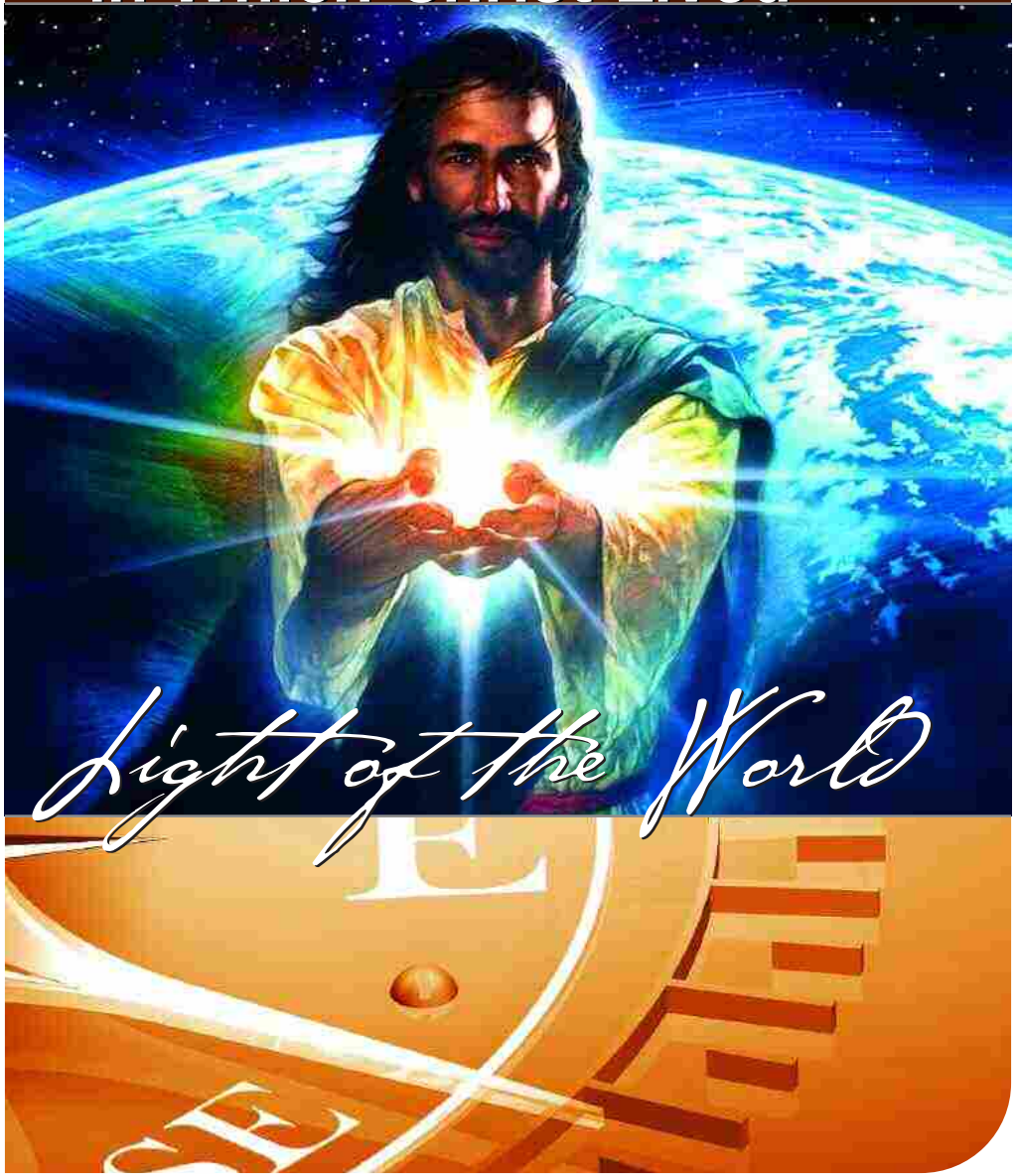
BOOKLET ONE

The World in Which Christ Lived



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We are very happy to introduce the life of Christ to you in a more intimate and personal way through the pages of the *Light of the World* Bible course. We have gathered together the bright rays that stream from Christ, the Light of the world, and have focussed them on these pages in order to make him more real to you. As you read this simple but powerful story of the life of Christ, you will be inspired as you have never been by any other biography.

Authority FOR OUR STORY





As the source of our story, we have the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, which are accurate and inspired accounts of Jesus' life. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us much about what Jesus did. John tells us what he is, and seeks to picture the divine beauty of Jesus - *The sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue* - the righteousness, truth, divine holiness and love that shone from Christ's person.

These biographies were written by men who lived when Jesus was here on earth and who were well qualified to write about him. We turn to these four books in the New Testament for our authority. Here the actual facts about Jesus Christ are presented - his pre-existence, his birth, his life, his ministry and teaching, his death, his resurrection, and his promise to come to this earth the second time. Long before you have finished this 25 booklet course, you will come to look upon Jesus as more than a mere man, but as the Light of the whole world.

Two THINGS TO REMEMBER







Now, in preparing this Bible course for you, we have kept two important things in mind - firstly, to present the events in the life of Christ in their natural order as nearly as possible. This is what is called the *chronology*, and that is important. But, as you read these booklets, you will discover that a second consideration, and perhaps a more important one, has prompted us - and that is, the attempt to reveal the many sides of Christ's life. And in order to do this, we have sometimes had to digress from the chronology.

As the sunlight passing through a prism is broken up into the beautiful colours of the rainbow, so Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, becomes more attractive when we look at him as the Master Teacher, the Great Healer, the Friend of sinners, the Prophet of God, the Miracle Worker, the Saviour of men, and the Son of God. To illustrate - to the casual observer, a diamond before it has been cut, looks much like any other stone. But in the hands of a skilful artisan, it is ground and polished until its dozens of facets seem to flash with living fire. So the life of Christ has many facets which, when put together, become a perfect means of revealing the great Light, which is Christ himself. We have endeavoured to put these pieces in such relation to one another as to present a full revelation of the most beautiful life this world has ever known.

special notes

The SURROUNDINGS OF JESUS







As you no doubt know, Jesus was born in Palestine, a country less than half the size of Tasmania. It is about 230 kilometres long and up to 115 kilometres wide. Nazareth, where Jesus grew up, is only 115 kilometres from Jerusalem in a straight line.

The Roman Emperor Augustus ruled a great part of the world in those days, and Jesus' tiny homeland was a part of the vast Roman Empire. Julius Caesar, uncle to Augustus, was the great builder of the empire, which included all the countries bordering on the Mediterranean Sea.

Here are some facts that will help you to understand what life was like in Christ's day -

1. LANGUAGE - Greek was spoken in the eastern Mediterranean countries, while Latin was prevalent in the western area. The language used by Christ and his disciples was Aramaic, a language which had long been spoken by several nations surrounding Judea and also widely used as the language of business and trade. After the Babylonian captivity, it had gradually replaced Hebrew, until by Christ's time it was the language of the masses, Hebrew being understood only by scholars.

2. POLITICS - During the forty five years of the reign of Augustus (31 B.C. - 14 A.D.), peace and prosperity were general throughout the empire. Comparative peace prevailed also under the immediate successors of Augustus. People of many lands enjoyed Roman citizenship, and there was more or less harmony among the races under the worldwide state of Rome. This gave trade and commerce great opportunities for expansion and also prepared the way for the spread of Christianity.

3. RELIGION - There were many confused ideas about God. Emperor Augustus was regarded by his supporters as a god. Statues were erected to him throughout the empire, and an imperial cult was developed.

Stoicism was a sort of pantheistic philosophy which regarded God as present in all living things. And, since the world is controlled by divine law, the Stoics contended that man should freely conform to whatever destiny was his, unsubdued by either joy or grief, pain or pleasure.

The *Epicureans*, in opposition to the Stoics, while recommending virtue, taught that pleasure is the highest good. Stoicism and Epicureanism were popular chiefly with the Greeks.

Judaism, the religion of the Hebrews with its multiplied forms and ceremonies, was widely believed. Millions of Jews, descendants of the tribes that had been scattered by the Assyrians and Babylonians, had carried their religion with them, and there were many Gentiles who had accepted the faith of Israel. Judaism, however, was divided into several sects. Chief among these were the *Pharisees*, who were most anxious to keep the nation true to the traditions of the past and keep alive the hope and expectation of the coming Messiah. The *Sadducees,* composed mostly of persons of wealth and influence, were strong rivals of the Pharisees. They stressed the moral law, but denied the authority of tradition and the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection, and the existence of angels. They also discounted the Messianic hope. The *Essenes* opposed the ritualism and formalism of the Pharisees. They took no part in public affairs and passed their lives in retired places, seeking by self denial and prayers to realise their ideal of Levitical purity. They believed in the immortality of the soul, but denied the resurrection of the body. It was into this kind of world that Christ came to reveal the true God to men.







special notes

A BRIEF PREVIEW OF CHRIST'S LIFE







The moral condition of the people at the time of our Saviour's birth was very low. Vice, crime, and disease were rampant. Jesus came into the world to penetrate this darkness with the light of his gospel of love and healing. That you may see the beauty and power of the life that you are about to study, we quote the following tribute from an unknown author -

Here is a young man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty, and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never travelled 300 kilometres from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself. While he was still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth, and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race, and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that One Solitary Life.

special notes

Booklet 2 will answer the following Questions -

- **When and where did Jesus live when upon earth?**
- **Why did he come into this world?**

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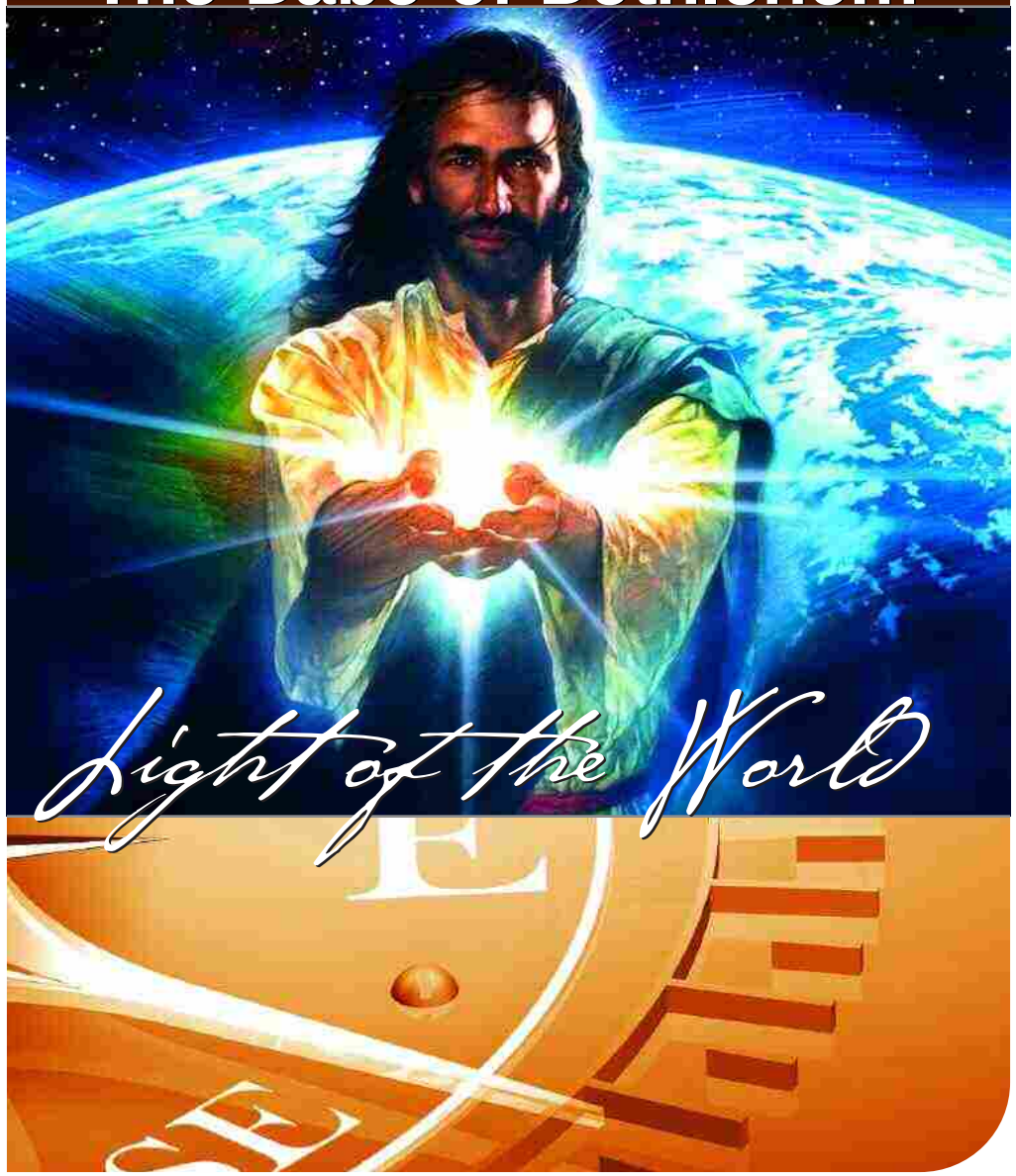
BOOKLET TWO

The Babe of Bethlehem


Light of the World

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity . . . For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way . . . Hebrews 2:14-17 *

Let us open the Bible, look into its inspired pages, and discover the secret of Christ's life of power. As we journey by his side through his ministry in Palestine, we will witness his mighty miracles and wonderful works. From one thrilling scene to another, we will travel with Jesus from Bethlehem to the great climax when he died as man's Redeemer on the cross of Calvary and rose triumphant from the tomb. Every step of the way we will walk in the light - first, in the bright rays of the star that shone over Bethlehem, then on to the light that radiated from the tomb when Christ arose from the dead. It will be a heart warming experience, and you will not want to stop until you have finished the journey.

In this booklet, we will acquaint ourselves with the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. To begin with, let's be sure of one thing - *Jesus Christ was a real person*, an historical character who lived on this earth. His life was spent among humble people who in many respects were just like himself. He was born in a small town in Palestine about 4 B.C. At the time of Christ's birth the world did not realise that all history was to focus on him. It was not until over five hundred years later that the idea was conceived of reckoning all time as either before or after the birth of Christ. But after that much time had elapsed, it was not easy to compute the exact date, and it was later discovered that an error of about four years had been made, a fact which places the date of Christ's birth at about 4 B.C. The exact day and month cannot be absolutely fixed.

At the age of thirty three, Jesus died at Jerusalem about five miles from the scene of his nativity. According to his own statement, his life work was "to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:10. He came to be the Saviour of mankind and to show us how to live and how to die with the hope of a resurrection to eternal life. To accomplish this, he *became a real man with human flesh.* His life of complete triumph over human selfishness placed him in a position where he can solve all the problems that distress our world.





Let us turn now to the Scripture record, where the Light shines clearly for all to see. For a brief preview of this booklet, we suggest that you read Matthew 2 and Luke 2:1-38.

special notes

Where WAS JESUS BORN?







. . . Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod . . . Matthew 2:1

Jesus was born in the quiet town of Bethlehem where David, the shepherd boy, had kept his flock centuries before. There was widespread expectation among the people that a great king would arise out of Judea. This is mentioned by many historians.

At this time the wicked and cruel King Herod ruled Palestine. He was the founder of an Idumean family which furnished the rulers for Palestine during the latter half of the century before Christ and throughout the first century of the Christian era.

The coming of man's Redeemer had been the theme of all the Old Testament prophets. Let's notice just two of these prophecies -

Micah - The birth of Jesus in the town of Bethlehem had been foretold by the prophet Micah. Here are his words as written seven centuries before Christ -

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. Micah 5:2

Daniel - The prophet Daniel had predicted the first coming to the earth of the Messiah, or Christ, and more especially the time when he was to enter into his public work. See Daniel 9:25.

From the earliest days of human history, men had been expecting Christ to appear on earth. Just before Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden because of sin, God pronounced a curse on the serpent that had enticed Eve, and at the same time promised a Redeemer for mankind.

He said -

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Genesis 3:15



Christ was the promised Seed of the woman. On the cross he was bruised by Satan, the serpent, but the tomb could not hold him. Ultimately, the head of the serpent will be bruised when Satan is destroyed in the lake of fire.

special notes

Who WERE JESUS' PARENTS?







The mother of Jesus is identified beyond question in the Gospel of Matthew and so is her husband, Joseph.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. Matthew 1:18, 19

Joseph, a carpenter of Nazareth, was "a righteous man." He was perplexed to learn that the virgin Mary to whom he was engaged was soon to have a child, so he made plans to break the engagement. Then God revealed to him in a dream that Mary was "with child through the Holy Spirit."

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1:20, 21

This relieved Joseph's anxiety. See Matthew 1:25. The mystery of the virgin birth of Jesus and his conception "through the Holy Spirit" will be discussed in Booklet 3.

Both Joseph and Mary were direct descendants of David, the greatest of Israel's kings. In Matthew 1:1-17 the family line is traced through Joseph. In Luke 3:23-38 the family tree is that of Mary, although it appears to be Joseph's, but that is only because it was not customary for a woman's name to appear in the genealogy. Joseph was really the son-in-law of Heli. So Heli - Eli in Hebrew - was Mary's father, not Joseph's. Both Mary and Joseph descended from a royal line, that of David. Jesus was of royal distinction so far as his earthly parents were concerned, yet at his birth there were no royal courtiers from Jerusalem to greet him, only the humble shepherds of the field.

What WELCOME WAS EXTENDED TO JESUS?







Nazareth, in northern Palestine, had been the home of Mary and Joseph prior to the birth of Jesus. But a decree from Emperor Caesar Augustus "that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world" (Luke 2:1), required that they go to Bethlehem, their own city, to register. After their arrival Jesus was born, and the following experience took place -

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." . . . So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. Luke 2:8-12, 16

The humble shepherds, instructed by a band of heavenly angels, hastened to the town of Bethlehem where they found the baby Jesus lying in a manger. Mary and Joseph had found temporary lodging in the stable of an inn, because all the available rooms were rented, and here the Christ child was born. The Bible record is very simple -

Mary . . . gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:5, 7

Mary and Joseph were encouraged by the visit of the shepherds, and when they learned that angel visitors had actually directed them to Bethlehem, a new sense of responsibility seized them. But why were not more of the children of Israel present to welcome Jesus? And why were not representatives from other lands there to rejoice at the birth of the world's Redeemer?

Who WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO WORSHIP JESUS?







The record is that wise men came from an eastern country to worship the infant Jesus. These men were the first converts to Christ from a foreign land. Let's read the story of their visit -

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1, 2

Making their way from the east to the city of Jerusalem, the wise men - the Bible does not say how many - made inquiry concerning a mysterious star that they had seen in the night sky, and which had guided them to Jerusalem. They also asked about the birthplace of the newborn King of the Jews. But apparently no one in Jerusalem, not even the priests and rulers, was aware of the great event that had taken place in Bethlehem. If they did know, they did not seem concerned about it.

When King Herod learned of the visit of the wise men, his suspicions were aroused and he demanded an explanation of their mission. This the wise men were eager to give. They wanted information about Jesus. Where was he? Couldn't anybody tell them? Summoning the priests, Herod instructed them to tell him where the Christ was to be born.

"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written." Matthew 2:5

With this information, the wise men left the palace of the king, and set out for the city of David. Then the star reappeared and led them to Jesus, as the Scripture says -

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed.

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route. Matthew 2:9-12







The wise men of the east were perhaps students of the ancient scrolls of the prophets, and by reading these forecasts, knew that a Saviour would appear in Israel. "A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel," the prophet Balaam had declared in Numbers 24:17. Could the mysterious star which they had seen in the night sky be a sign that the Light of the world had penetrated the darkness to shine upon the hearts of men? They determined to find out. As they followed the light of the moving star, they found the infant Redeemer and laid their precious gifts at his feet.

Then, being warned of God in a dream not to tell Herod of their discovery, they returned to their own country by a different route. The gifts which they left behind, the first ever presented to Jesus, no doubt helped to finance the long journey of the family to Egypt. But that is another story, as we will see.

special notes

What MESSAGE CAME TO JOSEPH IN A DREAM?





After the visit of the Magi, or wise men, an urgent messagecame to Joseph in a dream. The angel of the Lord had grim news for him.

