD DOES NOT QUIT. OLD AGE IS NOT WITHOUT DIFFICULTIES, AS IS EVERY OTHER STAGE OF LIFE, BUT IT MAY BE A VERY BLESSED AND OPPORTUNE MOMENT TO SERVE GOD. THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING WORSE THAN A CRANKY, BITTER OLD PERSON WHO MOANS ABOUT EVERYTHING IN LIFE INCLUDING HEALTH, NEGLIGENT FAMILY MEMBERS, MONEY, AND THE WORLD IN GENERAL. THEY AFFLICT ALMOST EVERYONE WHO GETS NEAR THEM. BY CONTRAST THERE IS NOTHING SWEETER THAN A GODLY AGED PERSON WHO HAS LEARNED TO TRUST GOD EARLY IN LIFE AND CONTINUES TO DO SO IN THE TWILIGHT OF LIFE.

ANNA WAS ONE OF THOSE DELIGHTFUL PERSONS WHOSE ADVANCED YEARS WERE A BLESSING TO ALL WHO KNEW HER. DURBANVILLE REMINDS HIS READERS THAT ONE'S AGE IS OFTEN REFLECTED IN HIS MENTAL ATTITUDE. HE ENCOURAGES HIS READERS TO TAKE CARE OF MIND AS WELL AS BODY. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE TO DO IS TO CULTIVATE A CHEERFUL SPIRIT, NEVER ALLOWING PESSIMISM TO GAIN THE UPPER HAND. MAKE UP YOUR MIND THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE AN OPTIMISTIC, BUOYANT OUTLOOK ON LIFE. WHEN THE SUN SHINES, LET IT SHINE ON YOU. GREY DAYS WILL COME BUT ALWAYS BE ASSURED THAT SUNNY DAYS WILL FOLLOW. HANG ON TO YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR WITH BOTH HANDS. HE SUGGESTS THAT MOST OF THE NEUROTIC WRECKS ONE SEES AND SOME OF THE MENTAL ONES ARE THE NATURAL RESULT OF A MORBID OUTLOOK ON LIFE.

(COMMENT REGARDING DAD WHO ALWAYS SEEMED OLD EVEN IN HIS 30'S. COMMENT REGARDING HOWARD SUGDEN AT 75 --

ZEALOUS, ENERGETIC -- YOUNG.)

## III. ANNA: A WOMAN WHO TURNED SORROW INTO SERVICE
### VERSE 37

ANNA'S HUSBAND DIED AFTER ONLY SEVEN YEARS OF MARRIAGE. SHE HAD LOST A LOVED ONE BUT HAD NOT GROWN BITTER. SOMEONE HAS SUGGESTED THAT SORROW WILL EITHER MAKE US HARD, BITTER, RESENTFUL AND REBELLIOUS OR IT WILL MAKE US KINDER, SOFTER, MORE SYMPATHETIC, AND HELPFUL TO OTHERS. AFTER SHE HAD LOST HER HUSBAND, SHE TURNED HER ATTENTION TO SERVICE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD AND SPIRITUAL INTERESTS.

THE STORMS OF LIFE DID NOT SINK HER BOAT, NEITHER DID IT BEACH UPON THE SHORES OF THIS LIFE. BUT STEADILY AND FAITHFULLY ANNA SET HER SAIL FOR HEAVEN AND NEVER STOPPED LOOKING IN THAT DIRECTION. (WHILE CONSIDERING THIS STUDY MY MIND WANDERED OVER 15 YEARS OF WATCHING FAMILIES COME AND GO IN THIS LOCAL CHURCH. I HAVE WATCHED WHAT DEATH AND SORROW DO TO FAMILIES. WEEPING WIDOWS, BROKEN-HEARTED PARENTS. FAMILIES WHO HAVE COME TO THIS CHURCH AND HAVE STRUCK THE ROCKY SHOALS OF LIFE HAVE QUIT ALTOGETHER. THEY NO LONGER PRETEND TO GO TO CHURCH OR HAVE SPIRITUAL INTERESTS. NATURALLY, THEY BLAME GOD OR THE CHURCH OR SOMEONE BUT NOT THEMSELVES FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL COLLAPSE AND FAILURE -- ALLUDE TO ROSE FAMILY.)

## IV. ANNA: A WOMAN WHO SAW AND SPOKE ABOUT JESUS
### VERSE 38

THE 400 SILENT YEARS WERE YEARS OF DARKNESS AND DESPAIR. SUDDENLY A LIGHT BEGINS TO SHINE IN THE DARK. THAT LIGHT WAS IN THE PERSON OF AN 8-DAY-OLD BABY. ANNA RECOGNIZED JESUS AS ISRAEL'S MESSIAH.

WHAT ANNA HAD TO SAY TO HER GENERATION, AFTER LONG YEARS OF SPIRITUAL DARKNESS AND DEADNESS, WAS VERY SIMPLE AND CLEAR. PEOPLE TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY HAVE HEARD AND SEEN. (I JOHN 1:3)

THIS IS A GENERAL RULE OF LIFE, AFTER A VACATION TRIP WE SHOW PICTURES, MOVIES, SLIDES, TICKET STUBS, SOUVINERS, INFORMATIONAL BROCHURES AND WE TALK ON AND ON AND ON.... IT'S THE WAY WE ARE. WE SIMPLY TALK ABOUT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NEAR AND DEAR TO US. COULD IT BE THAT SO FEW PEOPLE TALK ABOUT JESUS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT KNOW HIM!
(SAUL OF TARSUS SAW SOMEONE ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD IN A BLAZE OF GLORY LIGHT AND HE NEVER GOT OVER IT AND HE NEVER STOPPED TALKING ABOUT IT!)

(COMMENT REGARDING DOCTOR IN ELEVATOR IN CHATTANOOGA -- ANNA WAS SUCH A PERSON. THERE ARE SUCH PEOPLE IN THIS LOCAL CHURCH)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 4, 1983

But Don't Let It Pass!

# IT CAME TO PASS...THAT JESUS CAME

MARK 1:1-11

JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD AND THE WORLD WAS NEVER THE SAME. HE WAS BORN IN A STABLE OF UNDISTINGUISHED PARENTS YET HE WOULD RULE THE WORLD. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE WAS NOTHING ABOUT JESUS' PHYSICAL APPEARANCE TO CALL SPECIAL ATTENTION TO HIMSELF, THAT IS, THERE WAS NO HALO AROUND HIS HEAD, HE WAS SIMPLY A MAN AMONG MEN. HE GREW FROM CHILDHOOD TO MANHOOD IN NAZARETH APPARENTLY LEADING AN ORDINARY QUIET LIFE BUT THIS CHAPTER BEGINS JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY AND THE QUIET LIFE OF NAZARETH WAS NO MORE. JESUS' VIRGIN BIRTH WAS UNIQUE BUT MARK MAKES NO MENTION OF THAT SPECTACULAR EVENT! THE GOSPEL OF MARK WAS WRITTEN TO THE ROMANS. ROMANS WERE "ACTION" PEOPLE, THEY LIVED LIFE IN THE FAST LANE. THEY THOUGHT OF LIFE IN TERMS OF ENERGY AND MOVEMENT, THAT IS THEY WERE PEOPLE WHO DID THINGS. MARK, THE EARLIEST AND THE SHORTEST OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. (WORD SYNOPTIC MEANS TO VIEW TOGETHER, TO LOOK AT THE LIFE OF JESUS FROM A COMMON POINT OF VIEW. THE WORD STRAIGHT-WAY AND IMMEDIATELY ARE THE KEY WORDS. SOMEONE HAS MENTIONED THAT MARK WAS A ROMAN NAME BUT THAT JOHN WAS HIS HEBREW NAME. WE COULD HAVE HAD TWO GOSPELS OF JOHN, A LONGER AND SHORTER VERSION!) WHEN JESUS CAME, THERE WAS AN AIR OF EXPECTANCY IN THE WORLD. THE WORLD HAD BEEN PREPARED FOR HIS COMING. THE

JEWS HAD A MESSIANIC HOPE, THE GREEKS HAD PROVIDED THE WORLD WITH A BEAUTIFUL, FLEXIBLE LANGUAGE AND THE ROMANS PROVIDED ROADS AND A SYSTEM OF LAW. MEN LOOKED TO THE SKIES AND THE SCRIPTURES FOR A VISITATION FROM HEAVEN. MARK OMITTED THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE OF JESUS AND BEGAN IMMEDIATELY WITH HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY. THE KEY VERSE OF MARK SPEAKS OF THAT MINISTRY: "FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, BUT TO MINISTER, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY." (10:45) THIS VERSE TELLS US WHY HE CAME. THERE ARE MANY WONDERFUL VERSUS IN THE BIBLE, WHERE THE WORD COME RELATES TO JESUS' MINISTRY: "I AM COME THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY." (JOHN 10:10) "HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT." (JOHN 1:11) "I AM NOT COME TO CALL THE RIGHTEOUS, BUT SINNERS TO REPENTANCE." (MATTHEW 9:13) "AND YOU WILL NOT COME TO ME, THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE LIFE." (JOHN 5:40) "COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST." (MATTHEW 11:28) "ALL THAT THE FATHER GIVETH ME SHALL COME TO ME; AND HIM THAT COMETH TO ME I WILL NO WISE CAST OUT." (JOHN 6:37) "I WILL COME AGAIN." (JOHN 14:3) "NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME." (JOHN 14:6) JESUS CAME TO EARTH THAT MEN MIGHT COME TO HIM AND BE SAVED AND BE WITH HIM FOREVER. THE CHAPTER BEFORE US SUGGESTS FOUR BASIC IDEAS CONCERNING HIS COMING:

