

Titus 2:11-14

Our world into a cell. When we walk into a cell.

Several days ago while walking down one of the streets in our city, I noticed an advertisement concerning a show business personality who was making a pre-holiday appearance in the Civic Center. Throughout the year, radio and television inform us of the one-night appearances of certain celebrities. They are usually musicians and entertainers who, for one night, get people to think only of being entertained and not the problems of life. Men are interested in celebrities. Titus tells us that there was a time when God stepped into history for all men to see Him. Paul spoke of the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4) when God came down to men. The Roman empire had given the world a measure of peace and law. The Roman eagle touched every part of the inhabited earth. A measure of peace, coupled with slavery of 60 million people, was the grandeur of Rome. Hellenism was the culture and had provided a universal language through which the Gospel could be preached. Judaism provided the religion. The world was ready and God was ready for the world to receive His son.

I. THE APPEARANCE OF GOD IN HISTORY - verse 11

In the Old Testament, God made himself known to a select few on a limited basis. He appeared to men like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua and Isaiah. However, there came a day when God appeared to all men in the person of His son. (Compare John 1:10-14) This appearance of God in history was an act of pure unmerited grace on His part. God became visible or known to men in the person of His son Jesus Christ. Man was the Sinner. God was the Saviour. The appearance of God in history was in Saving Grace in the person of His son. The word grace is simply God's favor toward the sinner whose need is beyond human ability to provide. This was the favored word of a British sailor who deserted to go to Africa and join a Portugyese slave trader. He suffered greatly at the hands of the men on board ship. Through many sinful activities at sea and on one occasion he was knocked overboard and saved only when the captain speared him with a harpoon, which left a hideous scar upon him for the rest of his life. Eventually John Newton was saved and wrote one of the most familiar gospel songs of all times, "Amazing Grace." God sent Christ in saving grace to deal with man's sin. Grace is God's answer to sin. Were it not for God's grace, we would all be lost. Grace was manifested in the life of Christ when He came and died on the cross for our justification.

II. THE APPEARING OF GOD IN MEN - verse 12

Christmas is a strange season of the year. It is the time when boys and girls are told about Santa Clause and Jesus in the same

breath. Often putting Santa Clause at a higher plane than Jesus. It is a time when parents have little or no objection to their children having some religious instruction concerning the birth of Jesus. They want their children to know of the high moral quality of this remarkable story. In contrast, those same parents may use the Christmas season as an excuse to indulge in all kinds of sins, not the least of which is excessive drinking. Office parties have become the annual plague of many businesses. Because of the person of Christ, a born-again Christian is different. Paul suggests that the word which should characterize the Christian's life is "Godliness." The Christian in shoe leather is the kind of Bible everybody can read. The Christian lives in this present world but he is not of it. We are not of the "now age." We live in it but we do not love it. This is what makes us different from Demas. Notice in this verse there is a negative and a positive aspect to life. These must be seen in balance. There are some things we need to renounce and there are some things we need to attain. This verse speaks in broad terms of the believer's sanctification.

III. THE APPEARING OF GOD IN THE FUTURE - verse 13

In the word of God, the second coming of Christ is often seen as one huge event which will result in the completion of our salvation. The various aspects of the second coming are not always defined in one verse. In this verse, the Rapture of the church is spoken of as the blessed hope of the Christian. The glorious appearing of Christ has to do with His public visible display which will be evident to all in the second phase of His second coming. God will vindicate His son. When Christ came the first time, it was a dark hour in human history. When He comes the second time, it will even be a darker time. However, His second coming will not be in Bethlehem's manger but in all of the glory that is rightfully His. Earthly kings have come and gone, some have died in honor and glory, others have died in disgrace. All have died however, with no hope of resurrection. Only Jesus Christ has promised to come and live again upon the earth. The appearing of God in history, in our lives, and in the future is the hope of every Child of God.

"GIFTS OF THE BIBLE"

One reason why Christmas is so popular with many is because it is a time of exchanging gifts. People like to receive gifts as well as give them. The Magi supposedly established such a principle at Christmas time by their gifts to the Saviour and yet there is no basis for such a principle--they gave gifts to Christ--not one another. Much of our gift exchange today is more in theme with that passage which one of my friends called "The Devil's Christmas" in Rev. 11:10 where upon the death of the Two Witnesses .

The Bible has a great deal to say about gifts. God the great Giver gave Abraham a land. (Gen. 17:8) Gifts were involved in the early marriage proposal (Gen. 24). Jacob's great love for Joseph was demonstrated by a gift of a beautiful coat. (Gen. 37)

I. THE UNACCEPTABLE GIFT--Matt. 5:23-24

This section Jewish background. The Pharisees believed that murder was against the Law, but as long as they did no kill anyone and observed the other externals of the Law they were perfect before God. But they had forgotten the very purpose of the sacrifices. The proper sacrifice was an indication of an acknowledgment of guilt and faith in God for cleansing.

Jesus points out how ridiculous to bring a sacrifice for sin and yet harbor sin against a brother. ("Lord please accept my sacrifice but don't take notice of the real problem--my relationship with other people.")

Application:

The initiative is yours--I don't care if you are right! Being right has nothing to do with this act.

The gift is not what God wants so much as a proper heart before Him. Isa. 1:11 ff. Useless Sacrifices. These major on the external not the internal. c.f the Pharisee.

** There is a fable about a Persian Ruler who had a price-less pearl which he desired to give to one of his 3 son who demonstrated the greatest nobility.

Question: "During the past year, what is the greatest deed you have done."?

First Son: On a certain journey given valuable jewels by a merchant to deliver--no record of them. Could have kept many but delivered all instead. You did well son, you were honest--but could you have done differently without great shame?

Second Son: I was watching a child play by a lake. Fell in I plunged in and saved his life. You did a brave thing, but you could never have let the child drown.

Third Son: I was coming over the mountain one day. I saw a man who hates me, and had done me much harm.

He was asleep and had rolled near the edge of a great cliff. One push would have sent him over. Just passing him by would have left him to move in his sleep and fall to his death. But I waked him gently, and told him of his danger, and he abused me for it."

"My son, the pearl is yours. You did right, without the hope of reward, to one who had done you wrong." Doing right should be reward enough in itself.
Lincoln.

II. THE UNSELFISH GIFT--Luke 21:1-4

This is a story of contrast. (Luke does a great deal in his reference to the rich--Luke 12, 16 etc.)

A. The Wealthy

Out of their surplus they gave to the treasury in the temple.

B. The Widow

$\frac{1}{16}$ The "mite" was the smallest of all coins. About one sixteenth of a penny.

The Lesson to be learned was that God is interested in our giving to him. The heavenly arithmetic and book-keeping seen here--not the amount but how and how much was left ~~ast~~ after.

***Reminds me of Mrs. Dunlap--\$3 she took in for washings. I could not spend the money.

Isn't it interesting how "touchy" the subject of giving is in the local church. (left..hand right hand excuse.)

Yet the Bible speaks a great deal about the necessity of believers giving to the cause of Christ.

*** Article: "Our Church Needs No Money"

A way to function without money!

1. Dress warmly and we can eliminate the heat-- many hundreds of dollars annually for utilities.
2. Every time you want to talk to the pastor--get in the car drive over to the church--eliminate the phone.
3. Each take a turn at the organ, piano, directing the choir--eliminate the music ministry expense.
4. Each bring your own broom, dust rag, vacuum cleaner, floor wax, buffer, ~~watex~~ watch the lights, windows, unlock the church, shovel the snow etc. eliminate the expense of a janitor.
5. Bring own hymnbook.
6. Bring own Sunday School material, plus supplies for Primary, Junior Church and Youth Activities.
7. Bring own typewriter and meograph to run own bulletin. Take a turn at the administrative function of the church.
8. Take turn of using your car for kinds. Eliminate buse.
9. Take turn visiting the sick, preaching, marriages, funerals, counselling, keeping folk from fighting in the church..promoting the generally welfare of the church--eliminate the pastor.

Planning
Practice
Performance

10. Every member go to the mission field at your own expense.
~~for about 4 years.~~

In this way we could eliminate expense of the church.

**Many of us are like the 2 negros. million dollars-- $\frac{1}{2}$
1000 hogs-- $\frac{1}{2}$.. if 2 hogs $\frac{1}{2}$? That isn't fair, you know
I have 2 hogs. What you do with what you have?

Jesus uses this to shame us in our selfish approach to the things of God.

What about your giving to the cause of ~~Christ~~ Christ?
Is it at least one tenth? If it isn't it ought to be and you will be in spiritual doldrums until you begin here?

3 laws to successful life in church.

III. THE UNTARNISHED GIFT--James 1:17

Every gift you and I have ever received will rust and fade away. **1959 Chevie..now rusted, once shiny and new.

Last year's Christmas gifts are worn out--ready for more this year--the whole world of commerce operates on the principle that things wear out--they want them too!

Think of the good gifts of God to men:

Love--we would know little about this if it were not for God.

Mercy--what God withholds from us which we might deserve apart from grace.

Faith--the ability to know Jesus Christ as Saviour--to know God in a personal way.

Health--Mr. Erwin--how little we think of even the ability to sit on the edge of the bed, sit up and eat a meal.

Contentment

Fellowship with Christain friends.

Some friends who mean more than anything else in life.

IV. THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT--2 Cor. 9:15

2 Cor. 9 is one of the great "giving" chapters of the Bible. In this chapter several impt. principles:

1. No man is ever a loser who is a generous giver to the cause of Christ.

2. God loves a generous giver. (Nobody likes a tightwad.)

Scrooge

DECEMBER 23, 1979
A.M.HAIL INCARNATE DEITY

JOHN 1:14

RECENTLY I HEARD A SONG BEING SUNG WITH THE SINGLE LYRIC CHRISTMAS. THE MUSIC ARRANGEMENT WAS INTERESTING BUT THE SINGLE WORD CHRISTMAS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN. BY CONTRAST, HARK, THE HEARALD ANGELS SING CONTAINS THE PHRASE I AM USING AS A SERMON TITLE TODAY; "CHRIST, THE HIGHEST HEAVEN ADORED; CHRIST, THE EVERLASTING LORD! LATE IN TIME BEHOLD HIM COME, OFFSPRING OF THE VIRGINS WOMB; VEILED IN FLESH THE GOD HEAD SEE; HAIL THE INCARNATE DEITY...."

RECENTLY, A FRIEND OF MINE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM ONE OF THE ASTRONAUTS INVOLVED IN ONE OF OUR LUNAR LANDINGS. HE SAID: "WHILE I WAS ON THE MOON MY BELIEF WAS IN THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION. HOWEVER, SINCE THAT TIME I HAVE PUT MY HEART TO JESUS AND THE REALITY OF THE HOLY BIBLE. I BELIEVE NOW WITH ALL MY HEART THAT GOD IS THE CREATOR AND THIS BOOK HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS INSPIRATION TO ME TO UNDERSTAND MORE FULLY THE REALITY OF GOD'S CREATION."

CHARLES DUKE RETURNED FROM THE MOON A CHANGED MAN. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH AND CHANGED THE WORLD JUST AS HE CHANGED THE HEART OF ONE ASTRONAUT. EVEN THOUGH THE WORLD REJECTED JESUS CHRIST HE LEFT AN INDELIBLE MARK ON HUMAN HISTORY. HE CHANGED THE WORLD IN WHICH HE CAME AND IS STILL CHANGING THAT WORLD. SOCRATES AND ARISTOTLE TAUGHT FOR FORTY YEARS EACH, PLATO FOR FIFTY YEARS AND JESUS ONLY THREE AND YET THE IMPACT OF CHRIST SURMOUNDS THE COMBINED EFFORT OF THESE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS. JESUS PAINTED NO PICTURES AND YET HIS LIFE AFFECTED MEN SUCH AS RAPHAEL, MICHELANGELO, AND DA VINCI. HE WROTE NO MUSIC AND YET HE STIRRED THE HEARTS OF THE WORLD'S GREAT MUSICIANS HANDEL, BEETHOVEN, BACH, AND MENDELSSOHN. THE ROMANS CHANGED THEIR CALENDARS COUNTING THE YEARS OF HISTORY EITHER BC OR AD IE. ANNO DOMINI - THE YEAR OF THE LORD. SEVERAL YEARS AGO A MAN WROTE A BOOK ENTITLED BLACK LIKE ME. THE AUTHOR, JOHN GRIFFIN IN 1959 DETERMINED THAT IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE PLIGHT OF THE BLACK MAN IN AMERICA

HE MUST DO SOMETHING TO IDENTIFY WITH THEIR SITUATION. HE DARKENED HIS SKIN THROUGH ORAL MEDICATION, STAINS AND SUNLAMP TREATMENTS AND TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH. THE TREATMENT HE RECEIVED ALMOST INHUMAN. HE WAS NOT ALLOWED TO RIDE IN CERTAIN VEHICLES, EAT IN CERTAIN RESTAURANTS OR STAY IN CERTAIN HOTELS. HE COULD NOT DRINK FROM CERTAIN WATER FOUNTAINS OR ENTER CERTAIN RESTROOMS. HE WAS PERSECUTED, SLIGHTED AND CHEATED AND PERHAPS AS NO OTHER WHITE MAN HE UNDERSTOOD THE PLIGHT OF THE BLACK MAN IN AMERICA. THE VERSE BEFORE US SPEAKS OF THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FACT OF CHRIST'S INCARNATION. THE WORD INCARNATION SIMPLY MEANS "IN FLESH." THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING IT REFERS TO THE DIVINE ACT IN WHICH THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRIUNE GOD IS INBODIED IN HUMAN NATURE, FLESH AND FORM. (A.J. McCLAIN) WHEN YOU AND I ENTERED THE HUMAN SCENE WORDS SUCH AS CONCEIVED AND BORN WERE ADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE OUR ENTRANCE INTO THE WORLD. HOWEVER IT IS DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE THE ENTRANCE OF THE SECOND PERSON OF THE GODHEAD WHO HAD EXISTED FOR ALL ETERNITY BUT NOW MAKES HIS ENTRANCE IN FLESH ON THE EARTH. JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH HE CHANGED HIS DWELLING PLACE, HIS POSSESSIONS, AND HIS POSITION BUT HE DID NOT CHANGE HIS DIVINE PERSONALITY. HE DID NOT CEASE TO BE GOD WHEN HE BECAME MAN, HE DID NOT CEASE TO BE MAN WHEN HE RESUMED HIS POSITION IN GLORY. JESUS CHRIST BECAME A MAN IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT DIE FOR SINNERS AND SAVE THEM FROM THEIR SINS. HE BECAME INCARNATE THAT MEN MIGHT SHARE HIS OWN ETERNAL LIFE. HE BECAME INCARNATE IN ORDER THAT HE AS GOD WOULD KNOW HUMAN LIFE FROM THE PERSONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL SIDE. HE BECAME INCARNATE THAT MEN MIGHT HAVE AN EVER-LASTING REVELATION OF GOD IN VISIBLE HUMAN FORM. THE INCARNATION SAYS TO EVERY MAN THAT WE SERVE A GOD WHO KNOWS HUMAN LIFE THROUGH PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. WE SERVE A GOD WHO UNDERSTANDS THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN FLESH AND WHO IS ABLE TO SYMPATHIZE WITH MAN. (SOMEONE HAS SAID: IF I WERE EVER ARRESTED FOR STEALING BREAD, I WOULD HOPE THAT THE JUDGE THAT BEFORE WHOM I WAS BROUGHT HAD BEEN HUNGRY AT SOME-TIME IN HIS LIFE.) LET US LOOK AT OUR SINGLE VERSE AS IT RELATES TO THE GREAT SUBJECT OF THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST.

I. THE WORD

OF THE MANY TITLES GIVEN TO JESUS, THE WORD IS ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING. JESUS CHRIST IS CALLED THE WORD IN JOHN 1:1. HE IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD IN REVELATION 19:13 "AND HE WAS CLOTHED WITH A VESTURE DIPPED IN BLOOD: AND HIS NAME IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD." THERE ARE SEVERAL WORDS IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE TRANSLATED "WORD" IN THE BIBLE. THIS PARTICULAR WORD IS LOGOS AND IS BASICALLY A PHILOSOPHICAL TERM. IT IS USED 331 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, LOGOS CHARACTERIZES THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE WE PREACH. THE MESSAGE FROM GOD WHICH IS NOT THE DISCOVERY OF MAN OR SOMETHING HE INVENTED CLEARLY A DIVINE MESSAGE IS CALLED THE WORD OF GOD. (MARK 2:2, 4:14) IT IS THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD OF GOD MEN ARE SAVED. (1 PETER 1:23) WE UNDERSTAND THAT A WORD IS THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH MEN ENTER INTO INTELLECTUAL RELATIONSHIPS BOTH WITH THEIR SURROUNDINGS AND WITH THEIR FELLOW MEN. IT IS THROUGH WORDS THAT ONE EXPRESSES HIS THINKING AND IT IS ONE OF THE HIGHEST MOST DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN BEINGS. SIMPLY STATED, A WORD IS THE EXPRESSION OF A THOUGHT. AS IT RELATES TO JESUS CHRIST, HE IS THE EXPRESSION OF GOD'S TRUTH TO MEN IN OTHER WORDS JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S COMMUNICATION TO MEN. HE IS THE PERFECT EXPRESSION OR COMMUNICATION OF GOD TO MEN. IF A MAN DESIRES TO KNOW WHAT GOD IS LIKE AND TO HAVE COMMUNICATION OR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD HE MUST COME THROUGH GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION TO US, NAMELY, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. IF TWO PERSONS ARE GOING TO EXCHANGE IDEAS THERE MUST BE SOME INSTRUMENT OR VEHICLE OF EXCHANGE AND THAT INSTRUMENT IS USUALLY WORDS EITHER WRITTEN OR SPOKEN IT IS THROUGH WORDS WE COMMUNICATE GENERALLY WITH OTHER PEOPLE. (AS SPEECH REVEALS THE THOUGHTS OF MEN, SO OUR LORD REVEALS THE UNSEEN GOD.) (F.B. MEYERS)

II. WAS MADE FLESH

THIS COULD BETTER BE TRANSLATED "BECAME" FOR IT IS THE TRANSLATION OF THE WORD GINOMAI. IT IS SO TRANSLATED IN 1:12 AS "BECOME". BY AN ACT OF

HIS OWN WILL HE BECAME HUMAN FLESH. THE WORD FLESH IS A TERM COMMON TO ALL MEN AND ANIMALS. IT IS USED TO REFER TO THAT OUTER COVERING OF THE HUMAN COVERING AND IT IS ALSO USED TO CHARACTERIZE OUR NATURE WITH WHICH WE ARE BORN. PAUL IS CAREFUL WHEN HE SAYS: "IN THE LIKENESS OF SINFUL FLESH" (ROMANS 8:3) WHEN REFERRING TO CHRIST'S INCARNATION. THE FLESH WAS THE INSTRUMENT OR SPHERE INTO WHICH CHRIST CAME TO ACCOMPLISH OUR REDEMPTION. HE TOOK FLESH UPON HIMSELF IN ORDER THAT THROUGH HIS DEATH ON CALVARY WE MIGHT BE FREE FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE FLESH. THIS TERM IN A WONDERFUL WAY DESCRIBED HUMANITY AND ITS WEAKNESS AND DEPENDANCE ON OTHER SOURCE OF LIFE.