When they (the wise men) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him. Matthew 2:13

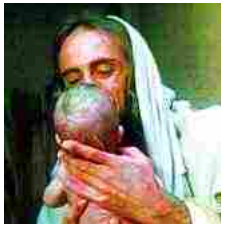
When the wise men failed to return to Jerusalem, Herod sent soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all the children under two years of age. See Matthew 2:16, 17 and prophesied in Jeremiah 31:15. This monstrous deed was executed with the hope that the infant Jesus, whom Herod feared as a possible rival to the throne, would be killed in the general massacre. But in a dream an angel appeared to Joseph and warned him to flee to Egypt. This he did without delay, barely escaping with Mary and the baby Jesus. Soon after the slaughter of the innocents, Herod himself died a horrible death.

special notes

What EXPERIENCE TOOK PLACE IN THE TEMPLE?







Before their flight into Egypt, Joseph and Mary took the baby Jesus to Jerusalem to dedicate him to the service of God, as it was customary among the Jews for the firstborn of all male children to be dedicated in the temple. God had promised to give his only begotten Son to save the sinner, and this gift of heaven was to be acknowledged in every home in Israel by the consecration of the firstborn to God's service.

. . . Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"). Luke 2: 22, 23

This was in harmony with the accepted Jewish practice for male children, and took place about forty days after the nativity (see Leviticus 12:1-4), but probably before the visit of the wise men. Mary brought two turtledoves as an offering. See Luke 2:24. These gentle creatures were without blemish and were symbolic of the perfect Child she presented. Jesus was healthy and without physical defect of any kind. He was the "lamb without blemish or defect." 1 Peter 1:19. He was an example of what God intended every child to be, physically as well as spiritually.

On this occasion Anna, a prophetess, and Simeon, a just and devout man, were divinely led to the scene of dedication, where they announced to the priests and the people that this Holy Child was the promised Saviour. Simeon declared openly in the temple -

"For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:30-32

Then Simeon illustrated the exact work Christ was to do. He said, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel." Luke 2:34



All must fall and be broken in repentance for sin before they can rise to live triumphantly over pride and selfishness. Later, when Christ began his public ministry, he showed that true humility is one of the first essentials for citizenship in his kingdom. Here are his exact words -

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5

special notes

Why DID CHRIST COME INTO THE WORLD?

And now let's find out why Christ came to this earth as a man. We have a partial answer in our guiding text -



Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity . . . For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest. Hebrews 2:14, 17



Christ became a man so that he might experience the trials of our humanity. Clothed in human flesh, he was able to understand the tests that come to us in this life. Jesus, as the Son of man, can sympathise with those whose hearts are torn and broken by trial and temptation. He is "merciful and faithful" to all. Many in Christ's day were afraid of God because they thought he was harsh and severe. Jesus came to correct this misconception and to show that "God is love." 1 John 4:8



In this story of the blessed Babe of Bethlehem is revealed "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Romans 11:33. It teaches us that sinful man may be reconciled to God and brought back to him. Here is shown his great love! Christ lived for us, and he died for us on the cross to redeem us from our sins.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but *has he been born in our hearts?* That's the all important question.

Some years ago in London, a non Christian made fun of an uneducated man who had recently been converted.
"What do you know about Jesus Christ?" he asked scornfully.
"I know a few things," was the humble reply.





"When was he born?" was the first question. To this the new Christian gave a wrong answer.

"How old was he when he died?" Again the answer was incorrect. The unbeliever asked many questions, always with the same result. Then he said with a cold sneer, "See, you do not know as much about Jesus as you thought, do you?"

"I know very little," was the Christian's reply, "but I know this: Three years ago I was one of the worst drunkards on the east side of London. My wife was a broken-hearted woman and my children were as afraid of me as if I had been a wild animal. Today I have one of the happiest homes in London, and when I come home at the close of the day my wife and children are glad to see me. Jesus Christ has done this for me. That I know!"

So the story of Bethlehem is wonderful! And why? Because it brings us face to face with Jesus the Saviour. But in this booklet we have just begun the thrilling revelation of his love and power.

special notes

special notes

Booklet 3 will answer the following Questions -

- **Is Christ divine?**
- **Did he live in Old Testament times?**
- **Does he live today?**

* Each booklet has a guiding text. Like a guiding star, it will lead you to new and wonderful discoveries about Jesus. Endeavour to memorise these special texts and see how your knowledge of the Bible increases

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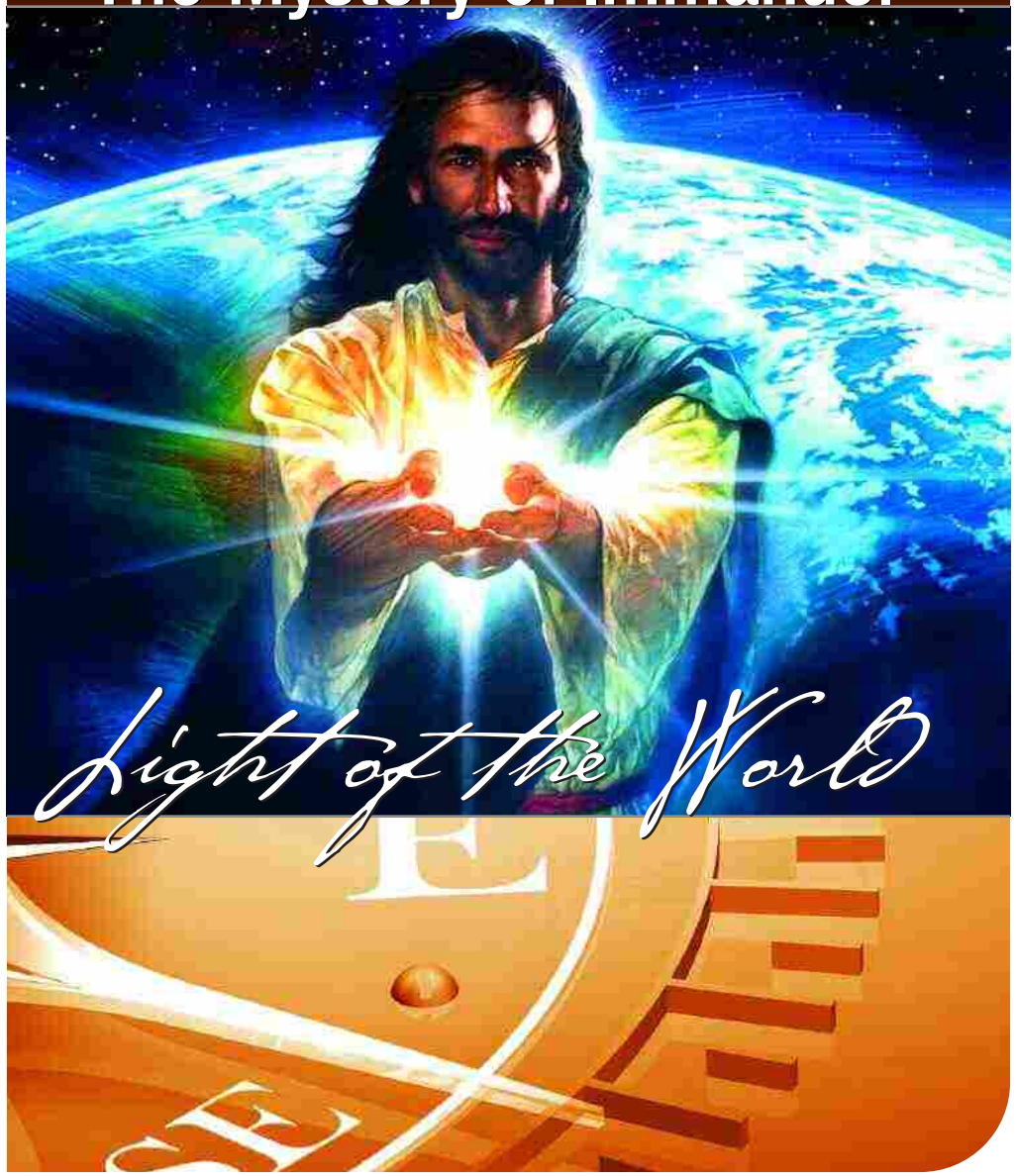
BOOKLET THREE

The Mystery of Immanuel


Light of the World

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us."
Matthew 1:23

He appeared in a body . . . believed on in the world . . .
1 Timothy 3:16

In Booklet 2 we got our first glimpse of Jesus as the Babe in Bethlehem. Mary, his blessed mother, gave him a human body. Thus he became a member of the human family, and later he called himself "the Son of man." Matthew 16:13. This is known as the "incarnation." Jesus had no earthly father. The God of heaven was his father. In this booklet we will see if we can understand a little better what the Bible means when it refers to Jesus as "the Son of God", or as "Immanuel . . . God with us." Our study will take us back before the birth of Christ in Bethlehem to the time when the Son lived in heaven with his Father. This will be an intensely interesting and revealing study, but there are some other important things that we want you to think about first.

Whenever we think of God the Father, a question arises in our minds concerning his nature and character. What is God like? When we were children, we tried to conjure up in our minds mental pictures of him. Curiosity sought to penetrate the unseen and the unknown. And it is important for all of us to know for ourselves the answer to the question - What is God like? How can we worship him intelligently unless we appreciate him for what he really is? Too many people think of God as a sort of policeman of the world, a supreme spy, a stern judge, or perhaps an exacting schoolmaster. These ideas about God fall far short of the truth.

One way to understand and appreciate God would be to go to heaven and see him and talk with him. But since we do not have that privilege, at least for now, we may become acquainted with him through the revelation given to us by Jesus Christ. God has been revealed in human flesh by One who is God's Son, and because of this we can understand something of the nature and character of the Father. The life of Christ shows that the Supreme Being is the kind of God that men *want* to worship. Let us come back to our theme now and turn to the Bible for light on this great truth.

How WAS CHRIST'S DIVINE SONSHIP ANNOUNCED?





Before the birth of Jesus, an angel announced to the virgin Mary that the Son to be born to her was the Son of God.

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David," . . . The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:30-32, 35

The heavenly messenger made it clear to Mary that she was to become a mother, and that God himself was to be the Father of the Holy Child. Here are the angel's words - "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

When Jesus was born, the Father recognised the advent of his Son in human flesh by sending the angel choir to sing the thrilling announcement -

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests. . . Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:14, 11

special notes

Who IS THE SUPREME REVELATION OF GOD TO MEN?







Throughout the New Testament the coming of Jesus to this earth is hailed as the supreme revelation of God to men. The incarnation of Christ has been said to be the most stupendous fact in the history of the world, and in it we have God's answer to man's desire to see God and know him. The Apostle John refers to Christ as the eternal Word, and says that he became flesh -

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:1-3, 14

And again the apostle writes -

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known. John 1:18

Paul tells us that the coming of Christ to this earth in human form was a manifestation of God to men.

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory. 1 Timothy 3:16

God is revealed to men through his Son, one who is of the same divine nature as God, but who appeared on earth as a man "in the flesh." To know Christ, the Son of God, is to know God the Father, for God is like Christ.

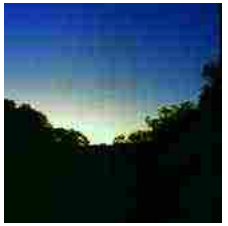
One evening after Dr William Spurgeon of Wales had delivered a lecture, a kindly old gentleman approached him and said -
"Dr Spurgeon, I am glad to meet you. I am the father of Henry Drummond."
"Oh, then," said Spurgeon, "I already know you, for I know your son so well."
Even so, God the Father has been revealed to men by his Son. Jesus himself said to Philip -

". . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father . . . If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." John 14:9, 7

So, "Immanuel, God with us" means that God's Son lived with us in our world. What an amazing thought it is that God should have "appeared in a body" and be "believed on in the world"!

Did CHRIST DWELL WITH THE FATHER BEFORE COMING TO THIS EARTH?

In one of the prayers that Christ offered while here on earth, he revealed that he had been with God the Father from eternity.



"And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began . . . Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." John 17:5, 24



You see, Christ was with the Father "before the creation of the world." He was with the Father "before the world began." Long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the prophet Isaiah had said that God's Son lived and that he would come to this earth as a child.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6







Christ shares with his Father the divine nature. God the Father refers to Christ as "the man who is close to me" (Zechariah 13:7), that is, his equal, his associate. His "origins are from of old, from ancient times". Micah 5:2. "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever'." Hebrews 1:8

While Jesus was on earth he demonstrated his relationship to the Father by his Godlike attributes and unselfish service. In this way he sought to attract people to the true worship.

". . . For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me." John 5:36

And as you become better acquainted with Christ you will discover that one great purpose of his coming to earth was to reveal God the Father and to show that he is just as worthy of your love as is Jesus, because his love is the same.

He [Jesus] gives me my clearest picture of God, for in him I find united those qualities for which my heart cries out in ultimate reality – supreme love, perfect righteousness, and above all an unwearying patience that no disappointment can discourage and no failure dismay. Treasury of the Christian Faith, page 89

special notes

Who LED ISRAEL IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES?

The facts we have mentioned reveal that Christ must have lived in Old Testament times just as certainly as in New Testament times. We see him all through the Bible. Paul says that he was the "spiritual rock" that followed, or accompanied, the children of Israel in their journey from Egypt.







For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our fore-fathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 1 Corinthians 10:1-4

Christ personally guided the nation of Israel during their exodus from Egyptian slavery in about 1500 B.C., and while they were wandering in the desert wilderness. The pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud that guided Israel during their long journey (Exodus 13:21, 22), represented the Presence of him who said -

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

The water that flowed from the rock was a symbol of Christ, who is the Water of life (Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20:11, John 4:14).

The manna which Israel ate for forty years in their wilderness wanderings was given to remind them of the Lifegiver, who said -

"I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world . . . I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:32, 33, 51







Jesus spoke publicly to the Jews of his existence prior to Abraham, the founder of the nation of Israel, about 2000 B.C. He declared -

"Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it, and was glad."
"You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"
"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:56-58

Here Christ used the name by which he had revealed himself to Moses, "I am who I am." Exodus 3:14. This means that Jesus *lives always* - not only "yesterday and today," but "yesterday . . . and forever." Hebrews 13:8. He is *a present help in time of need.* He is the eternal *I AM.* So, you see, Christ lives in all the Bible - in the Old as well as the New Testament.

Did you ever see one of those puzzle pictures on which you were told to discover the face of a man, or some object? You turned it this way and that, and finally, there you suddenly saw it, just as plain as day, and wondered why you had not seen it before! The great face in the Bible is that of Jesus. He is the supreme object of the Scriptures. ". . . diligently study the Scriptures . . . These are the Scriptures that testify about me." John 5:39

Like the scarlet thread that runs through every inch of rope in the British navy, like the melody of a beautiful song, like the theme of a great masterpiece, so is Jesus in the Scriptures. He is the author and the hero, the beginning and the ending of your Holy Bible. Bible Readings for the Home, page 35

special notes

Christ's COMING FORETOLD BY THE PROPHETS

David, the king of Israel, who lived in the eleventh century B.C., was a prophet of God. By inspiration he wrote of Christ's promise to come to this earth -



Then I said, "Here I am, I have come - it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." Psalms 40:7, 8



The coming of the Son of God in the flesh was the central theme of all the Old Testament prophets, for example -

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land . . . This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:5, 6 (See also Genesis 3:15, 49:10, Numbers 24:17, Daniel 7:13, Zechariah 6:12, Malachi 3:1)



During the Old Testament times, the faithful children of God lived in continual expectation of Christ's advent. The prophet Haggai (2:7) calls him "the desired of all nations." and we add - of all ages. His coming had been the one hope to which the people of God had clung for redemption from evil, for a way of escape from the bondage of sin. The Son of God had said, "I come." And he did come – voluntarily! After many centuries of hope and expectation, "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman . . ." Galatians 4:4. Bethlehem testifies to the coming of Christ to our world in human flesh.

. . . Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Philippians 2:5-7

How DOES CHRIST UNITE GOD AND MAN?







During his ministry in this world, Jesus revealed his great purpose to reconcile man to God. He came to earth to bring man and God into a father-son relationship. He was set apart to be man's Saviour.

"For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:19, 21

Sin has separated man from God.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:2

But through Christ, the Father is able to bring his wandering children back into fellowship with himself.

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Isaiah 59:1

Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28:10-12) represents the bridging of the gulf made by sin. When Christ left the realms of glory to become a man and die on the cross for our sins, he spanned the gulf between earth and heaven, between humanity and divinity. He himself is the ladder between man and God, bringing man up to God and God down to man (John 1:51). Upon him we may climb to the highest heaven! Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). But all may come to him and be saved.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." John 3:16, 17

How MAY WE RELATE OURSELVES TO THE SON OF GOD?

Peter expressed the faith of Christ's disciples when with deep feeling he said -

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Matthew 16:16

The Ethiopian eunuch revealed his faith in Christ when he exclaimed -

"I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Acts 8:37 (margin)

This Ethiopian's words represent the faith of millions of Christians down through the centuries who have believed in the divine sonship of Jesus. Read Acts 8:37 (margin) prayerfully. If you can say the last ten words of that verse sincerely, you have taken the first important step in the Christian life. You have placed your feet on the ladder that connects earth and heaven.

Following are a few simple facts of Christian faith that will be developed in future booklets and which will help you to see how belief in Christ as God's Son, "Immanuel . . . God with us," may affect *your* life.

1. The advent of God's Son in the flesh testifies that God may dwell in humanity.

2. Christ's crystal pure life, "holy, blameless, pure" (Hebrews 7:26), makes possible to all of us the strength of God in our struggle with sin.

3. His sacrifice on the cross and his glorious resurrection offer hope of victory over death and the grave.

4. His ascension to heaven at the close of his earthly ministry restored him to the side of his Father, where he now serves as our Advocate. See Hebrews 9:24 and 1 John 2:1.

5. He now represents us before God. We have an Intercessor in heaven who understands humanity, for he is one of us. He also understands God, for he is one with the Father. This divine-human Christ is our Saviour and Friend. To believe in him is to be accepted by the Father. To accept him as Lord and Saviour is to place our feet upon the path that leads to peace here and to eternal life hereafter. As the light of Christ's beautiful life shines upon your pathway, you can say - "He is truly the Light of my life and the Light of the whole world."