## I. THE PROPHETS SPOKE OF HIS COMING - VERSES 2-3

THE SPECIFIC PROPHETS MENTIONED IN THE TEXT ARE MALACHI AND ISAIAH. (MALACHI 3:1, ISAIAH 40:3) THE PASSAGE IN ISAIAH IS QUOTED FROM THAT GREAT SECTION OF THE BOOK WHICH BEGINS A CONTINUOUS, MESSIANIC POEM REGARDING THE SERVANT OF GOD! BY THE WAY, THIS THEME IS THE THEME OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE LAST HALF OF ISAIAH BEGINS WITH CHAPTER 40 AND CONCLUDES AT CHAPTER 66 AND THE VERY HEART OF THAT MESIANNIC GOLD MINE IS CHAPTER 53, ONE OF THE GREAT MESSIANIC PASSAGES IN THE BIBLE! AFTER ISAIAH'S GREAT PROPHETIC PORTION, THERE WAS 300 YEARS OF PROPHECY WITH EACH PROPHET ADDING NEW DETAILS CONCERNING THE SERVANT OF GOD. JESUS SPOKE OF THE IMPACT OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY AND LINKED THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT TOGETHER IN HIMSELF. ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS HE SAID: "THESE ARE THE WORDS WHICH I SPAKE UNTO YOU, WHILE I WAS YET WITH YOU, THAT ALL THINGS MUST BE FULFILLED, WHICH WERE WRITTEN IN THE LAW OF MOSES, AND IN THE PROPHETS AND IN THE PSALMS, CONCERNING ME." (LUKE 24:44) THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS WERE MEN WHO SPOKE FOR GOD AND NOT FOR THEMSELVES. THEY WERE IN A UNIQUE WAY GOD'S MESSENGERS. THERE WAS A WIDE RANGE OF MEN SUCH AS ISAIAH THE ARISTOCRAT, JEREMIAH THE PRIEST, AMOS THE WORKING HERDSMAN, HOSEA THE FAMILY MAN. JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS THE LAST AND GREATEST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS. THE WORD PROPHET MEANS TO BOIL. BARCLAY SUGGESTS THAT PROPHETS WERE MEN OF

5 OUTSTANDING CHARACTERISTICS: (1) A SEEING EYE. OLD TESTAMENT PROPHETS COULD SEE WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE. THEY SAW BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE INTO A NATION'S DESTINY. (2) A LISTENING EAR. MEN ARE OFTEN SO BUSY TALKING, DISCUSSING AND ARGUING ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS THAT THEY HAVE NO TIME TO LISTEN TO GOD. EVEN WHEN MEN PRAY, THEY ARE OFTEN BUSY TELLING GOD WHAT THEY WANT HIM TO DO. PROPHETS LISTENED TO GOD. (3) A COURAGEOUS VOICE. THE PROPHET NEVER BROUGHT SECURITY WITH COWARDLY SILENCE. HE SPOKE FOR GOD WHEN FEW WERE WILLING TO SPEAK. (4) A DEDICATED LIFE. THE PROPHETS WERE AVAILABLE WHEN GOD NEEDED THEM. (5) A DANGEROUS OCCUPATION. JESUS CONDEMNED THE CITY OF JERUSALEM FOR STONING THE PROPHETS. (MATTHEW 23:37) EVERY PROPHET HAD TO BE PREPARED TO RISK EVERYTHING FOR GOD AND GOD'S MESSAGE. THERE HAD BEEN NO PROPHETIC VOICE FOR OVER 400 YEARS. MALACHI SPOKE OF ELIJAH'S COMING (MALACHI 4:5-6) JOHN SERVED OR FULFILLED THAT FUNCTION OR PROPHECY. (MATTHEW 17:9-13) JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS THE FORERUNNER OF MESSIAH. IN THE EAST WHEN ROADS WERE IN POOR CONDITION, A FORERUNNER WAS SENT OUT TO PREPARE THE ROADS AND MAKE THEM FIT FOR THE KING'S ARRIVAL. HE WAS A KIND OF ADVANCE MAN TO PREPARE EVERYTHING FOR THE KING'S COMING. JOHN'S MESSAGE WAS MAKE READY FOR THE MESSIAH! THE KING OF ISRAEL WAS DRAWING NEAR AND HIS FORERUNNER WAS PRESENTING HIS CREDENTIALS.

## II. THE PREACHER CALLED THE NATION TO REPENTANCE - VERSE 4-8

THE WORD PREACH IS MENTIONED TWICE IN THESE VERSES. (1) JOHN PREACHED THE BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS - VERSE 4. SOME PEOPLE STOP AT THE WORD BAPTISM AND GET NO FURTHER. SIN WAS PRESENT IN THE NATION OF ISRAEL. IN ORDER TO PREPARE SPIRITUALLY FOR MESSIAH'S KINGDOM REPENTANCE WAS NECESSARY, THAT IS THE NATION MUST CHANGE ITS MIND ABOUT THEIR MESSIAH AND JOHN'S PREACHING WAS BREAKING UP THE FALLOW GROUND OF THE NATION HERALDING THE NECESSITY OF DEALING WITH THEIR SINS! REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS ARE THE PRIMARY THOUGHTS IN THE PASSAGE. BAPTISM WAS A SIGN OR TOKEN THAT THE REPENTANCE HAD TAKEN PLACE! THE RELIGIOUS RITUALISTS ALWAYS MAKE ACCEPTANCE BEFORE GOD TO BE BASED UPON A RITE OR SOMETHING MATERIAL OR TANGIBLE WHICH MAY BE DONE IN A RELIGIOUS WAY TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE BEFORE GOD. THIS IDEA IS AS OLD AS CAIN. THE NATURAL MAN WILL DO ANYTHING, GO ANYWHERE TO AVOID GRACE AND FAITH! REPENTANCE IS A STRONG THEME ESPECIALLY FOR SELF-RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE. (ACTS 17:30, II PETER 3:9) THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE KINDS OF WATER BAPTISM MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE. (1) JEWISH, (2) JOHN'S, (3) CHRISTIAN. JOHN'S BAPTISM WAS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING LESS THAN CHRISTIAN BAPTISM FOR IN ACTS 18:25 IT SAYS OF APOLLOS: "HE SPAKE AND TAUGHT DILIGENTLY OF THE THINGS OF THE LORD KNOWING ONLY THE BAPTISM OF JOHN." IN ACTS 19:1-5 SOME BELIEVERS AT EPHESUS HAD SUBMITTED TO THE BAPTISM TO JOHN BUT UPON HEARING OF

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST, SUBMITTED TO CHRISTIAN BAPTISM POINTING TO THE FACT THAT THE TWO BAPTISMS ARE NOT THE SAME. THOSE MEN HAD SUBMITTED TO JOHN'S MESSAGE AND HIS BAPTISM POINTING TO THE FACT THAT MESSIAH WAS COMING. NOW THEY SUBMITTED TO CHRISTIAN BAPTISM. WITH INCREASED REVELATION CAME ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY CONCERNING THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST. I DO NOT NEED TO BELABOR THE FACT THAT SALVATION IS IN CHRIST AND NOT IN THE CREEK, IN THE BLOOD AND NOT IN THE BAPTISTRY.