III. DWELT AMONG US

THE WORD DWELT MAYBE TRANSLATED "TABERNACLE" OR LITTERALLY TO LIVE IN A TENT OR TO PITCH A TENT. THE ROOT WORD IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORD SKIN. PETER USED THIS VERY TERM CONCERNING THE BODY HE SAID, "YEA I THINK IT MEAT AS LONG AS I AM IN THIS TABERNACLE, TO STIR YOU UP BY PUTTING YOU IN REMEMBRANCE; KNOWING THAT SHORTLY I MUST PUT OFF THIS MY TABERNACLE, EVEN AS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST HATH SHOWED ME," (II PETER 1:13-14) IN OLD TESTAMENT TIME THE LORD DWELT IN A TENT OR A TABERNACLE. "WHEREAS I HAVE NOT DWELT IN ANY HOUSE SINCE THE TIME THAT I BROUGHT UP THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL OUT OF EGYPT EVEN TO THIS DAY, BUT HAVE WALKED IN A TENT AND A TABERNACLE," (II SAMUEL 7:6) THE TABERNACLE WAS A MATERIAL SYMBOL OR REPRESENTATION OF THE GREAT BIBLICAL TRUTH OF THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THE VERY PATTERN AND DESIGN POINTED TO THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST. THE TABERNACLE WAS PART OF ISRAEL'S LIFE DURING THE TRANSIENT YEARS. IT WAS A TEMPORARY PROVISION FOR THE UNSETTLED YEARS OF ISRAEL'S NATIONAL EXISTANCE. IT WAS A TEMPORARY PROVISION. IT WAS UNATTRACTIVE ON THE OUTSIDE, MADE OF UNATTRACTIVE BADGER SKINS. IT WAS THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD, WHERE GOD AND MAN MET. IT WAS THE PLACE OF WORSHIP WHERE THE HIGH PRIEST PERFORMED HIS MINISTRY. THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE TABERNACLE AND TEMPLE WAS CALLED THE SHEKINAH GLORY. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH GOD HAS ALWAYS DWELT OR BEEN AMONG HIS PEOPLE.

68
2

IN A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL WAY, WHEN JESUS CHRIST CAME TO EARTH GOD WAS IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE AS NEVER BEFORE!

IV. WE BEHELD HIS GLORY

WHEN MEN SAW JESUS CHRIST, THEY SAW MORE THAN THE FLESH OF MAN, BUT RATHER THE GLORY OF GOD INCARNATE! THE WORD BEHELD IS RELATED TO THE ENGLISH WORD THEATER WHICH MEANS TO GAZE UPON. JOHN USED IT IN 1 JOHN 1:1 WHEN HE SAID: "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 THE WORD OF LIFE." (1 JOHN 1:1) JUST AS THE DIVINE PRESENCE OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED IN THE TABERNACLE, SO THE DIVINE PRESENCE OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. FROM TIME TO TIME IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, GOD MANIFESTED HIS GLORY FOR MEN TO SEE SUCH AS IN THE TEMPLE AND TO THE PROPHETS AND IN HUMAN HISTORY GOD MANIFESTED HIS GLORY IN THE PERSON OF HIS SON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. IN HIS WORDS, AND IN HIS DEEDS THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER COULD BE SEEN. THE WORD GLORY IS NOT EASY FOR US TO UNDERSTAND BECAUSE IT HAS AN ABSTRACT QUALITY TO IT. ONE CANNOT BY A POUND OF GLORY, MEASURE THE LENGTH OF GLORY, PAINT OR FIX UP GLORY. THE WORD GLORY IS FROM THE WORD "DOXA" AND IS RELATED TO THE ENGLISH WORD DOXOLOGY. HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHY WE SING THE DOXOLOGY EVERY SUNDAY MORNING? IS IT BECAUSE WE KNOW NO OTHER HYMN? IT IS FOR A PURPOSE, NAMELY, TO WORSHIP GOD. GENERALLY SPEAKING THE WORD GLORY SPEAKS BRIGHTNESS, BEAUTY, MAJESTY, OR SPLENDOR. THE TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE MATERIAL WEALTH AND MEN OF RANK AND POWER. THIS WORD INVOLVES MANS HIGHEST PRIVILEGE AND DUTY ON EARTH, SPECIFICALLY, TO GLORIFY, PRAISE AND WORSHIP GOD. IT IS BOND UP IN THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD MADE MAN. THEOLOGICALLY SPEAKING THE GLORY OF CHRIST IS THREEFOLD IN NATURE: (1) ESSENTIAL GLORY--THAT IS, THE GLORY CONCERNING CHRIST THE SON OF GOD AND HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD THE FATHER. (2) OFFICIAL GLORY--THAT GLORY WHICH BELONGS TO CHRIST IN HIS MEDIATORIAL CAPACITY. IT IS THE GLORY ASCRIBED TO HIM WHEN HE

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FINISHED HIS GREAT WORK ON EARTH. (3) MORAL GLORY-- THIS GLORY CONSISTS OF THE PERFECTIONS WHICH CHARACTERIZE HIS EARTHLY LIFE AND MINISTRY. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH HIS ESSENTIAL AND OFFICAL GLORY WAS VEILED DURING HIS EARTHLY MINISTRY. HOWEVER, HIS MORAL GLORY COULD NOT BE HID AND SHINES FORTH IN THE GOSPEL RECORDS FOR ALL TO SEE. THE OUT- STANDING ILLUSTRATION OF CHRIST'S GLORY WAS ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION.

V. THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER

THIS PARTICULAR PHRASE IS USED IN THE BIBLE TO DESCRIBE AN ONLY CHILD. TO BE SURE, GOD HAS MANY CHILDREN BUT THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS ABSOLUTELY AN COMPLETELY UNIQUE DISTINGUISHED FROM ALL OTHER CHILDREN OF GOD. JOHN USES THE TERM MONOGENES IN JOHN 3:16 TO REFER TO GOD'S UNIQUE SON THAT IS THE ONLY ONE OF THE KIND. IN HEBREWS 11:17 THIS TERM IS USED TO DESCRIBE ISAAC: "BY FAITH ABRAHAM WHEN HE WAS TRIED, OFFERED UP ISAAC: AND HE THAT HAD RECEIVED THE PROMISES OFFERED UP HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON." (HEBREWS 11:17) ABRAHAM HAD OTHER SONS BUT ISAAC WAS UNIQUE. (THE STORY IS TOLD THAT IN THE FALL OF 1775 THE MANAGER OF BALTIMORES LARGEST HOTEL REFUSED LODGING TO A MAN DRESSED LIKE A FARMER BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THE MANS LOWLY APPEARANCE WAS A DISCREDIT TO THE HOTEL. SO THE MAN OF SHABBY APPEARANCE LEFT THE HOTEL AND FOUND LODGING ELSEWHERE. LATER THE INKEEPER DISCOVERED TO HIS HORROR THAT HE HAD TURNED AWAY THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, THOMAS JEFFERSON! QUICKLY THE INKEEPER SENT A NOTE TO THE VICE-PRESIDENT ASKING HIM TO RETURN AND TO BE THEIR GUEST AT THEIR EXPENSE. JEFFERSON REPLIED BY SAYING HE HAD ALREADY ENGAGED A ROOM AND THAT IT WAS HIS OPINION THAT IF THEY HAD NO PLACE FOR A DIRTY AMERICAN FARMER NEITHER WOULD THEY HAVE A PLACE FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.) THIS WORLD HAD NO ROOM FOR GOD'S UNIQUE SON. HE WAS NAILED TO A CROSS FOR NO OTHER REASON OTHER THAN HE CLAIMED TO BE THE SON OF GOD.

VI. FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

THE WORD FULL IS FROM A WORD THAT IS TRANSLATED TO DESCRIBE THE FILLING OF THE BASKETS AS AFTER THE MIRACLE OF CHRIST AS RECORDED IN MATTHEW 14:20. IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE A MAN FULL OF LEPROSY, (LUKE 5:12). IT CHARACTERIZED STEPHEN WHO WAS FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST AND DORCAS WHO WAS FULL OF GOOD WORKS. (ACTS 7:55, 9:36) THERE HAVE BEEN MANY PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO BOTH TOLD OR SPOKE THE TRUTH AND WHO WERE GRACIOUS AND CHARMING MOST OF THE TIME BUT ONLY OF THE SON OF GOD COULD IT BE SAID THAT HE WAS FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH. GRACE, GOD'S UNMERITED LOVE AND FAVOR AND TRUTH SOME CHRISTIAN PEOPLE ARE CORRECT IN DOCTRINE, THAT IS THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD IS CORRECT BUT THEY ARE EXPRESSED IN AN UNCHRISTIAN UNGRACIOUS, DISCOURTEOUS FASHION. IN CHRIST WAS THE GENTLE BALANCE OF GRACE AND TRUTH. THIS VERSE CONCERNING THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST WAS NOT RECORDED BY JOHN SIMPLY TO INCREASE OUR THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE. IT WAS GIVEN IN ORDER THAT MEN MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND RECEIVE HIM INTO THEIR LIVES BY AN ACT OF FAITH. (CLOSE WITH JOHN 1:12-13)

" THE SECRET OF CHRISTMAS "

Luke 2:19

A Sunday School teacher was explaining to her class the meaning of Christ's coming to earth. After telling of His birth, she reminded her students that we do not linger at the manger but rather look to the Cross where He died for our sins. She concluded her lesson by saying: "Our Lord came to earth to die on the Cross that we all might be free." One little boy had a very puzzled look--she asked him what was wrong--"Teacher, I'm not free--"I'm four!"

Many people are like that small boy--they do not really understand the meaning of our Lord's birth. Many look upon Christmas simply as a time when kids get more toys, a few days off from work, an opportunity to drink more than normally would, time when we send cards to people from whom we seldom get greetings except at this time of the year. Several years ago a lady in New York City was heard to comment as she looked at a nativity scene in a department store window--"now they are trying to bring religion into Christmas!" More than we realize, this woman expressed the materialistic secularism-philosophy that grips the hearts of many Americans even at Christmas time.

The Psalmist ^{said:} ~~spoke of a secret in this way....~~ *Lk. 2:19*
"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." In Mary we see a Hebrew woman who did indeed fear the Lord and I am going to suggest that those things "she pondered in her heart" might well have been the real significance of Christ's coming and the events which surrounded His birth... *The Secret of Christmas.*

I. THE PREDICTION OF THE ANGEL GABRIEL--Lk. 1:26-35

In this passage in v.31/35 especially the truth of the Virgin Birth of Christ is emphasized. Matt. 1:18/20 this same truth is related to Joseph. With all that might be said about this passage, Dr. Luke is pointing out the uniqueness of Christ's birth.

*** It has been my joy to be present when both of our children were born. Our firstborn came into this world after a most hectic night--during exam week or just after in seminary--crisis at the plant--worked all night getting ready for day crew. At about 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. fellow classmate said:

"Wouldn't this be some day for that baby to arrive! It could not have been more than 5 minutes when the plant guard contacted me--you had better hurry home--its time to go to the hospital.

Our second arrived in the middle of the night

It is also interesting to notice that Elizabeth refers to the yet unborn child of Mary as "my Lord" in v. 43. Elizabeth recognized the divine nature and significance of the circumstances which had so resently blessed the life of Mary, it was indeed a time of praise!

It is interesting to notice that all men can be divided into tow camps re Jesus Christ:

- (1) Those who profane His name--either in word, deed, or attempted neutrality.
- (2) Those who praise His name---word and life. A life that brings glory to God.

III. THE PLACE OF JESUS BIRTH--Lk. 2:1-7

The fact that there was no room in the inn that night when heaven's greatest gift came to earth has within it a remarkable lesson: The world makes much of things which have no heavenly value or no eternal worth and often neglects or pays no attention to the great events of history. Here angels came from heaven to announce His birth--an there is no room for him to be born---to the stables His mother is sent! How little did the world realize waht a great event was happening that night! Those in the inn were oblivious to what was happening. One reason--they payed no attention to God's Word--Mic. 5:2. Men then as today were busy with the affairs of life and had no time to pay attention to the things of God. Luke 2:7 is a sad verse because it reflects the reaction of men of all generations when it comes to their relationship to Christ...no room. Education, government, civic affairs, homes, even in religious exercises---no room! (John 1:11-12)

In this place, the meeting palce of heaven and earth on that silent night long ago there was none to help, none to watch, not a word of public display---our God is like that--He is not dependant on man. If we were going to plan the birth of a king--it would be in the best of environment, the best doctors, the best hospital(suit)with every safe-guard. The king of kings was born in the humblest surroundings without world wide attention or acclaim. There was no publicity.

IV. THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO WORSHIP HIM--Lk. 2:8/15

Luke refers to the shepherds. Matthew to the Wise-Men. In each case, God spoke to them in a way they would understand. The Wise-Men studied the stars. The shepherds were devout Jews of the lowly class of people. They were familiar with the doctrine of angels--ti was by angels that men in the O.T. communicated with God. They were His messengers.

These men learned of the Saviour as they were going about their daily tasks. Nothing new that night--until the message from the angel came and then their whole life was changed.

There is one recurring note in the entire story of Christ's birth--simplicity.

Humble surroundings, humble parents, humble worshippers and a simple faith. v.15. There was no doubting, no arguing, no cynical approach. True worship of our Lord is simple. We do not need the pagentry and ritualistic trappings of men. All we need is Him.

V. THE PURPOSE OF JESUS BIRTH--Luke 2:11 and 1:31

In understanding the purpose of His birth we understand the secret of Christmas. Today men remember the manger where He was born and seek hide from the cross where He died. Tell us about the manger but leave out the cross! They bury their guilt before God in the celebration of Christmas because the true meaning of Christmas is not very popular in this world. Men do not like to be told about their sins, their need of being born-again. Mary knew the secret of His birth--so did Anna, Simeon, Elizabeth, Shepherds, Wise-Men but not the world at large. Now His work is finished at Calvary--the Saviour has come and God requires men to do something about His death. The two greatest events in all of human history occurred just 33 years apart--the birth and death of Christ.

At His birth--no room in the inn.

At his death--soldiers gambled for the only thing he possessed--his seamless robe. They wanted his "garment" but not Him.

What is the secret of Christmas? Men still do not know--they speak of the good Jesus, the great teacher, the moral example, the founder of Christianity but now as then they do not understand the reason He came when the angel made it so clear--

✓ Matt. 1:21. ⊕ Luke 19:10 John 10:10

*The secret -- a Saviour
my Saviour.*

"THE SECRET OF CHRISTMAS"

Luke 2:19

Luke is the gospel written especially to Gentiles. The beloved physician himself was thought to be a Gentile. The person to whom the letter was addressed--Theophilus was a Gentile. Luke points out the Gentile rulers of the day--Emperor--Agustus and the Governor--Cyrenus. We are deeply indebted to Luke for this lovely gospel of praise and beauty. In the ancient East, the position of women was not one of elevation but rather of low esteem. It was said that a Jewish man in his morning prayer thanked God for 3 things:

- ① Not a Gentile ② Not a slave ③ Not a woman

Yet, Luke gives a special place to the women in the narrative about the birth of Christ. (Reference to Elisabeth, Mary, Anna.) It would appear as if he were telling the story from a woman's point of view. For that reason let us consider the text:

What were some of the things Mary was pondering in her heart? Though Luke does emphasize the place of Mary at the birth of Christ, she will fade into the background shortly and appear but three times in the life of Christ as recorded in the Gospels: (1) Marriage of Cana (2) Matt. 12:46 (3) John 19:26

I. THE UNUSUAL BIRTH OF HER SON**Luke 1:26-56

It has been my joy to be present when our two daughters were born--it was a very special day for our family--but nothing special for others for it happens every day all over the world. But this is not the case concerning Christ. In years gone by, (we) have preached on the Virgin Birth at least a couple of times in the past 4 years. Yet this doctrine is greatly misunderstood. Some think it means the same as the Catholic dogma re The Immaculate Conception i.e. (Mary was preserved from original sin) This lacks any Biblical foundation.

(We) have used many of the O.T. references such as the great verse in Isa. 7:14 "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew interp. the meaning of the verse in Matt. 1:22-23. We have pointed out the various ways God has brought men into the world.

1. Adam--no human parent. (conflict with Evolution)
2. Eve-- just the male of the species
3. Normal-- male and female
4. Mary-- just the female.

Let us examine however just the events recorded in Luke:

A. The Appearance of Gabriel--1:26-38

This ought to tell us something about the importance of this birth. Heaven is involved and interested. This is the very angel who stands in the presence of God. It would indicate that the Father is vitally interested in this activity. This is his 2nd trip to earth in 6 months. The last time a reference to Gabriel was in the Book of Daniel--8:16; 9:21 In fact the 2 reference in Daniel and 2 in Luke the only reference to Gabriel in Scripture!

"Cindy"
Fire &
Arnolds
usual
right
out
Not as this!

Heavenly dignitaries did not appear at insignificant events ~~xxxxxxx~~ in history. (The same is true today--they reserve their presence for the special occasions.)

B. The Announcement of Elizabeth--1:42-45

"my Lord" Elizabeth believed the word of the angel as to the identity of the child to be born of Mary.

C. The Adulation of Mary--1:46-56

Origin
This passage is the final answer to those theologians of the gutter who suggest immoral ideas about Mary. This is not the voice of a woman hiding in shame--it is the rejoicing of an obedient soul to God!

II. THE UNUSUAL BACKGROUND OF EVENTS--Luke 2:8-20

When a King is born it is an event for world wide attention and acclaim. Publicity to all but especially the well-born, the aristocrats of the world. The unusual factor in this passage is that the first birth announcement came from an angel to shepherds.

Shepherds were the lowly class of people. They were looked down on by the religious classes. They were just about as common and simple as folk could get. As we read the account before us we are impressed with one word--SIMPLICITY.

1. Humble surroundings - *Outdoors*
2. Simple humble parents--a lovely Hebrew maiden--a carpenter.
3. Humble attendants
4. Simple faith--"Let us now go even to Bethlehem..."
(No doubting, skeptical attitude)

This one word has marked N.T. Christianity from its beginning. The gospel message is simple. (It can be understood by all--regardless of education. True worship is simple. No pagentry, no ritual, just taken up with the Saviour--as the shepherds and Wise-men were.

This has never changed--where it has it is of man's doing--not God's.

III. THE UNUSUAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE TEMPLE--Lk. 2:41-52

Twelve years of time have elapsed from 2:39 and 40 to verse 41. These have been called the "hidden years." We would like to know--but this is not the emphasis of the Bible.

It was Jewish custom that at the age of 12 a boy crossed over to manhood. Every male within 20 miles of Jer. came to the Temple. He became a son of the law.

Reason he was left: Women usually started early since they often traveled more slowly. Men started later but would catch up in time for evening meal and rest.