Booklet 4 will answer the following Questions -

- **How did Jesus spend his childhood and youth?**
- **In what kind of town was Jesus reared?**
- **Does Jesus have a message for youth today?**

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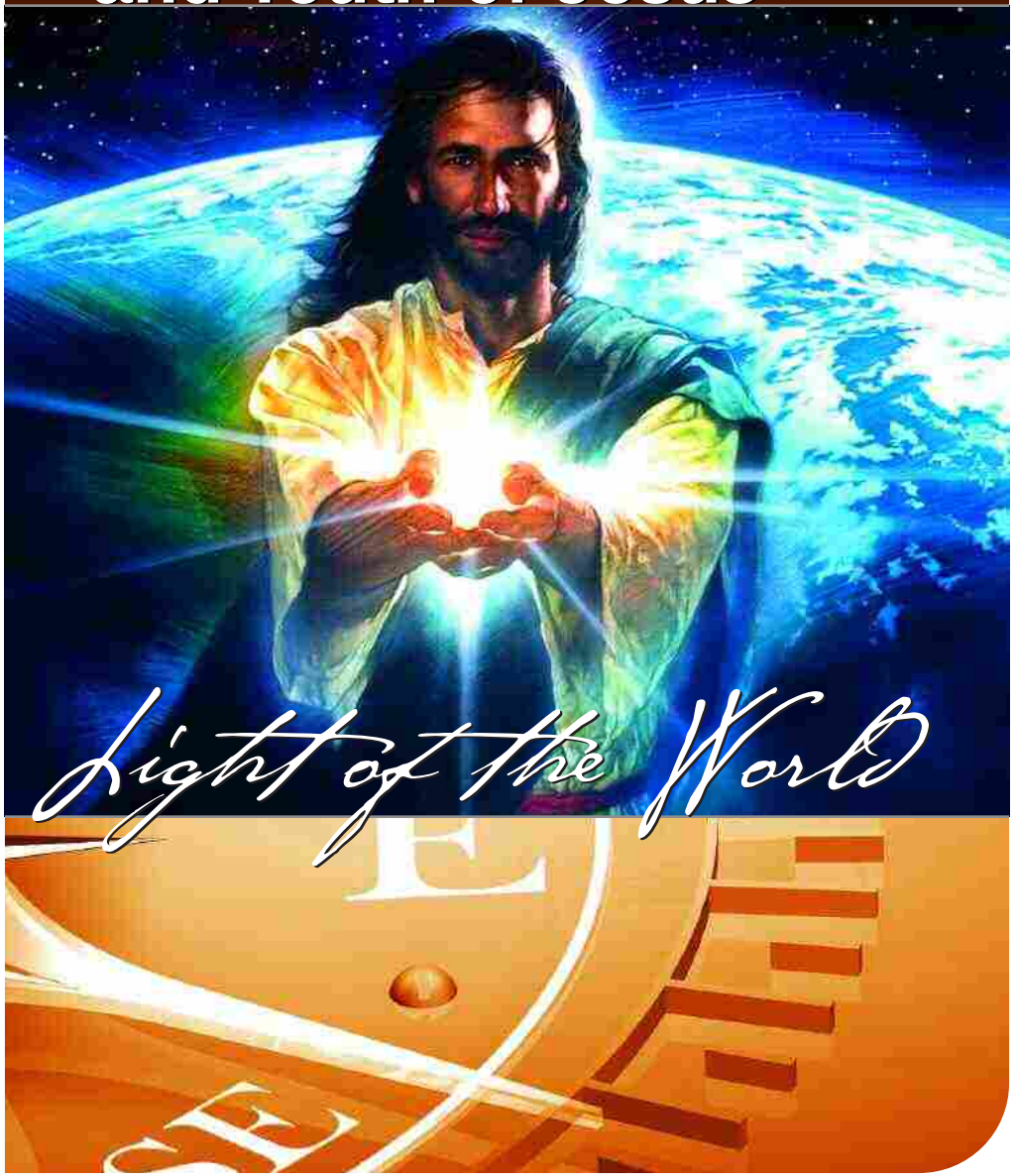
BOOKLET FOUR

The Childhood and Youth of Jesus



. . . and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene." Matthew 2:23

The town of Nazareth where Jesus spent his childhood and youth is about 115 kilometres north of Jerusalem. It is situated on a large hill (Luke 4:29) overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon with the beautiful Carmel Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea in the distance. Its modern name is Al-Nasira. The Christians of Palestine are still known as Al-Nasara. Not much is recorded in the New Testament about Jesus' early years at Nazareth, but the Gospel writers give us a few clues that are all we need.

In Booklet 2 Jesus was being taken by his parents into Egypt just in time to escape death at the command of King Herod. Let us now join them in the land of the Nile as they wait for some divine sign that they should return to Palestine.

Who APPEARED TO JOSEPH IN A DREAM?

After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." Matthew 2:19, 20

When Joseph learned that Herod was dead, he immediately made plans to return to his homeland. He and Mary gathered together their few possessions and, with the young child, started the journey back to Palestine.

As we watch them travelling over the caravan trails, we see that the parents are thinking and talking about the future, for the safety and welfare of the wonderful child entrusted to their care is their greatest concern.

The return of the family from Egypt had been foreshadowed centuries before Christ was born. ". . . out of Egypt I called my son" (Hosea 11:1), God had declared through his prophet. See Matthew 2:13-15 also. He did not forget his Son in Egypt, nor the earthly parents of that Holy Child. At just the right moment the angel spoke to Joseph in a dream, telling him that King Herod was dead and that the time had come for them to return to Palestine.

To WHAT PLACE DID JOSEPH AND HIS FAMILY RETURN?

As they journeyed homeward to Palestine, a second message came to Joseph warning him to avoid the province of Judea and go north to Galilee.

So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Egypt. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee. Matthew 2:21, 22





Joseph had planned to return to Bethlehem in the province of Judea, for that was his ancestral city (Luke 2:1-4), but when he heard that Archelaus, the villainous son of Herod, sat on the throne, he went north "to the district of Galilee." This was familiar country, for he and Mary had lived in Nazareth of Galilee before the birth of Jesus. So they returned to "their own town of Nazareth." Luke 2:39. Matthew tells us that "he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: 'He will be called a Nazarene.'" Matthew 2:23

The CHILD GROWS IN STATURE AND WISDOM





When Joseph and Mary arrived at Nazareth they must have felt as we do today when returning home after a long, hard journey. They were glad to be back! Joseph, being a carpenter, turned his attention to his shop and tools, while Mary applied herself to the joyful task of caring for her simple, little home and the young child Jesus.

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. Luke 2:40

Jesus passed from infancy to childhood as any normal child would. His mind was active, he was thoughtful and wise, patient and courteous, true to principle, loyal to God, and obedient to his parents. He had a pleasant disposition and a spotless character. Although Nazareth was a traders' town notorious for its wickedness, he was not influenced by the sin all about him. Jesus was alarmed as he saw men openly transgress the laws of God, and he determined that so far as he was concerned he would rather die than violate his conscience. So he committed himself fully to God and to a life of righteousness.

Did JESUS RECEIVE A FORMAL EDUCATION?

During his ministry, the question was asked concerning Jesus -

"How did this man get such learning without having studied?" John 7:15

Christ received no formal education in the rabbinical schools, yet during his lifetime he acquired a general knowledge and wisdom that made him the world's greatest teacher. His mother was his first human instructor, and from her lips he learned the will of God through the Old Testament Scriptures.

And Jesus was a student of nature. The country around Nazareth was rugged and beautiful. He breathed the pure air and basked in the warm sunshine that fell on the mountain meadows. Through God's vast creation he learned of the heaenly Father's power, wisdom, and love. As he studied, he stored this knowledge in his heart to be used later when he would begin his public work. The education which Jesus received in this way was of greater value than the traditions and human philosophy taught in the synagogue schools.

Dean Farrar makes this observation -
The language which our Lord . . . spoke was Aramaic: and at that period Hebrew was completely a dead language, known only to the more educated, and only to be acquired by labour: yet it is clear that Jesus was acquainted with it, for some of his Scriptural quotations directly refer to the Hebrew original. Greek, too, he must have known, for it was currently spoken in towns so near his home as . . . Caesarea and Tiberias . . . Whether he was acquainted with Latin is much more doubtful, though not impossible. The Life of Christ, page 48

What TRIP DID JESUS MAKE WHEN TWELVE YEARS OLD?



At the age of twelve, Jesus joined his parents in a never-to-be-forgotten visit to Jerusalem.

Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom. Luke 2:41, 42

Think of how Jesus must have felt making his first trip to the big city so far away from Nazareth. Having passed from childhood into youth, he now wore a different kind of clothes and had greater responsibilities. At the age of twelve, a Hebrew boy was called "a son of the law" and also "a son of







God." The Passover was one of the three annual religious festivals of the Jews and was well attended. Peasants and noblemen, princes and servants all joined in the procession that approached Jerusalem from all directions. Mary and Joseph were accustomed to attending the Passover feast every year, so when Jesus reached the age of twelve he was allowed to go with them. This trip to Jerusalem is the only event recorded in the life of Christ from the time of his return from Egypt until his baptism at the age of thirty.

And what was the significance of the Passover? This feast of the Jews, which lasted about a week, was a commemorative event. Its celebration every year reminded them of God's deliverance of their nation from Egyptian slavery. Read Exodus 12. Like the Independence Day celebrated in many countries, the Passover festival represented Israel's emancipation from Egyptian bondage.

On the night that the children of Israel left Egypt and began the long journey to Canaan, a divine judgment fell upon the Egyptians - the slaying of the firstborn. God's people were instructed to sprinkle the doorposts of their dwellings with the blood of a slain lamb. Then, when the destroying angel passed over and saw the sign of the blood, the firstborn within was safe. Death struck only those homes where there was no blood. This blood was symbolic of the sacrificial blood of Christ, which would be shed to deliver us from sin. He was the true Lamb of God. And those who believe "shall be saved from God's wrath through him." Romans 5:9. The Lamb, after it was roasted, was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

"This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover." Exodus 12:11

So Israel was spared through the mercy of God and left Egypt an independent nation.

Jesus SEPARATED FROM HIS PARENTS

For about a week Jesus and his parents joined with the worshippers in the Passover celebration. Then the time came for them to return to Nazareth.







After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Luke 2:43, 44

Why do you suppose Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem? He must have been fascinated by the Passover services in the temple. At least, he did not remain with his parents, whose minds were perhaps occupied more with the ceremonies themselves than with their meaning. As Jesus saw the Passover lamb sacrificed by the priest, we can imagine that the significance of the ceremony began to dawn upon his mind. He was himself represented by the slain lamb. Probably for the first time his work as man's Saviour began to open before him.

Later, when Jesus began his public ministry, John the Baptist referred to him as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29. This has meaning to us because, as Peter later said -

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18, 19

After leaving Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was not with them.

Thinking he was in their company, they travelled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. Luke 2: 44, 45

Can you imagine the thoughts that raced through their minds? At the birth of the Christ child, Herod had tried to kill him, and no doubt they thought that he might have been destroyed now by some enemy of God. Frightened at the possibility, they retraced their steps and began to look for him everywhere. Their hearts were filled with foreboding, and they were angry with themselves for having been so occupied with friends and the pleasures of the occasion that they had lost sight of their precious Son.

Where WAS JESUS FOUND?



Finally, after a long search, the parents of Jesus found him in the temple school where he was discussing religion with the rabbis.

After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. Luke 2: 46, 47



When the rabbis questioned Jesus, his brilliant answers amazed them. Could it be that he, in turn, questioned those scholarly men about the Old Testament prophecies which pointed to the sufferings and death of the Lamb of God? See Isaiah 53. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to come and free them from the Romans. Jesus doubtless directed their minds to the words of the prophets which describe the humility and sacrifice of the world's Redeemer.

When Joseph and Mary found Jesus in the temple school, they reprimanded him.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked.

"Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Luke 2:48-50



These are the first recorded words of Christ, ". . . I had to be in my Father's house." God was his Father, and he was faithfully attending to his Father's business. But Mary and Joseph had neglected their duty as protectors of the young Jesus and therefore had lost him.



What a lesson for us! The reason we lose the Light of life from our lives is that we do not take time to be alone with God. How many there are who make the mistake of assuming that a mere round of ceremonies constitutes religion and that secret communion with God is unimportant. But such mechanical worship is not acceptable to him. True religion means fellowship with the Creator. It touches the heart and changes the life. If we will make it a practice to pray and read the Bible every day - not just one day a week - we will have Jesus with us to brighten every step of the way. It is our sincere desire that this Bible course will help make religion a living, personal experience for you.

To WHAT PLACE DID THE REUNITED FAMILY RETURN?

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Luke 2:51

The return journey to Nazareth was uneventful. For eighteen years after this Passover visit, Jesus applied himself to the task of preparing for his ministry. His training was not acquired, however, in a parochial school or a theological seminary. By faithfully discharging the duties of a son, a workman, and a citizen, by studying the scriptures with his godly mother and learning lessons from the book of nature, he acquired an understanding of truth that fitted him for his mission in the world.

In WHAT FOURFOLD WAY DID JESUS DEVELOP?







The Bible describes the youthful development of Jesus in a few simple but meaningful words.

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. Luke 2:52

He grew intellectually - "wisdom", physically - "stature", spiritually - "favour with God", socially - "and man". In this text we have the only clue to the life of Jesus during the eighteen years between the Passover visit to Jerusalem when he was twelve, and his baptism in the Jordan River when he was about thirty (Luke 3:23), but the following facts are obvious -

1. *The parents of Jesus were poor.* Jesus understood the meaning of humility and self sacrifice. He had to work hard to help Joseph make a living for the family. His was an industrious life, and there were no idle moments to indulge in the pleasures of sin.

2. *Nazareth was a wicked place.* The world's Redeemer was not reared in what we would call a church town. The inhabitants of Nazareth were notorious for their wickedness. This is proved by the proverbial saying, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" John 1:46. But Jesus came out of Nazareth - and he was good. This shows that it is possible by God's grace to live a blameless life in the midst of temptation, poverty, and adversity. In fact, these things aid in developing a righteous character.

3. *Jesus was an obedient son.* Concerning the attitude of Jesus toward his parents, the Scripture says that he "was obedient to them". Just think! He had been the Commander of heaven. The angels had found their keenest delight in obeying his will. But now he was a humble youth in a small vilage, subject to his earthly parents. He worked in a carpenter shop and learned a trade (Mark 6:3). His dress was that of the common labourer. Though he was divine, he did not draw upon his supernatural power to lighten the load that he carried as a man.







4. *Jesus was a perfect workman.* In every way Christ was a perfect man. Not only was he perfect in physical form and character, but he did perfect work as a carpenter. No slovenliness or carelessness was seen in his workmanship. His hands were calloused and his muscles firm and solid. His example is a lesson to the world that physical labour is honourable. It teaches that carpenters and farmers and housewives who are faithful in their everyday duties are honoured of heaven.

5. *Jesus was a pattern for youth.* There would be no juvenile delinquency if all the young people today would follow the example of Jesus. In his home life he set the example for all children and youth to follow. He taught that humble work is a blessing and that labour is intended for man's good.

One of the most important lessons we can learn from Jesus' hidden years at Nazareth is that a truly great man is always humble. J. Whitcomb Brougher said -

True greatness can be humble without loss of power or dignity. Jesus stooped to conquer. The extreme simplicity of Christ's conduct is as difficult to follow as is the greatness of his character. How simply, and how beautifully, does the character of Jesus shine out in all the splendour of his humble service to mankind . . . Real greatness rejoices in the privilege of doing little things for the good of others. Treasury of the Christian Faith, page 383

A Word to Parents

Encourage the youth and children in your home to get acquainted with Jesus. We know that many of them will want to follow him. Encourage them also to enrol in one of our courses especially designed for their age.

Booklet 5 will answer the following Questions -

- **Who was John the Baptist?**
- **Why was Jesus baptised?**
- **What is the significance of baptism?**

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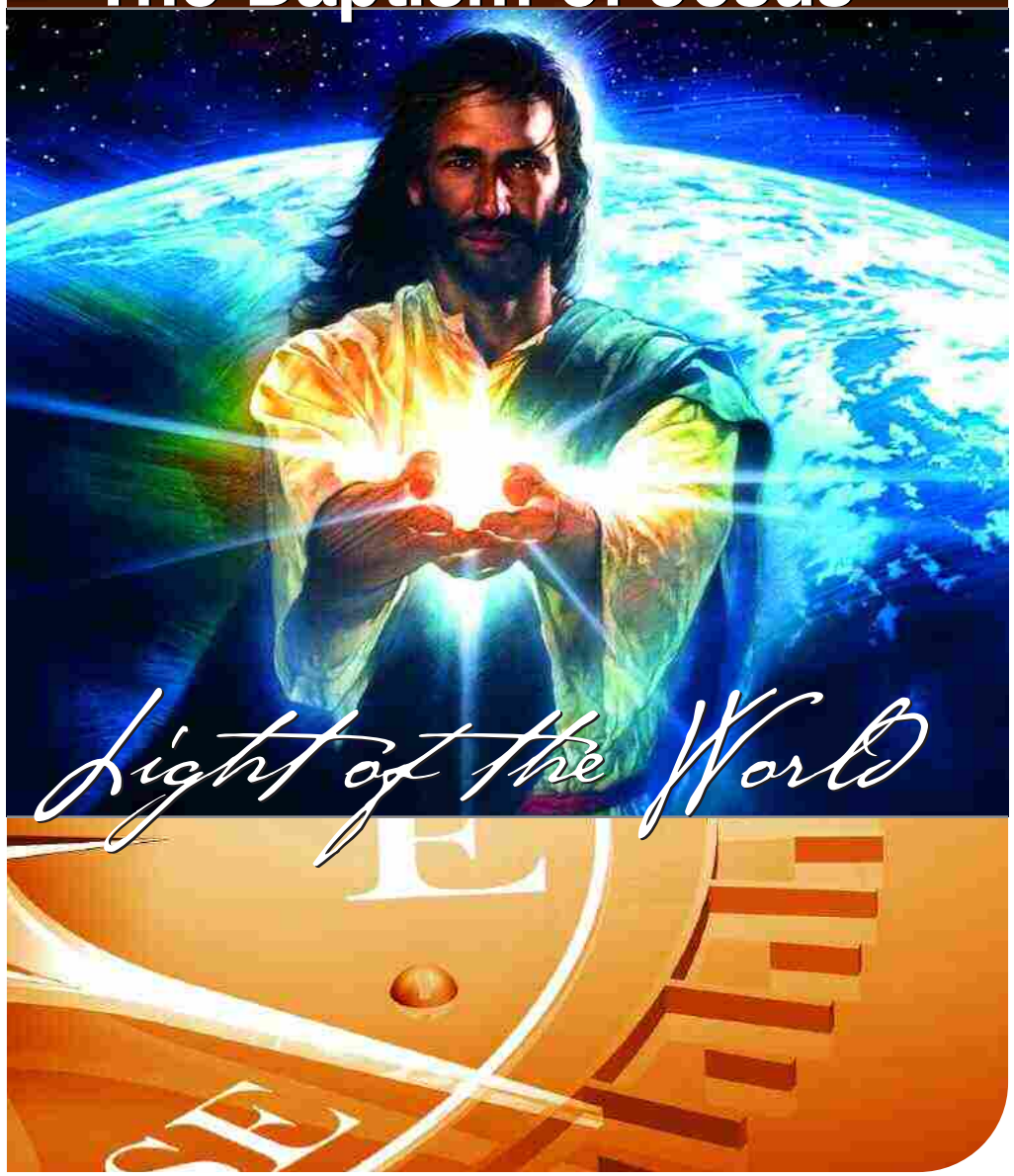
BOOKLET FIVE

The Baptism of Jesus*


Light of the World

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Mark 1:9

When we last saw Jesus he was busy at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth. During the eighteen years from his Passover visit to Jerusalem until the time of his baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus performed the ordinary work of a craftsman. In this booklet, we see how he laid aside his hammer and saw and began an entirely new phase of his life.

News had reached Nazareth of the great revival caused by the preaching of John the Baptist. This was the prophetic signal (Isaiah 40:3-5) for Jesus to say goodbye to his mother and make his way with the crowds that were travelling southward to the Jordan. The time had come for him to begin his public ministry and, as God's spokesman, to announce to Israel the good news of his kingdom!

Jesus PRESENTS HIMSELF TO JOHN



The Scriptures state that Jesus came to the Jordan "to be baptised" by John. That was the immediate reason for his journey from Nazareth.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John. Matthew 3:13

Jesus was not baptised because he was a sinner. He was uncorrupted by the sins of Nazareth. He was "holy, blameless, pure." Hebrews 7:26. He sought baptism because he wished to identify himself with men and to set an example for all to follow.

Although we do not know the exact spot where Jesus was baptised, we do know that this important event in his life took place in the Jordan River not too far from the city of Jericho, where John the Baptist was preaching and baptising.

In the original Greek, the expression "in Jordan" found in Mark 1:9 reads "into the Jordan." So we see that Jesus was taken out into the waters of the Jordan to be baptised.

"Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old" (Luke 3:23) at the time of his baptism. Thirty years from the time of his birth in 4 B.C. would bring us to A.D. 27, the year that Jesus was baptised.

Who WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST?

John the Baptist, or baptiser, was the forerunner of Christ who was to make the first announcement of his kingdom.



He was a mighty preacher of righteousness and the nation of Israel was stirred by his threefold message. He preached - repentance, Christ, and that the kingdom of God was at hand. Centuries before, Isaiah had prophesied that John would come and do this work.
The prophet spoke of him as -



"A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the Lord.' " Isaiah 40:3

John's work made it easier for Christ to gain the attention of the multitudes and attract them to his wonderful teachings. Being a man of strong personality and filled with the Spirit, John the Baptist made a powerful impression upon the people. His dress was of camel's hair, his diet simple. He rebuked sin and taught the truth in plain, easily understood language.

John's birth was a miracle, but he worked no miracles (John 10:41). Zacharias his father, and Elisabeth his mother, were both elderly at the

time of his birth (Luke 1:5-25, 36, 37). Elisabeth and Mary, the mother of Jesus, were cousins, and John was born six months prior to the birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-40, 56, 57). Apparently John and Jesus never became acquainted until the time of the baptism in Jordan. John was reared in the silent hills of Judea, many miles to the south of Nazareth of Galilee, where Jesus spent his early life.

John HESITATES TO BAPTISE JESUS





When Jesus requested John to baptise him, the prophet was doubtful that he was qualified to perform that sacred rite.