(2) JOHN PREACHED CONCERNING ONE MIGHTIER THAN HIMSELF OF WHOM HE WAS NOT WORTHY. JOHN SPOKE OF SOMETHING WHICH JESUS COULD DO FOR PEOPLE WHICH WATER BAPTISM COULD NEVER DO, NAMELY, THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT! JOHN PREACHED AND PEOPLE TURNED TO CHRIST. THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE MARK OF A GREAT PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

III. <u>THE PARADOX OF JESUS' BAPTISM</u> - VERSE 9

IF BAPTISM HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN, WHY WAS JESUS BAPTIZED? I PETER 2:22 SAYS "HE DID NO SIN" - NOT EVEN ONE TIME! JESUS' BAPTISM HAD TO DO WITH HIS <u>IDENTIFICATION</u> WITH SINFUL MEN AND HIS <u>INTRODUCTION</u> AS MESSIAH TO THE JEWISH NATION AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY. UP TO THIS TIME, JESUS HAD LIVED A QUIET, SECLUDED LIFE IN NAZARETH BUT FROM THE DAY OF HIS BAPTISM TO HIS CRUCIFIXION ON CALVARY HIS LIFE WAS VERY, VERY PUBLIC. IN THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY, IT HAS BEEN TRUE THAT SOLDIERS HAVE LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR KING AND COUNTRY BUT HERE IS THE PLACE WHERE THE KING LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS SUBJECTS. (ROMANS 5:6-8)

## IV. THE PLEASURE OF GOD THE FATHER - VERSE 11

AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS, THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TRINITY MAY BE SEEN. SCROGGIE SAYS "IF WE CAN BUT BE ASSURED THAT GOD IS PLEASED WITH US, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS." IF A MAN'S LIFE PLEASES GOD, WHAT ELSE IS IMPORTANT? THE PLEASURE OF GOD IS UNIQUELY BOUND UP IN HIS BELOVED SON. THEREFORE, IT WOULD STAND TO REASON THAT IF YOU AND I ARE GOING TO PLEASE THE GOD OF THE BIBLE WE CANNOT IGNORE HIS SON! IF WE WOULD PLEASE GOD, WE MUST RELATE TO JESUS CHRIST. THE THINGS THAT GIVE GOD PLEASURE ARE BOUND UP IN HIS DEAR SON OR THE SON OF HIS PLEASURE. (EPHESIANS 1:9-10) IN SCRIPTURE, THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE THINGS THAT PLEASE GOD: (1) HIS BELOVED SON - MATTHEW 17:5; (2) THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS - I CORINTHIANS 1:21; (3) SAVING THE LOST - GALATIANS 1:15. HEBREWS 11:6 SAYS THAT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD. THAT FAITH MUST REST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. (COMMENT CONCERNING MR. MCCLELLEN CONCERNING THE SON OF HIS PLEASURE - COULDN'T ASK FOR A BETTER SON. ALSO, REGARDING GRADUATION EXERCISE.)

ROBERT K. SPRADLING DECEMBER 18, 1983

# CHRISTMAS EVE IN HEAVEN

## HEBREWS 10:5-9

IN THIS CHAPTER, IT IS AS IF THE WRITER OF HEBREWS TURNED ON THE "DIVINE RECORDER" AND PERMITTED HIS READERS TO HEAR A CONVERSATION BETWEEN GOD THE FATHER AND GOD THE SON AS RECORDED IN PSALM 40. THE DIALOGUE REVEALS HOW JESUS GAVE THANKS TO THE FATHER FOR HIS HUMAN BODY. HE WAS ABOUT TO COME INTO THE WORLD AND SPOKE OF HIS BODY AS THE INSTRUMENT OR VEHICLE BY WHICH HE WOULD SERVE GOD AND SACRIFICE HIMSELF FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND. THIS CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE BEFORE JESUS CAME TO EARTH. THEREFORE, IF WE THINK OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST AS THE BEGINNING OF CHRISTMAS, THEN THIS CONVERSATION COULD BE CLASSIFIED - CHRISTMAS EVE IN HEAVEN! THE WRITER OF HEBREWS DID NOT VIEW THE DEATH OF CHRIST AS A HORRIBLE ACCIDENT IN HUMAN HISTORY BUT SAW OUR LORD AS THE PERFECT SACRIFICE WHICH HAD ITS DESIGN NOT AT CALVARY ALONE BUT IN ETERNITY. IN THEOLOGICAL TERMS, OUR SUBJECT TODAY DEALS WITH THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. LET US LOOK AT FOUR BASIC QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS SUBJECT. THE WORD INCARNATION DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE BIBLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, NEITHER DOES THE WORD TRINITY OR RAPTURE BUT THE TRUTH IS THERE NEVERTHELESS.

## I. WHAT DOES INCARNATION MEAN? - I Tim. 3:16

Charles Wesley wrote: "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail the incarnate diety." The word incarnation literally means "in flesh." It refers to that divine act in which the second person of the triune God is embodied in human nature, flesh and form. Incarnation has to do with the entrance of God's son into human existence not the beginning of His personal existence, for as God He always existed. (John 1:1-3) The path of truth is very narrow at this point, for man tends to stumble when dealing with a subject so profound and mysterious. Mythology spoke of gods in grotesque terms describing such creatures as the centaur - a half man, half horse creature or the mermaid - half woman half fish. Therefore, the idea of a God-man is grossly misunderstood because there is nothing in man's experience with which to compare. In the book of Christ, a member of the Godhead entered once for all forever into the human family to be part of and identified with that experience always. Chafer said: "No human mind can ever grasp the significance of the occurrence and consequences of the incarnation. That a person of the Godhead should become one of the human family - the sphere of his own creation - with a view to remaining in that form, though glorified, and throughout eternity must continue an insoluble mystery to the creatures of this world.

II. WHO IS THIS INCARNATE BEING? - JOHN 1:14

IN THE LATE 1950'S, A WHITE MAN DETERMINED THAT IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE PLIGHT OF THE BLACK IN AMERICA HE WOULD HAVE TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF IN THEIR EXPERIENCE. HE DARKENED HIS SKIN THROUGH ORAL MEDICATION, STAIN AND SUNLAMP TREATMENT AND TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH. HE UNDERWENT THE CRUEL TREATMENT MANY BLACKS EXPERIENCE. HE WAS NOT ALLOWED TO RIDE IN CERTAIN VEHICLES, EAT IN CERTAIN RESTAURANTS, STAY IN CERTAIN MOTELS. HE COULD NOT DRINK FROM CERTAIN WATER FOUNTAINS OR ENTER CERTAIN RESTROOMS. HE WAS CHEATED, PERSECUTED AND PERHAPS AS NO OTHER WHITE MAN IN AMERICA HE UNDERSTOOD THE PLIGHT OF BLACKS. THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF GOD ENTERING THE HUMAN SCENE FROM HUMAN EXPERIENCE. THAT IS, GOD WOULD KNOW FROM THE EXPERIENTIAL SIDE WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A MAN. HE KNEW HOW TO SYMPATHIZE WITH MAN. (SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT IF HE WERE EVER ARRESTED FOR STEALING BREAD, HE HOPED THAT THE JUDGE BEFORE WHOM HE STOOD HAD BEEN HUNGRY AT SOME TIME IN HIS LIFE.) THE WORD - THERE ARE SEVERAL WORDS IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE TRANSLATED WORD BUT THIS PARTICULAR ONE IS A PHILOSOPHICAL ONE. IT IS USED 331 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. IT IS THROUGH WORDS THAT ONE EXPRESSES HIS THINKING AND IT IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST AND MOST DISTINGUISHABLE CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN BEINGS. SIMPLY STATED, A WORD IS AN EXPRESSION OF A THOUGHT. THEREFORE, JESUS CHRIST IS THE GENUINE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S TRUTH TO MEN, IN OTHER WORDS, HE IS GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO MEN. HE IS THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OF GOD. IF A MAN DESIRES TO KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE AND TO HAVE COMMUNICATION WITH HIM HE MAY DO SO THROUGH

JESUS CHRIST BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST IS GOD. IF TWO PEOPLE ARE GOING TO EXCHANGE IDEAS THERE MUST BE SOME INSTRUMENT OR VEHICLE OF EXCHANGE AND THAT INSTRUMENT IS USUALLY THROUGH WORDS EITHER WRITTEN OR SPOKEN. IF MEN ARE TO COMMUNICATE WITH GOD, IT MUST BE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. WAS MADE FLESH - THE WORD MADE COULD BE BETTER TRANSLATED BECAME. FLESH WAS THE INSTRUMENT OR SPHERE INTO WHICH CHRIST CAME TO ACCOMPLISH OUR REDEMPTION. THIS TERM IS A WONDERFUL WAY TO DESCRIBE HUMANITY AND ITS WEAKNESS AND DEPENDENCE UPON OTHERS FOR LIFE. DWELT AMONG US - THE WORD DWELT LITERALLY MEANS TABERNACLE. THE OLD TESTAMENT TABERNACLE WAS A MATERIAL SYMBOL OR REPRESENTATION OF GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE. IT WAS PART OF ISRAEL'S LIFE DURING THE UNSETTLED TRANSIENT YEARS OF ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE. IT WAS A TEMPORARY PROVISION, OUTWARDLY UNATTRACTIVE BUT INWARDLY VERY BEAUTIFUL. IT WAS A PLACE OF WORSHIP, WHERE PRIESTS PERFORMED THEIR MINISTRY AND THE SHEKINAH GLORY DWELT. JESUS CHRIST WAS GOD DWELLING IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE. ATHANASIUS SAID IT WELL WHEN HE SAID: "HE BECAME WHAT HE WAS NOT; HE CONTINUED TO BE WHAT HE WAS." THIS INCARNATE PERSON WAS THE EMMANUEL OF ISAIAH 7:14, THE WONDERFUL COUNSELOR AND EVERLASTING GOD OF ISAIAH 9:6, THE SERVANT OF WHOM PAUL SPOKE IN PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8.