(Sermon: "The Missing Christ"----- Gone and many do not realize it.)

The secret of Christmas—the things Mary pondered in her heart are now perhaps a little more plain to us. Her Son had a unique relationship to God the Father. She would see soon that the event at the time of his birth was highly significant. (No room in the inn)—soon no room in religious circles—they would hate him. No room in the nation and most of all in the hearts of men! One one place where room for Him--- a wooden Cross outside the city—to die as a common thief. The two greatest events in history but 33 years apart and revolving about the same person—The Son of God.

What is the secret of Christmas? Men still don't know!

They talk about the good Jesus, the good he did; how wonderful that he lived—but the world still does not know---just a few like the shepherds—Magi, Simeon, Anna. REDEEMER.

Born this day ..a Saviour.....Matt. 1:21 ..from their sins!

The world did not want him...on the benefits of his life.

(Mr. Chapman) His garments but not the Christ.

The shepherds were interested in the Saviour and not in what He could do for them. True worshipers of God are interested in God for what He is, not for what they can get out of Him!

a. The Appearance of Jesus Brought Good News and Joy to the World - verse 10

Good news for sinners
Good news for sinners

The Gospel is not a message of gloom. It transforms lives and brings joy into the human heart. The one thing the world cannot duplicate from the Christian life is that of joy. Christ brings joy into the life. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) Whenever Christ is brought into the life, joy will always be present. Where there is no joy, there is no Jesus. Christmas = father's most joyful season.

b. The Saviour Came to Save Because All Men Need Saving - verse 11

If you and I were not needy sinners, then Jesus need not have come to earth. (Luke 19:10, Romans 3:10 and 23) If mankind was good and not sinful in nature then the life, ministry and death of Christ was the greatest waste in all of history. He steadfastly declared that the purpose of His mission was to save the lost. That is exactly what the Gospel has been doing for over 2,000 years. Apart from Christ, no man can be saved nor will be saved. This is the primary reason for His redemptive work on Calvary. John 3:16 - Born a sinner.

Matt. 1:21

John 17:9 - "the least"
Matt. 9:13 - No need - SINNERS

c. Praise is Always Associated With Christ - verse 13-14

People who know God love to praise Him. When a sinner knows Christ, it will bring praise to God and peace to men.

(Lk. 19:40)

d. The Message of Christ Requires Immediate Decision - verse 15

Emphasize the word now. When the shepherds heard the good news of the birth of Christ, their response was immediate. The time to decide for Christ is when you hear the message of the Gospel. You have no other promise in the word of God of another opportunity. Now is the day of salvation.

car yanak - young man -

II. SIMEON WHO CAME TO ADORE HIM - verse 25-35

The word Simeon means "one who hears." At a time in Israel's history when the religious world had little contact with God and had for the most part settled down to a life of empty ritual, God had a man who was deeply spiritual.

Apart from the crowd.

a. Simeon, A Spiritual Man

Everything about this passage indicates that here was a man living in a time of spiritual deadness, who recognized that God would do something in Israel. The messianic hope lived in his heart. He was living in Jerusalem, the city of the great king, the place where God had said the messianic hope would rest. Simeon was there on the spot. He is characterized as being just and devout. The word devout suggests reverence and care concerning the things of God. There are several references to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Simeon's life. The spiritual man is the man who is associated with the Holy Spirit. His spirituality is further illustrated by where he was dwelling, in the temple. This was a time when temple attendance was low. People had abandoned the house of God. Simeon knew that it was impossible to stay near to God and be negligent in attendance in the house of God. God can speak to His people anywhere but He speaks most often in the house of God because this is where the Word of God and the Christ of God are exalted.

b. Simeon Was A Dependable Man - verse 25

"Waiting for the consolation of Israel." Simeon was where he ought to have been, doing the right thing at the right time, when he saw Christ. The movement of God in our lives is always on schedule. The man who is willing to wait upon God is the man who will see God's Christ. Simeon recognized that the answers to the problems in Israel, their political, religious and personal problems, would be resolved when the Messiah came. The consolation of Israel was bound up in a person. The same is true today. The hopes and needs of the world are bound up in a person.

c. Simeon Was A Man of Vision - verse 30-35

Simeon saw the Messiah as having a world-wide impact and not just upon Israel. God's universal message is for all men. To Simeon, the baby he held in his arms was the hope of the world.

III. ANNA, WHO CAME TO WORSHIP HIM - verse 36-38

The story of Anna is sad at the beginning. Here was a woman who had known the loss of her husband early in their married life. Instead of becoming bitter and rebellious toward God, she turned to Him in service for God out of the deepest tragedy of her life. Sorrow does this to people. For some, it wrecks their faith, but

for others it makes their faith grow deeper and makes them more dependent upon God. Anna was a woman who had grown graceful with age. At that time when many people become difficult and distrubed, Anna was growing spiritually. Age is an enemy of vision. When sorrow wrecked her life she spent her life in service to God in the temple. She seldom missed a service. With both Simeon and Anna, we learn a valuable lesson concerning the house of God. It was here most of us were saved, it is here that we are blessed from week to week, we were married here, some of us will be buried here, and why should we have to beg people to attend. Prayer and worship were at the center of Anna's life. Age had taken away her physical strength but not her spiritual depth. She had been waiting for the redemption of Israel. She had never given up hope. When all around her seemed hopeless, she kept on hoping. With all of these three groups and people who came to worship Christ, it can all be summed up in verse 29-30. Men are not ready to die until they have come to Christ. Salvation is in a person and men are not ready to worship God until they have come to Christ. On this Christmas Eve, man's most solemn responsibility is to come to Christ and be saved.

" A MAN CALLED SIMEON "

Lk. 2:25-35

Revised
1982

Intro:

Over the course of several years of preaching on the Christmas theme, we have examined both of the Synoptic gospels which record the birth of our Lord. Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph showing Jesus to be of the legal line of David --thus properly in line to the royal throne. Luke gives the genealogy of Mary. This genealogy is biological in nature. We have looked at the various worshippers who came to see the Christ child, we have examined the political scene at the time of His birth, the other factors involved; we have examined several O.T. prophecies which culminate at the birth of Christ etc. etc. This year for the first time, one of the lesser known worshippers caught my attention and a great deal is said about this event early in the life of Jesus.

Dr. Luke in presenting the man Simeon is very careful to record what kind of man he was more than who he was. *Somewhat like an inscription in a soldier's cemetery in Virginia: "Who they were no man knows, what they were all men know."

I. PIETY--What ¹¹e Was v.25

The word "pious" has become a synonym for all that is hypocritical, stilted, cold and pretentious in religious life. We say "He is as pious as a judge, or as pious as a prune!" However, the original meaning of the word is a very good one: Webster: "Loyal devotion to parent, family, race, etc. Perhaps some of the meaning we attach to it today is rooted in the historical usage of the term. In the 17th century in Germany there was a religious awakening in the Lutheran church called the Pietism. It was to Germany what Puritanism was to England. Their purpose: To make Christianity practical rather than dead orthodoxy. Return to the Bible, godliness and holiness. Good start but the movement degenerated in second generation leadership and perhaps one reason the term has lost some of its true meaning. His piety is manifested in several things in the verse:

A. Geographical Location--"in Jerusalem" nr

Simeon was living in the right place in accord with the promise of the coming Messiah.

1. v.38 --"redemption in Jerusalem"

2. Psalm 102:16-21

3. Isa. 4:2-3 24:23, 27:13, 31:5, 52:9-10, 62:6-7, 66:13.

He believed the O.T. Scriptures.

B. Moral Integrity-- "just and devout"

1. "just" same word used elsewhere as "righteous"
Denotes uprightness of character. What he ought to be. He offered proper sacrifices in faith etc. But his faith did not rest on the ritual but in the promise of God. Proper standing before God.

2. "devout"

From a Gk. word εὐλαβής which means to take hold of carefully or cautious. Denotes care, reverence, godly fear, prudence in the things of God.

Proper attitude before God.

This man was a God-fearing man. Exercised care and caution of his life before the Lord. Uncommon in that day as in ours. ***We have too many who take a shallow view toward God.

C. Spiritual Interests "waiting"

A spiritually minded man who recognized that the answers to the problems in Israel, political, religious, etc. were to be found in Messiah. **All spiritually minded men know that the answers of men's problems are to be found in the Lord. "the consolation of Israel" meant a person. A divine deliverer as Moses in Egypt. Application: The situation is about the same---need Jesus Christ. Church is waiting for Him. ("ot inactivity but eager expectation.) "Waiting" suggests this. Heb. 9. HOPE

II. PERCEPTION--What He Saw v.30

His name also suggestive of His perceptive qualities. In the Heb. the root of the word means "to hear." In every age, the uncommon man with the common name who hears the word of God and heeds it.

Several things in the verses suggest more in this area:

A. Instruction In the right things v.26 "Lord's Christ"

The word revealed is most interesting. It was used in Greek to transact business or to give advice--to have dealings with. He was a man God could "do business with" because of willingness to heed Divine Instruction.

***Bible for us. Not a cafeteria. God reveals Himself to those who are willing to obey.

B. Direction By The Right Person To Right Place --v.27

1. Holy Spirit our Instructor and Director.

2. Temple--place of divine worship. **Application.

The church is not the temple, but application is same.

C. Salvation In the right Person--v.30

When Simeon made this statement to whom was he referring? Acts. 4:12 What about this group? This religion?

Salvation is in a Person--Jesus Christ.

III. PROPHECY--What He Said--v.34

"Fall and the rise."

A. Some Men Fall Because of Him:

1. Judas
2. Thief
3. Herod, Pilate

B. Some Men rise Because of Him

1. Peter
2. Thief
3. Joseph of Ar.
4. Saul of Tarsus

Point:

No middle ground, no on the fence business. Either are for or against Christ.

****Copy story in booklet:**

The story is told of an imaginary scene in heaven. It pictures God calling the angels together immediately after the fall of Adam. At this time God revealed His purpose to redeem man, deliver him from the curse of sin.

One angel: "I will go down to earth. I will live a life of peace truth and love before men. Thus man will want to do good and not evil.

Another angel: "I will go down and teach men the truth. I will fill their minds with precepts of righteousness.

3rd. angel: "I will go down to earth and tell man of a great hope. I'll lure him out of his sins by music of hope for the future.

To all of these God said no. He commended them for their noble desires and lofty purposes--but they would never work.

Then in the silence which followed, The Son of God was heard to speak: "Father I will go down. I will take the nature and body of men, I will offer myself on the Cross, shed my blood to redeem him. To this God responded "Yes." Eternal Son, God down, thou alone can redeem fallen men.

The story is imaginary but the truth is real.

Rom. 16
Greeting Chapter
15 Times - 27 verses
GREET OR SALUTE

NC (H) - Hey

LK 10:4 - "Salute No.
lengthy ^{man by the way} ~~creative~~ customs
long greeting
Kentucky - Name - shot
all those!

" CHRISTMAS GREETINGS "

A continuation of our Christmas subjects. This subject made to stand out in my mind just this past week while visiting with a person in his place of business whom I had never met before. *A most cordial greeting, with punch (fruit juice) fruit-cake, candy, an unusual spirit of cordiality. One reason, it was Christmas and people are just a little nicer, a little more willing to please at this time of the year. - Exception: Sales Personnel. In the Bible, the greetings surrounding the birth of Jesus are very interesting—with all of the angelic greetings there was the accompanying reassurance to—"Fear not."

I. THE ANGELIC GREETING TO JOSEPH CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF JESUS-- Matt. 1:18-25

A. The Secretive Aspect of the Birth--v.18-19

At some point within the year of the engagement in which Joseph and Mary were legally bound a great mystery perhaps even a cloud overshadowed their anticipated marriage. The text says "before" they came together as man and wife she was found to be with child. Joseph loved Mary very much--the law said she could be stoned, exposed publicly in a trial. But this was not the heart of Joseph. Undoubtedly they had discussed the matter and it was just a much a mystery to Mary as to Joseph. Now the text states:

B. The Supernatural Aspect of the Birth--v.18 & 20

These verses state clearly that the birth of Jesus had its origin and source in the Holy Spirit. It was a special creative act of the Holy Spirit whereby the personality of the eternal Son of God was clothed with human flesh and born of the Virgin Mary. However, this is nothing near the Roman doctrine of the Immaculate Conception which they say preserved Mary from original sin. Mary was not sinless. The Saviour was indeed preserved from original sin. If this were not true, he would be just like any other son of Adam--the problem would be only in the degree of depravity--but with Him--none. Supernatural birth, Conception - "Overshadow" (Gen. 1:3)

C. The Salvation Aspect of the Birth--v.21

He came to save men. We hear much today that would suggest men don't need saving. But the Bible and truth declare all men are sinners and need a saviour. Luke 19:10, Mark 10:45, 1 Pet. 2:24, 1 Pet. 1:18. The burden of Scripture is not Bethlehem but Calvary. His sinless life did not deal with our sin...but his suffering death did!

Phone: detective
logic
eliminate supernatural
None
Miraculous Birth
a miraculous
Conception!

D. The Scriptural Aspect of the Birth--v.22-23

"That it might be fulfilled..."

↑ Mal 5:2

700 years before Jesus was born the exact location of his birthplace was predicted...Bethlehem. David alone was the only king of Judah ever born there...all other kings were born in the royal city...Jerusalem. Think of the circumstances to bring this prophecy to its exact fulfillment.

(a.) Joseph was living in Nazareth in the North...90 miles from Bethlehem. The decree in the exact year of Mary's expectation. But they came in time for Jesus to have been born in Bethlehem--not a day late!

(b.) The significance of these prophecies can be stated in contemporary language. Suppose--700 years ago--1266 someone would have written in a book that a Fellow named Johnson who would be born in Johnson City Texas would rule a great democratic nation of 200 million! This was 200 years before Columbus even discovered America! The wonders of Bible prophecy. 333 O.T. prophecies re Christ! Not one left undone.

Therefore, Matthew shows us that 19 centuries ago, in an obscure town in Palestine an event took place which changed the course of history and all mankind to this day. Not born of distinguished wealthy parents etc.

II. THE ANGELIC GREETING TO ZACHARIAS CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF JOHN-- Luke 1:11-17

A. John's Birth Was An Answer to Prayer--v.13

This should be encouragement for us to pray. It was in God's plan to send John but it was His will to answer prayer in doing so. cf. Hannah. 1 Sam.

B. John's Birth Was According to a Plan--v.15-17

God had a purpose for this son in the great program of God. John 1:6

Like John, God's plan for us centers around His son, Jesus Christ. No plan we devise apart from Christ is God's will for us.

C. John's Birth Was Accompanied With Praise--v.14 & 64
Great Joy surrounds the things which are of God.

III. THE ANGELIC GREETING TO MARY CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF JESUS --Luke 1:28-38

A. The Selection of Mary--v.28-30

Favor with God. Fere is out of his mind. Pike too.

B. The Position of Jesus--v.31-33

C. The Question of Mary--v.34

D. The Explanation of the Angel--v.35

IV. THE ANGELIC GREETING TO THE SHEPHERDS --Luke 2:8-10

A. A Humble Class of People

Always true of God. He comes to the lowly of the earth. God does not act as men do. Matt. 18

Men who would enter into glory...humble. Luke 18.

B. A Heavenly Choir of Praise --v.13-14

Peace on earth...not governmentally possible today.

Matt. 11:28.....Rom. 5:1

A. The Supernatural Aspect of Christ's Birth 1:20

In verses 18 and 20, Matthew brings out the fact that the source of Mary's conception was the Holy Spirit. Luke is also very careful to point out that this birth was not like the others he as a doctor had witnessed-- it was unique. This was a special act of the Holy Spirit whereby the eternal Son of God was clothed in human flesh. The only birth in human history whereby the child was not tainted with original sin... this includes Mary. Every other man born of woman came into this world a victim of Adam's transgression: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psa. 51:5) In Luke's gospel there is added information about the birth of Christ: "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Lk. 1:35) It is interesting to observe that another place in the N.T. where the word overshadowed is used has to do with the Mount of Transfiguration-- Mark 9:7. The picture of a cloud engulfing people.

*Paul's
Dominion*
The doctrine of the virgin birth of Christ is one of those doctrines that some so called evangelicals do not wish to argue over--we should not be so dogmatic on some of these issues but rather find other areas in which we may cooperate--find common ground. This is the common ground of Bible believing Christians and if you give in here the next place of compromise will be the doctrine of the Scriptures and the blood redemption. Men who reject the virgin birth have little regard for the inspiration of Scripture and blood redemption. The same folk who refer to the invitation at the close of our services as a "sacred cow" and who refer to us as "funny mentalists." Let me remind some of these smug people that our allegiance is to what the Bible teaches---not what men think it teaches!

B. The Saving Aspect of Christ's Birth--1:21

The angel announced to Joseph that the baby to be born of Mary would be a boy. His name had been picked in advance---Jesus. The word Jesus means Saviour and it simply reflected the nature and purpose of His coming to earth. Mark 10:45, Luke 19:10, John 20:31-- the key verses of each Gospel record pointed to this aspect of his coming--to save men from their sins! The burden of the Word of God is not to put the emphasis on Bethlehem and the manger but on Calvary and the Cross where He died. This fact is brought out not only by emphasis but by implication-- one-third of the material in the Synoptic Gospels deals with a single week in the life of Christ, the last week in which He died. One-half of the Gospel of John deals with the last week--this is where God puts the emphasis!

Prophet--his earthly ministry, Priest---his ministry for us today, Heb. 7:25 and King-- He is indeed the king of the Jews and their King will be vindicated before the eyes of the world.

III. THE GREETING OF THE ANGEL TO THE SHEPHERDS Luke 2:8-15

When we see these men receiving the good news of Jesus birth there is one outstanding feature of the story--- the message did not come to the elite of the religious world but rather it came to very common folk and very simple men who were going about the normal affairs of life. These men were probably in charge of the flocks used for Temple offerings. It is usually the desire of men to be above their fellows to achieve a high place of prominence--not so with Christ--born in a humble manger/stable, surrounded by humble folk the Son of God came to bring hope and life to all men. *(I remember the story of a king who would lay aside his royal garb and disappear in his kingdom for days on end. He was asked if he did not fear for his life and why he sought to do such things. "I cannot rule my people unless I know how that live." So our great God know how we live because he too has lived among us asking no special favors above that of the common man.

There is on other lesson to learn from the shepherds.~~th~~ When they heard about the Saviour their response was immediate--"Let us now go...." When a man gets the news of Jesus...its time to act.

"THE VIRGIN BIRTH"

This is one doctrine of the Bible which seems to stir up the skeptics as no other, unless it might be the inspiration of Scripture. Since the day of my conversion, I have been reading and studying what some of these men have to say to refute this doctrine. Boils down to one idea--they reject anything of the supernatural in religion. Really it isn't just the Virgin Birth its anything that cannot be explained at the altar of science. Recently an article which told what Baptists believe--but he did not speak for me because in that article he suggested that the virgin birth of Christ is an optional doctrine--some believe it some do not---.(Let me suggest the alternative of those who do not accept the truth of the Bible in this regard. Casting a reflection on Mary, God, Scripture. If someone should say such about their wife or mother they would turn pale with rage.