Never before had John perceived such purity in any human being. The atmosphere about Jesus was awe inspiring, and John felt himself to be a sinner in the presence of this Holy One. The Holy Spirit impressed him that he who stood before him was the Son of God. How could he baptise the Sinless One? And why should Jesus request baptism? He had no sins to mar his record. There was no stain of iniquity upon his soul. So John, in his humility, suggested that the process be reversed and that Jesus baptise him. The Scripture reads -

But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfil all righteousness." Then John consented. Matthew 3:14, 15

So Jesus was baptised by John. As we study Christ's life we see that every act was filled with significance. His baptism was intended to teach the lesson that all who believe in him should be baptised as he was.

special notes

What SIGNS MARKED JESUS' BAPTISM?

As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. Matthew 3:16







The Spirit of God in the form of a dove rested upon Christ immediately after he came up "out of the water". In this way the Heavenly Father anointed his Son for service. Now Christ would be able to accomplish his work of building God's kingdom of righteousness in the hearts of men. With the Spirit's presence, he could discharge his mission as man's Redeemer. And he could also, as John said, "baptise . . . with the Holy Spirit." Mark 1:8. Christ later made the promise - which was fulfilled at Pentecost - that all who receive him as Lord and Saviour would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. See John 14:16, 17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-11.

Immediately after the Spirit fell upon Christ, the Father gave another token of his divine relationship to him.

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

Jesus recognised the approving voice of his Father in the words, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Christ was now about to enter upon his public ministry. The spiritual kingdom that he had come to establish was not the kind of kingdom the people were looking for. *They were expecting a political Messiah to deliver them from Roman bondage.* Many would be disillusioned by his preaching and teaching. There were great conflicts ahead for the Saviour, and the Heavenly Father desired to encourage and strengthen his Son to press forward in his work, hence the Spirit's presence and the voice of God's approval. The Man whom John had baptised was indeed the Messiah, the Hope of Israel, and the Light of the world.

John ACKNOWLEDGES THE MESSIAH





These events led John to express his convictions about Christ as follows -

"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me. The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God. John 1:32-34

John discerned the Spirit of God resting in dove like form upon Christ. He also heard the voice of the Father speaking from heaven, acknowledging Jesus to be his Son. By these two signs he recognised the identity of Jesus as the Messiah of whose coming he had been preaching. He knew that it was the world's Redeemer whom he had baptised. His faith was expressed in his open declaration to the people -

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29

These words of John the Baptist prepared the way for many to accept Jesus as the Messiah, or Anointed One. See Acts 10:38.

Closing DAYS OF JOHN'S MINISTRY

During the months that immediately followed the baptism and temptation of Christ, the multitudes in Judea turned away from John and fixed their attention upon the One to whom he had directed them as the Son of God.

The crowds who followed John became smaller and smaller, but the people flocked to hear Christ. Many openly acknowledged their loyalty to Jesus after hearing him preach. The disciples of John were trouble about this and complained to him. They looked with jealously upon Christ and made it known to the Baptist that they did not appreciate the work that Jesus was doing. Here is the record -







Now John was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptised . . . They came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan - the one you testified about - well, he is baptising, and everyone is going to him." John 3:23, 26

John was not troubled by their complaints, but rejoiced in the Saviour's popularity.

To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him. The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less. John 3:27-30

John represented himself to his disciples as the best man at a wedding. Such a person helps to prepare for the marriage and the feast that follows. In this illustration John pointed to Christ as the groom and the church as the bride. It was his work to bring Christ and the church together in the closest relationship. The Baptist had been called to direct the people to Jesus, and it was his pleasure to witness the success of the Saviour's work. "That joy is mine, and it is now complete. *He must become greater, and I must become less."*

What a lesson we can learn from John's humility! By nature he was a forceful and rugged character, but he was willing to put Christ first.







Jesus later paid this tribute to John -

"What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you'. I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John." Luke 7:24-28

Dean Farrar, an eminent Christian writer said -

The nature of St John the Baptist was full of impetuosity and fire. The long struggle which had given him so powerful a mastery over himself - which had made him content with self obliteration before the presence of his Lord – which had inspired him with fearlessness in the face of danger, and humility in the midst of applause - had left its traces in the stern character, and aspect, and teaching of the man . . . His very teaching reflected the imagery of the wilderness - the rock, the serpent, the barren tree. "In his manifestation and agency," it has been said, "he was like a burning torch; his public life was quite an earthquake - the whole man was a sermon; he might well call himself a voice - the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Life of Christ, page 57

Some time after the baptism of Jesus, John was imprisoned by Herod the Tetrarch. The historian Flavius Josephus tells us that John's imprisonment was in the fortress of Machaerus, near the north end of the Dead Sea. John had rebuked the adulterous life of this evil ruler and he paid for his fearless act with his life, but in the face of death he received a cheering message from Christ. See Matthew 14:1-12, 11:2-6.

In the death of John, Jesus must have seen a token of the gathering tempest that was to grow darker and more violent until he himself would be crucified upon the cross. The same hatred of righteousness and truth that caused the wicked Herod to take the head of John the Baptist was responsible later for the cruel death of Jesus.

Baptism A CHRISTIAN ORDINANCE





Not long after his baptism, Jesus began to gather about him a group of twelve men who became his disciples.

Later he ordained them and they baptised as John had. See John 3:22, 4:2. Thus Christ set his approval on the Baptist's work. After his death and resurrection Jesus gave this special group the command to go into all the world and make disciples, first teaching, then baptising them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. See Matthew 28:18-20. Only those who accepted the Lordship of Jesus, his words and teachings and saving power, and who gave evidence of repentance, were to be baptised. That command of Christ is still in force today and will be until the end of the world. Here are his words -

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . . And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:19, 20

What IS THE MEANING OF BAPTISM?

Baptism represents a threefold experience in the Christian life: death, burial, and resurrection. Paul said -

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. Romans 6:3, 4

To be buried with Christ in baptism signifies: death to the selfish, carnal nature, a spiritual resurrection - living "a new life," and the consent of the







mind and heart to follow the example of Jesus in all things that he commands. As we think about these three facts, it becomes clear that *immersion* perfectly represents this experience of *death, burial and resurrection* to a new life. Our English word "baptise" comes from a Greek word which means "to dip" or "to immerse."

Before one is baptised as a follower of Christ, he ought to know *what* the Bible teaches so that his belief can be intelligent. He ought also to know in *whom* he believes. A mere profession of Christianity will save no man, even if he is baptised. Christianity is a *life*, not simply a religious philosophy. That life is Christ's life, which through the gospel is to be reproduced in the Christian. You too may live that life through faith in Jesus as your personal Saviour.

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved . . . As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." Romans 10:9, 11

God acknowledges as his sons and daughters all who are baptised as Jesus was, with an intelligent understanding of the meaning of baptism and a true heart experience with God. To all who would follow the Lord in baptism, the following promise is made -

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

Then God's word is fulfilled -

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

When an old Christian, who had experienced much joy in his life, was asked about the happiest day of his life, he said, "It was the day on which I was baptised."





A few of the New Testament characters who followed their Lord in baptism are - the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the converts in Samaria (Acts 8:12), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:38), Saul of Tarsus - who became Paul the apostle (Acts 9:18), the Corinthians (Acts 18:8), the disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-5), and the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16).

May we all show the willing spirit of the Ethiopian eunuch, who said -

"Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptised?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptised him. Acts 8:36-38 (verse 37 in margin)

special notes

Booklet 6 will answer the following Questions -

- **Did a good God make a devil?**
- **How did Jesus overcome Satan and sin?**
- **What is the secret of victory in the Christian Life?**

*For a good scriptural preview of this booklet, read the third chapter of Matthew and also Mark 1:1-11.

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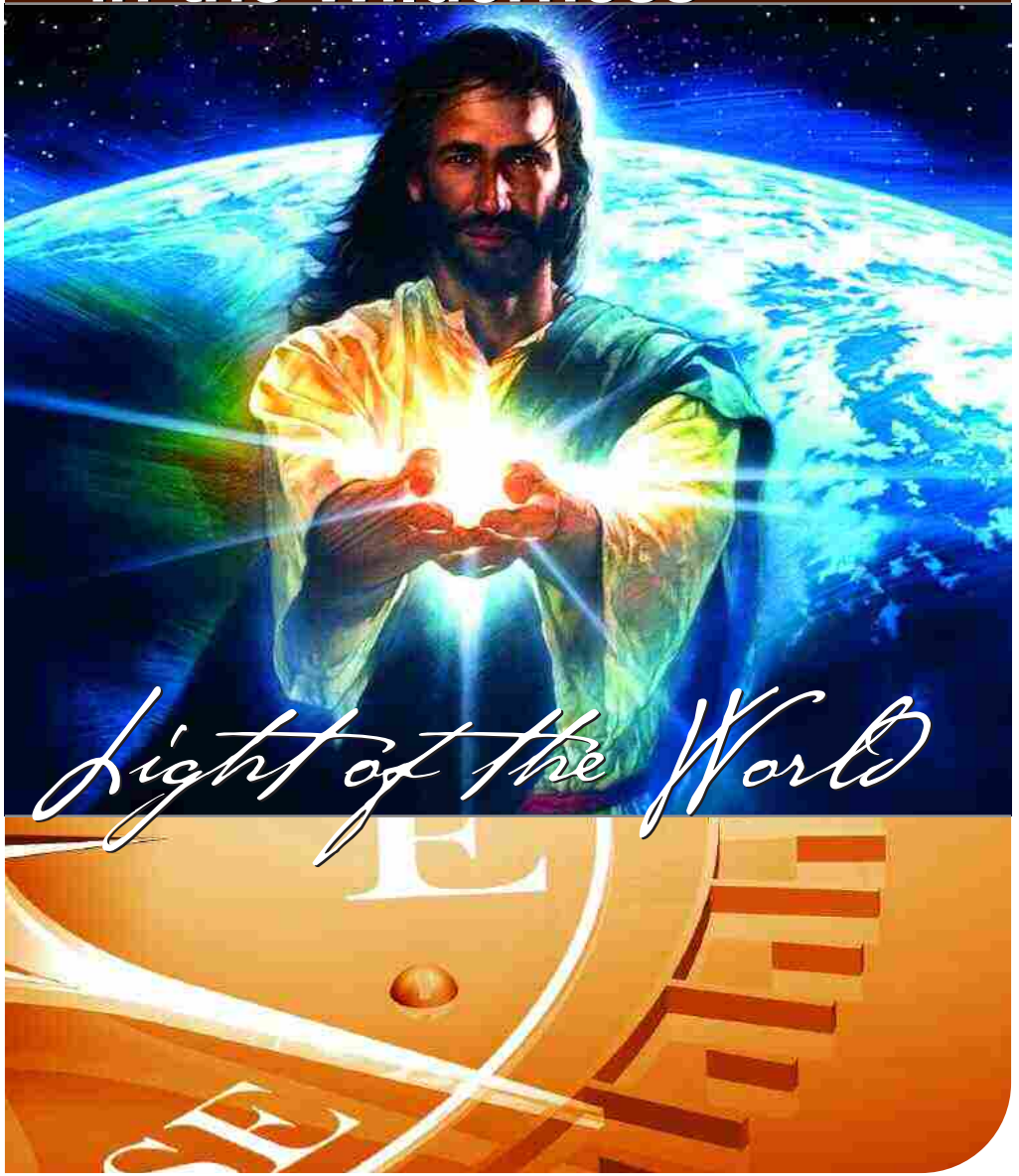
BOOKLET SIX

The Temptation in the Wilderness*



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days Luke 4:1, 2

Today we will take an unusual journey. We will follow the footsteps of Jesus into the wilderness of temptation, a wild and desolate country rising westward from the valley through which the Jordan River flows. Tradition points to a mountain about ten kilometres north west of Jericho as the scene of his temptation. It is called Mt Quarantania in allusion to his forty day fast.

This forsaken country, known as the Wilderness of Judea, was probably uninhabited except for wild beasts. In this hilly land of stone and sand, Christ endured a period of great temptation. John A. Broadus, a great Bible student and teacher, says that, "familiar as we are with the simple narrative, it presents one of the most wonderful, mysterious, and awful scenes of the world's history."

Jesus had no contact with any human being during his forty day fast. He was alone in the wilderness save for the presence of Satan who tormented him, and angels who strengthened him to endure. Alone, Jesus became the conqueror over Satan and sin, and his wilderness conflict and victory are heaven's assurance of our own victory over evil.

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:18

The best protection against temptation is faith in Christ. His victory over temptation is our pledge of triumph in the battle with sin. Those who are struggling with temptation will find wonderful help by reading the first chapter of James. Let us now follow Jesus into the wilderness experience.

Who LED CHRIST INTO THE WILDERNESS?

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. Matthew 4:1, 2





Jesus did not go deliberately and of his own accord into the wilderness to be tempted. He was providentially led there so that he could be alone to think about his work and pray over his future plans. By fasting and prayer he sought to prepare himself to travel the hard road that lay ahead. When Satan saw that Christ was alone in the wilderness, he took advantage of the opportunity to tempt him.

During this period of nearly six weeks, Jesus engaged in the most terrible conflict of his life, with the exception of his struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane over three years later. Even Moses and Elijah, both of whom fasted forty days, did not pass through so trying an experience.

Think of the suffering that Christ endured. First, he was alone with the wild beasts and the poisonous snakes of the desert hills. Second, he was without food of any kind for forty long days. Third, he was approached personally by the devil, who presented to him the most cunning temptations at a time when he was weak and suffering from extreme hunger.

What WAS THE FIRST TEMPTATION?

When Satan came to Christ with the first of three great temptations, he suggested that he satisfy his appetite. He challenged Jesus to prove that he was the Son of God by changing the desert stones into bread and appeasing his hunger.

The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread. Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Matthew 4:3, 4







The tempter probably appeared as a messenger of light in order to deceive Christ. See 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15. Jesus was emaciated and weakened from his long fast. Body, mind, and spirit had been tested to the limit. Taking unfair advantage of this situation, Satan came suddenly upon Christ, tempting him first to doubt his divine Sonship, and then to satisfy his appetite.

"The first Adam," said Dwight L. Moody, "was tempted in the garden, and fell; the second Adam in the wilderness, and he came off victorious." Appetite was the basis of Adam's temptation in the Garden of Eden and it was also the basis for Christ's temptation in the Judean wilderness. As one writer has said: "Just where the ruin began, the work of our redemption must begin. As by the indulgence of appetite Adam fell, so by the denial of appetite Christ must overcome."

For thousands of years the descendants of Adam had indulged appetite and passion until they had no power to resist the temptation to intemperance and impurity. In order to save man from the slavery of fleshly lust, Christ, "the last Adam", endured nearly six weeks of starvation. In our behalf he exercised a self control so strong that all the power of Satan could not break his will.

In order to understand the conflict that Christ endured, let us get a picture of the powerful adversary who tempted him. It was Satan, a real being, a fallen angel who was "cast out" of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). Jesus himself said concerning him, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven". Luke 10:18. He was created a beautiful sinless angel - Lucifer, Son of the Morning - not a monster with hoofs and horns. God did not make a devil. Lucifer made himself a devil when he chose to indulge pride and vanity. Of him the Lord said -

"You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." Ezekiel 28:12







Lucifer had stood in the light of God's presence and knew much of his plans for his vast universe. The prophet Ezekiel said -

"You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you." Ezekiel 28:15

Original sin was found in Lucifer, not God. He had said, "I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." Isaiah 14:14. This envy led to open rebellion. God saw fit to remove this sore spot from heaven, so Lucifer and his followers - about one third of the angels - were cast out of heaven into this world. See Revelation 12:3, 4. It was this powerful being who tempted Christ in the wilderness.

Coming to Christ, Satan suggested that he turn the desert stones into bread to satisfy his hunger. The enemy revealed his perverse character by his insinuation of distrust - "*If* you are the Son of God," he said. Jesus refused to doubt that he was God's Son. Fresh in the Saviour's memory were the words of his Heavenly Father, spoken at his recent baptism - "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17. So Jesus did not weaken. He refused to doubt God or to exercise his divine power to provide bread for himself. Jesus met the temptation by quoting the Scripture -

"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' " Matthew 4: 4

That was all that was necessary. Satan had no power against the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God . . . living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword." Ephesians 6:17, Hebrews 4:12. The adversary was unsuccessful in this first temptation.

In your struggle against temptation and material attractions, remember that with God's help, spiritual things become stronger than earthly attractions. The power of the Word of God is yours for victory if you will but read it and hold fast to its promises. It is impossible for us in our own strength to resist the temptation to indulge in bad habits, but "looking to Jesus," our feet will be directed into habits of righteousness, and we will overcome.

A company of young soldiers was once drilling on the main street of a small town. The leader gave orders with short, crisp commands, but the young recruits stumbled all over themselves. With a note of irritation the sergeant barked out, "Quit looking down at your feet! Eyes to the front! Your feet will follow your eyes!"

If we will but look up and fasten our eyes on Jesus, our feet will walk in the way of righteousness, and we will find ourselves being drawn toward him. "But take heart," he says to the struggling soul, "I have overcome the world." John 16:33

How DID SATAN NEXT TEMPT CHRIST?





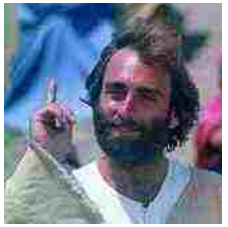
Satan's next assault upon Christ was a bold and presumptuous act. Placing him upon the pinnacle of the temple, he suggested that Christ prove his divine Sonship by casting himself down to the ground without killing himself.

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' " Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " Matthew 4:5-7

Satan doubtless would like to have hurled Christ to his death on the pavement below, but he did not have the power to do this. So he commanded Jesus to jump of his own volition.

In this temptation the sin of presumption was urged upon Jesus. "To presume," from which the word "presumption" comes, means "to take upon oneself without leave, authority, or warrant; to undertake in rash defiance, in over confidence, or in vain hope."

Satan assured Christ that, according to the Scriptures (Psalm 91:11, 12), the angels would hold him up in their arms lest he kill himself in the fall. "Prove that you are the Son of God," Satan commanded. "If you are God's Son, the angels will come and protect you."





The devil is clever at quoting Scripture, but in this case he failed to quote it in its proper context. Jesus knew that this promise refers only to those who walk in God's ways. The Saviour would not have been walking in God's ways had he shown such foolhardiness and presumption. Nothing could be gained by such an exhibition of vanity. Turning upon Satan, he declared -

"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " Matthew 4:7

At the baptism of Jesus, God had already testified that Jesus was his Son. Now the devil wanted to put God's word to the test. He was tempting God, putting God on trial.

Jesus refused to comply with Satan's demand. Resting in the knowledge of his Father's love, he rebuked the devil, and by his example taught that we may safely trust the Scripture.

What WAS THE FINAL TEMPTATION?

The third and final inducement to sin that the devil held before the Saviour is described in these words -

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' " Matthew 4:8-10

The scene now changes from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem to the summit of an unknown mountain. In this final temptation the character







of the tempter is fully revealed. With all pretence laid aside, he offers Christ the supremacy of the world if he will only acknowledge the sovereign power of Satan.

The inducement here held before Jesus is tremendous. The kingdoms of this world with all their glory pass in panoramic view before him. For forty days he has seen nothing but the gloom and desolation of the wilderness. Now, he beholds the beautiful cities of the earth. The sun's rays play upon marble palaces and scenes of worldly pleasure. As far as the eye can reach, stretch fertile fields quilted with grain, and orchards and vineyards laden with fruit. The scene is one of lush prosperity. He listens quietly as Satan says -

"I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Luke 4:6, 7

But Jesus is not deceived. He knows that Satan is lying when he declares that the sovereignty of the world is his, and that he could give it to whomsoever he would. In the beginning Adam had been appointed ruler of this world *under* God. When Adam sinned, Satan usurped that authority, but the world was *still subject to God.* So Christ denies that Satan is the supreme ruler of the world. Pointing to his Father in heaven, he declares -

"For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' " Matthew 4:10

With that word of authority from the Scriptures, Christ orders the enemy of all truth to depart. "Away from me, Satan!" he commands. And with those words of authority Satan flies in rage and defeat.

special notes

How DID THE TEMPTATION END?

After the third temptation God directly intervened on behalf of his dear Son.