## III. HOW DID THE INCARNATION TAKE PLACE? LUKE 1:34-35

WHEN IDENTIFYING THE WAY THE INCARNATION TOOK PLACE THE TERMS VIRGIN BIRTH ARE USED. THESE TWO WORDS DO NOT APPEAR IN SCRIPTURE AND DO NOT REFER TO THE ROMAN DOCTRINE OF

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. JESUS CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD THROUGH THE SAME PROCESS AS EVERY OTHER MAN - HE WAS BORN. HOWEVER, HIS BIRTH WAS UNIQUE. (ISAIAH 7:14, MATTHEW 1:18-23) THE BIRTH OF CHRIST INVOLVED ONLY ONE HUMAN PARENT - HE HAD NO BIOLOGICAL FATHER. THAT ASPECT OF HIS BIRTH WAS MIRACULOUS IN NATURE AND WROUGHT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. AS A MATTER OF FACT, ANSELM REMINDED THE CHURCH HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO THAT GOD HAD SEVERAL WAYS OF BRINGING PEOPLE INTO THE WORLD. (1) BY DIRECT CREATION WITH NO HUMAN PARENTAGE. ADAM IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS METHOD. (2) A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL - A MAN ADAM FROM WHOM GOD TOOK EVE. (3) TWO INDIVIDUALS - A MAN AND A WOMAN. THE NORMAL PROCESS. (4) A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL - A WOMAN - THIS IS THE WAY JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD. THE DOCTRINE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH HAS BEEN A THEOLOGICAL BATTLEGROUND FOR YEARS. IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THAT IN THE REALM OF NATURE THE TERM PARTHENOGENESIS IS KNOWN AND THE PROCESS A BIOLOGICAL FACT. THIS TERM REFERS TO REPRODUCTION BY THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN UNFERTILIZED EGG. THAT IS, WITHOUT SPERMATOZOA. THIS PROCESS HAPPENS WITH INSECTS, FISH, REPTILES AND CERTAIN BIRDS. IT IS OFTEN USED WITH REFERENCE TO BEES. THERE ARE SOME FACTS TO CONSIDER IN THE WORD OF GOD. JOSEPH DISCLAIMED ANY PRO-CREATIVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD MARY WAS CARRYING. HOWEVER, MARY MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT SHE HAD NOT KNOWN A MAN IN A SEXUAL WAY BEFORE THE BIRTH OF CHRIST! (LUKE 1:34) IF ONE DOES NOT ACCEPT THE STATEMENT OF THIS BIRTH THE HORRIBLE ALTERNATIVE IS THAT MARY LIED AND WAS UNFAITHFUL TO HER ENGAGEMENT VOWS.

IS THIS THE KIND OF WOMAN AND EXPERIENCE THAT HAS CAPTURED THE INTEREST OF THE ENTIRE WORLD AT CHRISTMASTIME? HARDLY! ACCORDING TO LUKE 1:42 THE TERM BLESSED IS USED CONCERNING MARY. SHE IS CALLED BLESSED AMONG AND NOT ABOVE WOMEN. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE VIRGIN BIRTH IS A FACT. A SAVIOUR TAINTED WITH ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION AND SIN IS HARDLY A SAVIOUR AT ALL! IF THE BIBLE IS INACCURATE CONCERNING CHRIST'S BIRTH, THEN WHO IS TO SAY WHAT IS TRUE AND UNTRUE, ACCURATE AND INACCURATE IN OTHER PLACES?

IV. WHY IS THE INCARNATION SO IMPORTANT? - I PETER 2:24, I PETER 3:18

THERE IS A DISTINCT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTMAS AND EASTER. JESUS' BIRTH AND LIFE IS NOT THE PRIMARY EMPHASIS OF THE BIBLE! THE WORD OF GOD TEACHES THAT HE DIED IN ORDER THAT WE MIGHT LIVE. IN HEBREWS 10, THE WRITER MAKES IT VERY CLEAR THAT ANIMAL SACRIFICES COULD NOT CLEANSE OR FORGIVE THE WORSHIPER. THERE ARE TWO WORDS MENTIONED WITH REFERENCE TO CHRIST'S ARRIVAL ON THIS PLANET: SAVE AND SHARE. JESUS CHRIST CAME TO THIS EARTH TO SAVE SINNERS. (LUKE 19:10, I TIMOTHY 1:15, HEBREWS 2:9 MOST PEOPLE APPLY THE TERM "SINNER" TO THE BIG SINS PUNISHABLE BY PRISON OR OTHER LEGAL REPRISAL. THAT IS TO SAY, SIN DOESN'T APPLY TO ME! (ROMANS 3:23 IS NOT UNDERSTOOD. PEOPLE DO NOT SEE SIN AS A SPIRITUAL INFECTIOUS DISEASE WHICH IF UNATTENDED WILL KILL THE VICTIM - ETERNALLY.) JESUS CAME TO SHARE HIS LIFE WITH THOSE OF US WHO ARE DYING. THE WAY OF LIFE FOR US WAS THE WAY OF

DEATH FOR HIM! (JOHN 10:11 - THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVETH HIS LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.) (JOHN 10:28) SIMPLY STATED, MAN IS A SPIRITUAL CASUALTY. FROM ADAM'S DAY UNTIL NOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN IS BASICALLY A RUINED RELATIONSHIP. THE ONLY WAY TO RESTORE THAT BROKEN RELATIONSHIP, BROKEN BY SIN, IS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. THAT RESTORATION IS CALLED IN BIBLE TERMS "BORN AGAIN, CONVERSION, REGENERATION, SAVED." SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THE SIN BARRIER BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. SOMETHING HAS BEEN DONE AND THAT SOMETHING WAS DONE BY SOMEONE NAMED JESUS CHRIST. RECENTLY, I HEARD SOMEONE DESCRIBE MAN'S SPIRITUAL PROBLEM AND DILEMMA IN MILITARY TERMS. HE SAID THAT MAN IS A "SPIRITUAL P.O.W.". HE HAS BEEN CAPTURED BY SATAN AND IS TOTALLY UNAWARE OF HIS CAPTIVITY AND WORST OF ALL OF HIS SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS! (II CORINTHIANS 4:4) THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST IS LIGHT TO MAN'S BLINDNESS. HOWEVER, WHEN HE HEARS THE GOSPEL HE KNOWS THAT THIS IS GOD'S CALL OUT OF DARKNESS.

QUESTION: WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO DO?

(1) ADMIT YOUR NEED. (I AM A SINNER AND I NEED TO REPENT OR LITERALLY RUN FROM MY SINS. (2) ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR. (REVELATION 3:20 - PRAYER.)

FUNERALS

ROBERT K. SPRADLING

Comfort = 5 times in 2 verses ("comes beside us to help in time affliction" - 2 Corinthians)

Ps 23:4 (Yea though I walk thru the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me, thy rod & thy staff they comfort me.)

# II CORINTHIANS 1:3-4

INTRO. COMMENT REGARDING LIMITED ACQUAINTANCE OF TWO YEARS, VISIT IN THE HOME AND CONCERN FOR OTHERS. HOW MAY GOD COMFORT US TODAY?

## I. THE COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES - ROM. 15:4

"FOR WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME WERE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE." THE CHRISTIAN ~~[illegible]~~ TURNS TO THE BIBLE IN TIMES OF SORROW. JOSEPH PARKER WAS CRITISIZED BY SOME FOR NOT PREACHING MORE RELEVANT SUBJECTS TO HIS SOPHISTICATED CONGREGATION. SOME BELIEVED HE SHOULD BE MORE SOCIALLY INVOLVED FROM HIS PULPIT AND TALK MORE ABOUT THE FINDINGS OF SCIENCE AND LESS ABOUT THE BIBLE. HE TOLD THE STORY OF A LADY WHOSE SON DIED AND DR. PARKER WAS ASKED TO CONDUCT THE FUNERAL. NEXT SUNDAY MORNING HE STOOD IN THE PULPIT AND TOLD THE STORY OF THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE IN THAT FAMILY. HIS QUESTION WAS WHAT DOES SCIENCE SAY TO THIS LADY CONCERNING THE PROBLEM OF DEATH? LET SCIENCE SPEAK. BUT THERE IS NO ANSWER TO THE SORROWING HEART." IN TIMES LIKE THIS, I DO NOT PRETEND TO EXPLAIN OR UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS WITH HUMANKIND. I CANNOT EXPLAIN HOW A WIFE AND MOTHER IS CUT OFF IN THE PRIME OF LIFE BY A TERRIBLE DISEASE. I DO KNOW HOWEVER, THAT SICKNESS STRIKES MANKIND WITHOUT DISCRIMINATION. THE AGED AND THE INFANT BOTH MAY DIE. THERE ARE PROMISES IN THE WORD OF GOD FOR YOUNG AND OLD, SICK AND WELL, THE UNWANTED AND UNLOVED. (1) WHEN WE ARE AFRAID - PSALM 27:1. (2) WHEN WE ARE WORRIED - I PETER 5:7. (3) WHEN WE ARE LONELY - HEBREWS 13:5 (4) WHEN WE ARE WEARY - DEUT. 33:27. (5) WHEN WE ARE FACING DEATH - PSALM 23:1-6. IT IS ONE

(Psa. Mem. by Gill)

"Thou art with me..."

the eternal God is refuge

AT
THING TO LAUGH ~~ABOUT~~ THE BIBLE AND FAITH IN THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM WHILE HEALTH IS GOOD, HOPES ARE HIGH, BUT IN LIFE'S SORROWING MOMENTS IT IS COMFORTING TO KNOW THE BIBLE. (I THESS. 4:13-18, I COR. 15:51-57).

II. THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT - ACTS 9:31

"THEN HAD THE CHURCHES REST THROUGHOUT ALL JUDAEA AND GALILEE AND SAMARIA, AND WERE EDIFIED; AND WALKING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD, AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY GHOST, ...." JESUS PROMISED HIS DISCIPLES A COMFORTER LIKE HIMSELF. "AND I WILL PRAY THE FATHER AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER COMFORTER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER; EVEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH .... I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS: I WILL COME TO YOU."

III. THE COMFORT OF FRIENDS - COL. 4:11

"AND JESUS, WHICH IS CALLED JUSTUS, WHO ARE OF THE CIRCUMCISION. THESE ONLY ARE MY FELLOWWORKERS UNTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD, WHICH HAVE BEEN A COMFORT UNTO ME." THE WORD COMFORT IN THIS VERSE OF SCRIPTURE WAS A MEDICAL TERM USED TO DESCRIBE THE ALLEVIATION OF PAIN. COMMENT REGARDING MARY, MARTHA AND LAZARUS AND JESUS' FREQUENT VISITS TO BETHANY. PAUL HAD LUKE AND TIMOTHY. ONE OF THE EARLY CHURCH LEADERS NAMED BARNABAS WAS CALLED THE "SON OF CONSOLATION" OR COMFORT. THANK YOU FOR BEING [redacted]'S FRIEND TODAY. THANK YOU FOR CARING AND SHARING FOR LOVING AND SYMPATHIZING. IT HELPS IN WAYS WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE.

IV. THE COMFORT OF OUR LORD HIMSELF - PHIL. 2:1

"IF THERE BE THEREFORE ANY CONSOLATION IN CHRIST, IF ANY COMFORT OF LOVE, IF ANY FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT, IF ANY BOWELS AND MERCIES ..." NONE OF US LOOK FORWARD TO THAT INEVITABLE HOUR WHEN WE TOO MUST FACE DEATH. AND YET, IF THE LORD TARRIES, IT IS AN APPOINTMENT WHICH ALL MUST KEEP. DOCTORS AND HOSPITAL STAFF, FAMILY

# FUNERAL SERVICE FOR BLANCHE ALFORD

IF YOU AND I COULD HAVE CHOSEN A MOTHER, WE WOULD HAVE CHOSEN A WOMAN LIKE BLANCHE ALFORD. SHE WAS THE KIND OF WIFE AND MOTHER SOLOMON SPOKE OF AND EVERY FAMILY IS PROUD OF. I COUNTED IT A PRIVILEGE TO KNOW HER AND TO BE HER [illegible]. AT TIME LIKE THIS, GUESSES WON'T DEATH INVADES A FAMILY, THE PEOPLE AFFECTED NEED TO KNOW SOME THINGS FOR SURE. THE BIBLE IS A BOOK OF CERTAINTIES. LET US MENTION FOUR TODAY: 4 Bible Certainties:

Some things we know for sure!

I. WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE BEFORE WE DIE - I JOHN 5:12-13

He Is Our Savior - Now!

THERE ARE MANY MYTHS ABOUT HEAVEN. (MENTION PETER AND THE PEARLY GATES, BALANCES, ALSO THAT YOU CAN'T KNOW UNTIL THEN.) JOHN 3:36, JOHN 5:24 USE THE WORD HATH - IT IS IN THE PRESENT TENSE AND SUGGESTS PRESENT POSSESSION AND NOT FUTURE ATTAINMENT. WE SETTLE OUR ETERNAL DESTINY BEFORE WE DIE.

More than a Candidate for Rescue

1 Jn. 3:1

II. WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD KEEPS US SAFE - II TIMOTHY 1:12

He Is Our Keeper - Now

THE WORDS KEEP AND COMMIT SUGGEST SOMETHING WITH GOD THAT IS IN SAFE KEEPING. ONE DAY, [redacted] MADE A DEPOSIT IN THE BANK OF HEAVEN AND ALL [redacted] SIN DEBTS WERE PAID IN FULL AND [redacted] HAS NOW JOINED [redacted] DEPOSIT AND TREASURE. WISE IS THE PERSON WHO UNDERSTANDS THIS RELATIONSHIP. (PHILIPPIANS 1:6, JOHN 10:27) STORY OF FATHER AND SON - HOLDING HANDS - MUDDY ROAD - QUESTION: "WHO'S HOLDING WHOM?"

(MARK 4:35 – 5:1 "they arrived ... safely!)

III. WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH OF HIS CHILDREN - ROMANS 8:28

HE IS OUR GUIDE

GOD DOES NOT ALWAYS REVEAL HIS PLAN FOR US EITHER AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR LIVES OR AT THE END. JOSEPH ENDURED INCREDIBLE TESTING AND ADVERSITY BEFORE HE SAW THE TOTAL PICTURE OF WHAT GOD WAS DOING. (GENESIS 50:20) IT IS NOT HOW LONG A PERSON LIVES BUT HOW WELL HE LIVES THAT COUNTS. OUR LORD, JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OTHERS WERE CUT OFF IN THE PRIME OR MATURITY OF LIFE YET, THEY ACCOMPLISHED THE WORK GOD HAD FOR THEM ON EARTH. SO IT IS WITH US.

IV. WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE THAT A BELIEVER GOES TO BE WITH THE LORD WHEN HE DIES - II CORINTHIANS 5:1,8

HE IS OUR ETERNAL HOME

THE TEXT SAYS WE KNOW. WE ARE NOT GUESSING, GROPING IN THE FOG, HOPING IN THE FACE OF IGNORANCE - THE BIBLE STATES SOME FACTS AND WE HAVE RESTED OUR FAITH ON THE PROMISES OF GOD WHO NOT ONLY WILL NOT BUT CAN NOT LIE. IF YOU WANT TO BE SURE YOU ARE WHERE BLANCHE IS, YOU MAY BE SURE.

Lolly - didn't ask me that

ROBERT K. SPRADLING FEBRUARY 17, 1991

# ETERNITY IN THE HEART

ECCLESIASTES 3:11

ECCLESIASTES, WRITTEN BY SOLOMON, RECORDS THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE NATURAL MAN, "THE MAN UNDER THE SUN." IT IS GOD'S RECORD OF HOW MAN REASONS. GOD DOES NOT SAY THAT THE PHILOSOPHY OF ECCLESIASTES IS RIGHT ONLY A RECORD OF WHAT THE NATURAL MAN SAYS ABOUT LIFE. GOD IS NOT SANCTIONING WHAT SOLOMON SAYS, HE IS ONLY STATING HIS CONCLUSIONS. THE SUMMATION OF THE NATURAL MAN IS SEEN IN THE KEY WORD VANITY. WORLDLY THINGS DO NOT SATISFY THE DEEPEST LONGINGS OF THE HEART. GOD HAS RESERVED A PLACE IN THE HEART OF EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF AND NOTHING ELSE CAN OR WILL FULLY SATISFY THAT LONGING. (RECAP STORY OF GIRL INVOLVED IN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT WHO RELATED TO HER FATHER THAT SHE WANTED SOMETHING BUT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS.) LIKE SOLOMON, MANY OF US HAVE SOUGHT FOR SOMETHING TO FILL THE VOID OF LIFE, ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THAT WHICH IS PURSUED THE HARDEST OFTEN LEAVES A BITTER TASTE AFTER ALL. GOD HAS A HANDLE ON MAN. MAN HAS A CAPACITY FOR GOD. (THIS IS NOT TRUE OF ANIMALS BECAUSE THEY HAVE NO LONGING FOR OR SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD.) THE TEXT SAYS GOD HAS SET ETERNITY OR FOREVER IN MAN'S HEART AND MAN FINDS TRUE SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION AND FULFILLMENT ONLY IN HIS RELATIONSHIP TO GOD. GOD MADE MAN TO GLORIFY HIMSELF AND TO ENJOY GOD FOREVER. THERE IS A FEELING IN MAN'S HEART THAT MAN AND GOD WILL SOMEHOW, SOMEWAY, SOMEDAY, GET TOGETHER. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I HAVE NEVER MET ANYONE WHO DID NOT WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN BUT I HAVE MET MANY WHO WERE NOT SURE THEY WOULD MAKE IT. THE HOPE OF HEAVEN IN THE HEART WAS WHAT SOLOMON HAD IN MIND IN THIS VERSE. HEAVEN FROM THE HEBREW