What do we mean by the Virgin Birth of Christ? Jesus Christ came into this world born of a woman who had never know a man. Joseph was not his earthly father for the Holy Spirit created wt within the humanity of Mary the body by means of which the Son of God would tabernacle among men. Thus he was not tainted with an Adamic nature with which all men are born.

I. THE RECORD

Is the Virgin Birth a fact? Let us examine carefully the declarations of Scripture.

A. Matthew's Account:

Comment: Only Matthew and Luke record the birth of Christ. Matt. deals more with Joseph goes back to David and Abraham.

Shows Jesus as King of the Jews. Jewish origins. Luke deals with Mary. Goes back to Adam. The reason the other 2 do not carry the account is because Mark presents Christ as the servant, the worker, "e needs no geneology. John presents Jesus as the Son of God and as such no gen. is possible. (heavenly origin)

1. Matthew 1:18-20 Two references to the fact that the Holy Spirit was the Person involved in the conception of Christ. In fact, the Spirit of God is very careful to point this out in 1:16!
2. Matthew 1:23 This is the final word on the translation of Isa. 7:14
Here Matthew interprets the meaning. Translation difficulties spring out of a theological bias.
3. Matthew 1:25 Compare this with Luke 1:34

B. Lukes Account:

1. Luke 1:26-27 This is the statement of a professional man highly trained in his field.
2. Luke 1:28-35 These are phrases which are never said about questionable women!

C. Others Factors:

1. Jer. 22:29-30 --the curse on Coniah.
If Joseph had been the father of Jesus
He could not inherit the throne of David.
Yet Messiah must come thru that royal line of Solomon.
Only solution--Messiah born of a virgin who is a descendant of David, marries a man of the ~~xx~~ royal line of Solomon, making the husband his legal father.
2. Preservation of the Messianic line for 2000 years.
3. Foreknowledge:
son--name
sins--said of no other person in history.
4. Psychological factor of Mary with Eliz.
5. The spirit of Christmas--in mythology where co-habitation of gods with men nothing of purity or wholesomeness about it. Buddah's mother married--dreames a white elephant enter her--nothing of this in birth of Christ. Children and adults love the sotry.

If the virgin birth were not true--Matthew and Luke were either lying or misinformed. They have led millions to believe this story. Point: If they are not accurate at this point how can we be sure about other things such as the other miracles, death, resurrection. (Man becomes his own Saviour!)

Point: The same Holy Spirit who wrote Scripture is the same person who overshadowed the Saviour.

Today the situation is the same as in John 8--men are still casting aspersions as to the birth of Jesus-- "I honor my Father, and ye dishonor me."

II. THE REJOICING

Examine carefully the lives of those who came to see the Lord and interesting thing of all:

- A. Wise Men-- "They rejoiced with exceeding great joy."
cf. Herod *MT. 2:10*
- B. Heavenly Host "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." 2:10
- C. Shepherds "And the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God... 2:20

This principle is true in our day. Those who know the Saviour--joy that comes by faith in Him. The greatest day in human history--bethlehem--sadest day 33 years later at Calvary.

III. THE REASON

- A. Reveal God---John 3:16 and John 1:18
God's point of contact with men.
- B. Rescue Creation---Rom. 8:19-22
- C. Redeem Men
Matt. 1:21, Luke 2:11
A Saviour for whom??????? How about you??????

ideas for Ch. messages

"The Questions of Christmas"
- Lk 1:34

"No Time for Fear"
Fear not: Joseph - Mt 1:20
Fear not: Mary - Lk 1:30
Fear not: Shepherds - Lk 2:10

PROOFS IN PROPHECY

Luke records in Acts 1:3 that our Lord showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs.... Using this idea it occurred to me that there are many proofs in prophecy regarding the person of Christ. In the preceeding weeks I have dealt with several O.T. prophecies regarding Christ, as in Isaiah which 700 years before His birth foretold it would be of a virgin. Last week in dealing with the 22nd Psalm we pointed out that this Psalm tells of our Lord's crucifixion 1000 years before crucifixion was known as a type of punishment. Today we will deal with 3 prophecies in the O.T. regarding Christ and His advents to earth.

I. THE TOWN OF HIS BIRTH—Micah 5:2 148

Every preacher has a dream of going to Palestine. In our day, more and more are going, but most of us will just keep on dreaming—but if in the providence of God this should ever become a reality for me, of all the places I would like to see—and there are many—one would be the place where our Lord was born—Bethlehem. (At this time of year, thousands make their way to this little town.) Like so many things in life, Bethlehem would mean nothing in human history if Christ had not been there. Perhaps no city has ever been talked about so much, unless perhaps it might be Jerusalem: "O little town of Bethlehem, How still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep The silent stars go by; Yet in thy dark streets shineth The everlasting Light; The hopes and fears of all the years Are met in thee tonight."

A. Its Name: (MODERN NAME)

The name Bethlehem is really two words, "Beth" which means "house" and "Lehem" which means "bread"—"The House of Bread"! (Here came the Bread of Life)

Notice elsewhere where the prefix "Beth" is attached to words: "Bethel"—house of God

"Bethesda"—house of mercy

"Beth-Aram"—house of the mountain or high place.

"Beth-Eden"—house of pleasantness.

B. Its Significance:

Why should a king be born in Bethlehem? Jerusalem was the city of regal splendor and majesty. Why this little town about 6 or 7 miles south of Jerusalem? This little town where David was born and where Ruth came to live.

C. Its Prophecy:

"little among the thousands of Judah"

Bethlehem was insignificant in size and population.

Not listed in Josh. 15:21 or Neh. 11:25

Of all the clans, towns in Judah—this one very small.

ANCIENT NAME

"EPHRATAH"

(FRUITFUL)

BOTH NAMES

HAVE REF. TO

THE FERTILITY

OF THE REGION

These words about "little things" recall to mind that this is the thing God delights to do--use the little things of this world to confound the wise.

1. Gideon--who pleased that he was "least" of his father's house.
2. Moses--who declared his great inability--least a nation out of bondage.
3. David--small and fair of count. who defeated Goliath, not mighty Saul!
4. John 6--it was a little lad that Jesus took the fishes and loaves and fed the 5000
5. Naaman of Syria--mighty and strong but a "little maid" who told him about Elisha the prophet.
6. Widow of Zarephath--just a "little oil" and ~~flower~~ handful of meal.
7. Samson--jawbone of an ass
8. Great principle: 1 Cor. 1:27 also 26

"...not many wise...according to human estimates and standards; not many influential and powerful; not many of high and noble birth.

~~No for God selected...what the world in the world is foolish to put to shame, and~~

No, for God selected what in the world is foolish to put the wise to shame, and what the world calls weak to put the strong to shame...And God also selected... what in the world is lowborn and insignificant, and branded and treated with contempt, even the things that are nothing, that He might dispose and bring to nothing the things that are; So that no mortal man should ... boast in the presence of God. 1 Cor. 1:26-29 A.N.T.

"Yet out of thee shall come forth. ruler in Israel
Isa. 9:6

"whose goings forth..from everlasting"

Man recognizes the "going forth" of Jesus as from Bethlehem to die some 30 years later. But they neglect to see the point of the verse...He is from all eternity.. from the ages of the ages...The Eternal Son of God!

D. Its Uniqueness:

The startling thing about this prophecy is the time element. Think of all the things that had to work together to make this prophecy come true and if it hadn't the inspiration of Scripture at stake. A decree from the Roman Government to start Joseph on his way to Bethlehem. To take Mary with him. Chance? No God the author and arranger of history and according to His master plan.

II. THE TRIBE FROM WHICH HE SHOULD COME--Gen. 49:10

Of all the 12 tribes in Israel, why from Judah?

In accord with the Scripture--"SHILOH"--"peace-maker"
"septr"

The staff adorned with carvings and handed down from father to son so that it became the symbol of ones authority.

"from between his feet"-- from among his descendents.

Rev. 5:5

IV. ISA. 9:6

III. THE TRIUMPH OF OUR LORD--Psa. 110:1

Editorial in this weeks Life Magazine in which the editor points to the fact that Christians look toward a climax in history--all moving toward a goal and the one who determines the destiny of nations. I am sure many of the things we believe he does not--but one general truth he has touched upon-- God into History.
LORD--Jehovah

Lord--Master (Adonai) God the Father said to Son.

Matt. 22:41-45 --Whole point the Deity of Christ!

The Pharisees believed in a human Messiah who would deliver them--but not one who was God!

Christ not just a mere man--the God-Man

Proof:

1. Names-- John 1:1 -

John 20:20

1 John 5:20

Did not deny it under oath--Matt. 26:63-65

2. Attributes--

3. Works-- forgave sin--only God can do this
raised the dead.

4. Worship (God alone to receive such)

a. Angels refused such

b. Peter too

c. Apostles

But Christ accepted such--Matt. 28:9

Luke 7:37-38

1 Tim. 1:13 Paul a Pharisee--but his rejection of Christ.

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CHRIST IN ISAIAH

Introduction:

Christianity is unique among the religions of the world. You can have Buddhism without Buddah, Confusism without Confusius, Islam without Mohammed but there would be no Christianity without Christ for He is the core and the whole. The history of the human race has its focal point in Christ--the whole Bible points to Him and to Calvary. In the Old Testament the writers said "He is coming", in the Gospel they said "he is here" and in the epistles they said "He is coming again"--hence it could be said that all Biblical history is really "his story. 700 years before the babe Jesus was born in the lowly stable in Bethlehem, Isaiah told us some interesting things about the coming Saviour.

I. HIS VIRGIN BIRTH-- Isa. 7:14

A. A Current Battleground:

- Brake Now
Inspiration!*
1. Began in our day in the 20's and 30's in the conflict between the "fundamentalists and the Modernists"--today the modernist has changed his name--Neo-Orthodox but the battle still rages. (An interesting experiment to ask some of the prominent preachers in the greater Detroit if they believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ.)

a smah

2. Translation of the R.S.V.

In the first editions it appeared as "young woman". In the later edition changed back to "virgin". Answer of E.J. Young in Studies in Isaiah

3. Still a problem with some--just recently a professor at a leading Presby. Seminary was brought before the General Assembly. Problem among Southern Baptist and a prof. at their newest Seminary in Kansas.

*Denials
No Troops
H*

Why don't men want to believe in the Virgin Birth of Christ? (Explain what it means)

In this age of rationalism, skepticism, materialism, men scream that it is not "scientific" it can't be proven in a test tube! *παρρησια*

*** If a person does not believe in the virgin birth of Christ he is faced with several terrible alternatives:

1. That the Bible is inaccurate at this point--
Matt. 1:18-23 (The angels of heaven believe it!)
Matt. 1:16 Joseph was Jesus legal not bio-
logical father.

✓ Problem: If the Bible were not true here, how can we be sure elsewhere--all of nothing.

2. That Mary lied -- Luke 1:34

**McClain at Occidental College to a lecture where a man said not necessary to believe the Virgin Birth. McClain ask him the alternative and the man got mad. Then McClain spoke out saying the speaker was teaching something about Christ that he would turn pale with anger if someone should suggest it about his wife!

3. Two psychological tests to strengthen the truth--not that the Bible is not enough--for it is!

a. Mary's trip to Elizebeth--Luke 1:46

(This is not the action of a woman in sshame!)

b. The Place of the Christmas Story in History

(We tell this story all around the world to our Children with the greatest joy, blessing--I would suggest that none of this possible if not born of a virgin.)

No couple who had a child out of wedlock could ever have a "sinless son" and Christ was that! His virgin life is as astounding as his virgin birth!

(God's 4 ways of giving bodies)

c. Mary Could Have Saved His Life

II. HIS VICTORIOUS RULE-- Isa. 9:6

This verse is quoted every Christmas and too be sure it does speak of our Lord's incarnation (in flesh) But Isaiah saw beyond Bethlehem, beyond Calvary to that day when the Son of God takes up the rule on earth of the throne of David. *EXPLAIN 2 Sam. 7*

A. Names Refer to His Character: (His Deity)

B. The world has not seen the last of Christ.

On his shoulder the divine government of God will rest. The world doesn't need a better philosophy, or system but a PERSON of character, strength and wisdom with power to rule for God and men.

Isa. 2:2 and Dan. 2:44

11 - Isa 2:6

III. HIS VICARIOUS SUFFERING--Isa. 53

|| In our place. (Incident at the Barber shop--would you like to pay his debt too! Exactly what Christ did! Our sins--not his !

IV. HIS DAY OF VENGEANCE--Isa. 61:1-2

His first coming--he preached the "acceptable year of the Lord--the door of salvation si wide open--"whosoever will"

But this is only half of the story——Salvation is free,
God pleads for you to be saved today. One day, as in the
days of Noah, God is going to deal with man and his sin—
God Must Punish Sin! (A) Look at Clavary to see how much
God hates sin!

(***Story of Saviour and Judge)

CHRIST BUT THE SUBJECT IS DEALT WITH AS ONE CONTINUOUS EVENT WITH NO BREAK IN THE VERSE.) ACCORDING TO IS. 9:6 WE LEARN THREE PRIMARY IDEAS ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST:

I. HIS HUMANITY - "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN"

THIS V. TEACHES THAT GOD'S MESSIAH ^{would} WILL BE BORN OF A WOMAN. HE WAS NOT, AS CERTAIN SUPERSTITIONS TAUGHT, SOME KIND OF FREAKISH GOD WHO CAME DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS BEARING THE APPEARANCE OF PART MAN AND PART ANIMAL OR SOMETHING OF THIS SUPERSTITIOUS NATURE. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST BORE ALL THE MARKS OF A TRUE HUMAN BEING. HE BEGAN HIS LIFE AS A BABY IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER, GREW AND DEVELOPED INTO PERFECT MANHOOD. HE HAD EVERY ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC OF HUMAN NATURE WITH ONE EXCEPTION, HE HAD NO SIN NOR THE CAPACITY TO COMMIT SIN. SIN IS AN ABNORMALITY AND NOT IS ESSENTIAL OR NECESSARY AS PART OF TRUE HUMAN NATURE. HE WAS BORN WITH A PURE HUMAN NATURE. IN THE FINEST SENSE OF THE WORD, JESUS WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL HUMANITY. BECAUSE HE WAS INDEED HUMAN, HE IS ONCE AND FOREVER LINKED TO THE HUMAN RACE AND ASSURES ALL MEN EVERYWHERE OF HIS INTEREST AND SYMPATHY IN THEIR BEHALF BECAUSE HE IS INDEED "THE MAN" CHRIST JESUS. OUR LORD MANIFESTED TRUE HUMAN EMOTIONS WHEN IT SAYS IN THE BIBLE THAT HE WAS GRIEVED, HE LOVED, HE WAS WEARY, THIRSTY, SLEEPY, AND HUNGRY. TO THE TWO DISPIRITED DISCIPLES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS HE SEEMD AS ANY OTHER ORDINARY CITIZEN. TO MARY IN THE GARDEN, SHE MISTOOK HIM FOR A GARDNER AND TO THE DISCIPLES RETURNING FROM A FISHING EXPEDITION HE LOOKED LIKE ANOTHER MAN STANDING ON THE SHORE AS THEY RETURNED. AS THE TEXT EMPHASIZES THE FACT THAT CHRIST'S PERFECT HUMAN NATURE, IT IS VERY OBYIOUS THAT THE REFERENCE IN THIS V. IS NO ORDINARY CHILD. THERE IS SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL ABOUT THIS CHILD WHO WAS BORN, THE TERMS OF THIS DESCRIPTION COULD FIT NO OTHER PERSON IN ALL OF HISTORY AMONG THE CHILDREN OF MEN. HE IS UNIQUE.

II. HIS DEITY - "UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN"

THE DEITY OF CHRIST IN THIS VERSE MAY BE DIVIDED INTO TWO MAJOR AREAS:

A. HIS NATURE

B. HIS NAMES A

JESUS CHRIST WAS GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT TO MANKIND. HOWEVER, OUR LORD DID NOT BEGIN HIS EXISTENCE IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER FOR HE WAS THE ONE WHO HAD ALWAYS EXISTED BEFORE IN ETERNITY. BETHLEHEM WAS HIS INCARNATION, THAT IS, HE BECAME FLESH BUT THIS WAS JUST THE DOOR THROUGH WHICH HE ENTERED INTO HUMAN EXISTENCE. THE DEITY OF CHRIST IS NOT A QUESTION THAT NEEDS TO BE DEBATED THIS DAY. THE BIBLE ABOUNDS WITH VERSES ON THIS SUBJECT. FOR EXAMPLE, JOHN 1:1, TITUS 2:13, JOHN 20:28. THERE IS A MARGINAL READING OF JOHN 1:18 THAT HAS ALWAYS APPEALED TO ME:

"NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME; THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HATH DECLARED HIM." ONE TRANSLATION, AS A MATTER OF FACT THE NESTLES TEXT, TRANSLATES THE WORD SON AS GOD. IN THE TITUS PASSAGE, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ONE PERSON NOT TWO IS IN QUESTION. IN THE JOHN PASSAGE ONE MUST KEEP IN MIND THAT THOMAS WHO WAS A JEW DID NOT PROFANE THE NAME OF GOD. IT IS ALSO VERY OBVIOUS FROM THE TEXT THAT THOMAS WAS NOT REBUKED BUT RATHER COMMENDED BY OUR LORD FOR THE STATEMENT HE MADE CONCERNING CHRIST'S DEITY. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT JESUS' DEITY WAS DEMONSTRATED NOT ONLY BY WHAT HE DID, SUCH AS HIS POWERS OVER NATURE AND DISEASE, BUT ALSO IN THE AREA OF WORSHIP AND ADORATION. OUR LORD'S HUMILITY WAS BEYOND QUESTION. AND YET, HE PERMITTED MEN TO PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE HIM IN ADORATION AND WORSHIP AND DID NOT REBUKE THEM FOR SUCH BEHAVIOUR. A CASE IN POINT WAS MARY'S ANNOINTING HIM FOR BURIAL. THERE WAS NOT WORD OF REBUKE. EITHER JESUS WAS GOD OR HE WAS THE GREATEST CHARLATAN WHO EVER LIVED!

THE SECOND AREA IN OUR TEXT WHICH DEMONSTRATES THE DEITY OF CHRIST ARE THE NAMES GIVEN TO HIM. THERE IS A GENERAL FEELING THAT THE WORDS WONDERFUL AND COUNSELOR SHOULD GO TOGETHER. THE WORD WONDERFUL IN THE O.I. WAS APPLIED TO THINGS THAT WERE GREAT AND POSSESSING REMARKABLE QUALITIES. THE WORD COUNSELOR IS A REFERENCE TO WISDOM AND WAS USED AT TIMES TO DESCRIBE THOSE WHO WERE ABLE TO ADVISE KINGS, TO GUIDE THEM IN DECISIONS AND BEHAVIOR. THIS VERSE REMINDS US THAT GOD'S MESSIAH IS ABSOLUTELY QUALIFIED TO GUIDE THE HUMAN RACE. HE IS THE PERSONIFICATION OF WISDOM AND ONE TO WHOM MEN MAY TURN FOR GUIDANCE.