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Matthew 4:11

Jesus was exhausted from the fearful ordeal. But the Father in heaven was watching. His heart of infinite love suffered with his Son. Angels were sent from heaven to minister to him. Then the devil departed from him "until an opportune time." Luke 4:13. This was not by any means the last temptation that Jesus encountered, but it ended the fierce ordeal of temptation in the wilderness.

Temptations THAT COME TO ALL

Peter tells us that the Christian also meets with temptation "for a little while." 1 Peter 1:6, 7. There may be many seasons of temptation in each life before the final victory is gained. The Apostle John warns us to beware of three evils that plague every life. In the wilderness temptation, Christ overthrew this triumvirate of evils that plague the human soul. Here they are -





Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. 1 John 2:15-17

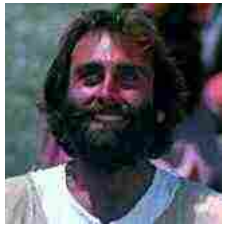
1. *The lust of the flesh* can be compared to Jesus' first temptation to change the stones into bread to satisfy his hunger.

2. *The lust of the eyes* corresponds to the third temptation when the glory and glamour of the world passed before Jesus.

3. *The pride of life* is equivalent to the sin of vanity and presumption presented in the second temptation.

How CHRIST OVERCAME TEMPTATION







Let us now point out the secret of Jesus' decisive victory over all temptation. His victory was made up of three precious ingredients which we may have when we seek God's power over temptation.

1. *Christ looked in faith to the Father for wisdom and strength.* The prophet Isaiah describes the faith that Jesus exercised in his conquest of evil -

Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced . . . and I know I will not be put to shame . . . It is the Sovereign Lord who helps me . . . Who among you fears the Lord? . . . Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. Isaiah 50:7-10

The victories that Christ gained through faith in his Father we too may gain. So, friend, "Have faith in God." Mark 11:22

2. *Christ was kept by the power of the Word.* "It is written," Christ said to the devil. The Saviour met the enemy with the promises and commands of Scripture. We are to do the same, as Peter said -

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1:4

It was "by every word of God" that Jesus lived. So are we to be guided by every verse and every word of Scripture. There is power in the Word, but there is no power in self. The strength of the Bible is ours. The psalmist says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you . . . by the word of your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent." Psalm 119:11, 17:4







3. *Christ was consecrated to God.* He came into this world for a purpose. The prophet said, "He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth." Isaiah 42:4. Even at the cost of life itself, he determined to save the human race. He counted the cost and willingly accepted the pain and sacrifice demanded of him. Although he had to tread the wine-press alone, he pressed forward through the conflict, determined that he would not yield an inch to the devil.

We will never understand how much our redemption has cost until we pass through the portals of the eternal city of God and stand with our Redeemer before God's throne. Then we will know something of the great condescension and love of Jesus which led him to leave the heavenly palaces and come to this world to live and die for us. We will cast our crowns at his feet and raise the song of praise and adoration -

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" Revelation 5:12

Booklet 7 will answer the following Questions

- **Who were the intimate friends of Jesus?**
- **What kind of people were they?**
- **How may I become a friend of Christ?**

* For a good scriptural preview of this booklet, read Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.

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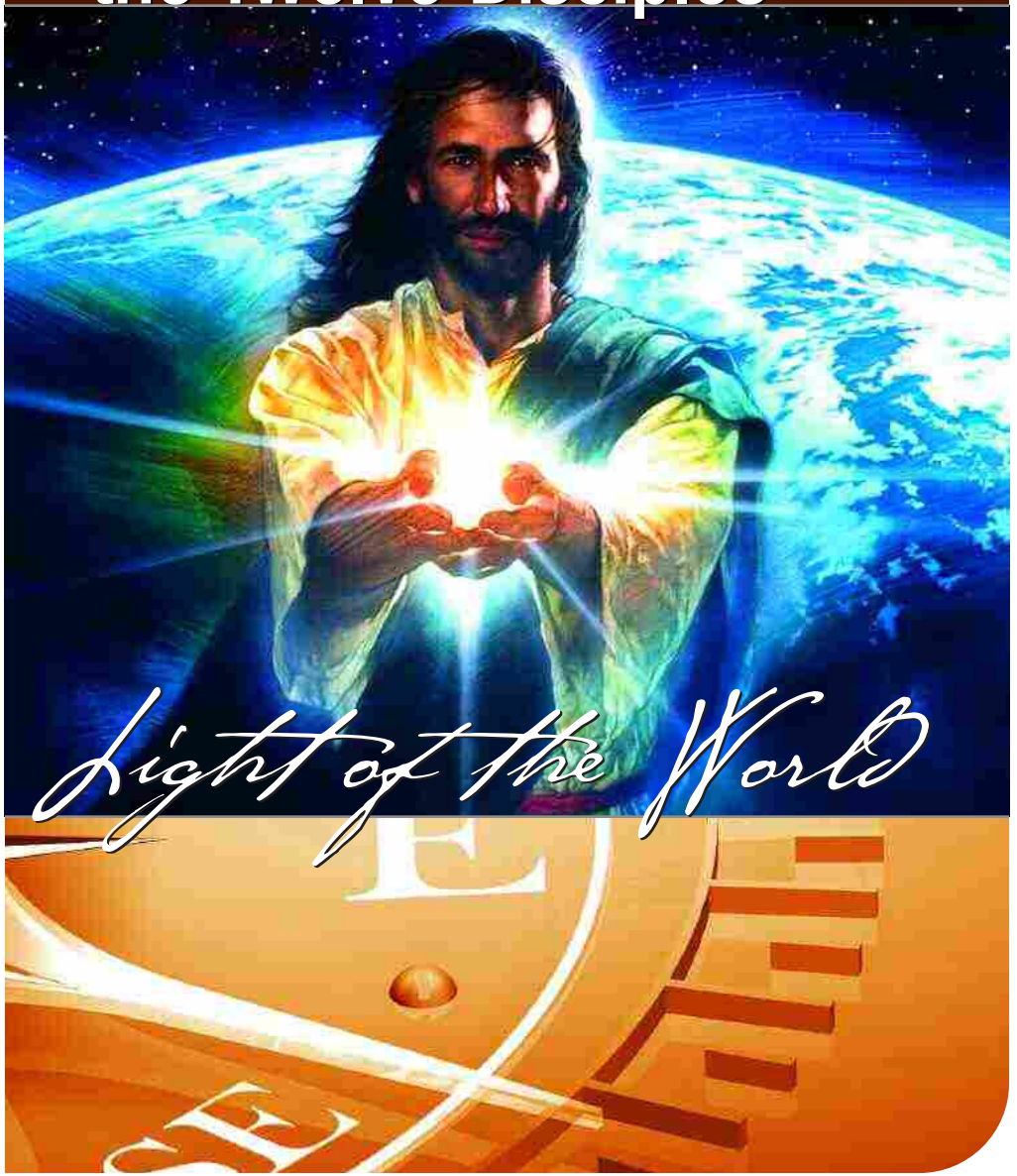
ADVENTIST DISCOVERY CENTRE

BOOKLET SEVEN

Jesus Calls the Twelve Disciples



"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends." John 15:13-15

This booklet brings us face to face again with John the Baptist and the people who were the friends and disciples of Jesus, those closest to him during his public ministry. As we study the life of our Saviour, we discover that only a few people were intimately associated with him, yet he had a wide friendship with thousands of spiritually hungry men, women and children who found peace and security in his presence. These folk from all classes of society were attracted to Jesus. His understanding of their problems and his sympathetic interest in their welfare touched them deeply. He proved himself to be a friend in time of need, and they became strongly attached to him.

Closest to Christ, forming the "inner circle," were the twelve disciples whom Jesus called to a fellowship of love and sacrifice. The account of their noble lives of service is one of the most thrilling chapters in the Bible story. We turn now to the inspired pages and take a quick look at these twelve faithful friends of Christ.

Continuing our story of the Saviour's life, we see him returning from his temptation in the wilderness of Judea to the Jordan River, where John the Baptist is preaching. He arrives at a time when the Baptist's work is under investigation by the Sanhedrin, the supreme council of the Jews. This body of seventy elders had sent a delegation of rabbis from Jerusalem to investigate the work of John and to question him about the source of authority for his work.

What QUESTIONS ARE ASKED BY THE RABBIS?

The Jewish leaders asked John many questions. Here is the Bible account of the interview -







Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely. "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John 1:19-22

When the rabbis arrived, the usual crowd had gathered at the banks of the Jordan to listen to John preach. There was a marked contrast between the prophet of the wilderness and the delegates from the city. John was dressed in a coarse garment made from camel's hair. But the great men from Jerusalem were clothed in rich robes. The Sanhedrin had not given John permission to carry on his work, and his independence annoyed them. They were offended and wanted an explanation. Then, also being wary, they thought that *perhaps John might be a prophet sent from God*, so they questioned him carefully concerning his mission. In reply John indicated that his work fulfilled an important prophecy of the Old Testament.

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.' " John 1:23

John made it plain that he was not the Christ. Neither was he an Old Testament prophet raised from the dead (John 1:20, 21). He said that he was the "voice" that Isaiah had predicted would come to announce the coming of the Messiah. The rabbis then pressed John with further questions and insinuated that he had no right to baptise.







Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptise if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" John 1:24, 25

By the words "the Prophet," they referred to Moses. The Jews believed that some day Moses would be raised from the dead and transported to heaven. They did not know that he had already been raised from the grave and was even then in heaven. See Jude 9 and Matthew 17:1-3. They believed that before the Messiah's advent, Elijah would appear in person. But John denied that he was either Moses or Elijah. He said that he was merely "a voice." Later, during his public ministry, Jesus referred to John the Baptist by saying -

"And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come." Matthew 11:14

John came with the power of Elijah to do a work of reformation similar to Elijah's. See 1 Kings 17, 18. Had the Jews accepted John's work, a reformation similar to that of Elijah's time would have taken place again in Israel. But the Jews rejected John's message, so he could not fully accomplish the mission that he had been sent to perform.

In the prophecy of Malachi 4:5, 6, we are told that in the last days a work of reform similar to Elijah's will take place in Christendom prior to the second advent of Jesus. See Revelation 14:6-12.

special notes

What STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT DOES JOHN MAKE?

As the Baptist searches the crowd before him, he sees Jesus standing in the midst.







"I baptise with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." John 1:26, 27

Imagine the amazement of the priests and rulers as they heard these words. Christ was standing among them! But he was not distinguishable to the rabbis or to the multitude. "But among you stands one *you do not know*," John said. They had never seen Christ, so they did not recognise him in the crowd. This occasion afforded a wonderful opportunity for the rabbis to make further inquiry of John concerning Christ, but they did not.

The following day John saw Jesus again, and pointed him out to the people as the Saviour of Israel, saying -

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' " John 1:29, 30

But now the rabbis are gone. If they had stayed one day longer and searched out Jesus, they would have found "the Lamb of God".

On the next day John again publicly acknowledged Jesus to be the Lamb of God. He pointed Christ out to his disciples and clearly identified him.

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" John 1:35, 36

When John referred to Jesus as the Lamb of God, he was moved by *the Spirit* of God, and probably did not fully understand his own words. Jesus had come as the Lamb of God to die for the sins of the world. But few of

the Jews really understood the meaning of his mission of sacrifice. To many of them the sacrificial offerings of lambs and goats were just so many gifts by which they might appease the wrath of an offended God. Jesus came as God's Lamb to atone for the sins of the whole world and to reconcile men to the Father. His love and sacrifice were to be the means of redemption and the keynote of all Christian service.

What DID TWO OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES DO?





As John spoke, two of his disciples who were standing near heard his words. In their hearts burned a heaven born curiosity which quickly grew into a resolve to meet Jesus and talk with him.

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. John 1:37

One of those was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, and the other is unnamed. Turning away from John the Baptist, they eagerly followed the Saviour. They wanted to talk with him and question him, but they were timid. There was something about Christ that attracted them, yet they were awed by his presence. Then Jesus turned and spoke to them.

Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?" "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went where he was staying, and spent that day with him. It was about the tenth hour. John 1:38, 39

Notice they asked, "Rabbi, where are you staying?" The one dominating thought in their minds was "Jesus." The Saviour invited them to the place where he had found temporary lodging, and there they spent the remainder of the day together. Alone with Jesus, they sat at his feet and listened to his words. What they saw and what they heard convinced them that he

was indeed the Messiah. The Old Testament Scriptures had new meaning for them after this interview. Their hearts were won over, and they decided to follow Jesus and support his cause. Deeply impressed, they became the first fruits of his ministry, his first two disciples.



Like Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet and learned from him, these two men took the position of learners and, because they were willing to be taught, the Master Teacher flooded their minds with heavenly light. So should we be willing to learn of him.

special notes

Whom DID ANDREW BRING TO CHRIST?







Just as soon as this visit was over, Andrew began to share his new found faith.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him. "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter). John 1:40-42

NOTE: Both Cephas (Aramaic) and Peter (Greek) mean rock or stone.

Apparently Peter had heard John the Baptist preach about Christ, and he was anxious to see and hear Israel's Messiah. So Andrew "brought him to Jesus." Of the two brothers, Peter was destined to do a greater work, yet Andrew was the humble instrument that God used to win him. If Christians would only bring their relatives to Jesus, many precious jewels would be won. Perhaps you could win a soul to Christ by encouraging a relative or friend to study this Bible course.

Christ identified Peter at once. "You are Simon son of John," he said. Then he gave him a new name. "You will be called Cephas (which, when translated, is Peter)." Yes, Peter was like (as mentioned in the note above) a stone, a rolling stone - impulsive, ambitious, self confident. But association with Christ would change all that, and Peter was destined to become one of the greatest of the apostles.

special notes

Who NEXT JOINED THE DISCIPLES?

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John 1:43-45 *(See also verses 46-51)*





Nathanael is not listed among the twelve disciples in Mark 3:13-19 or in Luke 6:12-16, but in these passages the name of Bartholomew is associated with Philip. Since it was Philip who introduced Nathanael to Jesus after finding him praying for light under a fig tree, there are grounds for believing that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person. One thing is certain - when Nathanael found Christ, he readily accepted him as the Messiah. Jesus recognised in Nathanael a righteous character and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." John 1:47. To be honest and have nothing in you that is false is a great help in understanding spiritual truth. These attributes are essential if we are to discover Christ in our personal experience.

special notes

What CALL DID JESUS GIVE BY THE SEA?







After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When they had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. Mark 1:14-20

When Jesus called the four disciples by the sea, he had already begun his public ministry in Galilee. But up until this time none of the disciples so far as we know, had united their interests with him as full time ministers and teachers. Now Jesus bids them to lay down their fishing nets and follow him. "I will make you fishers of men," he said. And he was true to his word, for the disciples became successful teachers and evangelists. Through their labours in later years, the whole known world was stirred by the Christian message.

Who NEXT WAS CALLED TO DISCIPLESHIP?

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Luke 5:27, 28

Levi Matthew was a tax collector and most probably well to do, and as such was a Roman official. His Jewish countrymen hated him because he served a foreign power, but Christ had a purpose in calling Matthew to be his disciple. The exclusiveness of Jewish religious and social life had to be broken down if he was to set up his spiritual kingdom. Jesus came to teach that true hearted men and women of all races and classes of society may be his friends and followers, if they are willing to accept the conditions of discipleship. So Matthew was accepted into the circle of Christ's closest followers, and he was deeply touched by this call to love and service.







Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples. "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:29-32

The publicans must have been pleased that Christ had chosen one from among their number to be one of his disciples. A great interest was created among them, but the religious leaders from the sect of the Pharisees criticised Jesus and his disciples for associating with publicans and sinners. They were of the opinion that the publicans and the Gentiles were morally diseased, so Jesus met them on their own ground. "If you think the publicans are sick," he said, "then as a spiritual Physician, I will heal them. I will work for the people that you think need spiritual help. Since you do not feel any need, I cannot help you."

Those who are proud and self sufficient cannot receive spiritual help from Christ. But those who cry out to him for mercy will receive it. The simple, trustful soul who hears the call to service will, like Matthew, rise up, leave all, and follow Jesus.

The ORDINATION OF THE TWELVE DISCIPLES







In the Gospel of Mark we have the names of the twelve men whom Christ ordained as his disciples.

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. Mark 3:13-19

We do not know exactly how or when Christ called Thomas, nor James "the younger" (Mark 15:40), the son of Alphaeus, nor Thaddaeus (also called Lebbaeus and Judas), nor Simon the Canaanite, nor Judas Iscariot. But these five men joined Christ and the other seven (Andrew, Peter, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew and Matthew) to make up the original company of leaders in the Christian church. See Matthew 10:1-5 and Luke 6:13-16, 9:1.

The ordination of these twelve friends and disciples of Christ took place on a mountainside near the Sea of Galilee. It must have been a solemn and joyful occasion - and very important. Actually, this ordination service was the first step in the organisation of the Christian church. Here are seven vital facts to keep in mind about these dedicated men -

1. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and their reward will be proportionally great (Matthew 19:27, 28).

2. They had the privilege of being intimately associated with God's only begotten Son in the redemption of a lost world (John 17:1-9).

3. With Christ, the apostles and prophets were the foundation stones of the Christian church in the same sense that the twelve patriarchs were the representatives of ancient Israel. See Ephesians 2:19-22 and Revelation 21:10-12, 14.

4. At least eight of the books of the New Testament were written by men chosen from among the twelve disciples, viz, the Gospels of Matthew and John, also First and Second Peter, First, Second and Third John, and Revelation.

5. At the time of Pentecost and for many years thereafter, these men, filled with the Holy Spirit, conducted the most powerful missionary movement in the history of the Christian church. Read the Book of Acts in the New Testament.

6. It is commonly believed that all except John (and excluding Judas, the traitor) died as martyrs for Jesus. James, the brother of John, was slain with the sword. It is thought by some that Peter was crucified head down, and John was exiled, and we know very little of the others except what tradition tells us.

7. In life and in death they were an example for all future disciples and ministers of the church of Christ.







special notes

The DISCIPLES TRANSFORMED IN CHARACTER







The disciples were with Jesus only about three years, yet association with him changed their lives completely. The impetuous spirit of Peter, and the self seeking spirit of James and John, were humbled by contact with Christ. Notice how Peter and John were identified in character with Christ as they preached to the people -

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. Acts 4:13

The apostles were brought into such close personal touch with Jesus as he worked for the people, that in a few short years they became more and more like him in character and in methods of labour. They revealed the force and power of his character in their own lives. It was this that made them great. And it was this that brought such experiences as Pentecost (Acts 2). When the time came for their life records to close, they were as great in death as they had been in life. They were the true friends of Christ to the last, and their influence will live through eternity.

To us today, Christ speaks the same invitation that he gave to the fishermen of Galilee. His "Follow me" is as truly for us as it was for the first disciples. No matter how imperfect or sinful we may be, if we will but give our hearts to God, he will forgive our sins, take us into partnership with himself, and use us as his co-workers to tell the wonderful story of redemption. If we are willing to be taught by Christ, we may become his fully fledged disciples and be workers together with God (2 Corinthians 6:1).

From this point in our story we will follow the events in Christ's life as they relate to different phases of his ministry. For example, we have gathered together the miracles of Christ, the parables of Christ, and the teachings

of Christ, and placed them in separate booklets to make the narrative clearer and more meaningful. When we come to the final scenes of his ministry, the chronological order will be resumed.



special notes

Booklet 8 will answer the following Questions -

- **Are miracles reasonable?**
- **Are miracles the supreme proof of Christ's divinity?**
- **Are miracles possible today?**

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BOOKLET EIGHT

The Miracles of Christ



Light of the World

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." John 3:1,2

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, recognised that Christ was sent by God, because as he said, ". . . *no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."* Jesus himself acknowledged the miracle working power of his Father who worked through him when he said, "With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26

The four Gospels show that Christ performed many miracles during his public ministry. You can see these listed at the end of this booklet. Through faith in his Father, the great Wonder worker healed the sick, cast out devils, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. Those who witnessed these miracles were convinced that there was no limit to God's power to deliver. In Christ were fulfilled the words of the psalmist -

What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples. Psalm 77:13, 14

We know, of course, that some people are sceptical of miracles, but if we will but stop to think, we must conclude that miracles are not unreasonable. Someone has put it this way - When, in some countries, a father takes his little son to the visitors' platform at the city airport and puts a coin in the slot, the steel arms barring the way turn down, and they pass through

on to the ramp where they can get a closer view of the big airliners. That machine with the steel arm is a miracle to the child but not to the father, who understands something about its mechanism. Even so, what appears as a miracle to us is no miracle to God, but rather the speeding up of those divine forces which operate in harmony with divine laws. With this in mind, let us continue our story and follow the great Miracle worker as he performs his wonderful acts for the good of the people.