PERSPECTIVE MEANS "THE HEIGHTS." THE GREEK WORD MEANS THAT WHICH IS RAISED UP OR ABOVE US. THE BIBLE SPEAKS OF AT LEAST THREE HEAVENS: (1) ATMOSPHERIC; (2) ASTRONOMICAL; (3) ABODE TO GOD. LET US EXAMINE A FEW PASSAGES WHERE HEAVEN THAT IS UNSEEN MAY BE COMPARED TO THINGS WE HAVE SEEN:

I. HEAVEN IS COMPARED TO A HOUSE OR A HOME - JOHN 14:2 - (2 Cor 5:1)

HOUSES HAVE BEEN A HOBBY FOR MANY YEARS. I ENJOY BUILDING AND [redacted] THEM. FOR ME, THOSE DAYS ARE OVER - BUT I CONTINUE TO LOOK AT AND LOOK THROUGH THEM. THIS VERSE GIVES INSIGHT INTO HEAVEN:

(A) HEAVEN IS A PERSONAL PLACE - "MY"

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD IS PERSONAL AND NOT INSTITUTIONAL. PSALM 23:1 SPEAKS OF GOD AS A PERSONAL SHEPHERD - NOT A, NOT THE, BUT MINE. THE PERSON WHO HAS BEEN BORN AGAIN KNOWS CHRIST PERSONALLY - ONE ON ONE. ANY-THING LESS THAN A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO HIM.

(B) HEAVEN IS A PATERNAL PLACE - "FATHER"

I CAN REMEMBER THREE HOUSES OF MY FATHER. (1) AMONATE - COAL FIELDS THAT LOOKED SO LARGE BUT TURNED OUT TO BE RATHER SMALL. A COMMUNITY PUMP - NO CENTRAL HEATING OR COOLING, HEATED BY A FIREPLACE AND A KITCHEN STOVE - VERY POOR AND PRIMITIVE - BUT ORDINARY AND USUAL TO THE LATE 1930'S. (2) SUGAR CREEK - SMALL, CRAMPED, NOT A SINGLE CLOSET, THREE ROOMS - HARD TIME.

(3) FALL CREEK - OLD STRUCTURE - POORLY CONSTRUCTED AND INSULATED - POORLY HEATED AND COOLED BUT FILLED WITH FOND MEMORIES. IT WAS THE HOUSE OF MY FATHER FOR OVER 40 YEARS BUT TODAY, THOUGH IT STANDS, IT IS NOT THE SAME BECAUSE HE MADE IT MEANINGFUL. NOW HE IS WITH CHRIST AND KNOWS SOMETHING ABOUT HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. NOW HIS INTERESTS ARE THERE AND NOT HERE AND SO ARE MINE.

1981

(C) HEAVEN IS A PRESENT PLACE - "~~WAS~~" "ARE"

OUR HEAVENLY HOME IS NOT UNDER CONSTRUCTION - IT IS READY AND WAITING, COMPLETED FOR THE BELIEVER'S ARRIVAL. (II COR. 5:8)

(D) HEAVEN IS A PEACEFUL PLACE

TO THE TERM PEACEFUL WE MIGHT ADD PERMANENT BECAUSE OF THE TERM "DWELLING PLACES, ABODES OR RESTING PLACES." WHEN WE GET THERE, THERE WILL BE NO MORE MOVING, NO MORE BOXES IN THE BASEMENT, NO MORE CRAMPED OR CONFINED QUARTERS.

(E) HEAVEN IS A PALATIAL PLACE - "MANY"

HOW MANY IS MANY? THIS VERSE SUGGESTS THAT NOT ONLY WILL HEAVEN BE MAGNIFICANT BUT IT WILL HAVE ROOM FOR EVERYBODY - NO RESTRAINTS. ALMOST EVERY EARTHLY HOUSE YOU HAVE EVER LIVED IN HAS HAD GREAT LIMITATIONS IN SOME WAY. WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN THERE WILL BE NO HOUSING SHORTAGE AT ALL. (COMMENT REGARDING TOM SNYDER - A HOUSE OF TWELVE OR MORE THOUSAND SQUARE FEET - ALMOST TEN TIMES THE SIZE OF THE PLACE IN WHICH MY FAMILY LIVED.) HEAVEN'S HOUSING WILL BE ADEQUATE. (COMMENT REGARDING EPLINGS - OUT OF FOOD. NOT TRUE IN HEAVEN.)

Grandparents / Uncles
Sleep 2 head
2 foot
EAT - 3rd takes

## II. HEAVEN IS COMPARED TO A PARK OR GARDEN - II Cor. 12:4

The word PARADISE is used three times in the New Testament. Compare Luke 23:43, Rev. 2:7. It was used among ancient Persians to refer to A ROYAL OR MAGNIFICENT PARK. It was a place of SUPREME HAPPINESS and PLEASURE. Just as HELL is used to describe a place of punishment for the wicked, so PARADISE is a place of comfort and blessing. It is used to describe A GARDEN SUCH AS EDEN and was so characterized in the LXX.

(A) Heaven or paradise is spoken of as UP - (Acts 1:11).

(B) It is spoken of as beyond verbal description - I Cor. 2:9

A park is a place of rest, recreation, picnics, walking, running, playing. (Comment regarding Jasper, Buchard in Vancouver and Mizner in Florida - just sitting in the sun and enjoying the scenery.) Often in such places there are no cars, trash, just a place of enjoyment and beauty. Think of all the beautiful parks and gardens rolled up into one great, beautiful, magnificent place of beauty. Then we can begin to understand and appreciate the beauty of heaven.

## III. HEAVEN IS COMPARED TO A CITY - Hebrews 11:8-10, 13:14

Abraham left a city called Ur and looked for another city not on the Persian Gulf but in Glory. He saw a city beyond his hometown and started for a place he had never seen and when he got there was not exactly sure

WHERE HE WAS BUT HAD HIS EYE ON GOD'S ETERNAL CITY. NO OTHER CITY IN HUMAN HISTORY IS CALLED A CONTINUING CITY. REV. 21:2-4, 10-12, 21-27, 22:1-5 RELATE FIVE DIVISIONS OF REVELATION. COMPARE THE "MUCH MORE" FAMILY OF ROMANS TO THE "NO MORE" FAMILY OF REVELATION. THERE WILL NO MORE SEA, DEATH, SORROW, CRYING, PAIN, SUN, MOON OR NIGHT. THIS IS A HOLY OR CELESTIAL CITY - THE LIKES OF WHICH THE EARTH HAS NEVER SEEN OR KNOWN. TODAY CITIES ARE OFTEN THE CENTERS OF GREAT EVIL AS WELL AS ENLIGHTENMENT AND EDUCATION - IN THAT DAY A CENTER OF GREAT WORSHIP AND JOY. THIS HOLY CITY WILL BE THE CLIMAX OF THE AGES - THE CITY OF GOD FOR A REDEEMED PEOPLE, A PLACE FOR THEM TO DWELL FOREVER. IN THIS PLACE GOD AND MEN WILL DWELL IN UNITY AND HARMONY, NEVER TO BE SEPARATED. MAN WILL SEE AND SERVE GOD IN THAT CITY.

## IV. HEAVEN IS COMPARED TO A COUNTRY - HEBREWS 11:14

IN THE COUNTRY CHURCH WHERE I WAS SAVED AND GREW UP, PEOPLE SANG AND SPOKE OF HEAVEN OFTEN. THEY SPOKE OF JORDAN'S STORMY BANKS AND THE SWEET BY AND BY, THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME - AS MANY GROW OLDER HEAVEN SEEMS NEARER AND FOR SOME IT IS FURTHER AWAY. THE PHRASE "HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN" IS A REALITY FOR SOME WHOSE BODIES ARE SICK. (COMMENT REGARDING RAYMOND AKERS - LEE WALKER - "ALL USED UP.") THE KEY TO HEAVEN IS BOUND UP IN THE WORD "PREPARE" IN THE JOHN 14 PASSAGE. HE HAS PREPARED A PLACE FOR US BUT WE MUST BE PREPARED IN ORDER TO GO THERE. COMPARE JOHN 14:6. THE PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR LIVING ON THIS PLANET IS TO MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR HEAVEN. THERE IS NO ENTRANCE INTO THAT PLACE WITHOUT RESERVATIONS. (COMPARE REVELATION 21:8)

Heaven: Prepared for Prepared Hearts

FUNERAL MESSAGE - RUTH BOHN (NOLA PARSONS)
II Corinthians 5:17-21, 5:8

Before Christ

Three prepositions in this passage tell the life story of every believer.

BEFORE CHRIST. "WITHOUT" Eph. 2:12

I. IN CHRIST - vs. 17

The expression "in Christ" or its equivalent occurs 164 times in the Paul line epistles and never in the gospels. This technical term describes the relationship of the believer to Christ. God sees every man in one of two locations. He is either "in Adam" or "in Christ" and everyone is in one of these two categories. It is a kind of spiritual address to identify one's position with reference to God. The person who has received Jesus Christ as savior is a new person altogether. His past life with its goals and philosophy is gone. This change is called the new birth. This phrase "in Christ" first appears in the New Testament in Romans 3:24 where the believers redemption is said to be "in Christ." The qualification for the resurrection of the just is said to be "in Christ." (I Thess. 4:16) Everything the believer will ever need is in Christ. The Bible does not say that believers are in Paul, Peter, John or any other human being. Our Christian position is in Christ forever. Ruth Bohn was in Christ and we spoke of that relationship often over the months of her illness.