(AS A MATTER OF FACT, IN JUDGES 13:18 THE ANGEL WHO SPOKE TO SAMSON'S PARENTS IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH THIS VERY WORD "WONDERFUL" BUT IT WAS TRANSLATED "SECRET" IN THE TEXT. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE MANIFESTATION OF THIS ANGEL WAS THE O.T. MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST HIMSELF. THE PHRASE, THE MIGHTY GOD IS A NAME APPLIED TO JEHOVAH-GOD AND CARRIES WITH IT THE IDEA OF A HERO. THIS WAS ONE PROBLEM ISRAEL HAD WHEN JESUS PRESENTED HIMSELF AS MESSIAH. IN LOOKING AT MESSIAH'S CREDENTIALS, THEY EXPECTED A STRONG POLITICAL HERO TYPE PERSON WHO WOULD DELIVER THEM FROM THE SHACKLES AND BONDAGE OF ROME. WHAT THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND WAS THAT MESSIAH WOULD COME TWICE. FIRST IN SUFFERING AND HUMILIATION AND THE SECOND TIME IN REGAL POWER AND GLORY. THE NEXT NAME WHICH SPEAKS OF OUR LORD'S DEITY IS THE PHRASE 3. "THE EVERLASTING FATHER" OR THE FATHER OF THE AGES. IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE WORD FATHER HERE IS APPLIED TO THE SON AND THE POINT IS THAT HE ALONG WITH GOD THE FATHER SHARED ETERNITY. THE HEBREWS TURNED THE WORD FATHER WITH GREAT VARIETY. IT COULD REFER TO A LITERAL FATHER OR GRANDFATHER OR AN ANCESTOR, RULER, OR INSTRUCTOR. THIS PHRASE REFERS TO THE SAVIOR NOT ONLY AS EVERLASTING IN NATURE AND DURATION, BUT ONE WHO IS STRONG IN THAT ROLE. THE SAVIOR IS CALLED THE 4. PRINCE OF PEACE WHICH IS A PHRASE TO DESCRIBE THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF HIS RULE. HE WILL BE A PEACEFUL PRINCE WHO WILL PERPETUATE PEACE ON EARTH. THIS PHRASE DISTINGUISHES THIS KING FROM ALL THE KINGS AND PRINCES OF ALL HUMAN HISTORY WHO HAVE DELIGHTED IN TAKING TERRITORY BY THE SWORD AND THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD. HOWEVER, MESSIAH WILL PROMOTE A UNIVERSAL PEACE AND HIS REIGN WILL PUT AN END TO WARS AND BRING ABOUT THE ONLY PERMANENT HARMONY NATIONS OF THE EARTH WILL HAVE KNOWN IN ALL OF HISTORY. AS A MATTER OF FACT, FROM THE DAY THAT MESSIAH WAS BORN UNTIL THE DAY HE WILL RULE UNIVERSALLY, PEACE HAS BEEN THE THEME AND THE KEYNOTE OF HIS ADMINISTRATION. WHEN CHRIST CAME, THE ANGEL SPOKE OF PEACE ON EARTH. WHEN HE COMES IN THE FUTURE HIS REIGN WILL BE CHARACTERIZED BY PEACE. DURING THIS DISPENSATION, IT IS ONLY THOSE WHO KNOW HIM IN A PERSONAL WAY WHO KNOW BOTH JUSTIFYING AND SANCTIFYING PEACE. (ROMANS 5:1, PHIL. 4:7)

III. HIS ROYALTY - "AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER" "UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID AND UPON HIS KINGDOM"

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS IS THE INFLUENCE OUR LORD HAD UPON THE EARTH DURING HIS LIFE AND MINISTRY. IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING WHEN HE RETURNS AGAIN IT WILL BE CHRISTMAS DAY EVERYWHERE FOREVER. THE PEACE THAT HE WILL BRING WILL NOT LEAVE THE EARTH. THE PAGES OF THE O.T. ABOUND WITH A MAJOR THEME CONCERNING CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL KINGDOM. THE PROPHET FORESAW AND DESCRIBED THE BLESSING AND GLORY THAT WOULD COME TO EARTH WHEN SIN IS RESTRAINED, SATAN BOUND AND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST AS KING WILL SPREAD OVER THE FACE OF THE EARTH. WE USE THE TERM MILLENNIUM TO DESCRIBE THIS THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OR GOLDEN AGE OF PEACE AND GLORY. THROUGHOUT HISTORY MAN'S HIGHEST DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS HAVE BEEN TO HAVE A GOVERNMENT ON EARTH WHERE ALL OF MAN'S INEQUITIES AND INJUSTICES WILL BE DEALT WITH. THE O.T. SPOKE OF A RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT OF GREAT PROSPERITY FOR THE SAINTS AND IMMEDIATE PUNISHMENT FOR WRONG DOERS. HOWEVER, TO THIS POINT IN SPITE OF MAN'S NOBLE AMBITIONS PEACE HAS ELUDED THE WORLD. THE UNITED NATIONS IS ITSELF THE CENTER OF DISUNITY AND ARGUING AMONG THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD. THE VERSES IN THE O.T. THAT SPEAK OF CHRIST'S MILLENNIAL REIGN ARE SUBSTANTIAL. WE WILL LIMIT OUR CONSIDERATION TODAY TO A SELECTIVE FEW PASSAGES IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH. (Is. 2:1-4, Is. 11:1-9, Is. 35:1, 6, 7) DURING OUR LORD'S REIGN HE WILL DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF WAR. WHEN WE THINK OF THE MULTIPLIED BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SPENT FOR ARMAMENTS, RESEARCH IN NEW DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS AND IN MILITARY PREPAREDNESS IT STAGGERS THE HUMAN MIND. MAN'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF WAR IS TO BUILD BIGGER AND MORE DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS, TO KEEP LARGE STANDING ARMIES NUMBERING IN THE MILLIONS OF MEN IN ORDER TO REMAIN SAFE IN THE WORLD. OUR LORD WILL SPEAK PEACE TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD AND CHRIST, WHO IS CALLED IN OUR TEXT THE PRINCE OF PEACE, WILL BRING THE LONG SOUGHT AND DURABLE PEACE MEN HAVE FOUND SO ELUSIVE THROUGHOUT THE PAGES OF HISTORY. IT IS INTERESTING TO OBSERVE THAT IN THE BOOK OF MICAH 5:2 WE HAVE ONE OF THE GREAT PROPHECIES IN THE O.T. CONCERNING THE SAVIOR - "BUT THOU, BETHLEHEM-

EPHRATAH, THOUGH THOU BE LITTLE AMONG THE THOUSANDS OF JUDAH, YET OUT OF THEE SHALL HE COME FORTH UNTO ME THAT IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL, WHOSE GOINGS FORTH HAVE BEEN FROM OF OLD, FROM EVERLASTING," IN MICAH 4:2-4 SEVERAL GREAT TRUTHS ABOUT MESSIAH'S KINGDOM: ARE MENTIONED, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH IS THE UNIVERSAL PEACE OF WHICH WE'VE BEEN SPEAKING: "AND HE SHALL JUDGE AMONG MANY PEOPLE, AND REBUKE STRONG NATIONS AFAR OFF; AND THEY SHALL BEAT THEIR SWORDS INTO PLOWSHARES, AND THEIR SPEARS INTO PRUNINGHOOKS; NATION SHALL NOT LIFT UP A SWORD AGAINST NATION, NEITHER SHALL THEY LEARN WAR ANY MORE." THE NEXT VERSE SPEAKS OF THE SECURITY THAT MESSIAH WILL BRING WHEN IT SAYS "THEY SHALL SIT EVERY MAN UNDER HIS VINE AND UNDER HIS FIG TREE; AND NONE SHALL MAKE THEM BE AFRAID...."

ANOTHER MAJOR PROBLEM WHICH MESSIAH WILL BE CONCERNED IS THE MATTER OF EDUCATION. OURS IS A VERY LITERATE NATION BUT THERE IS A KIND OF IGNORANCE THAT PERMEATES THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD WHICH IS ASTOUNDING. BIGGER AND BETTER SCHOOL SYSTEMS DO NOT CHANGE MEN SPIRITUALLY. IT IS POSSIBLE TO LEGISLATE AND EDUCATE THE NATURAL MAN AT THE ENORMOUS EXPENSE OF MILLIONS AND BILLIONS OF DOLLARS AND YET NOT HAVE A NATION OF WISE PEOPLE. DURING THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST HABAKKUK SAYS "THE EARTH SHALL BE FILLED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA."

HABAKKUK 2:14) MESSIAH WILL DEAL WITH SICKNESS AND DISEASE. ONE OF THE RESPONSIBLE CONCERNS OF SOCIETY IS MEDICAL CARE FOR THE PHYSICAL NEEDS OF THE CITIZENS OF A GIVEN COUNTRY. ISAIAH REMINDS US "AND THE INHABITANTS SHALL NOT SAY I AM SICK; THE PEOPLE THAT DWELL THEREIN SHALL BE FORGIVEN THEIR INIQUITY. THEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND SHALL BE OPENED AND THE EARS OF THE DEAF SHALL BE UNSTOPPED. THEN SHALL THE LAME MAN LEAP AS AN HART, AND THE TONGUE OF THE DUMB SHALL SING." (Is. 33:24, 35:5) ONE OF THE AREAS

OF PRIME SENSITIVITY TODAY IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF LABOR AND MANAGEMENT. THE IMPACT OF STRIKES TO CRIPPLE A NATION'S INDUSTRY IS FELT BY ALL OF US. THERE ARE LABOR MEDIATION BOARDS AND LAWS TO DEAL WITH THESE KINDS OF PROBLEMS IN SOCIETY. ISAIAH 62: 8-9, 65:21-23 SPEAK OF THE FACT THAT THERE WILL BE A COMING DAY WHEN MEN SHALL NOT LABOR FOR THE GREED OF OTHERS AND SUFFER HARDSHIP EVEN AFTER EXPENDING HARD ENERGY BUT RATHER AND EQUITABLE SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN WHICH NO ONE LABORS WHEREAS ANOTHER RECEIVES ALL

THE BENEFITS WILL BE TOLERATED. THESE PASSAGES IN ISAIAH SPEAK OF AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS AND LABOR AND ABUNDANCE FOR ALL. SOCIETY WILL BE JUST BECAUSE CHRIST WILL BE THE JUST ADMINISTRATOR AS THE PROPHETS FORESAW. I'VE OFTEN SPOKEN OF THE TREMENDOUS JOY OF BEING A FARMER DURING THE MILLENNIUM. AMOS SPOKE OF THE DAY WHEN THE BLOW SHALL OVERTAKE THE REAPER. (AMOS 9:13-14) IN A DAY WHEN PEOPLE ARE SPEAKING OF WORLDWIDE FAMINE BECAUSE OF OVERPOPULATION IN THE WORLD AMOS SPOKE OF A TIME WHEN THERE WOULD BE BOUNTY TO SUCH A DEGREE THAT THE ONE PLANTING WOULD OVERTAKE THE ONE REAPING, SO GREAT WOULD BE THE PRODUCTION OF THE FARMER ON EARTH DURING THAT TIME. THINK OF ALL THE PROBLEMS IN ANY GIVEN SOCIETY, THE PROBLEM OF PROSPERITY, HUNGER, SICKNESS, LAWLESSNESS, IGNORANCE, WAR, WHATEVER, MESSIAH WILL CORRECT ALL OF THESE AS HE BRINGS A UNIVERSAL REIGN OF PEACE IN A PERPETUAL DYNASTY OVER WHICH HE IS KING. THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT PART OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY HERE AND NOW IS TO GET READY TO REIGN WITH HIM THEN. THE CHURCH IS NOT SPOKEN OF IN TERMS OF A KINGDOM, NECESSARILY, BUT RATHER AS CHRIST'S BRIDE OR THE SPIRITUAL NUCLEUS OF THAT FUTURE KINGDOM. IN THAT DAY, THE APPARENT DOWNTRODDEN OF THE EARTH, THE DREGS OF SOCIETY, THE OUTCASTS WILL BE SOMEBODY AS THEY REIGN WITH CHRIST! (MATT. 13:38ff) SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID THAT GOD NEVER HAS TWO TEAMS ON THE PLAYING FIELD AT THE SAME TIME. TODAY, THE CHURCH IS ON THE FIELD AND GOD'S TIMECLOCK AS FAR AS ISRAEL IS CONCERNED IS NOT TICKING. IT IS A KIND OF "TIME OUT" PERIOD. AT ABOUT 2 MIN. TO MIDNIGHT. AT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH GOD'S PROPHETIC CLOCK WILL BEGIN TICKING AGAIN AS HE BEGINS WORKING WITH THE NATION OF ISRAEL AND IN PREPARATION FOR MESSIAH'S GOVERNMENT ON EARTH. GOD IS CALLING OUT FROM THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD A PEOPLE TO REIGN WITH HIS SON. YOU MAY BE PART OF THAT GROUP BY RECEIVING HIM AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR AND BEING SPIRITUALLY PREPARED FOR THAT FUTURE KINGDOM. (RELATE JESUS' WORDS TO NICODEMUS CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL NECESSITY OF BEING CHANGED IN ORDER TO SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.)

WHAT WISE MEN KNOW

MATTHEW 2:1-12

THE WORLD WAS WAITING FOR JESUS TO COME. THERE WAS A FEELING OF EXPECTANCY, THAT GOD WAS ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING IN HUMAN HISTORY WHEN JESUS CAME TO EARTH. FROM THE ENDS OF THE EARTH MEN CAME TO HIS CRADLE TO SEE ONE WHO WAS BORN KING OF THE JEWS. FROM DISTANT PERSIA WISE MEN OR MAGI CAME TO SEE THE KING. IN THEIR COUNTRY, THESE MEN WERE SKILLED IN MEDICINE, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SCIENCES. THEY WERE THE ASTRONOMERS OF THE DAY. THEY DEVOTED MUCH TIME AND STUDY TO THE SKIES. TO BE SURE, THIS INTEREST IN THE HEAVENS GAVE RISE TO ANOTHER STUDY CALLED ASTROLOGY AND ALL OF THE SUPERSTITION INHERENT IN THIS SYSTEM. I PREFER TO LOOK UPON THESE MEN AS WISE AND HONORABLE MEN ENGAGED IN THE STUDY OF ASTRONOMY RATHER THAN SUPERSTITIOUS READERS OF HOROSCOPES. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ME TO ENVISION WISE MEN INVOLVED IN MUCH OF THE SUPERSTITION THAT SURROUNDS RELIGION. B. H. CARROLL COMMENTS ON THIS FACT WHEN HE TELLS THE STORY OF AN AUCTIONEER WHO ONCED TRIED TO SELL THE SWORD WITH WHICH BALAAM ALEGEDLY KILLED HIS DONKEY. WHEN A BYSTANDER INFORMED HIM THAT BALAAM DID NOT KILL HIS DONKEY, BUT ONLY WISHED FOR A SWORD THAT HE MIGHT KILL HIM, THE AUCTIONEER DIDN'T MISS A WORD BUT CONTINUED BY SAYING - "THIS IS THE VERY SWORD HE WISHED FOR!" THE SAD PART OF THE STORY, SAYS DR. CARROLL, IS THAT THE MAN SOLD THE SWORD FOR AN ANTIQUE RELIC! MUCH SUPERSTITION SURROUNDS THE BACKGROUND OF THE WISE MEN. HOW MANY WERE THEY? WHAT WERE THEIR NAMES? WHEN DID THEY ARRIVE IN PALESTINE? TODAY LET US EXAMINE THE LIVES OF THESE MEN AND DISCOVER SOMETHING WHICH THEY KNEW THAT WILL HELP MAKE US "WISER MEN" THIS CHRISTMAS OF 1975.

Many Questions

I. WISE MEN KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF FINDING JESUS -
2:1-2

AUGUSTINE SAID "THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SINNER AND A SAINT IS THAT THE SINNER HIDES FROM GOD AND THE SAINT HIDES IN GOD." THESE MEN DEMONSTRATED THEIR WISDOM BY SEEKING CHRIST. TO BE SURE, THE INITIATIVE CAME FROM GOD, BUT SEEK THE LORD THEY DID! NOTICE THEIR QUESTION "WHERE IS HE....?" THESE MEN WERE LOOKING FOR A PERSON AND NOT A PROGRAM. THEY WERE MORE INTERESTED IN A KING THAN SEEKING TO BUILD HIS KINGDOM. GENERALLY SPEAKING, MEN ARE NOT SEEKING THE LORD TODAY. MOST MEN ARE SEEKING OTHER THINGS IN LIFE, AND JESUS IS LEFT OUT, IGNORED, AND NEGLECTED UNTIL LIFE'S TRAGIC MOMENTS AND THEN HE IS SOUGHT. AT THIS SEASON OF THE YEAR, WISE MEN SHOULD BE SEEKING THE SAVIOUR. "I AM NOT IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE STORY ABOUT THE MAN WHO SAID 'I FOUND THE LORD' AND WAS REBUKED ON THE BASIS OF THE FACT THAT THE LORD IS NOT LOST. I THINK THIS IS AN UNNECESSARY PLAY ON WORDS AND THEOLOGY. IT IS TRUE THAT CHRIST FINDS THE BELIEVING SINNER, BUT IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT WHEN HE FOUND US WE FOUND HIM!" IN THIS VERY CHAPTER ONE DISCOVERS THAT EVERY PERSON IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY DID NOT SEEK THE LORD FOR GOOD PURPOSES. ACCORDING TO VERSE 13 AND VERSE 20 OF THIS CHAPTER, HEROD SOUGHT JESUS FOR EVIL PURPOSES. IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD NOT BE AS BLOOD THIRSTY AS HEROD, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE TO WANT TO KNOW JESUS SIMPLY BECAUSE IT IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS OR IT PUTS THEM IN CONTACT WITH THE RIGHT KINDS OF PEOPLE, RATHER THAN KNOWING HIM IN A PERSONALLY VITAL WAY BECAUSE WE OUGHT TO. HEROD HAD NO REAL INTEREST IN CHRIST. HE WAS SIMPLY CONCERNED IN PRESERVING HIS OWN POLITICAL STABILITY. HEROD PRETENDED TO WANT TO WORSHIP CHRIST WHEN IN REALITY HE HATED THE LORD AND ALL HE STOOD FOR BECAUSE JESUS WAS A THREAT TO HEROD'S POWER AND INFLUENCE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HISTORY REVEALS THAT HEROD HAD MURDERED HIS WIFE, HIS MOTHER, AND HIS TWO SONS. HE HAD ASSASSINATED A NUMBER OF CLOSE ASSOCIATES WHEN HE SUSPECTED THEM OF DISLOYALTY.