Christ's FIRST MIRACLE

At the beginning of his public ministry in Galilee, Jesus accepted an invitation to attend a wedding feast in the town of Cana, and there he performed a notable miracle.





This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him. John 2:11 *(For the full account read* John 2:1-11*)*

During the wedding festivities, which probably lasted for several days, the supply of wine unexpectedly gave out, and Jesus' mother, who was also a guest, told him about the embarrassing situation.

Nearby were six large stone jars - the capacity of each was about 55 litres - and Jesus instructed the servants to fill them with water. This was done as he commanded, and he said, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." John 2:8. And, wonder of wonders! Instead of the water with which the jars had been filled, there flowed forth the sweetest wine! When the ruler of the feast drank the delicious beverage, he exclaimed at its excellence. Inquiry was made concerning the wine, and it was discovered that Jesus had performed a great miracle. The news of this event spread





throughout Galilee and probably even to Jerusalem. There was a keen desire on the part of both the leaders and the common people to know more about Christ. This miracle which had been performed to add happiness to a wedding feast resulted in a widespread interest in his ministry.

The word "wine" as used in the Bible, frequently refers to the unfermented drink. It is the fresh juice of the grape to which the prophet Isaiah refers when he speaks of the new "wine" in a cluster." "Don't destroy it," he says, "there is yet some good in it." Isaiah 65:8

The acts of Christ's public ministry were in harmony with the Old Testament warning which had been given to Israel -

Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise. Proverbs 20:1

Jesus did not come to this earth to contradict the teachings of the prophets. It was unfermented wine which he provided for the guests at the wedding feast. He gave no encouragement for the use of intoxicating drinks at the wedding feast in Cana, nor at any time during his public ministry.

Feeding THE FIVE THOUSAND

The miracle of the loaves and fishes took place about a year after the first cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem. The scene was a hillside rising from the banks of the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd of travellers en route to Jerusalem for the Passover halted at this quiet, secluded spot to listen to the Great Teacher and to bring their sick to him for healing. The record is that "Jesus . . . had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things." Mark 6:34

Absorbed in his work, the Saviour had forgotten to eat, and the people were so engrossed in what he said that they did not give a thought to food. Finally the disciples urged Jesus to send the multitude away so that they could buy bread for themselves, but Jesus had other plans. He determined to feed them himself, beginning with such provisions as were available.







Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand. Mark 6:41-44

With firm reliance upon God, he took the five loaves and the two fishes that had been given to him by a little boy, and blessed them and broke them. Then, as he gave the food to the disciples to distribute to the people, it multiplied in his hands. Thus a vast crowd of over five thousand was fed.

This is the best attested of all Christ's miracles, for all four Gospel writers record it - Matthew 14:13-21, Mark 6:34-44, Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:1-13. A similar miracle took place later not far from this spot, when Jesus miraculously fed four thousand. See Matthew 15:29-38 and Mark 8:1-9.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes teaches us two important lessons -

1. Christ never performed miracles in his own behalf, but *always for the welfare of others.* This miracle of the loaves and fishes supplied an actual necessity. Christ did not perform it merely to demonstrate his divine power. If he had wanted to do so, he could have provided for the people a feast "fit for a king". But he gave the poor fisher folk their simple, daily bread - barley loaves and fish.

2. When Jesus took the food and passed it to his disciples, and they to the people, he taught us how we are to receive and pass on the blessings of God. The disciples received from Christ and then gave to the people. So, if we have faith in Christ, we shall receive from him the bread of life which the Father has given. Then, when we are so blessed, we should pass the blessings of salvation on to others.

What MIRACLE TOOK PLACE ON THE SEA OF GALILEE?







Immediately after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, an attempt was made to proclaim Jesus king - a sort of political Messiah - to bring deliverance from the Romans. See John 6:14, 15. But when the Jews approached him with this purpose in mind, he firmly declined. Jesus then dispersed the excited crowd and quietly ordered his disciples to take off by boat for Bethsaida on the other side of the lake, while "he went up on a mountainside to pray." Mark 6:46. This was a great disappointment to the disciples, and as they reluctantly obeyed his command and walked toward the beach, they were discouraged and depressed. But an event was soon to take place that would startle them back to their senses.

When the evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading. John 6:16-21. *(See also* Matthew 14:22, 23 *and* Mark 6:45-51*)*

After the disciples push their small boat out into the sea, a storm breaks upon them. As they battle with the oars in the mounting tempest, the boat begins to sink. But the Saviour, who has been praying for them on the mountain, has not forgotten them. Walking to the shore, he sees them struggling hopelessly against the elements. Continuing, he walks over the sea to his twelve disciples and stands on the water by their storm tossed ship. "Take courage," he says, "It is I. Don't be afraid."
Matthew 14:27







Peter can hardly believe his eyes, but faith rises in his heart and he asks if he might not come to the Master on the foaming waves. Jesus bids him, "Come!" With his eyes fixed on Jesus, Peter steps out on to the angry sea. At first he walks securely, but as he thinks of the danger that surrounds him he loses faith, and down he goes into the raging deep! As he sinks, he cries out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus takes his outstretched hand and lifts him up, saying, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" Matthew 14:31. Together they walk back to the ship, and as soon as they step aboard, the wind ceases and they land safely.

There are times when we are all very much like Peter, but if we would keep our eyes fixed upon the Saviour, our footsteps would not slide, nor would life's tempests engulf us. When Jesus told Peter to come to him, he did not call him to an untimely death by drowning. It was the disciple's own fearfulness and doubt that proved his near ruin.

As we follow Christ in his ministry, we see that he has received from his Father absolute power over all the forces of nature. Even the winds and the waves are subject to him. Earlier in his ministry, while crossing the lake with his disciples, he rebuked the howling winds and made the storm to cease. When physical disasters strike without warning today, it is encouraging to know that the same Jesus is still able to protect his children.
See Luke 8:22-25, Matthew 8:23-27 and Mark 4:35-41.

special notes

How DID CHRIST REVEAL HIS POWER OVER LIVING CREATURES?







He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." . . . When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. . . . When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken. Luke 5:3-9

Christ had been teaching the multitude from Peter's boat. After his sermon, he dismissed the people and told Peter to launch out into the deep and let down his net. But the disciples had been fishing all night with no success. If he couldn't catch fish at night, the best time for fishing in Galilee, how could he catch them during the daytime? Nevertheless, at Christ's command, he let down his net, and so great was the catch of fish that the strong cords of the net broke, pulling in the prize.

As James and John came to his aid, Peter was seized with the realisation that he, a sinful man, was standing in the presence of Divinity. Overwhelmed with the thought, he fell at Jesus' feet, crying, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

It was fitting that Peter should act as he did. Probably never before had there been such a large catch on Galilee. Peter and all the disciples now realised that not only the winds and the waves obey Christ's words, but also the fish which swim in the deep – and for that matter, all living things. Read also about the miracle of the coin and the fish in Matthew 17:24-27.

Jesus was indeed the miracle working Son of God. No wonder Peter fell at his feet in adoration! And so may we all honour and worship him who wrought such wonders for the good of men.

Three IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT MIRACLES







1. Not all miracles are from God. Satan also has the power to perform *certain* "counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders." 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15. Only a study of God's Word will enable us to differentiate between the two classes. Miracles, therefore, are not the crowning evidence of Christ's divinity. The fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, was the supreme proof that he was the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

2. Christ never performed a miracle to gratify curiosity. See Luke 23:8-11. All his miracles were wrought in answer to a deep human need. They were not merely *signs* of his power, but *evidences* of his deep love for, and interest in, humanity.

3. When Christ ordained his disciples, he gave to them the power to perform miracles. See Matthew 10:1, 8 and Mark 16:15-18. By faith in his Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit, they were to work as he worked for the sick and the helpless. Even today we are instructed to pray for the sick. See James 5:13-15. The gifts of the Spirit are to be with the church to the end of time. Read Ephesians 4:8, 11-15 and 1 Corinthians 12. Whenever man has reached his extremity, God has opportunity to help and to heal.

Yes, "with God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. And so, friend, if you have a problem and have done all you can to relieve the situation, ask God to help you. He has the power if you will be believe his promises and obey them (1 John 3:22, 23).

special notes







Christ's Miracles

Recorded in only one Gospel -

Two blind men healed	Matthew 9:27-31
A dumb demoniac healed	Matthew 9:32, 33
Piece of money in mouth of fish	Matthew 17:24-27
Deaf and dumb man healed	Mark 7:31-37
A blind man healed	Mark 8:22-26
Passed through throng unseen	Luke 4:28-30
Draught of fishes	Luke 5:1-11
Raising the widow's son	Luke 7:11-17
Healing woman with infirmity	Luke 13:11-17
Healing man with dropsy	Luke 14:1-6
Healing ten lepers	Luke 17:11-19
Healing ear of Malchus	Luke 22:50, 51
Turning water into wine	John 2:1-11
Healing nobleman's son	John 4:46-54
Healing impotent man	John 5:1-15
Healing man born blind	John 9
Raising of Lazarus	John 11:1-46
Draught of fishes	John 21:1-11

Recorded in two Gospels -

Healing centurion's servant	Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10
Blind demoniac healed	Matthew 12:22-30, Luke 11:14-26
Healing Syrophenician maiden	Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30
Feeding the four thousand	Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-9
Cursing the fig tree	Matthew 21:17-22, Mark 11:12-14
Demoniac in synagogue healed	Mark 1:23-28, Luke 4:33-37

Recorded in three Gospels -

Healing the leper	Matthew 8:2, 3, Mark 1:40-42, Luke 5:12, 13
Healing Peter's mother-in-law	Matthew 8:14, 15, Mark 1:30, 31, Luke 4:38, 39
Stilling the storm	Matthew 8:23-27, Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25
Legion of devils cast out	Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-37
Healing sick man of palsy	Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:3-12, Luke 5:18-26
Healing woman with issue	Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48
Raising Jairus' daughter	Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:41-56
Healing man's withered hand	Matthew 12:10-13, Mark 3:1-5, Luke 6:6-10
Walking on the sea	Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:48-51, John 6:16-21
Curing demoniac child	Matthew 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29, Luke 9:38-42
Curing blind Bartimaeus	Matthew 20:30-34, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 18:35-43

Recorded in four Gospels -

Feeding the five thousand	Matthew 14:15-21, Mark 6:35-44, Luke 9:12-17, John 6:5-14

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special notes

Booklet 9 will answer the following Questions -

- **Why did the sinless Christ have such an appeal to sinful men?**
- **Why did Jesus befriend an adulterous woman?**
- **Is there hope for the worst sinner to be saved?**

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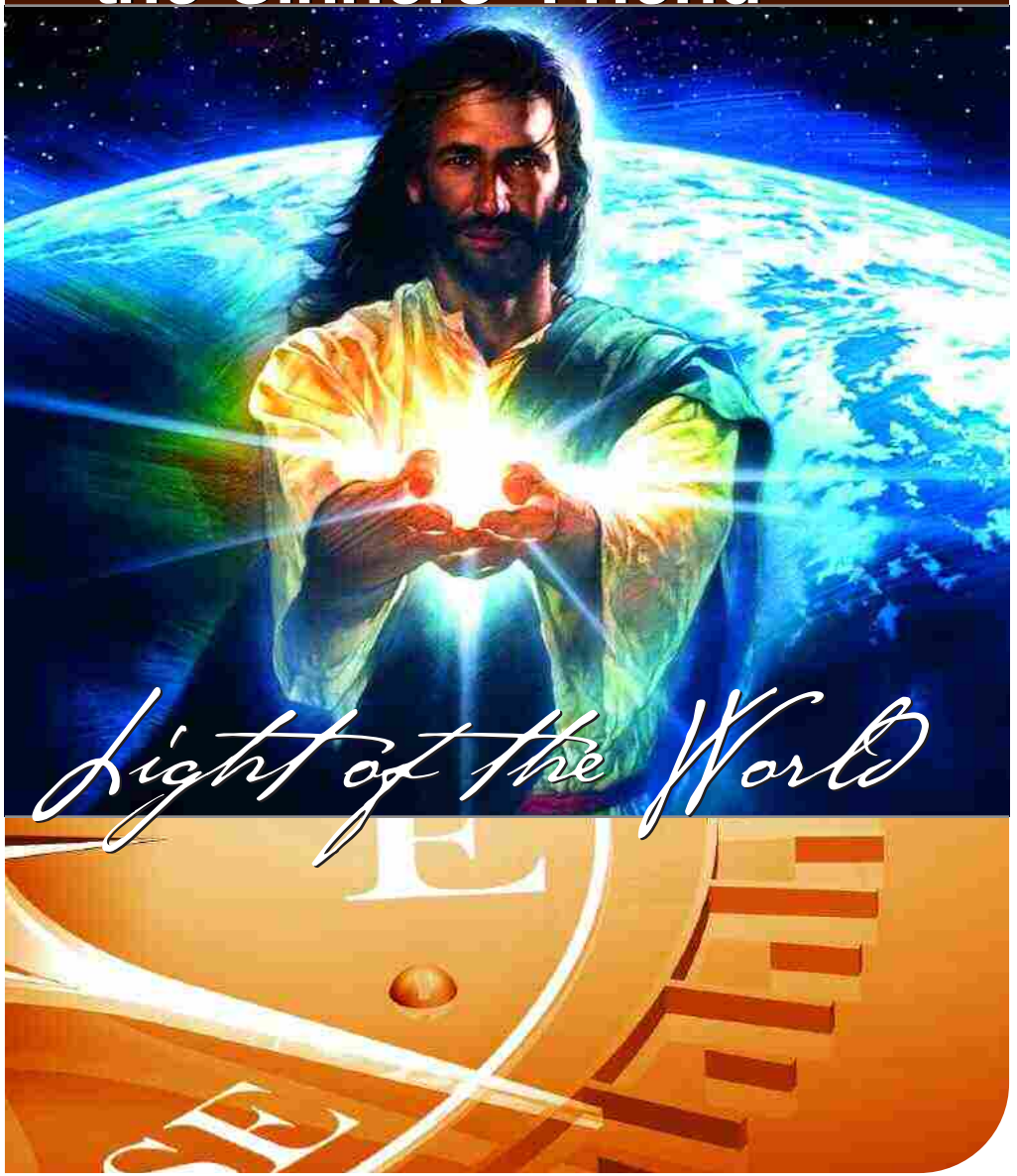
BOOKLET NINE

Christ, the Sinners' Friend



"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Luke 4:18, 19

The four Gospels tell many encouraging stories of Christ's friendship with the distressed and broken-hearted. As we read these inspired accounts, we see how great is the kindness of God revealed through Christ, and the impression is left upon our hearts that we may safely go to him in every time of need, confidently expecting to find help. Jesus also offers us his companionship, which takes the coldness and loneliness out of our lives and brings us peace. He has everything that men desire and need, but it is his divine love and kindness that appeal most to us. He declares -

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." Jeremiah 31:3 *(Read* John 8:1-11*)*

Jesus is the "friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24. We see this in one scene after another in his ministry as he assists the friendless and fearful.

special notes

Christ BEFRIENDS A WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY







We turn now to the Gospel of John and watch as Christ befriends an adulterous woman who had been openly exposed by the Pharisees.

Jesus . . . appeared again in the temple courts, and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery . . . Jesus . . . asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:1-3, 10, 11

This experience took place in connection with the annual Feast of Tabernacles when Jesus was in Jerusalem on one of his frequent visits. While he was teaching the people in the temple, the scribes and Pharisees brought to him this unfortunate woman who was taken in adultery - "caught in the act."

She was a great sinner before God, but the malice and bigotry of these Jewish leaders who knew so much more about God's requirements, made their sin even more offensive. They were jealous of Christ and sought to find some complaint against him so that he could be accused as a transgressor either of the laws of Moses or the laws of the Romans. If in this case Jesus had suggested that the woman be stoned as Moses' law required, he would have involved himself with the Roman authorities.

In this experience Jesus tried to reach the hearts of both the Pharisees and the adulterous woman herself, seeking to lead all concerned to repentance. *He proved to be a friend, first to the proud and self righteous, and second to the downcast and fallen.* But only the adulterous woman responded to his love.

Jesus knew that the sins of these hypocritical men who had brought the woman to him included acts of impurity, yet in great kindness he refused to expose them as they had exposed her. Stooping down, he began to write







on the ground, and the words which they read there condemned them -

"If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." John 8:7

As the trembling woman stood before Jesus, expecting at any moment to be stoned, she heard his tender voice ask -

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir", she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:10, 11

The Pharisees had nothing but contempt and scorn for this erring woman, but Jesus spoke words of comfort and caution to her. He did not excuse her sin and neither did he say anything to lessen her sense of guilt. But he spoke words of pardon that lifted the torturing burden of reproach and shame from her soul. His words, "Neither do I condemn you," brought peace to her troubled heart. The redemption of this poor soul was a greater miracle than the healing of an epileptic or a leper. Sin is a moral disease that can be rebuked only by the touch of the sinner's Friend (Isaiah 1:4-6, 16-20). Sin brings nothing but guilt and remorse, but if we will confess our sins to Jesus and put them away, we may go free in his pardoning love.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

This forgiveness which God gives us includes more than simply pardon for sins. It also brings power to keep from sinning. "To him who is able to keep you from falling," says Jude, verse 24. Read also Romans 6:11, 12 and Hebrews 7:25. True religion is not simply an ambulance at the foot of a precipice to pick up those who have fallen over - it is a fence at the top to prevent them falling in the first place.

Both pardon for sin and power to keep from falling are the gifts of God which we are to receive by faith. This is the fuller meaning of forgiveness. How beautifully this is illustrated by Christ's words to this woman, "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin." It was his purpose that

from this point on in her experience she should live a pure and sanctified life. And that is his plan for every Christian.

Mercy SHOWN AT THE FEAST IN SIMON'S HOUSE

(Read Luke 7:36-50)







Not long before his death on the cross, Jesus was invited to a feast at the home of Simon, the Pharisee - a leper whom Jesus had healed of this terrible disease. Simon was regarded as Christ's disciple, but his heart was still proud and his life sinful. At this feast, an unusual event occurred.

Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them . . . Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven . . . Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:36-38, 48, 50

Christ used this occasion to show God's love for those who were commonly looked down upon as sinners. This despised woman whom Christ befriended came to the feast and anointed his head and feet with expensive ointment. Jesus was honoured by this unselfish act, but Simon and others at the feast were offended. Perhaps, if they had experienced the joy of God's pardoning love as this poor woman had, they would have understood why she was so grateful to Christ. No doubt she had heard Jesus speak about his death and had saved her money to buy an expensive ointment for his burial. But she decided to bestow her gift upon the Saviour while he was still living.

Jesus understood the struggles that this woman had experienced in her effort to overcome. Earnestly she had pleaded with God for victory over sin, and her prayers had been answered. Now, because she loved Jesus







"much," she gave expression to her deep feelings by anointing him with this precious ointment. If, friend, there is some sin you are struggling with, remember there is hope for you. Like Paul, we can be "more than conquerors through him who loved us," Romans 8:37. There is only one danger, and that is that we will neglect to seek the Lord for his saving power. God cannot pardon the sin that we cling to, the sin that is unconfessed and unforsaken. We may sin against the Holy Spirit by neglecting or postponing our surrender to God. But "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13. Let us part company with sin and join hands with God in a consecrated life that we, like this converted woman, may find peace with God.

In the parable of the debtor, which Christ told at the feast (Luke 7:41-47), he showed Simon and his guests that the reason this woman loved him so much was that she had been forgiven much. But Simon loved Jesus only a little because he did not think he had been forgiven much. There were few sins in his life – so he thought! But if Christ had revealed to him, and to the guests at the feast, the dark record of his life, Simon would have been discouraged. This Jesus did not do, yet the Holy Spirit convicted Simon that he was just as much in need of God's grace and mercy as was the poor woman.