II. FOR CHRIST - vs. 20

Many years ago I read the life story of Pat Withrow who was associated with the Union Mission for many years. In speaking of his conversion experience and of the problem he had with feeling, he tells how he attended a certain revival meeting and went forward to the altar on at least two occasions. When he received no special feeling from God he simply rose to his feet and said: "feeling or no feeling from now on I'm for God." Once the believer is in Christ he will then live a life that is for Christ. The term ambassador refers to the fact that you and I are God's spokespeople or personal representatives on earth chosen by Him, commissioned by Him to convey the message of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The message we are to proclaim is the message

of reconciliation.

III. WITH CHRIST - vs. 8

Our bodies are likened to an earthly house or tent that is frail, earth bound, temporary in nature. What will happen when the body dies? When the believer leaves this earthly body behind he will "come home to the Lord." Which is what the Greek text says. To the Philippian church, Paul spoke of being torn in two directions. On the one hand, he longed to leave and be with Christ. Obviously that was the best that could happen to him. On the other hand, he felt it necessary to remain behind to continue his earthly ministry. (Compare Phil. 1:21-23) Our earthly house or tent will one day be taken down, but when that happens we have a permanent house or body in heaven not made with hands. That body is eternal and will not be subjected to the painful limitations of this earthly pilgrimage. (At funerals I remember the experience of Vance Hamner concerning his friends who had gone on to be with the Lord.) Simply stated the person who is in Christ, and lives for Christ when that person dies will go to be with Christ.

(John 16:22)

"And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

(*) Pete Thom — Trophy (2T. m 4:8)

Dad — 78 1981

FUNERAL SERVICE FOR ~~CARL SMITH~~ Claude A Lucas, Jr.

JOHN 3:16

WE HAVE COME TO PAY TRIBUTE AND FINAL RESPECT TO THE MEMORY OF ~~CARL SMITH~~. IT IS NOT MY PURPOSE TO EULOGIZE...SURE MANY FITTING THINGS COULD /SHOULD BE SAID. NOR TO MAKE JUDGMENTS THAT BELONG TO GOD ALONE. WHAT A PASTOR SAYS OR DOES NOT SAY DOES NOT EFFECT THAT ONE BIT. FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THE BIBLE - WORDS OF HELP AND COMFORT.

JOHN 3:16 IS THE MOST FAMILIAR VERSE IN THE N.T. A FAVORITE OF ALL. MEMORY BY MOST. IN THIS VERSE 3 GREAT ~~THINGS~~ FACTS ABOUT GOD:

I. GOD LOVES US

FOR YEARS I LIVED UNDER THE DELUSION THAT GOD ~~HATED~~ MADE ME -- SINNER. READ IN THE BIBLE - GOD LOVES EVERY PERSON ON THIS PLANET. (MAY NOT LIKE WHAT WE DO - BEHAVE - STILL LOVES US. (REV. 1:5, ROM. 5:8, I JOHN 4:10)

SONG: "THE LOVE OF GOD"

THE LOVE OF GOD IS GREATER FAR THAN TONGUE
OR PEN CAN EVER TELL
IT GOES BEYOND THE HIGHEST STAR, AND REACHES
TO THE LOWEST HELL
THE GUILTY PAIR, BOWED DOWN WITH CARE, GOD
GAVE HIS SON TO WIN;
HIS ERRING CHILD HE RECONCILED, AND PARDONED
FROM HIS SIN.

COULD WE WITH INK THE OCEAN FILL, AND WERE
THE SKIES OF PARCHMENT MADE;
WERE EVERY STALK ON EARTH A QUILL, AND EVERY
MAN A SCRIBE BY TRADE;
TO WRITE THE LOVE OF GOD ABOVE WOULD DRAIN THE
OCEAN DRY;
NOR COULD THE SCROLL CONTAIN THE WHOLE, THO
STRETCHED FROM SKY TO SKY.

> OH, LOVE OF GOD, HOW RICH AND PURE! HOW MEASURELESS AND STRONG! IT SHALL FOREVERMORE ENDURE--THE SAINTS AND ANGELS SONG.

THESE WORDS WERE FOUND ON THE WALLS OF A CELL OF A SUPPOSED INSANE MAN.

God Gave us —

II. GOD GAVE SOMETHING TO US

"GOD'S NEVER DONE ANYTHING FOR ME!" ANCIENT ARMIES - SLAVES TO THE GODS. GOD GAVE HIS "ONLY SON." (GEN. 22)

QUESTION: "WHERE WAS GOD WHEN MY SON WAS KILLED?"

God made the Way - Room

III. GOD MADE A WAY FOR US TO GET TO HEAVEN

"WHOSOEVER" (WRITE IN YOUR NAME) "BELIEVETH" - NOT PAYETH, WORKETH OR GOODETH!

"NOT PERISH...EVERLASTING LIFE"

IF PEOPLE DON'T MAKE IT TO HEAVEN WHEN THEY DIE, IT'S BECAUSE THEY PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE BIBLE.

DEATH IS NOT THE END.

MAN WILL LIVE SOMEWHERE FOREVER.

STORY: "HE DIDN'T ASK ME THAT."

ROBERT K. SPRADLING JANUARY 25, 1994

# FUNERAL SERVICE FOR EMILY PHILLIPS

## "CHRIST THE WAY"

JOHN 14:6

EMILY LEARNED OF THE TERMINAL NATURE OF HER ILLNESS IN THE FALL. WE WERE ALL SHOCKED AT HER RAPID DECLINE WHICH RESULTED IN HER BEING BEDFAST THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. I SAW HER ON A REGULAR BASIS AND WAS STRUCK BY: ~~SEVERAL FEATURES OF HER LAST DAYS ON EARTH~~

(1) SHE NEVER LOST HER SENSE OF HUMOR - NOT EVEN THE DAY BEFORE SHE PASSED AWAY. (EXPLAIN)

(2) HER ACCEPTANCE OF HER IMMINENT DEATH NOT AS A PENALTY BUT AS A PROMOTION. THERE WAS NO SELF PITY OR WHINING ABOUT HER CONDITION.

(3) THE LOVING CARE SHE RECEIVED FROM MANY SOURCES SUCH AS LOU PERRY, THE CHOIR, NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS, CHURCH FRIENDS, THE HOSPICE PEOPLE. IT WAS ALL AN OUTPOURING OF LOVE AND CARE THAT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR PEOPLE IN EMILY'S CONDITION BUT SURELY NOT UNAPPRECIATED BY HER. I EXPRESS TO ALL OF YOU HER HEARTFELT GRATITUDE.

I. CHRIST IS THE WAY TO CLEANSING FOR THE PAST - MARK 1:40-42

"AND THERE CAME A LEPER TO HIM, BESEECHING HIM AND KNEELING DOWN TO HIM AND SAYING UNTO HIM, IF THY WILT, THOU CANST MAKE ME CLEAN.

AND JESUS MOVED WITH COMPASSION, PUT FORTH HIS HAND, AND TOUCHED HIM, AND SAID UNTO HIM, I WILL; BE THOU CLEAN. AND AS SOON AS HE HAD SPOKEN, IMMEDIATELY THE LEPROSY DEPARTED FROM HIM, AND HE WAS CLEANSED."

WHAT JESUS DID FOR THIS LEPER PHYSICALLY, HE IS ABLE TO DO FOR ALL MEN SPIRITUALLY. (EXPLAIN) CLEANSING FROM ONES PAST SINS IS ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. REV. 1:5, TITUS 3:5, II KINGS 5. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS SPEAKS OF A CLEANSED CONSCIENCE - THIS IS SOMETHING ONLY GOD CAN DO.

II. CHRIST THE WAY FOR COMPANIONSHIP FOR THE PRESENT (MATTHEW 28:20, HEBREWS 13:5

(1) PSALM 23:4,)..."AND LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. AMEN"

(2) "....FOR HE HAS SAID, I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE."

(3) "YEA THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL: FOR THOU ART WITH ME...."

(COMMENT REGARDING NORTHVILLE MURDER AND SUICIDE. Patty Sandy)

III. CHRIST THE WAY TO CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE - I CORINTHIANS 15:19

"IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE IN CHRIST WE ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE."

THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY BOOK THAT GOD EVER WROTE. SURELY THE GOD OF THE BIBLE COULD MAKE HIS WILL FOR MANKIND CLEAR. SURELY HE COULD MAKE KNOWN THE WAY TO HEAVEN BEFORE WE DIE SO THAT A PERSON WOULD NOT BE GUESSING ABOUT HIS ETERNAL DESTINATION.