THERE WAS A SAYING IN ROME THAT IT WAS SAFER TO BE HEROD'S PIG THAN HIS SON. HEROD REPRESENTS PEOPLE OF ALL AGES WHO WOULD GLADLY SEE JESUS DESTROYED AND ALL HE STANDS FOR IN ORDER TO PERPETUATE THEIR OWN INTERESTS. WISE MEN WOULD DO WELL TO EXAMINE THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING THE LORD. "AND HE SOUGHT TO SEE JESUS WHO HE WAS; AND COULD NOT FOR THE PRESS, BECAUSE HE WAS LITTLE OF STATURE." (LUKE 19:3) IN RESPONSE TO ZACCHAEUS' INQUIRY IN VERSE 10 THESE WORDS - "FOR THE SON OF MAN IS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST." IN THIS VERSE WE LEARN THAT THERE IS NONE JESUS CANNOT SAVE. "BUT SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; AND ALL THESE THINGS SHALL BE ADDED UNTO YOU." (MATTHEW 6:33)

IN THE BIBLE FINDING CHRIST IS EQUIVALENT TO FINDING ETERNAL LIFE. "HE THAT HATH THE SON HATH LIFE...." (1 JOHN 5:12) "WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH WHICH BEING INTERPRETED IS THE CHRIST." (JOHN 1:41) THESE WERE THE WORDS OF ANDREW TO HIS BROTHER SIMON PETER. PHILLIP CONTINUED THE SAME MESSAGE TO NATHANIEL WHEN HE SAID "WE HAVE FOUND HIM OF WHOM MOSES IN THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS DID WRITE, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE SON OF JOSEPH." (JOHN 1:46) THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL SON IS BASICALLY THE STORY OF A SON WHO WAS LOST AND FOUND. "FOR THIS MY SON WAS DEAD, AND IS ALIVE AGAIN, HE WAS LOST AND IS FOUND." (LUKE 15:24) - QUESTION: WHEN WAS THIS BOY DEAD? THIS BOY NEVER DIED PHYSICALLY, SO IT MUST REFER TO HIS SPIRITUAL CONDITION!

WISE IS THE MAN WHO DETERMINES SOMEWHERE IN LIFE THAT FINDING JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR IS THE GREATEST DISCOVERY POSSIBLE FOR THE HUMAN SOUL! ALL OTHER DISCOVERIES IN LIFE ARE INSIGNIFICANT AND MEANINGLESS IN COMPARISON TO THIS DISCOVERY. IF YOU DOUBT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STATEMENT, ASK ANY PERSON WHO KNOWS JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOUR TO IDENTIFY LIFE'S GREATEST MOMENT FOR THEM AND IT WILL BE WITHOUT QUESTION THE MOMENT THEY RECEIVED OR DISCOVERED JESUS CHRIST AS LORD OF THEIR LIFE.

II. WISE MEN KNOW THAT CHRIST ALONE IS TO
BE WORSHIPPED - 2:2

idea

MAN MUST WORSHIP SOMETHING OR SOMEBODY. IT IS PART OF HIS NATURE TO WORSHIP. IF THIS WORSHIP IS NOT TOWARD THE GOD WHO MADE HIM IT WILL TURN TO LESSER GODS AND THE WORKS OF HIS OWN HANDS. SOME MEN WORSHIP THEIR CHILDREN, WORK, WIVES, OR MONEY. ALL OF THESE FALSE GODS WILL CRUMBLE. JUST THIS PAST WEEK WE HAVE HAD AN ILLUSTRATION OF HOW MEN DESIRE TO WORSHIP OTHER MEN BUT ALWAYS TO BE DISAPPOINTED. (A DOZEN YEARS AGO, J.F.K. APPROACHED THE PLACE OF DEIFICATION IN THE MINDS OF MANY AMERICANS. A YOUNG PRESIDENT AND A WIFE WHO ASPIRED TO BE "QUEEN OF AMERICA" WERE SET FORTH AS HIGH PEOPLE OF HIGH CHARACTER TO BE EMULATED BY ALL AMERICANS. IT WOULD NOW APPEAR THAT THAT REVERED PRESIDENT HAD A "MYSTERY WOMAN" ON THE SIDE OR ON THE SLY. WE LEARN AFTER ONLY A DOZEN YEARS FROM HIS DEATH THAT THIS PRESIDENT HAD CLAY FEET AND QUESTIONABLE MORALS. FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES WE HAVE BEEN PLAGUED WITH LEADERS AT THE TOP OF GOVERNMENT WHO WERE IMMORAL, PROFANE IN WORD AND DEED, AND YET SOME OF US WOULD DARE TO SAY THAT ALL IS WELL IN AMERICA. NEVER IN OUR HISTORY HAS THERE BEEN A GREATER NEED FOR MORAL LEADERSHIP, FOR MEN WHO COULD MAKE NECESSARY DECISIONS THAT WOULD TURN US AROUND MORALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.) IF MEN LIKE JOHN KENNEDY AND J. EDGAR HOOVER AND MARTIN LUTHER KING CANNOT STAND THE SCRUTINY OF THE PRESS AND CONGREGATIONAL COMMITTEES, THEN ALL OF THIS SHOULD ADD WEIGHT TO THE FACT THAT AFTER 2,000 YEARS OF DIGGING AND PROBING, JESUS CHRIST'S LIFE STANDS AS THE EPITOME OF VIRTUE AND GRACE ALL OVER THE WORLD. HE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP. THE WORD WORSHIP CARRIES WITH THE IDEA OF REVERENCE OR HONOR IN THOUGHT, FEELING, OR DEED TOWARD ANOTHER PERSONAGE. JESUS CHRIST IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP NOT BECAUSE HE WAS JUST A GOOD MAN, BUT BECAUSE HE IS GOD! WE HAVE SOME INTERESTING IDEAS ABOUT WORSHIP IN OUR CHURCHES. WE ARE TOO MUCH OCCUPIED WITH VENERATION OF

PEOPLE, PROGRAMS, PAGEANTRY, AND ATMOSPHERE TO THE EXCLUSION OF CHRIST. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE IN A "WORSHIP SERVICE" AND NOT WORSHIP. TEST WHERE ARE YOUR THOUGHTS NOW? ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT DINNER, FOOTBALL GAMES, HOLIDAYS, SHOPPING, DAYS OFF, CHRISTMAS BONUSES? IF SO, YOU ARE NOT WORSHIPPING EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE IN CHURCH! WORSHIP IS PREOCCUPATION WITH CHRIST. ANYTHING LESS THAN THIS IS NOT WORSHIP. IT MAY BE RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND HABITS, BUT IT IS SOMETHING FAR LESS THAN BIBLE WORSHIP. PLEASE NOTICE THAT IN MATTHEW 2:11 THEY WORSHIPPED HIM AND NOT MARY. THE WORD WORSHIP APPEARS APPROXIMATELY 60 TIMES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, 24 TIMES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION, AND 9 TIMES IN ONE CHAPTER - JOHN 4. IN THAT FOURTH CHAPTER THE WORD WORSHIP OCCURS IN VERSES 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. IN JOHN 9:38 BIBLICAL ORDER IS SUGGESTED "AND HE SAID, LORD, I BELIEVE. AND HE WORSHIPPED HIM." BELIEF IS FIRST FOLLOWED BY WORSHIP. NO MAN CAN WORSHIP CHRIST WHO HAS NOT RECEIVED HIM AS LORD AND SAVIOUR. THIS WORSHIP EXTENDS BEYOND MAN TO THE ANGELS OF GOD. "AND AGAIN WHEN HE BRINGETH IN THE FIRST BEGOTTEN INTO THE WORLD, HE SAITH, AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM." (HEBREWS 1:6) THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED. ANGELS ANNOUNCED CHRIST'S COMING. (LUKE 2:13-14) MEN DO NOT DO GOD A FAVOR BY COMING TO CHURCH ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS. HE IS NOT IMPRESSED BY OUR PRESENCE IN CHURCH. HE REQUIRES THAT MEN WORSHIP HIS SON AND ANYTHING LESS THAN GENUINE WORSHIP IS MERE RELIGIOUS RITUAL AND ABSOLUTELY WORTHLESS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

(To)

III. WISE MEN KNOW AND FOLLOW GOD'S LEADING
IN THEIR LIVES - 2:2, 9, 10.

THESE MEN WERE FOLLOWING THEIR DAILY WORK WHEN GOD MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO THEM BY SPEAKING FROM THE HEAVENS. THESE MEN FOLLOWED THE "LIGHT" WHICH GOD GAVE THEM AND IT BROUGHT THEM TO JESUS. THIS IS A BIBLE PRINCIPLE. (ROMANS 1, ACTS 10)

SOMEONE HAS WELL SAID "HE WHO SEES NO STAR NEVER CAN COME TO THE STABLE." AN IMPORTANT BIBLE POINT SHOULD BE MADE, NAMELY, IN THE OLD TESTAMENT GOD SPOKE TO MEN IN VARIOUS WAYS ACCORDING TO HEBREWS 1:1-2. HOWEVER, TODAY GOD SPEAKS TO MEN MORE FROM THE SCRIPTURES THAN FROM THE SKIES. HOWEVER, THE POINT IS STILL THE SAME - IF MEN WILL FOLLOW THE LIGHT WHICH GOD GIVES THEM FROM THE SCRIPTURES IT WILL LEAD THEM TO JESUS CHRIST. ALSO, WHEN THESE MEN FOLLOWED THE GUIDANCE OF GOD IT BROUGHT JOY INTO THEIR LIVES. (2:10) MEN DO NOT FIND JOY IN LIFE UNTIL THEY FIND GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THEM AND FOLLOW HIS LEADING IN THEIR LIVES. THIS GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION ALWAYS BEGINS BY FINDING CHRIST.

maybe
IV. WISE MEN KNOW HOW TO GIVE ^{What} GIFTS TO CHRIST -
VERSE 11

A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN SAID CONCERNING THE SYMBOLISM SURROUNDING THESE GIFTS. BY THAT I MEAN, GOLD WAS A GIFT FOR A KING DEPICTING CHRIST'S KINGLY WORTH, FRANKINCENSE WAS A GIFT DEPICTING CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD. THE TEMPLE WAS THE PLACE OF SWEET PERFUME AND FRAGRANCE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. MYRRH WAS IDENTIFIED WITH DEATH AND EMBALMING, DEPICTING JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONE WHO WOULD DIE FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SEVERAL INTERESTING IDEAS ABOUT THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF GIVING. THESE MEN GAVE THE FINEST GIFTS TO A BABY RATHER THAN A FULL GROWN KING SEATED UPON THE SEAT OF A THRONE. TO ME, THIS INDICATES FAITH. THEY BELIEVED THIS BABY WAS ALL GOD SAID HE WOULD BE. THEIR ATTITUDE WAS UNLIKE THE IDEA OF GIVING WHICH PREVAILED IN ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF THE PROPHETS. ISAIAH REBUKED THE NATION FOR SACRIFICING SICK SACRIFICES INSTEAD OF THE BEST OF THEIR FLOCKS. GIVING IS ALWAYS A BAROMETER OF SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE. NO MATTER HOW MUCH A MAN MAY PROCLAIM HIS LOVE AND WORSHIP OF CHRIST, ONE TANGIBLE WAY OF DEMONSTRATING THAT LOVE AND AFFECTION IS REFLECTED NOT ONLY IN HOW MUCH WE GIVE THE LORD BUT HOW IT IS GIVEN.

MANY PROFESSING CHRISTIANS FARE VERY WELL UNTIL THE SUBJECT OF GIVING IS BROUGHT UP IN THE HOUSE OF GOD. THEY CAUSE NO TROUBLE, CREATE NO DIFFICULTY UNTIL FINANCES ARE MENTIONED, AND THEN CRITICISM ERUPTS FROM EVERY DIRECTION. EVEN PROFESSING CHRISTIANS HAVE THE "TIPPING" PHILOSOPHY TOWARD GOD. THEY LIVE IN THE FINEST OF HOMES, FURNISHED WITH NEW APPLIANCES, WEAR GOOD CLOTHING, EAT THE BEST OF FOODS, DRIVE THE NEWEST OF AUTOMOBILES, BUT ARE SUDDENLY SUPER SENSITIVE WHEN IT COMES TO GIVING TO THE LORD. FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN A CHURCH ARE ALWAYS A SYMPTON OF SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS. GIFTS TO CHRIST ARE INDEED PART OF WORSHIP. THESE GIFTS MUST BE SACRIFICIAL IN ORDER TO BE A BLESSING TO THE GIVER. GIFTS OF LOOSE CHANGE AND AN OCCASIONAL DOLLAR BILL ARE NOT INDICATIVE OF WORSHIPAL HEARTS. NEITHER IS THE PRESENCE OF SALES, SUPPERS, AND BAZAARS HONORING TO JESUS CHRIST. WHERE HE IS SPIRITUALLY WORSHIPPED, THERE WILL BE A BLESSED ATTITUDE TOWARD THE THINGS OF THE LORD. IT IS STRANGE BUT TRUE THAT ALL TOO MANY OF US PUT OUR POCKETBOOK AHEAD OF JESUS CHRIST. WISE MEN GIVE THE BEST OF THEIR MEANS TO HIM, BECAUSE HE IS WORTHY OF OUR BEST. I HAVE BEEN AMAZED AT HOW WE MIS-INTERPRET THE WORD OF GOD. IN THIS TEXT WHICH MUST BE THE BASIS FOR GIVING OF CHRISTMAS GIFTS, PLEASE NOTICE THAT THEY GAVE THEIR GIFTS TO HIM, NOT TO ONE ANOTHER. IN AMERICA THIS CHRISTMAS, THE REVERSE IS TRUE.

" WISE MEN----THEN AND NOW"
Matt. 2:1-12

Almost 20 centuries ago in an obscure Palestinian village, an event took place which has had more effect on history than any other single event. A child was born. He was not the son of well known/well to do parents. He was born in the most unlikely place --a stable. And yet to this event and place millions upon millions of people have look in utter wonder and awe. How could it be that such a lowly birth could change the course of human history? One might expect that such a momentous event would be met with all the pomp of which man is capable--but there was none of this. A few shepherds, a few faithful people like Anna and Simeon and those Wise Men from the East realized part of the glory that had come to dwell among men! It is the significance of these Magi I wish to speak about today. Surely, there are common characteristics of these wise men of long ago with those "wise" men today who recognize the purpose and nature of the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I. WISE MEN UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF WORSHIPPING GOD THROUGH CHRIST--v.2, 11. WORTH-SHIP

"To acknowledge the WORTH OF OUR GOD."

These men are said to have come "from the East." It is generally supposed they were from Persia for many of the Jews had remained there after the Captivity and the relationship of the 2 countries was good. Because of the wide-spread influence of the Jewish culture and religion, the center of that religion--the expected appearance of Messiah was known from the time of Daniel to the time of Christ.

These men were philosophers in the broad sense of the term. A priestly cast who studied the stars and the influence they were supposed to have on the events and circumstances of human life. There are two common beliefs about them that are not as clearly evident as popular belief would warrant:

- Tradition: Casper, Melchior, Balthazar*
- (1) Number-- to my knowledge the Bible does not list the number. This is implied by the gifts in v.11.
 - (2) Time of Coming-- it is generally thought that they came to the stable. Yet the terms are different from Luke's account. The Shepherds were told they would find a "babe" (brephos) in swaddling clothes in a manger. These men found a "young child" in a house. v.11. We do know our Lord was under the age of 2 years--v.16.

There are three ideas in the text for consideration:

A. Their Purpose in Coming To Jerusalem --v.2

Was Indicative of Worship.

"to worship him."

This is God's purpose for all men. God is not desirous that every man chart a course thru life to live independent of God! Look at man today! (God's day, book, people-- Study the life of Christ-- one of worship!

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

4 Sp. Lams

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In Satan's great pride and plans--this is what he wants more than anything else--it was revealed in Matt. 4

B. Their Posture Is Indicative Of Worship--v.11

I do not wish to get too far afield here. Men can and do worship God while sitting, standing, lying down but there is something which reveals an attitude of heart by the bended knee--it indicates submission to authority. The proud of heart finds it difficult to bend to anything!

C. Their Presents Were Indicative of Worship--v.11

There is a wonderful lesson on the providence of God here. Soon the departure to Egypt for an undisclosed period of time. These valuable gifts a means of livelihood for the time of exile.

gdd-- deity. The gift for a king.

frankincense--- fragrant life.

myrrh -- sacrificial death. Used to embalm the dead.

Gifts of prophetic significance.

Conclusion:

The word worship is thrown about in religious circles today with great freedom. Men are not too reluctant say--"I worship God." But this is not enough as the Bible indicated.

John 14:6....no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

John 8:42 "If God were your Father, ye would love me..."



Example: Saul of Tarsus---worshipper of God yet lost!
called himself a "Blephemer"

THE IMPORTANCE OF

II. WISE MEN UNDERSTAND WATCHING GOD FOR HIS LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE --v.2,9 "his star"

It is not important to try to find in the history of the study of astronomy such an event as this. It was a special revelation of God for this one purpose in history.

A. It Was The Star That Led Them To The Saviour--v.9

* These men followed a light sent from God to bring them to the Light of the World. *IF men respond to light - more light...*
Application:
Word of God....Witness of men.

B. It Was This Experience That Brought Joy Into Their Lives--v.10

Life was not a joyous thing until the Saviour came in. *Heaven's formula for joy on earth!*

III. WISE MEN UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF HEEDING THE WARNINGS OF GOD----v.12

Christmas season

Joy is at no other...