On this occasion Jesus rebuked Judas, one of the twelve apostles, because he had criticised this woman for the "waste" of the precious perfume (John 12:4-8). Judas argued that the ointment might have been sold and the money given to the poor. Actually, as the treasurer of the group of disciples, he wanted the money for himself, for he was continually robbing the bag. Deeply angered, Judas went directly to the priests and bargained to betray his Lord for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). Instead of repenting of his selfishness, he hardened his heart and went on from one perverse act to another, until he ended his life by suicide. If Judas had responded to Jesus' discipline, how different his life might have been! His attitude determined his destiny. How important that we all have the right attitude toward life's discipline!

Hope FOR ZACCHAEUS - THE TAX COLLECTOR

The city of Jericho in the Jordan Valley was one of the cities of Israel that had been set apart anciently as a home for the priests. At the time that Jesus met Zacchaeus, there were also many publicans, or tax collectors, living there, for Jericho was a city of considerable commerce and traffic. It was a pleasure resort as well, for Herod the Great had built a winter palace there. Zacchaeus, a man of short stature, was "a chief tax collector."







Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead, and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:1-10

When Christ entered the city, Zacchaeus rejoiced because he had heard about him and had hoped that he might be the Messiah. He wanted very much to see Jesus but, being a short man, he could not see over the heads of the people, so had to climb a tree in order to catch a glimpse of Jesus. As the Saviour proceeded through the town with the crowd pressing him on every side, he paused beneath that very tree and, looking up at Zacchaeus, told him to come down because he wished to stay at his house.







These words of Jesus were a great surprise to the publican. In the first place, he had never seen Christ before. And then, how did he know his name? There had been no opportunity for Jesus to inquire about him. Certainly he had no idea that Zacchaeus was up a tree! To Zacchaeus, this was a heaven ordained sign that the Man who stood before him was sent by God. He immediately decided to accept Jesus as Lord, and gave evidence of his sincerity by announcing that he would give half of his goods to the poor, and would repay four times those whom he had defrauded in unfair tax collections. Christ's friendliness toward this despised Jew resulted in one of the most amazing transformations of character recorded in sacred history.

We may learn a lesson from Zacchaeus' reformation. When a man is converted, he will, like this repentant publican, abandon all dishonest practices and make restitution. The Lord says -

". . . if he gives back what he took in pledge for a loan, returns what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil . . . None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him . . . he will surely live." Ezekiel 33:15, 16

One night a man came forward in a religious meeting to surrender his life to God. The next day a friend came to him and said, "Jack, I understand that you were converted last night at the revival."

"Yes," he replied, "I am a new man."

His friend said, "Good. Now you can pay me the money you owe me."

Jack answered, "I don't owe you any money. When I went to the altar last night, God forgave me all my debts."

What do you think of that man's conversion? If he really had experienced a change of heart, would not the money get back into the right pocket?

Jesus ILLUSTRATES HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR THE LOST

(Read Luke 10:25-37)







It was in connection with a certain lawyer's question that Jesus told the story of the Good Samaritan. "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" asked this man of the law. In his reply Jesus described the basic condition of life and happiness.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." Luke 10:25-28

But the lawyer had still another question, "Who is my neighbour?" To this the Saviour replied by relating what seems to have been an actual incident that had taken place. A man had been waylaid and beaten by robbers on the Jericho road, but his own countrymen passed him by and would do nothing to relieve his pain and misery. Then a despised Samaritan came along and befriended him. The Good Samaritan loved his neighbour as he loved himself, so he took pity on him and cared for him. This illustrates the love that Christ has for sinners and the love that all men should show toward their neighbours.

When the story was ended, Jesus fixed his eyes searchingly upon the lawyer, and asked -

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:36, 37

The question - Who is my neighbour? - is answered by this experience. Christ teaches that our neighbour is not merely the one who lives next door, or one of the members of the church to which we belong, or a member of our race or class of society. Whoever needs help, that person - regardless of any prejudices we may have against him - is our neighbour.

But there is a still more important question - While all men are my neighbours, am I a good neighbour to all men? The answer to that question is vital to the solution of all life's problems. What good will my profession of Christianity do to my neighbour unless I am a Good Samaritan, unless I am a brother to him when he needs help? But the place to start practising this noble principle is in the home, with the members of our own family. Then we may reach out into the community wherever there is a soul in need of clothes, food, comfort, friendship, God.

Think of what might have happened to the human race if Christ had not been a good Samaritan to us! We would have been left to die in our sins by the wayside of life - victims of our own selfishness, robbed of all moral power by Satan, the enemy of God. How grateful we should be that Jesus, the Good Samaritan, has not passed us by!

The CROWNING EXAMPLE OF CHRIST'S FRIENDSHIP FOR SINNERS

The crowning example of Christ's love for sinners is the pardoning love that he showed for the repentant thief who died on the cross next to him. But the unrepentant criminal on the other side received no help. He might have been saved, but he did not turn to Christ.

When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals - one on his right, the other on his left . . . One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom. Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:33, 39-43

Without a thought of his own sufferings, the Saviour's heart went out in pity to the sin burdened thief who pleaded for pardon. This man was not ready to die until Christ removed the burden of his guilt. In this act of forgiving the thief who recognised the dying Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, the glory of Christ was revealed. Even in his crucifixion, Jesus was honoured. His mission to this world was manifested in the salvation which he provided for this lost sinner. While he was dying for the sins of humanity, with no thought of his own immense sufferings, his great love reached out and drew the contrite thief to his own broken heart. Such is the unfathomable love of Jesus, the Friend of sinners.

When Christ said to the dying thief on the cross, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise," he did not promise that the thief would be transported to heaven the moment he died, nor on that particular day. Christ himself did not go to heaven that day. The punctuation and the division of the Bible into chapters and verses were the work of men, supplied many years after the inspired Word of God was written, and in this verse the comma was put before, instead of after, the word "today," where it belongs. Even on the morning of Christ's resurrection three days later, he said -

". . . I have not yet returned to the Father." John 20:17

On the day of the crucifixion, the promise of a future paradise was made. "Today" - while Christ was expiring on the cross and the thief was hanging there as a criminal - the Saviour gave the assurance, *"you will be with me in paradise."*

The repentance of the thief on the cross at the eleventh hour is the only "death bed repentance" recorded in the Scripture. There is one such experience given so that men will not lose hope and become discouraged in the last moments of life, *but only one* – so that men will not be presumptuous.

"I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2

Delay is always dangerous. No decision for Christ is decision against him. To be *almost* persuaded is to be not *almost,* but *wholly* lost. Your *study of the life of Christ* will help you to see that the wisest choice you can make in life is to surrender your heart without reserve to Jesus *today*. Sin brings death and eternal separation from God, but those who turn to him now may have the assurance of a place with him in that future Paradise.

Booklet 10 explores the greatest sermon ever preached.

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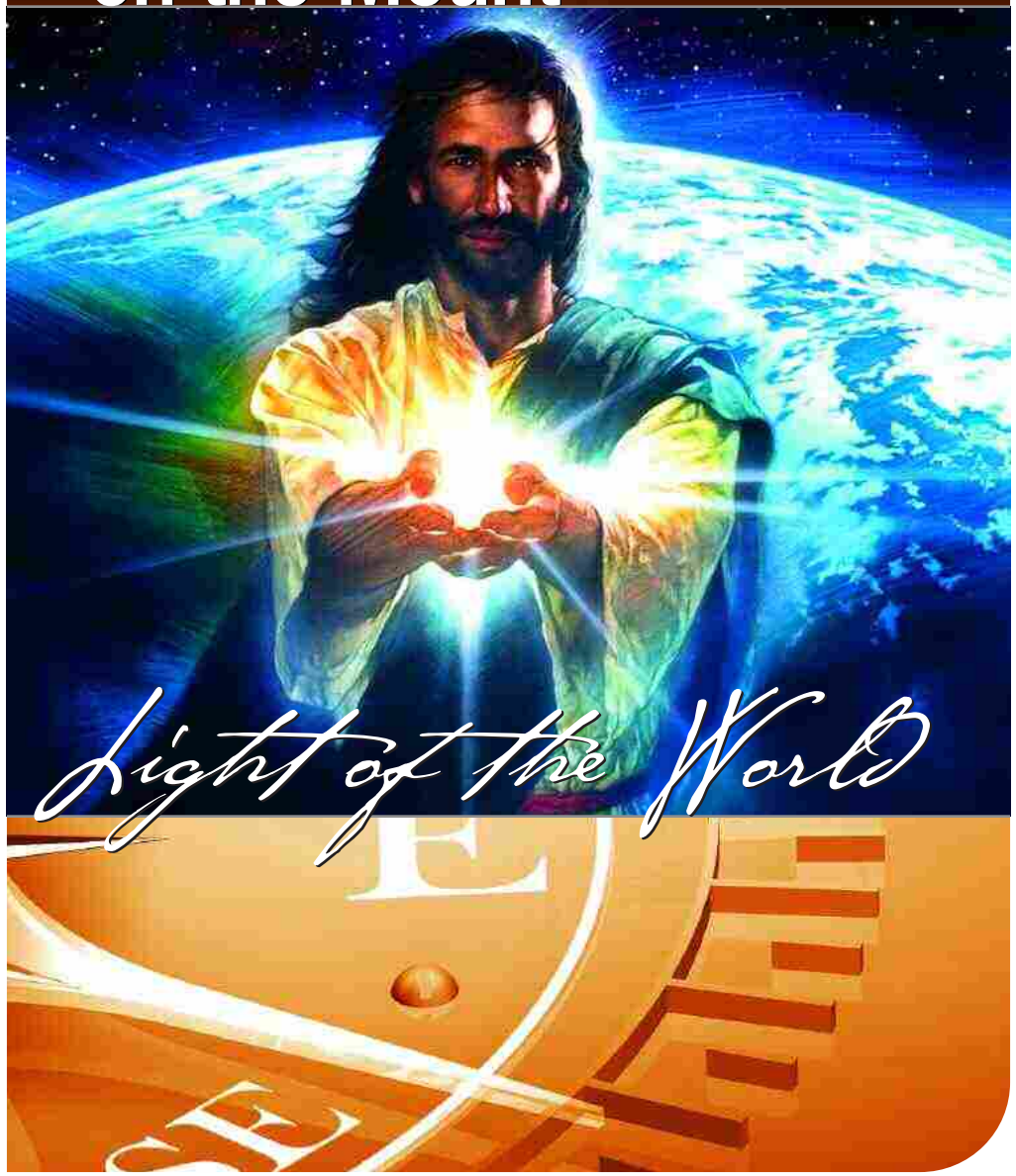
BOOKLET TEN

The Sermon on the Mount*


Light of the World

"I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." Luke 6:47, 48

The Sermon on the Mount was delivered soon after the ordination of the twelve apostles. The multitude had gathered near the Sea of Galilee to hear Jesus preach, and he led them back to the mountain side. Seating himself on the grass with the disciples close by and the great crowd stretching out before him, Christ presented his most famous sermon.

The Sermon on the Mount has been called the Magna Carta of Christianity. It is the most important sermon recorded in the Bible, and no other discourse in the history of the Christian church can compare with it. In this powerful inaugural address, as it were, Christ declared the principles and objectives of his kingdom. In the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ laid the foundation stones for his spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. The beatitudes were his greeting, not merely to the company before him, but to the whole human race.

After the giving of the beatitudes, Jesus proceeded to show how, by his grace, one's life may be transformed into a temple of righteousness. Then he concluded by stating that the house of faith in human experience will stand forever if men will obey the words he has spoken, and build upon the solid foundation of the Scripture.

Let us now join the crowd as the people wait expectantly for Jesus to speak. There is a feeling that something unusual is about to happen. In a clear, ringing voice the Master opens his mouth and begins to speak.

Subjects OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

(Read Matthew 5:1-12)







Gathered in the great crowd to hear Jesus are priests and farmers, businessmen and fishermen, housewives and little children. All classes of people are represented. Christ does not isolate any one of these groups, and says, "You, and you *only*, are the subjects of my kingdom." He pronounces a blessing upon men and women of all classes and races who reflect his character. Christ has words of blessing for -

1. The Poor in Spirit - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

Translated from a Greek word which means "happy," the word "blessed" is used as the lead word in this sermon. The opening expression shows that Christ's mission to the world was to bring happiness to men. Only those who recognise their spiritual poverty and feel their need of God are acceptable to him. Jesus recognises the humble and the contrite ones as the subjects of his kingdom. See Isaiah 57:15.

2. Those Who Mourn - "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Matthew 5:4

As we listen to these words, we are greatly encouraged. Not only those who sorrow for their sins, but those also who grieve over the loss of loved ones and friends, are comforted and blessed by God.

"I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow." Jeremiah 31:13

3. The Meek - "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5







Christ offers a blessing here to those who are lowly in heart, who exercise self control, and who do not take offence when they are misjudged or treated cruelly. Those who calmly wait upon the Lord and trust him in all things will someday inherit the earth. See Revelation 21 and 22.

4. Those who Hunger for Righteousness – "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Matthew 5:6

Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will find true satisfaction in life. The fruits of righteousness will appear in their lives. God will "do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." Ephesians 3:20. These soul hungry followers of God will be filled with his righteousness.

5. The Merciful – "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7

God himself is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness." Exodus 34:6. Those who are his followers become like him in character, and eventually will live with him forever in his sinless Paradise. They obtain mercy, and all sighing, tears and troubles will flee away.

Note how Jesus develops the steps in the Christian life, going from one phase of blessing to another. While the Christian works on the plan of *adding* virtue to his life, God works on the plan of *multiplying* his blessings and his grace.

6. The Pure in Heart – "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Matthew 5:8

Those who expect to see God face to face will shun all impurity of speech and thought, and all impure acts. They find divine grace sufficient to deliver them from all immoral habits. Human weakness is made strong in Christ's purity. Turning their backs upon the weak and sinful elements of the carnal nature, they behold Jesus in all his beauty and holiness, and are transformed.

7. The Peacemakers - "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, said -

"If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea." Isaiah 48:18

The reason why men are at war with God and with one another is that they oppose God's law. Read Exodus 20:3-17 and Romans 13:8-10. The evil passions which stir up trouble and instigate war are the spirit of rebellion against the Ten Commandments. Men may try to bring peace, but all their efforts are doomed to failure unless the grace of Christ is in their hearts. Only when there is love for God's law will people be different and bring forth "a harvest of righteousness and peace." Hebrews 12:11. Peace is the gift of God, the consciousness of right doing that comes to the loyal subject of his kingdom.

8. Those who are Persecuted - "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:10

Someone has called Christianity a "disturbing element" in our society, and this is true. Christ's teachings expose sin, and that makes men angry. Rather than acknowledge their guilt and turn to God for pardon, they cling to their wrongdoing and oppose those who stand for the right. Jesus encouraged his followers to rejoice when they were ill treated rather than indulge in self pity or retaliation.

". . . pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:44, 45

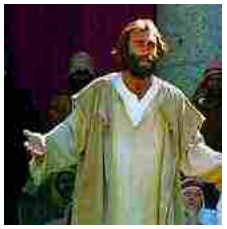
As we read the Beatitudes we note that Jesus speaks with authority as one telling the truth, and his description of the conditions for obtaining security and happiness appeals to us. But Christ has not ended his sermon. In fact, he has just begun.







What ARE CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS DECLARED TO BE?





At this point in his address, Jesus proceeds to show the positive, dynamic force of true religion. Christianity is a life that shines like the light. It is like salt that flavours and preserves. It is not a dead, formal profession, but a living, guiding principle in the life.

"You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before men." Matthew 5:13-16

Christians are not to isolate themselves from their fellow men like hermits, but to mingle freely with others that, like salt, they might preserve and flavour the world of men. Their influence, strengthened by Christ's presence in their lives, will save the world from becoming wholly corrupt.

Jesus instructs the people to let the knowledge of his teaching spread beyond Palestine and the Jewish nation out into the Greek and Roman spheres of influence. The Jews were exclusive, claiming salvation only for themselves. Jesus shows that God's gift of redemption is for the whole world. Like the light of the sun, it is to warm the hearts of all.

special notes

What DOES CHRIST TEACH ABOUT THE LAW?







There is now an air of expectancy in the crowd as Jesus turns attention to the law. As we listen to his words, we see that his purpose is to "make his law great and glorious" (Isaiah 42:21) in the sight of all men. Listen now as he speaks -

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Matthew 5:17, 18 *(Read also verses 19-47)*

Jesus came to show by his earthly life that God's law applies to all human conduct. His own character is an illustration of its holy precepts.

Centuries before - in Moses' time - the Ten Commandments had been given on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 20) to reveal to men the nature of sin. The law exposes man's guilt and creates in the human heart a feeling of its need of God. As a Geiger counter has the fantastic power to detect radioactive particles, so the law of God has the ability to expose sin in the life. Then the Holy Spirit convicts men of their need of a Saviour. The law, therefore, becomes an agent in bringing sinners to Christ that they may be justified by faith in him. The law does not save them. Christ alone can save. But when he saves, he does not abolish the law.

"Until heaven and earth disappear," says Jesus, "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Though heaven and earth may pass away, the divine law of God will always endure. Therefore, the stars shining in the heavens above and the solid earth upon which we stand are witnesses that God's commandments are changeless and eternal.





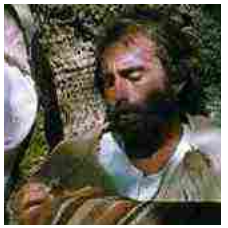
It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." Luke 16:17

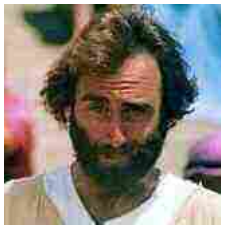
And now Jesus takes one commandment at a time and explains the depth of the divine requirement. See Matthew 5:17-48. He shows how far reaching are the principles of heaven. His teaching makes it clear that a mere outward show of obedience is of no value. The sinful thought and the lustful look are wrong, even as the outward act of sin. Adultery and murder begin in the mind, the result of evil thoughts. By his own life of love and purity, Jesus showed that men could rise above their natural passions and appetites and become the obedient sons of God. We may overcome all our weaknesses through faith in him. He will impart the Holy Spirit to his children to help them overcome and to keep them "from falling." Jude 24. As Jesus lived a righteous life in human flesh, so may we. The Lord says of those who believe in him -

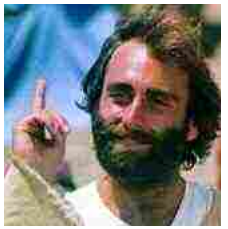
"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

special notes

What DOES JESUS SAY FURTHER ABOUT PRACTICAL RELIGION?







Jesus now gives instruction about making gifts to the church, and about prayer and fasting -

"Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them . . . And when you pray . . . pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matthew 6:1, 5, 6

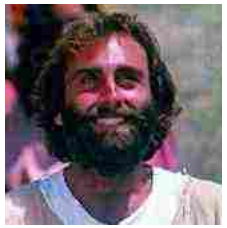
Let nothing be done to win praise or to excite feelings of self admiration. Don't think that you can earn God's favour by your good works. Remember, it is his grace that saves you. Be sincere and humble when you give. Do so liberally and without ostentation. Give to help worthy causes, not to draw attention to yourself. Don't pray to be seen and heard of men. Commune with God as with a friend. If you fast, make your appearance as pleasing as possible so that men will not know that you are fasting. Avoid the show and parade of the Pharisee. In all your service to God and man, be helpful, humble, simple, sincere in motive, and God will bless you.

Jesus next states a vital truth about allegiance. "No man can serve two masters," he declares. Loyalty to God should be a fixed principle in the Christian's life.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Matthew 6:22-24 *(Read also verses 19-21)*

As we continue to listen to the Sermon on the Mount, we are convinced that a man cannot serve God acceptably if he has a divided heart. The reason why some Christians falter is that they are not fully consecrated to God. They stumble because they walk in semi darkness. They live in the twilight zone, and as long as they remain there, they cannot walk with confidence. But if they will come out into the open light, the Sun of Righteousness will shine upon their pathway and show them the way of peace.

Christ SPEAKS TO THE FEARFUL





Now Christ's face lights up with heavenly sunshine as he continues with words of cheer for those who are inclined to worry.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own." Matthew 6:33, 34 *(Read also verses 25-32)*

These wonderful words of Jesus break the spell of fear. After speaking of God's care over the birds of the sky and the flowers of the field, he says -

"Are you not much more valuable than they? . . . Therefore do not worry about tomorrow." Matthew 6:26, 34

As we listen it becomes clear that we are to follow Christ day by day. Tomorrow has not yet come, and yesterday is gone forever. We have only one day at a time in which to live, so let us trust God *now*. He has promised strength only for today.