I JOHN 5:13 "THESE THINGS HAVE I WRITTEN UNTO YOU THAT BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD: THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE AND THAT YE MAY BELIEVE ON THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD."

THE WORD KNOW IN THIS VERSE REFERS TO EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE - THAT IS TO KNOW WITH CERTAINTY AND CONFIDENCE THAT TO HAVE CHRIST IS TO HAVE THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

# THINGS WE KNOW FOR SURE

THERE ARE MANY COMMENDABLE THINGS THAT COULD AND PERHAPS SHOULD BE SAID ABOUT CHARLES WALDRON. HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE HOUSE OF GOD, HIS CHEERFUL SPIRIT IN THE FACE OF A TERMINAL DISEASE WAS RARE. IN THIS AGE OF UNCERTAINTY, THERE ARE SOME BIBLE CERTAINTIES THAT HELP. THIS IS NO TIME FOR GUESSING. WE HAD BETTER KNOW SOME THINGS FOR SURE. "I'D RATHER KNOW A FEW THINGS FOR SURE THAN A WHOLE LOT OF THINGS THAT AREN'T SO." QUESTION: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY WE MAY KNOW FOR SURE?

I. WE MAY KNOW FOR SURE THAT WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE - I JOHN 5:12-13, JOHN 6:37

A PERSON MAY KNOW HE IS BOTH SAVED AND SAFE BEFORE HE DIES. JOHN 3:16, JOHN 5:24, JOHN 20:30. "FOR I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH AND THAT HE SHALL STAND AT THE LATTER DAY UPON THE EARTH: AND THOUGH AFTER MY SKIN WORMS DESTROY THIS BODY, YET IN MY FLESH SHALL I SEE GOD...." JOB 19:25.... "ONE THING I KNOW, THAT WHEREAS I WAS BLIND NOW I SEE." (JOHN 9:25) THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT WE ARE MORE THAN CANDIDATES FOR SALVATION. WE ARE COMPLETE IN CHRIST. (I JOHN 3:1) - Beloved NOW.... (Jn 5:24)

II. WE MAY KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD KEEPS US - II TIMORTHY 1:12

FROM THE DAY THE BELIEVER BEGINS THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, HIS DESTINATION IS SURE. MARK 5:1... "AND THEY CAME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA...." PHILIPPIANS 1:6, JOHN 10:27-28,

"FOR I AM PERSUADED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME: NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD." (ROMANS 8:38)

III. WE KNOW FOR SURE THAT GOD IS WORKING OUT THE DETAILS OF OUR LIVE FOR GOOD - ROMANS 8:28

LIFE VIEWED FROM ISOLATED EVENTS IS DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET. BUT WHEN ALL OF THE THREADS OF LIFE'S TAPESTRY HAVE BEEN WOVEN TOGETHER, THE PICTURE WILL BE COMPLETE AND IN DEED A BEAUTIFUL ONE. (COMPARE TO A PARADE.) IN GENSIS 50:20 JOSEPH DECLARED ...."BUT AS FOR YOU, YOU THOUGHT EVIL AGAINST ME; BUT GOD MEANT IT UNTO GOOD." TO BE SURE, THERE ARE MYSTERIES IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD WHICH NONE OF US CAN EXPLAIN THIS SIDE OF ETERNITY. HOWEVER, IN THE FACE OF SICKNESS, SORROW AND DEATH, I KNOW THAT THIS VERSE IS TRUE AND SOME DAY HE WILL MAKE IT PLAIN.

IV. WE KNOW FOR SURE THAT A BELIEVER HAS A HEAVENLY HOME -- II COR. 5:1

VANCE HAVNER HAD A WAY OF EXPRESSING TRUTH THAT GETS TO THE HEART OF THINGS. IN ONE OF HIS BOOKS HE MENTIONED THE FACT THAT AS A BOY IN NORTH CAROLINA, AFTER HE HAD COME TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOUR, HE CARVED THIS INSCRIPTION IN THE CHIMNEY OF THE OLD HOUSE WHERE THEY LIVED...."HEAVEN I HOPE TO WIN." IN THOSE EARLY DAYS HE SET HIS EYE ON THE CELESTIAL CITY. HE SAID HE USED TO

SWING UNDER THE OLD OAK TREE IN THE FRONT YARD AND LOOK AT THE DISTANT BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS AND SING, "THERE'S A LAND THAT IS FAIRER THAN DAY, AND BY FAITH I CAN SEE IT AFAR." HE MADE UP HIS MIND TO HEAD HEAVENWARD AND GOT AN EARLY START. YEARS LATER, AFTER 60 YEARS OF MINISTRY, HE REVISED THE OLD HOUSE, LOOKED AT THE INSCRIPTION THAT WIND AND WEATHER HAD BATTERED AND ONLY TWO WORDS REMAINED - "HEAVEN AND HOPE." HE SAID: "I, TOO, HAD WEATHERED AND SUMMERS AND WINTERS FOR 60 YEARS BUT THE STORMS OF LIFE HAD NOT REMOVED THE HOPE OF HEAVEN IN MY HEART." INFIDELS AND CRITICS AND OTHERS HAD TRIED TO DIM HIS BOYISH FAITH BUT ALL UNSUCCESSFULLY. MANY OF HIS DEAREST FRIENDS WERE NOW THERE. WHEN HE CARVED THE INSCRIPTION MOST OF HIS LOVED ONES WERE HERE BUT NOW THEY WERE THERE. IN A WORLD THAT SEEMS TO HAVE GONE WILD NOTHING HAD BEEN ABLE TO ERASE HIS HOPE OF HEAVEN. SINCE HE WROTE THAT BOOK VANCE HAVNER HAS JOINED HIS WIFE IN THAT BLESSED PLACE.

Ruby Bobbs

# AT HOME WITH THE LORD

## II Corinthians 5:8

"Make yourself at home" is a phrase we all use to encourage guests to be comfortable in our home. There is something wonderful about the word home. To arrive at home after a long, hard journey is to arrive at a place where we may rest and be refreshed. So it is with the journey of life, like Pilgrim enroute to the Celestial City, our journey is toward our Eternal Home. As a matter of fact, the words of our blessed Lord in John 14:1-2 are couched in a home setting. Our friend _____ _____ is finally and surely home. What does this verse teach us about our Eternal Home?

### I. A MATTER OF CONFIDENCE - "Confident"

This word literally means "to be of good cheer." That is, our eternal home is a subject that delights not depresses the believer. According to II Cor. 5:1 we know what will happen to us when we die, it is not guessing! Why are we so confident? Our confidence is in the promise of God and the person who promised. Jesus Christ did what He said He would do - He arose from the grave - so shall we.

### II. A MATTER OF PREFERENCE - "Willing"

This word means "to think it good" or as the NIV says, "something we prefer." Paul expressed his preference in Philippians 1:21-23. These verses are absolutely impossible to understand for the person who does not enjoy eternal life in anticipation of an eternal home. The only way death may

Coaching "Let me go"

BE CLASSIFIED GAIN AND NOT LOSS IS WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS IN THE PICTURE. WHEN THE BELIEVER DIES HE GAINS JESUS. (RELATE STORY OF RAYMOND ACKERS - "ALL USED UP.") HAVENER'S REFERENCE TO MORE THERE THAN HERE. THE PHRASE "HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN" IS SOMETHING PEOPLE ACTUALLY EXPERIENCE WHILE ON EARTH. ABRAHAM HAD THAT ETERNAL DIMENSION AS PART OF HIS PILGRIMAGE. HE "LOOKED FOR A CITY WHICH HATH FOUNDATIONS, WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD." (HEB. 11:10)

New Hope Testimonies

HINDRANCE

III. A MATTER OF RIDDANCE - "ABSENCE"

"WE ARE GLAD TO BE RID OF THESE BODIES...." (LIVING LETTERS) THE WRITER UNDERSTOOD WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW OLD. THE EYES GROW DIM, EARS CANNOT HEAR, STEPS SLOW, STRENGTH EBBS AWAY. ONCE STRONG BODIES AND MINDS MUST BE HELPED IN ORDER TO MOVE. THE BURDEN OF AN OLDER BODY LIKE A HOUSE DETERIORATING OR A TENT ABOUT READY TO FOLD. ALL OF US HAVE HEARD AN AGED PERSON EXPRESS THE DESIRE TO BE RID OF A BODY THAT WAS NO LONGER A HELP BUT RATHER A HINDRANCE.

OUR TEXT TALKS ABOUT "BEING AT HOME WITH THE LORD." STATE LESSON LEARNED REGARDING O. A. S. AND HOME. IT IS NOT THE PLACE THAT IS SO IMPORTANT BUT RATHER THE PERSON. WHERE JESUS IS WILL BE HEAVEN FOR THE BELIEVER. THE STREETS OF GOLD AND ALL OF THE BEAUTY MENTIONED IN REVELATION IS ALL SECONDARY, IT IS THE PERSON OF CHRIST WHO OCCUPIES OUR ATTENTION NOW AND THEN.