THE SHEPHERDS WHO FOUND THE SHEPHERD *Revised 1981*

LUKE 2:8-20

RELATE THE STORY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER WHO ON THE SUNDAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS ASKED HER STUDENTS TO TELL THE STORY THEY LIKE BEST ABOUT CHRISTMAS. ONE STUDENT MENTIONED THAT HE LIKED THE STORY ABOUT THE SHEPHERDS GOING TO THE LAUNDROMAT. "WHILE SHEPHERDS WASHED THEIR SOCKS BY NIGHT." WHEN GOD APPEARED IN HUMAN FLESH IN HUMAN HISTORY HE MADE HIMSELF KNOWN FIRST OF ALL TO SIMPLE PEOPLE WHO WOULD RECOGNIZE HIS PERSON AND WORTH. THE SHEPHERDS WERE THE SIMPLE MEN OF THE FIELDS AND FLOCKS, THE NOBODY'S OF SOCIETY. THEY KNEW LITTLE OR NOTHING OF ROME'S POLITICS, EDUCATION AND CULTURE. THEY WERE NOT FAMILIAR WITH ROME'S LITERATURE OR LAW. THEY WERE NOT NUMBERED AMONG THE INTELLIGENT OR THE ELITE. GOD DELIGHTS IN MAKING HIMSELF KNOWN TO THE SIMPLE AND HUMBLE PEOPLE OF THE EARTH. PLEASE NOTICE THAT IT WAS NOT TO AUGUSTUS IN ROME OR HEROD IN JERUSALEM THAT THE NEWS CHRIST'S COMING TO EARTH WAS FIRST MADE KNOWN. PERHAPS THEY LIKE OTHER PEOPLE OF ALL AGES THOUGHT THEY WOULD FIND GOD BY THEIR OWN METHODS, NAMELY, THROUGH READING, RESEARCH AND REASONING WHEN GOD'S WAY IS ALWAYS BY REVELATION! PAUL BELIEVED AND PRACTICED THIS SAME APPROACH TO MEN WHEN HE CAME TO CORINTH. (I COR. 1:19-2:4)

I. THE SHEPHERDS WERE ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING THE ORDINARY TASKS OF LIFE - v. 8

SEVERAL PHRASES ARE USED TO DESCRIBE WHAT THE SHEPHERDS WERE DOING ON THAT MEMORABLE NIGHT. THE PHRASE "ABIDING IN THE FIELD" IS A COMPOUND GREEK WORD THAT LITERALLY MEANS "TO REMAIN IN THE OPEN AIR." IT IS NOT THE USUAL WORD FOR ABIDE. FOR EXAMPLE IN JOHN 14:1-2 THE FATHER'S HOUSE IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING MANY MANSIONS OR ABIDING PLACES. IN THE NEXT CHAPTER OF JOHN, BELIEVERS ARE TOLD TO ABIDE IN CHRIST. THIS PHRASE POINTS TO THE FACT THAT THESE MEN WERE OF THE OUT-OF-DOORS VARIETY. THEY WERE NOT CITY DWELLERS, BUT MEN OF THE OPEN SPACES, SKIES, FRESH AIR, SUN, MOON AND STARS. IT MAY WELL BE THAT THEY RECOGNIZED THE HAND OF GOD IN HIS

CREATION. THE PHRASE "KEEPING WATCH" LITERALLY MEANS TO GUARD. THESE SHEPHERDS WERE TAKING TURNS WATCHING OVER THAT SAFETY OF THE SHEEP. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THEY WERE DEPENDABLE AND COULD BE TRUSTED FOR THE SAFETY AND CARE OF THE SHEEP. THEY WERE THE "NIGHT WATCH" SHEPHERDS AND WERE EVEN MORE DEPENDABLE THAN THE DAY MEN. WHAT IMPRESSES ME ABOUT THIS V. IS THAT GOD APPEARED TO THEM WHILE THEY WERE DOING THEIR APPOINTED DAILY TASKS. MEN EXPECT GOD TO SPEAK TO THEM OUT OF THE MIRACULOUS AND SPECTACULAR, BUT MORE OFTEN THAN NOT HE SPEAKS THROUGH THE ROUTINE. AS WE ARE BUSY ABOUT OUR REGULAR WORK GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO US. (SUPPOSE ONE OF THESE MEN HAD NOT SHOWN UP FOR THE NIGHT SHIFT - THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO HEAVENLY VISITOR FOR HIM THAT NIGHT.) SOMETIMES WE ARE MISTAKEN IN OUR BELIEF THAT THE GREAT PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD ARE THOSE WHO CLIMB TO A PLACE OF POWER AND PRESTIGE IN SOCIETY. APPARENTLY GOD WAS NOT IMPRESSED WITH MEN IN THE WAY WE ARE. WHEN HE ANNOUNCED THE COMING OF HIS SON TO EARTH HE MADE THAT WONDERFUL NEWS AVAILABLE TO SIMPLE MEN WHO WERE TRUSTWORTHY WITH SUCH GREAT NEWS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, SOME OF GOD'S "GREATS" WERE MEN DOING THE ORDINARY IN AN EXTRAORDINARY WAY WHEN GOD APPEARED TO THEM. (CF. MOSES, DAVID, GIBION) GOD COMES TO US WHERE WE ARE AS WE ARE FAITHFULLY DOING THE TASK AT HAND. I AM ALSO IMPRESSED BY THE LITTLE WORDS "BY NIGHT." MARSH WROTE A BOOK MANY YEARS AGO ENTITLED "NIGHT SCENES OF THE BIBLE." -FOR EXAMPLE, (1) JOHN 3:2 - NICODEMUS CAME TO JESUS BY NIGHT. (2) LUKE 12:20 - IT WAS "THIS NIGHT" THAT THE RICH FOOL WAS CALLED TO GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF BEFORE GOD. (3) JOHN 13:30 - "AND IT WAS NIGHT" INTO WHICH JUDAS WENT WHEN HE BETRAYED JESUS. G. H. MORRISON HAD AN INTERESTING COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT "WE CRAVE FOR LIBERTY FROM COMMON DRUDGERY. WE SEEM TO BE MISSING SO MUCH IN THE ROUTINE. WE LONG FOR A LARGER LIFE. THE ANGEL MUSIC NEVER COMES THAT WAY. HEAVEN HAS NEVER A SONG FOR THOSE WHO SHIRK. IT WAS ON MEN WHO WERE FAITHFUL TO THEIR APPOINTED TASK THAT THERE BROKE THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

II. THE SHEPHERDS WERE VISITED BY HEAVENLY MESSENGERS WITH A HOLY MESSAGE - v. 9-14

A. AN ANGEL - v. 9

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTICE THAT THE WORD "THE" DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE ORIGINAL TEXT AND IS SO NOTED IN THE N.A.S.B. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT POINT BECAUSE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD WAS A PREINCARNATE MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST IN THE O.T. THIS ANGEL CAN BE IDENTIFIED AS CHRIST BY COMPARING JUDGES 13:15-18 WITH ISA. 9:6. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT THE ANGEL OF THE LORD NEVER APPEARS AFTER THE BIRTH OF CHRIST. SOMEONE HAS POINTED OUT THAT THE CHARACTER OF THESE MEN IS REVEALED IN THEIR REACTION TO THE PRESENCE OF AN ANGEL. MOST PEOPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN SATISFIED WITH SUCH AN EXPERIENCE THAT IS, OF HAVING SEEN AN ANGEL. THINK HOW THEY COULD HAVE TALKED ABOUT SUCH AN EXPERIENCE IN GOING FROM CHURCH TO CHURCH, CHRISTIAN RETREATS, CLUBS, ON RADIO AND TELEVISION, OR THEY MIGHT HAVE FORMED THEIR OWN MUSIC GROUP RELATING THIS HEAVENLY EXPERIENCE. PLEASE NOTICE THAT ANY EXPERIENCE THAT DOES NOT GET PEOPLE TO JESUS HAS NO LASTING VALUE.

B. AN ARMY - v. 13-14

THE WORD "HOST" IS A MILITARY TERM FOR A BAND OF SOLDIERS. THE ANGELS ARE REGARDED AS FORMING JEHOVAH'S HOST OR ARMY AND HE HIMSELF IS THE LEADER. GOD WAS UNDERSCORING THE FACT THAT THE EVENT THAT WOULD TAKE PLACE ON EARTH IN BETHLEHEM'S MANGER HAD THE AROUSED INTEREST OF INTELLIGENT BEINGS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTICE THAT HERE IS AN ARMY WHOSE PRIME OBJECTIVE AND PROCLAMATION WAS PEACE AND NOT WAR. (ISA. 9:6)

C. AN ANNOUNCEMENT - v. 10B-12

THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS ONE OF GOOD NEWS BRINGING GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE, AND IT HAD TO DO WITH A SAVIOR. IT IS OBVIOUS FROM VERSES LIKE THIS THAT THE WORLD NEEDED SAVING. MEN TEND TO IGNORE OR DENY THIS FACT. IF MEN WERE GOOD ENOUGH OR ABLE ENOUGH TO SAVE THEMSELVES THEN THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO NEED FOR A SAVIOR LIKE JESUS. IT IS THE FACT THAT MEN ARE SINNERS AND UNDER THE INDICTMENT OF SIN THAT THEY NEED A SAVIOR LIKE JESUS. (LUKE 19:10, I TIM. 1:15, ROM. 3:23) OF ALL THE PLACES IN THE BIBLE WHERE FAITH WAS NECESSARY TO BELIEVE THE MESSAGE OF GOD, THIS WAS IT. HOW COULD A BABY

WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES LYING IN A MANGER DO ANYTHING FOR THE SINS OF MANKIND? THE WAY OF REDEMPTION, IN THE MINDS OF MOST PEOPLE, WAS TO RELIEVE ISRAEL FROM ROMAN OPPRESSION, AND ESTABLISH A LITERAL VISIBLE KINGDOM ON THE EARTH. IT TOOK REAL FAITH ON THE PART OF THE SHEPHERDS TO BELIEVE THE ANGELS MESSAGE ABOUT REDEMPTION IN CHRIST.

Right Solution

D. AN ANALYSIS - v. 14

THIS IS A GROSSLY MISUNDERSTOOD V. IT IS COMMONLY ACCEPTED AS A BASIS FOR GENERATING GOOD WILL AMONG MEN OF ILL WILL AT CHRISTMAS TIME. V. LITERALLY SPEAKS OF PEACE ON EARTH TO MEN WITH WHOM GOD IS WELL PLEASED. PEACE DOES NOT COME TO MEN SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY EXHIBIT GOODWILL TOWARD ONE ANOTHER; BUT LASTING PEACE COMES WHEN MEN ARE AT PEACE OR IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST. GLORY AND PEACE GO TOGETHER. THERE IS NO PEACE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT CONCERNED WITH THE GLORY OF GOD. REAL LASTING PEACE ON EARTH EXISTS ONLY WITH THOSE IN WHOM GOD IS WELL PLEASED. AS WE LIVE TO PLEASE GOD, WE WILL KNOW THE PEACE OF GOD. AS WE SEEK HIS GLORY AND HIS WILL, PEACE AND CONTENTMENT WILL COME TO THE HUMAN HEART.

III. THE SHEPHERDS WERE QUICKLY OBEDIENT IN FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY THE ANGELS - v. 15-16

THE WORDS "NOW" AND "HASTE" SPEAKS OF THE FACT THAT THESE SHEPHERDS WERE QUICK TO OBEY GOD. THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGEL WAS NOT SOMETHING THEY NEEDED TO PONDER OVER FOR SEVERAL WEEKS AND THEN MAKE A DECISION. THEY WERE NOT AT LIBERTY TO EXAMINE THE MESSAGE AND THEN PROMPTLY IGNORE IT. GOD REQUIRED IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THEIR PART. THE LITTLE WORD "NOW" HAS NINE GREEK WORDS SO TRANSLATED IN THE BIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE (1) I JOHN 3:1 "NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD" (2) HEB. 9:24 - NOW TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US (3) GAL. 1:23 "HE NOW PREACHETH THE FAITH WHICH ONCE HE DESTROYED" (4) ACTS 17:30 "GOD NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT" (5) II COR. 6:2 "NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME...NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION" (6) LUKE 16:25 "NOW HE IS COMFORTED AND THOU ART TORMENTED". FAITH DID NOT PROCRASTINATE. IT AROSE AND SOUGHT THE SAVIOR. THESE MEN MIGHT HAVE SAID THAT THERE ARE BABIES BORN EVERY DAY AND THEY COULD HAVE QUESTIONED WHAT WAS SO UNIQUE ABOUT THIS ONE

PARTICULAR BABY, BUT THEY DID NOT. THERE ARE SOME OPPORTUNITIES WHICH COME OUR WAY ONCE IN A LIFETIME. ONCE PAST, THEY NEVER RETURN. WE NEED TO KEEP OUR EYES OPEN TO THE MESSAGE OF GOD AND BE WILLING TO RESPOND WHEN WE HEAR IT.

IV. THE SHEPHERDS WERE EAGER TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS WITH OTHER PEOPLE - v. 17-20

IF I MAY PARAPHRASE A POSTER WHICH I SAW RECENTLY THAT SAID "I'VE FOUND IT" THE SHEPHERDS MIGHT HAVE SAID "WE HAVE FOUND HIM." THEY WERE WILLING TO SHARE THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST. NOTHING IS SAID IN THE BIBLE ABOUT THE INNKEEPER SHARING THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN HIS STABLE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, HE PROBABLY DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON RIGHT ON HIS OWN PREMISES UNDER HIS NOSE. A KING WAS BORN IN HIS STABLE THAT NIGHT AND HE WAS IGNORANT OF THAT FACT BECAUSE PROBABLY IN HIS JUDGMENT IT WAS THE WRONG PLACE AND THE WRONG TIME FOR KINGS TO BE BORN. AFTER ALL, IF WE WERE RUNNING A PROGRAM FOR KINGS IT WOULD BE IN THE BEST FACILITIES MAN COULD BUILD. ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IN FUNDAMENTAL CHURCHES IS WHAT I HAVE CALLED "ZECHARIAH'S DISEASE." (CF. LUKE 1:19-21 UNBELIEF ALWAYS SILENCES THE TONGUE.) AND THESE SHEPHERDS REMIND ME OF A STORY TOLD BY A FRIEND OF MINE CONCERNING TWO LADIES IN AN ELEVATOR IN A SOUTHERN CITY SEVERAL YEARS AGO. IT PERTAINED TO A DOCTOR AND RELIEF ONE WOMAN FOUND WITH HIM. WHEN SHE GOT SO MUCH HELP HER MIND IMMEDIATELY TURNED TO A FRIEND WHO HAD A SIMILAR PROBLEM, HOPING SHE COULD BE HELPFUL TO SOMEONE ELSE WITH HER RECENT DISCOVERY. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT SO FEW PROFESSING CHRISTIANS EVER PASS THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST'S GOSPEL TO ANYONE ELSE? THERE MAY BE SEVERAL REASONS: (1) MANY WHO PROFESS DO NOT POSSESS (2) FAILURE TO DEVELOP CORRECT SPIRITUAL HABITS AND THE ACQUISITION OF SKILL IN WITNESSING. WE MUST WANT TO WITNESS BADLY ENOUGH TO LEARN HOW TO DO IT! (3) SOME FOLK ARE IN SUCH BAD SHAPE SPIRITUALLY THEY DARE NOT APPROACH ANOTHER PERSON ABOUT THIS SUBJECT. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ONE DROWNING MAN TO HELP ANOTHER WHEN THE FIRST MAN IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH HIS OWN SAFETY. OUR SUBJECT TODAY HAS TO DO WITH SHEPHERDS WHO FOUND THE SHEPHERD. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS

CALLED THE "SHEPHERD AND BISHOP OF OUR SOULS" IN
I. PETER 2:25. IN THE SAME BOOK IN CHAPTER 5:4
HE IS CALLED THE "CHIEF SHEPHERD." IN HEB. 13:20
HE IS CALLED "THAT GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP."
THE WORD SHEPHERD IS USED MORE IN LUKE 2 THAN ANY
OTHER CHAPTER IN THE BIBLE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF
JOHN 10: WHERE IT IS USED ONE MORE TIME TO DESCRIBE
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS THE "GOOD SHEPHERD."
THESE SIMPLE MEN WHOSE OCCUPATION WAS TO CARE FOR
SHEEP DISCOVERED THE PERSON ABOUT WHOM DAVID SPOKE
IN PS. 23. EVERY MAN IS LOOKING FOR A SHEPHERD.
FOR SOME, THAT SHEPHERD WILL BE A HIRELING WHO WILL
LEAD THEM INTO PATHS OF SIN; BUT FOR THOSE WHO
FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST, HE LEADS THEM INTO PATHS OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETERNAL GLORY. QUESTION: WHO
IS YOUR SHEPHERD TODAY?

Convers.

" THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS "

HoBart Freeman

It is not my purpose in using such a title to go back into Church history and see how much of the tradition associated with Christmas is of Babylonian origin--nor to seek to disprove that Dec. 25 has nothing to do with the actual time of Christ's birth--this is not my purpose. Rather to take the present day attitudes of men regarding Christmas and compare them with what the Bible says about such things.

Most of us are familiar with the story around Dickens "Christmas Carol" and the rather unusual manner in which Scrooge learned something about the spirit of giving. We are quick to condemn him for his terrible attitude but really are we so much better in our day:

- a. Woman who saw a manger scene in a department store window and was heard to say: "Isn't that disgusting, they are trying to drag religion into Christmas now."
- b. Little boy may have been closer to the truth than he realized when he quoted John 3:16 and substituted the words "only forgotten son!"

I. ~~THE TRUE CHRISTMAS GIFT~~ -- v.11 "~~gift~~"

Christmas is the strangest season of the year. People who have been grouchy and grumpy all year suddenly begin to mellow just a little--sometimes not much! They send gifts to people they scarcely know and cards to people they have never met. Someone gave this definition of Americans: "People who buy things they don't need with money they don't have to impress people they don't like"--this surely must fit the Christmas season. How many of us run out at the last moment to buy an extra box of cards to send one to that family who sent you one and you forgot to send them one! Did you ever wonder why men, often the lowest of men, suddenly start to think about others at this time of the year? The answer very simple: the influence of Christ upon the world. Even in this world in which we live, which is no friend of grace, mercy is shown by the cross: Green, Red, White, Blue

I. THE TRUE CHRISTMAS GIFT -- v.11 "GRACE"

1. "For the grace of God"

What is the grace of God? Grace is divine favor, unmerited and to the unworthy. "Everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything." Grace--the one thing man cannot buy! It is not for sale--it must be given! Only God can give grace! The Bible has much to say about grace:

1. Our Lord the personification of grace--(John 1:14-17)
In Christ men can see the grace of the Father for He is the fulness of that divine favor.

25 Jan.
9

mephob.

Rom. 3:24
4:7 *

2. Our Lord saves men by grace alone—Eph. 2:8-9
"Saved By Grace Alone"
"Amazing Grace" Titus 3:5-7
Why does God save men this way only?
a. No man can ever boast of his accomplishment for salvation or Calvary would have been in vain.
b. For God's glory: Eph. 2:7
"That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

2. "That Bringeth Salvation"

- a. Matt. 1:21....Christ came to save men.
b. Titus 2:14 Not Bethlehem but Calvary!

3. "Hath Appeared To All Men"

"did appear" - Jn

- a. Simeon—Luke 2:30
Simeon saw Christ and recognized Him as the Saviour of ~~man~~—this has never changed.
b. Shepherds—Luke 2:11 "a Saviour"
Common folk—poor
c. Wise Men—Matt. 2:11 "worshipped him"
d. Salvation has never changed—same today as then—
Christ—Acts. 4:12
No man can ever look into the face of God and say,
"I never had a chance—God's salvation has appeared to men at Calvary—come to Him—now!"

SPIN IT

II. THE TRUE CHRISTMAS RESPONSIBILITY v.12 "godliness"
Think of the ungodliness — Some who seldom drink — drink
Godliness is not something we are to hope for in the like to come...notice "in this present world."

2 Pt.
2:2
False Teachers

**Mr. Barthel telling about men who would drink at this time of the year. **Arnolts.
Men do not rejoice in the blessings of Christ—
but rather turn to lust and greed.
How does a person attain this? He can't until he knows Christ as Saviour—like a car without a motor—
no power to live a Christian life until Christ comes in. Rev. 3:20
2 Cor 5:17

III. THE TRUE CHRISTMAS HOPE v.13 "glory"

At our Lord's first coming, darkness of human history, the Pax Romana did not help the sorrowing heart. They were looking for a "deliverer" in Israel just as Moses in the long ago.
His Second Coming will be in power and glory.
Where is your hope? Live somewhere forever!
Alex. Great—buried with hand out of coffin—nothing in the life to come.

Two Requests

1. 4 Genes
2. 2 Pangs

"GOD'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM"

GALATIANS 4:4-5

TWO YEARS AGO, WE ENGAGED A COMPANY TO ASSIST OUR CHURCH IN A LONG-RANGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. HOWEVER, BEFORE THIS COMPANY WAS HIRED, I SPENT SOME TIME CHECKING OTHER CHURCHES WHO HAD BEEN THEIR CLIENTS. AFTER TRIPS TO PENNSYLVANIA, INDIANA, AND OHIO, I WAS IMPRESSED WITH ONE OUTSTANDING FACT. THE COMPLETED BUILDINGS ALL LOOKED LIKE THE ARCHITECTS PICTURE. IT SEEMS THAT THIS COMPANY BUILDS WHAT IT SAYS IT WILL BUILD, NAMELY, THEY BUILD ACCORDING TO THEIR PLANS. ANY WELL-RUN ORGANIZATION MUST HAVE LONG-RANGE GOALS. WITHOUT THESE GOALS LITTLE PROGRESS WILL BE MADE. WHAT IS TRUE OF A WELL-ORDERED COMPANY IS ALSO TRUE OF GOD'S WORLD. THE WORLD IS NOT RUNNING WILD WITH NO ONE AT THE CONTROLS, IT ONLY SEEMS THAT WAY! GOD HAS A MASTER BLUEPRINT FOR HUMAN HISTORY AS WELL AS A BLUEPRINT FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN'S INDIVIDUAL LIFE. TODAY, WE CONTINUE OUR STUDIES IN THE GREAT FAMILIAR TEXTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. THIS VERSE SPEAKS OF GOD'S GREAT PLAN FOR THE AGES.

I. GOD'S PROGRAM IS ALWAYS ON SCHEDULE - "BUT WHEN THE FULLNESS OF TIME WAS COME"

ALMOST TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO IN AN OBSCURE TOWN IN PALESTINE, AN EVENT TOOK PLACE WHICH WOULD INFLUENCE HISTORY MORE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE EVENT PRIOR TO THAT TIME. A BABY WAS BORN IN A STABLE NEAR AN INN. THE PARENTS OF THE CHILD WERE NOT OF NOBLE BIRTH, THEY WERE NOT WEALTHY BUT THE CHILD WAS DESTINED TO BE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL HISTORY WOULD CENTER ON THIS FOCAL PERSON. GOD HAD PREPARED THE WORLD FOR THIS UNEVENTFUL YET HISTORIC AND DEVASTATING MOMENT IN HISTORY. SOMEONE HAS WELL-SAID THAT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST IS THE HINGE OF HISTORY. WE THINK OF HISTORY AS LITERALLY HIS STORY. THE TERMS BC AND AC INDICATE THIS TRUTH. THE VAST ROMAN EMPIRE WITH ITS ROAD AND LEGAL SYSTEMS DOMINATED THE WORLD. THE GREEK LANGUAGE MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY FOR MEN TO COMMUNICATE ON A WORLD WIDE BASIS. JUDAISM HAD

PREPARED THE WORLD RELIGIOUSLY. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TIME IS REFLECTED IN THE FACT THAT THERE WERE OVER SIXTY MILLION SLAVES IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE OF THE APPROXIMATELY 250,000,000 INHABITANTS OF EARTH. WOMEN HAD NO RIGHTS. SHE WAS THE PROPERTY OF HER HUSBAND AND MORALITY IN MARRIED LIFE WAS HARDLY KNOWN. POVERTY WAS EVERYWHERE. THE WORLD WAS READY FOR A SAVIOUR; IF NOT BY AWARENESS, SURELY BECAUSE OF NEED. OUR TEXT REFERS TO THE "FULLNESS OF THE TIME". THE WORD FULLNESS IS USED ELSEWHERE IN THE BIBLE AS "FILL UP" OR TO BE FULLY COMPLETED. THIS TERM WAS USED TO DESCRIBE ELIZABETH WHEN SHE GAVE BIRTH TO JOHN THE BAPTIST. "NOW ELIZABETH'S FULL TIME CAME THAT SHE SHOULD BE DELIVERED; AND SHE BROUGHT FORTH A SON." (LUKE 1:57) THE SAME TERM IS USED TO REFER TO THE "FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES". (ROMANS 11:25) IT WAS THE PROPER TIME FOR CHRIST TO BE BORN. ALL OF THE EVENTS IN GOD'S DIVINE PLAN HAD COME TO COMPLETION. (IN MY OPINION, GOD IS PREPARING THE WORLD NOW FOR HIS SON'S SECOND COMING TO EARTH. THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES OR THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH IS NEARING ITS COMPLETION.) LET US LOOK AT THIS MATTER OF DIVINE SCHEDULING FROM THE OPPOSITE END OF THE SPECTRUM. GENESIS 15:13 - 16 - THESE VERSES REFER TO A FULLNESS OF INIQUITY CONCERNING THE CANAANITE NATIONS. THESE NATIONS WERE NEARING THE POINT WHERE DIVINE TOLERANCE COULD FOREBEAR NO LONGER BUT THEY HAD NOT YET REACHED THE ERRUPTION STAGE. THESE VERSES REFER TO THE BUILDING UP OF EVIL IN WHICH THE LAND WAS RIPENING FOR JUDGMENT. THIS JUDGMENT REACHED ITS CULMINATION IN EXODUS 12:41! GOD'S DIVINE SCHEDULE MAY BE SEEN IN THE LIFE OF ESTHER. "AND WHO KNOWETH WHETHER THOU ART COME TO THE KINGDOM FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?" (ESTHER 4:14) MORDECAI REMINDED ESTHER THAT THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S BRINGING HER TO A HIGH POSITION IN THE KINGDOM WAS TO SAVE HER PEOPLE. GOD'S TIMING IN THIS BOOK IS AMAZING. NOT ONE MIRACLE IS PERFORMED TO PRESERVE THE NATION OF ISRAEL WHICH SEEMED TO TOTTER ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION. GOD USED THE NORMAL OCCURANCES OF EVENTS TO WORK OUT HIS OWN PLAN. GOD IS NEVER TOO EARLY OR TOO LATE BUT ALWAYS ON SCHEDULE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH MEN. THE LORD JESUS SPOKE OF THIS GREAT PLAN OF GOD AS "MINE HOUR". (JOHN 2:4) "THEN THEY SOUGHT TO TAKE HIM; BUT NO MAN LAID HANDS ON HIM, BECAUSE HIS HOUR WAS NOT YET COME." (JOHN 7:30) "THESE WORDS SPAKE JESUS AND LIFTED

UP HIS EYES TO HEAVEN, AND SAID, FATHER, THE HOUR IS COME; GLORIFY THY SON, THAT THY SON MAY ALSO GLORIFY THEE." (JOHN 17:1) GOD DOES ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO HIS OWN SCHEDULE AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT TIME IS RUNNING OUT AS FAR AS MAN'S DAY IS CONCERNED.

II. GOD'S PROGRAM CENTERS IN HIS SON - "GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON...."

ALL MEN MUST DEAL WITH GOD'S SON, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. ACCORDING TO EPHESIANS 3:11 GOD HAS A SINGLE, ETERNAL, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WHICH IS BOUND UP IN HIS SON. NOTICE THE WORD PURPOSE IS IN THE SINGULAR. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE WORLD IS TO CALL OUT FROM AMONG THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD A REDEEMED SOCIETY OF PEOPLE. GOD'S PLAN IS TO SAVE SINNERS AND TO PUNISH THOSE WHO REFUSE GOD'S REMEDY FOR SIN IN JESUS CHRIST. THE BELIEVERS BLESSING FOR TIME AND ETERNITY IS BOUND UP "IN CHRIST." (COMPARE EPHESIANS 1:3,6) MEN WHO SEEK TO IGNORE JESUS CHRIST IN THIS LIFE SHOULD BE MADE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THEY WILL INDEED FACE HIM IN JUDGMENT. (JOHN 5:27 - 29) DR. JIM MCGINLAY USED TO REMIND US THAT IT IS EASY TO HAVE A WRONG OPINION ABOUT OUR CHILDREN OR SONS AS WELL AS AN UNSCRIPTURAL OPINION CONCERNING GOD'S SON. HE RELATED THE STORY OF A MOTHER WHO 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 HAS NEVER CAUSED ME A MOMENTS 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." THE MOTHER WAS A BIT INDIGNANT AND ASKED WHY SUCH A STRANGE RESPONSE. DR. MCGINLAY EXPLAINED THAT GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF SAVING GOOD BOYS BUT RATHER OF SAVING SINNERS. THIS MOTHER DID NOT REALIZE THAT HER BOY WAS GUILTY OF THE ONLY CRIME THAT WOULD DAMN A SOUL FOREVER AND THAT CRIME IS REJECTION OF CHRIST. IT WAS NOT UNTIL THIS 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 SINLESS SON. ALL OF HIS GOODNESS WAS NOTHING IN THE EYES OF GOD AS FAR AS SALVATION WAS CONCERNED.

THIS MOTHER'S SON HAD NO USE FOR CHRIST AND THAT COULD DESTROY HIS SOUL FOREVER. HER LIFE WAS CENTERED IN HER SON WHEN IN FACT HER LIFE NEEDED TO BE CENTERED IN HIS SON! 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 WERE FARMERS WHO CAME FROM A LONG LINE OF FARMERS WHO DELIGHTED IN THEIR FARMS. I REMEMBER ONE PARTICULAR OCCASION WHEN A MAN WAS SHOWING ME AROUND HIS FARM 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 AND CATTLE BARNS AND EQUIPMENT - PROSPERITY EVERYWHERE. I ASKED MY FRIEND WHAT HIS GOALS FOR THE FUTURE WERE WITH REFERENCE TO THE FARM. HE HAD LIVED AND WORKED HARD TO PASS ALL OF THIS ON TO HIS SON. HIS WHOLE LIFE WAS WRAPPED UP IN HIS SON. GOD'S PROGRAM FOR THIS WORLD IS BOUND UP IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. WHAT MEN DO WITH HIM WILL DETERMINE THEIR ETERNAL DESTINY.

III. GOD'S PROGRAM EMPHASIZES REDEMPTION - "TO REDEEM"

THE BIBLE WORD REDEMPTION IS A TERM THAT WAS USED PRIMARILY TO DESCRIBE THE PAYMENT OF A PRICE FOR SOMETHING. IT WAS USED OFTEN WITH REFERENCE TO SLAVE MARKETS WHERE PEOPLE WERE BOUGHT AND SOLD LIKE THINGS. IN HEBREW HISTORY THE WORD REDEEM HAD TO DO WITH THE IDEA OF SACRIFICE IN THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM. PAUL PICKED UP THIS IDEA IN 1 PETER 1:18-19 - "FOR AS MUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YE WERE NOT REDEEMED WITH CORRUPTIBLE THINGS, AS SILVER AND GOLD, FROM YOUR VAIN CONVERSATION RECEIVED BY TRADITION FROM YOUR FATHERS; BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST..." THIS TERM REDEMPTION IN THE BIBLE INDICATES THAT THE LIFE OF CHRIST WAS THE PRICE FOR OUR FORGIVENESS OF SINS. HE IS THE BELIEVER'S SUBSTITUTE. EVERY READER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT UNDERSTOOD THAT THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL WERE REDEEMED FROM EGYPT'S BONDAGE. THE DEATH OF THE PASSOVER LAMB WAS INVOLVED IN THIS REDEMPTION. (COMPARE EPHESIANS 1:7, ROMANS 3:24 "BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.") THE BOOK OF RUTH BEAUTIFULLY ILLUSTRATES THIS GREAT BIBLICAL

TRUTH OF REDEMPTION. THE PRINCIPLE WAS AS FOLLOWS:
IF AN ISRAELITE WAS IN BONDAGE, PROVISION WAS
MADE FOR HIM TO BE SET FREE. ONE WHO WAS KIN TO
THE SLAVE COULD PAY THE PRICE IN ORDER THAT THE
SLAVE MIGHT GO FREE. THE PERSON WHO PAID THIS
PRICE WAS CALLED THE KINSMAN - REDEEMER. IN ORDER
FOR THIS TRANSACTION TO TAKE PLACE, THERE MUST
BE MORE THAN SYMPATHY INVOLVED BUT NAMELY, A FAMILY
RELATIONSHIP. THE KINSMAN REDEEMER MUST HAVE THE
NECESSARY FUNDS OR BE ABLE TO REDEEM AND HE MUST
BE WILLING TO DO SO. ALSO, HE MUST NOT BE A SLAVE
HIMSELF. RUTH - A GENTILE WHO WAS A TYPE OF THE
CHURCH AND BOAZ WAS A KINSMAN REDEMMEER NAMELY, A
TYPE OF CHRIST. THERE ARE MANY STORIES WHICH
ILLUSTRATE THIS GREAT BIBLE PRINCIPLE. ("LITTLE
BOAT TWICE OWNED.") THE PROBLEM IN OUR WORLD IS
A FALSE PHILOSOPHY ABOUT REDEMPTION. MOST PEOPLE
BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN MAN, SOME
HUMAN ABILITY OR EFFORT BY WHICH HE CAN GAIN AP-
PROVAL BEFORE GOD. MEN TODAY ARE MUCH LIKE THE
ELDERLY WOMAN WHO LIVED DURING THE DEPRESSION OF
THE 1930'S. SHE ENTERED AN INSURANCE OFFICE IN
MINNEAPOLIS CARRYING A POLICY AND EXPLAINED THAT
SHE WAS UNABLE TO MAKE THE PAYMENTS. SHE SAID
SHE WORKED HARD BUT HARDLY HAD ENOUGH FOR FOOD
AND CLOTHING AND SHELTER LET ALONE INSURANCE PAY-
MENTS. AFTER A QUICK INVESTIGATION THE CLERK
SAW THAT THE POLICY HAD ALREADY BEEN PAID UP.
STRANGELY ENOUGH THE POLICY WAS ON HER HUSBAND
WHO HAD BEEN DEAD FOR THREE YEARS. AFTER A BRIEF
INVESTIGATION THE LADY RECEIVED FULL PAYMENT FOR
THE VALUE OF THE POLICY AND APPROPRIATE REFUNDS
FOR OVER-PAID PREMIUMS. MANY PEOPLE ARE LIKE
THIS WOMAN TRYING TO MAKE PAYMENTS FOR SOMETHING
THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN PAID! JESUS CHRIST PAID
THE FULL PAYMENT FOR YOUR AND MY REDEMPTION
ON THE CROSS OF CHRIST. (RELATE STORY OF MIS-
SIONARY - AFRICA AND A TRANSLATION OF "HE TOOK OUR
HEADS OUT". HE WAS TOLD THE STORY OF HOW YEARS
AGO WHEN THESE PEOPLE WERE SLAVES THAT HUGE IRON
COLLARS WERE PLACED ABOUT THE CAPTIVES NECKS WHICH
CHAINS WERE ATTACHED. IN SERVITUDE THEY DARED
NOT STRAIN FOR THE COLLAR WOULD BRUISE THEIR
THROATS AND SHUT OFF RESPIRATION. LIBERATION
FINALLY CAME THE BEST PART OF BEING FREE WAS THE
OPPORTUNITY TO BE LOOSED FROM THE CHAINS AND THEIR
HEADS OUT OF THESE IRON BANDS. -- MAKE APPROPRIATE
COMMENT.

A NEW YEAR

Each year brings new things into our lives. We will never be together just exactly as we are today. The new year will bring (1) new jobs, new home and new friends. (2) marriage (3) schooling, perhaps far from home. (4) Some will grow nearer the Lord, others will slip away. I would like to suggest 3 "new things" which would be of great blessing to us all in the following year:

I. NEW LIFE --2 Cor. 5:17

Some of you were not born again this time last year. For you 1963 was your first birth day. Lamb's book of life. This verse tells us some interesting things about the "new life" we have in Christ.

A. CONDITIONAL "if"

God has made adequate provision for all to be saved. But we must respond to Gods invitation. (Use \$ to show difference between "believe" and "receive".

B. UNIVERSAL "any man" lit. "anyone"

God is no respecter of persons. Anyone who will plead the merits of Christ for salvation can be saved.

(1) The salvation of the soul knows no racial or national bounds. The answer to the problem of the human heart--everywhere.

C. POSITIONAL "in Christ" Rom.3:24, 6:23; 8:1 and 8:39

Some look for salvation elsewhere. Acts 4:12

D. SUPERNATURAL "new creation"

Is this just "overhauling" the old life. A psychological boost. This activity is the same activity by the same person who was active when God created the Universe.

Titus 3:5

New life where once there was death.

Problem:

Even in Fundamental churches, too many who have made a profession, on the roll, baptized, but no new life.

***** The animal museum on route 17. They have all of the outward appearance but nothing on the inside!

II. NEW OPPORTUNITY---1 Cor. 16:9

Paul was never satisfied with last's labor. Looked for new areas of service. (Too many churches not vision--Harry Simms 18 months without a conversion--sleeping church.)

A. PERSONAL "unto me"

God has a particular job for each of us--none else can do it as you can. (I get discouraged when I hear men like Lester Pipkin and John McCormick--I will never preach as they do--but they can't do my work for the Lord. Same with us: S.S. class, other offices. GIVE IT YOUR VERY BEST**IF WORTH DOING, WORTH DOING RIGHT.

Doug Sporlock
"ADAPTIONS"
H

B. POWERFUL "effectual"

The work "effectual" from word we get "energy". Used in Greek papyri of a mill in "working order". The idea is that of "work". The Lord's work is work! It takes work to win souls, it takes work to keep a church going. Keep people happy and out of one another's hair!

Paul was willing to work for Jesus! ~~NEW~~ EFFORT!

C. PROVIDENTIAL--"is open" lit. "is wide open"

God opens the door of our service. If I did not believe this I would have resigned this church a dozen times last year! We seek His will in prayer and wait for His leading--then when the door is open--go thru!

D. PERILOUS--"many adversaries"

"The door to the room of success ~~is~~ swings on the hinges of opposition."

Problem: Our adversaries are not from "without" but more from "within". I haven't had one run in with one sinner in all of Northville about my stand for Christ----but some of the saints have sure given me some anxious moments!

Read Acts 18-20 But Paul went thru the door all the way to Nero's dungeon and death.

III. NEW HOPE-- James 5:8 "is very near"

How could James say this. It has been 1900 years since this statement was made and Christ has not come. Point: Then His coming is near now than ever before.

Is there "hope" in a world where men are at odds about political philosophy and possess the power to eliminate one another? 2. Is there hope in an age where apostasy is increasing? 3. Is there hope in a world dominated by materialism? 4. Is there hope in a world where the church is asleep?

Answer: Yes.

The word hope does not occur in the Gospels. In Acts 2:26 it first occurs as a quotation of Psa. 16:9. The Heb. word meant "to cling as a child to its mother"

Where is our hope?

Is it attached to Jesus Christ?

*Right - but discussion
not in institution or
tradition - new life, hope,
in Christ?
Do you know him?*