Let GOD BE THE JUDGE







The Apostle Paul says, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves." 2 Corinthians 13:5. This is our work. Christ admonishes further -

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" Matthew 7:1-3

When we judge others, we pass judgment on ourselves. *Let God be the Judge.* Listen to Paul's words -

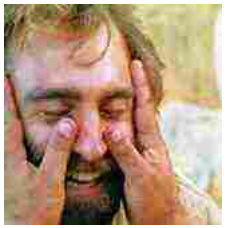
You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Romans 2:1

How much better it is to speak well of others and to believe the best concerning them. Only in this way can our minds be spared from the poisonous virus of prejudice, ill will, and open hostility. Besides, we do not have all the facts, do we? As Alexander Pope once remarked -

'Tis with our judgments as our watches, none go just alike, yet each believes his own.

What time is it now by your watch? Ask someone else that same question. His watch may tell a different time. Even so our judgment of people may differ. *Let God be the Judge!*

How TO APPROACH GOD IN PRAYER







Attitudes mean much in worship. We are to make our requests known to God in simple faith.

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

"And without faith," said the Apostle Paul, "it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Hebrews 11:6. Prayer is a two way street - an avenue of access to God, and an avenue of blessing from God. When we pray, we are not to doubt or to be fearful about the answer. God will give to us "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." Ephesians 3:20. If we do not receive exactly what we requested, we will receive a substitute gift that is better than the questionable thing we may have demanded of the Lord.

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:3

God is too wise to err. If our prayers are selfish, he will shape circumstances so that we can become aware of our short sightedness. Henry Ward Beecher said, "It is not well for a man to pray *cream* and live *skim milk*." A rich experience requires a rich faith, and these should accompany earnest prayer.

special notes

What IS THE GOLDEN RULE?



"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12

This is what we call the golden rule, the best of all rules for men to live by. Jesus said that it represented the principles of "the law and the prophets." The standard of our obligation to others is found in what we ourselves would regard as their obligation to us. Not how much we can get, but how much we can give, is God's rule of conduct. We are to put ourselves in the place of others and enter into their feelings, treating them as we would wish to be treated if we were to exchange places. Christ's life is the best example of the golden rule. The principles of true courtesy, kindness, and unselfishness were revealed in everything he did.

special notes

The TEST OF SINCERITY





There are those who say, "Believe, believe in Christ - only believe and you will be saved. You need not keep the law - only believe." But a belief that does not lead to obedience is presumption, so Jesus taught that -

"Thus, by their fruit you will recognise them." Matthew 7:20 *(Read also verses 13-20)*

Obedience is the test of discipleship. He in whose heart the law of love is written proves the sincerity of his profession by following the example of Jesus.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 1 John 2:3

It is the fruit which we bear that shows the kind of trees we are - trees of evil or trees of righteousness. If the seed planted in the heart is the Word of God and the law of God, the fruit will certainly be good. See Psalm 119:11 and Hebrews 8:10.

special notes

The FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER



Jesus has built his sermon up to a grand climax and is about to end his instruction. We listen carefully as he describes the man who builds his house of faith upon his divine teaching, and not only hears his words but "puts them into practice."

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Matthew 7:24, 25 *(Read also verses 26-29)*

The shifting sands of human theories and traditions are unsafe material upon which to build the temple of life. The storms of temptation will sweep away every house that is founded upon self, every house that is not built upon the Rock Jesus Christ. The Master Teacher calls upon all to hear his words and to build upon this foundation of truth.

As we look about us we see that the truths taught in this wonderful sermon are just as applicable today as when the Saviour gave them to the multitude on the mountainside by the Sea of Galilee.

Are you building on the right foundation? Have you received Christ's words as the guide for your life? If so, you may be sure that you will not fall when the storms of trial beat upon you.

Booklet 11 will answer the following Questions -

- **What is the significance of Jesus' statement - "The kingdom of heaven is near"?**
- **Will the kingdom of God finally triumph over all the kingdoms of the world?**
- **Who will be the subjects of God's eternal kingdom?**

*For a good Scriptural preview of this booklet read Matthew 5, 6, 7, and Luke 6:17-49.

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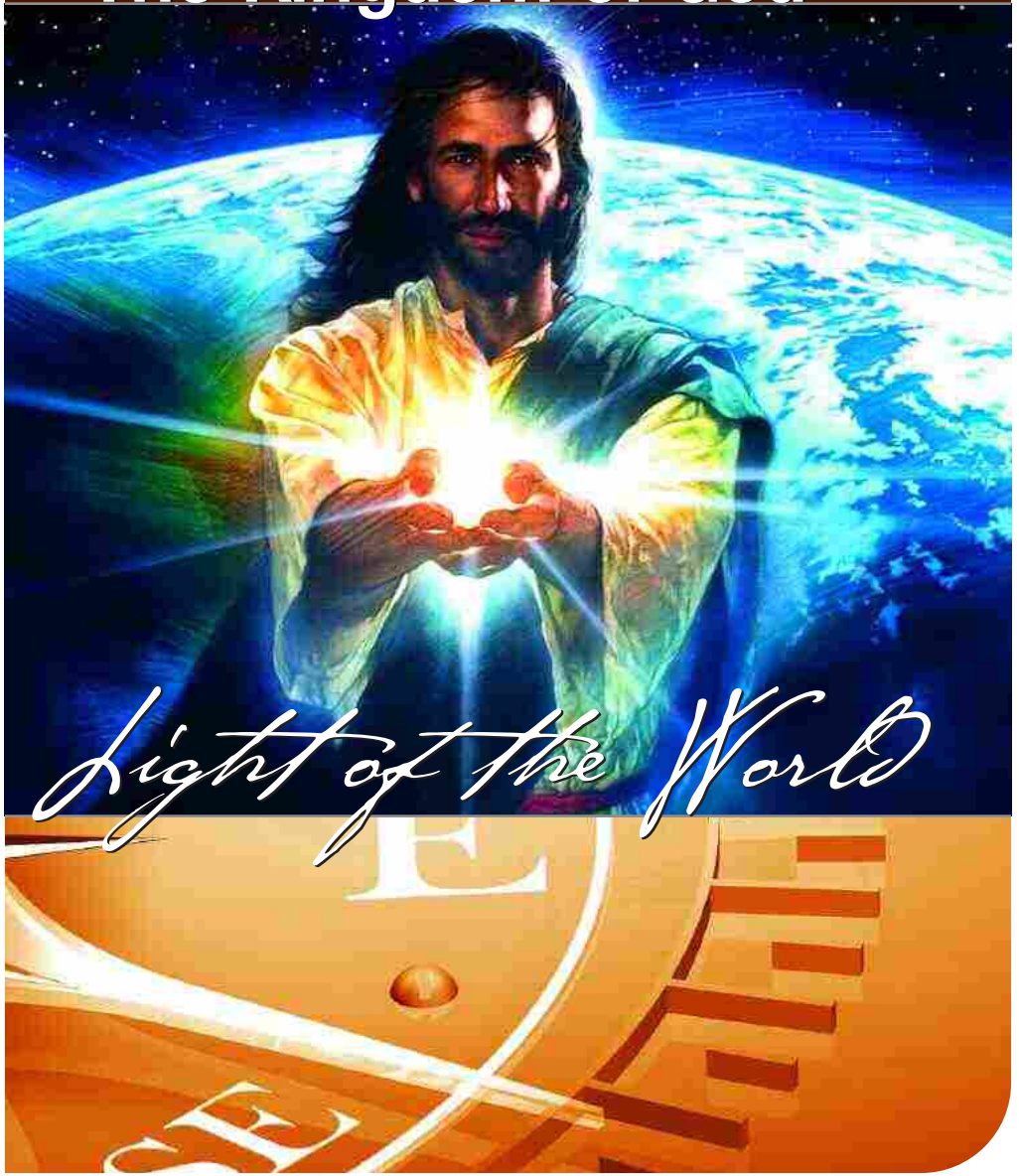
BOOKLET ELEVEN

The Kingdom of God



Light of the World

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4:23

During the early days of his public ministry in Judea, and later in Galilee, Jesus "went throughout … preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness." He was a powerful "kingdom" preacher. Much of his time was spent explaining to the people the nature of the kingdom that he had come to establish. Early in his ministry he journeyed to Nazareth, the scene of his boyhood and youth, and there in the synagogue one Sabbath day he stood up and read to the people from the prophets. If you had been in the congregation that day, you would have heard his melodious voice repeating Isaiah's kingdom prophecy -

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. Isaiah 61:1

Then as Jesus finished reading this passage from the prophet, you would have heard him say with deep feeling, and with obvious reference to his own work, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Read Luke 4:16-30. But the response from the worshippers was unfavourable. The people were maddened by Christ's application of this prophecy to himself. They seized him and would have taken his life by throwing him over the brow of a nearby hill had not God miraculously intervened to save his Son. "No prophet is accepted in his hometown." Luke 4:24



But even outside Nazareth, Jesus found that his announcement of the kingdom stirred up controversy and opposition. Why? Because he, like John, called the people to repentance and a new life. "Repent and believe the good news!" he said. Mark 1:15. But they did not want to repent or change their ways.

As we turn to other incidents in the life of Christ we will see how, in one crisis after another, he stirred up the spiritual sensibilities of the people and tried to lead them away from their false ideas to accept the principles and teachings of his kingdom.

special notes

How DID JESUS ANNOUNCE HIS KINGDOM?





Everywhere Jesus went he announced that - "The kingdom of God is near."

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:14, 15

When Jesus said, "The time has come," he referred to the prophecy of Daniel who forecast the exact time of his anointing for leadership in the kingdom. This time prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27) pointed to Jesus' baptism by John in A.D. 27, near the close of the seventy weeks prophecy. Then he was anointed as the Messiah by the Holy Spirit. See Daniel 9:25, John 1:41 and Matthew 3:16.

So we see that Christ's public work began on time. The "kingdom" message began to be preached by the Messiah exactly as the prophet Daniel had foretold. This is a striking confirmation of the mission of Jesus, who came to earth as God's anointed Son to establish his kingdom.

special notes

What IS THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM?

Some time after Jesus first announced, "The kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17), a group of Pharisees came to him demanding when the kingdom of God should come. To them "the kingdom" implied an armed struggle for freedom from the Romans resulting in national independence.







Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20, 21

These religious leaders saw no outward signs that a kingdom such as they expected was being set up by Christ. They insinuated, therefore, that both John and Jesus were impostors, but the Saviour answered, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." In other words, "Don't look for earthly power and pomp to mark the coming of my kingdom, for the kingdom I have come to establish is not a temporal one. It is in the hearts and minds of men."

Jesus did not come with outward show or with sword and spear. The gospel of his grace and love was the only sword that he unsheathed for the deliverance of his people. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal but spiritual. His kingdom message was the emancipation proclamation to all the spiritual slaves of sin, not to the political slaves of Rome. Paul said -

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14

Christ laid down the terms of citizenship in his spiritual kingdom in his Sermon on the Mount, but Israel refused to accept those terms.

Not many among his own countrymen accepted him (John 1:11), but in the years that followed, those whom his Spirit made humble, those who were meek and merciful and courageous, accepted his principles and became the subjects of his kingdom. Read Matthew 5:3-12.

All Christ's teachings concerning the spiritual nature of his kingdom did not change the false conceptions held by the Jews. His parables illustrating the nature of the kingdom of heaven only antagonised the leaders of Israel who, with strong national pride, looked for the day when the favoured people would be delivered from the Roman yoke. To them this was more important than deliverance from sin.

Why DID ISRAEL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM?



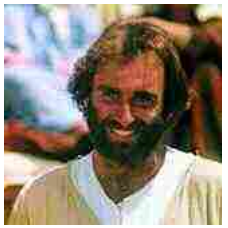


Christ reminded the Jews that they had misinterpreted the Scriptures. This, he implied, was one reason why they lacked the power and blessing of God.

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. Matthew 22:29 *(Read also* Mark 12:24*)*

These solemn words were spoken to correct a common error about marriage in the next life (Mark 12:18-23), but they apply with equal force to the erroneous belief held by the Jews regarding Christ's kingdom. Israel had applied the Old Testament Scriptures that point to the second advent of Christ, when he will come in power and glory, to the work which they thought he should do at his first advent. This misapplication of Scripture led to Israel's rejection of the Saviour. If they had rightly understood the Scriptures, they might have recognised Christ when he came, accepted him as the Messiah, and entered into God's kingdom.

It is written that "no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." 2 Peter 1:20. It is true that some texts are hard to understand. See 2 Peter 3:15-17. But we need not be misled if we will seek for the true meaning of God's Word by comparing text with text. See 1 Corinthians 2:13. This promise of Jesus is sure -



"If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." John 7:17

special notes

Christ's KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD







At the time of his trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, Jesus made it clear that his kingdom was not a worldly kingdom.

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." John 18:36 *(Read also* 1 John 2:15-17*)*

The Roman government that administered Palestine in Christ's day was notoriously corrupt. Taxes were unreasonably high and political offices were bought and sold. Jesus knew that the government was bad, but he did not attempt any civil reforms, nor did he attack the Roman rulers or their methods of administration. He had the wisdom to see that there was a better approach. If there was to be a change for the better in human society, the heart of man must be regenerated by having a new principle of life implanted within it.

The Jews wanted a kingdom like the nations around them, and if Jesus had been willing to set up a temporal dominion, and to enforce the laws of God the way they interpreted them, and if they could have been the officers of that kingdom to execute the rules of their religion on all mankind, they would gladly have received him as the Messiah. But Christ disappointed them. He would not accept the earthly throne which might have been his. He wanted only to rule on the throne of the human heart with the full consent of all his subjects.

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12, 13

The change must begin in the individual. He must be born again, spiritually renewed by the Holy Spirit. See John 3:1-17. Those who receive Christ into their lives receive the "right to become children of God."

This spiritual rebirth is the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is the only power that will make men better. Legal enactments enforcing religious laws will never make sons of God out of the sons of men. Not force, but love, is the basis of Christ's kingdom, as we will see.



special notes

What IS THE LAW OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM?







There are two great principles, Christ said, upon which the law of his kingdom is founded - love to God and love to men. The Great Teacher made this plain one day when a scribe questioned him about the law. See Mark 12:28-31 and Matthew 22:34-40.

The first four of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-11), are summed up in the first precept, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart." Matthew 22:37. The last six (Exodus 20:12-17), are included in the other, "Love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 22:39. These two love commandments sum up the great principles governing Christ's kingdom. These two principles cannot be separated. Christ taught that a man cannot love God and at the same time hate his neighbour, neither can he love his neighbour while hating God. If we love God, we shall love our neighbour. If we love our neighbour, we shall love God. The law of love and the law of the Ten Commandments are one law. See Romans 13:8-10. And "God is love". 1 John 4:8. He and his law stand or fall together.

Christ came to restate the moral law of Ten Commandments, in terms of love, a principle which the people did not understand, although in the very heart of the Decalogue were the words, "I, the Lord your God" show "love to . . . those who love me and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:5, 6. Jesus revealed that respect for the law is not acceptable to God without LOVE and FAITH. The form without the power is worthless (2 Timothy 3:5), but love and faith establish the law as the great rule of the kingdom. See Romans 3:31.

By his grace Jesus saves us from breaking the law of his kingdom. This he does by writing the law of love in our hearts by his Holy Spirit, and this fulfils the promise of the new convenant. See Hebrews 8:10-13. To every believer Jesus offers spiritual freedom and grace. But without love, obedience to the law is a yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1), and there is no salvation in it.

Christ's KINGDOM FIRST

Now, if love to God is the first commandment, then his kingdom must occupy first place in the lives of his followers. In his Sermon on the Mount, Christ said -

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33 *(See also verses* 22-24, 30-33 *and* Luke 9:57-62, 14-33*)*







The kingdom of heaven is for those who love God above all else. It is not for the half hearted. The half Christian cannot be a member of Christ's kingdom. Dwight L. Moody used to tell the story about an apple tree which grew so near the fence that half of its branches hung over the roadside. Describing this tree, he said -

There it stood, half in the orchard and the other half out. And when the fruit was ripe every man and boy that went by threw a stick or a stone into that tree to bring an apple down. The other trees that stood fully in the orchard were not bothered that way. And the man who tries to live half in the world and half in the kingdom of Christ is going to have a tough time of it all the way around.

Many want the kingdom of God, but few want it *first*. Everyone wants to be saved, but how few there are who want to be saved *in God's way*.

special notes

Final TRIUMPH OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM







The transfiguration of Christ on the mountaintop served to represent to his followers the final triumph of his kingdom.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" Matthew 17:1-5 *(See also* Mark 9:2-10 *and* Luke 9:28-36*)*

If you had been there on the mountain of transfiguration, you would have beheld a beautiful representation of the future phase of Christ's kingdom - the kingdom of his glory. Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ in the midst of a blaze of heavenly light. In this never to be forgotten scene, the three disciples who were present saw in miniature the second coming of the Lord Jesus when he will appear in the clouds of heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. See Luke 21:27 and Revelation 1:7, 19:11-16. Then the kingdom of God's glory will begin, and Christ will rule supreme. This, of course, is still in the future.

Moses had passed under the dominion of death, but he had been raised from the dead and taken to heaven. See Jude 9. Elijah had been translated to heaven without seeing death. See 2 Kings 2:11. These Old Testament characters, now glorified beings, appeared to their Lord on the mount. Suddenly he was transfigured with a glory exceeding theirs. When the three disciples beheld this, they were filled with awe. But the scene they beheld, glorious as it was, was not to be mistaken for the event it represented. The transfiguration of Jesus was but a preview in miniature of his second coming to begin the kingdom of glory. See 2 Peter 1:16-18.

The presence of Moses represented those who will be raised from the dead at Christ's second coming. The presence of Elijah represented the translated ones who will be taken to heaven without seeing death when Jesus appears the second time.

There is a *present* and a *future* phase to the kingdom of God - first, the kingdom of grace, and second, the kingdom of glory. At his first advent, Christ established the first phase of the kingdom. At his second advent, he will establish the second. This life affords everyone an opportunity for the spiritual *kingdom of grace* to work a change in their life. Those who yield their hearts to become the subjects of his grace will someday see the heavens opening to welcome them into the eternal *kingdom of his glory*. Then the righteous dead will be raised and the righteous living will be "changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Corinthians 15:52), and "caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thessalonians 4:17. "For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:53. What a day of glory that will be! Will you be there with those you love?







special notes

Who ARE THE HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM?







The future kingdom of glory will be established on this earth. "The meek . . . will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5) is the promise Christ made to his followers.

The home of the saved will be a beautiful land, a country inhabited by the righteous. This world will be given to the heirs of God's kingdom as their eternal dwelling place. See 2 Peter 3:13. Two great prophecies will then be fulfilled -

Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him. Daniel 7:27

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15

Note firstly, the saints (God's people) receive the kingdom, and secondly, Christ reigns as King. See 1 Corinthians 15:22-28. It is for the coming of this final kingdom of glory that Christ taught us to pray. See Matthew 6:10. When this dominion is restored, we will see fulfilled the promise that God made to Abraham, "The whole land of Canaan" shall be "an everlasting possession". Genesis 17:8. "Canaan land" will be this entire world made new by the Creator (Revelation 21 and 22), and it will be the possession of God's children forever.

Abraham is represented in the Bible as "the father of the faithful" of all ages. *The children of Abraham are the children of faith. Those who have faith in Christ, are heirs of the everlasting kingdom. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed,* and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29. Read also Galatians 4:4-7.

You may decide the question of an inheritance in that eternal kingdom by saying, "I accept Jesus as my Saviour by *faith.* I accept his spiritual reign in my heart. I am willing that his law of love should rule in my life. I want to become a citizen of his kingdom." All who enter into this experience by faith become heirs of God through Christ. They find righteousness, peace and joy, for Paul said -





For the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit . . ." Romans 14:17

Finally, when Christ returns as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16), they become citizens of the eternal kingdom of glory.

So, friend, have faith in Christ. He is your Saviour. He will provide you with a passport and a title deed to dwell with him forever in the earth made new.

special notes

Booklet 12 will answer the following Questions -

- **What does the Bible say about Christ's personal appearance and manner?**
- **Does the expression "without sin" apply only to Jesus?**
- **Why is moral character more important than intellectual knowledge?**

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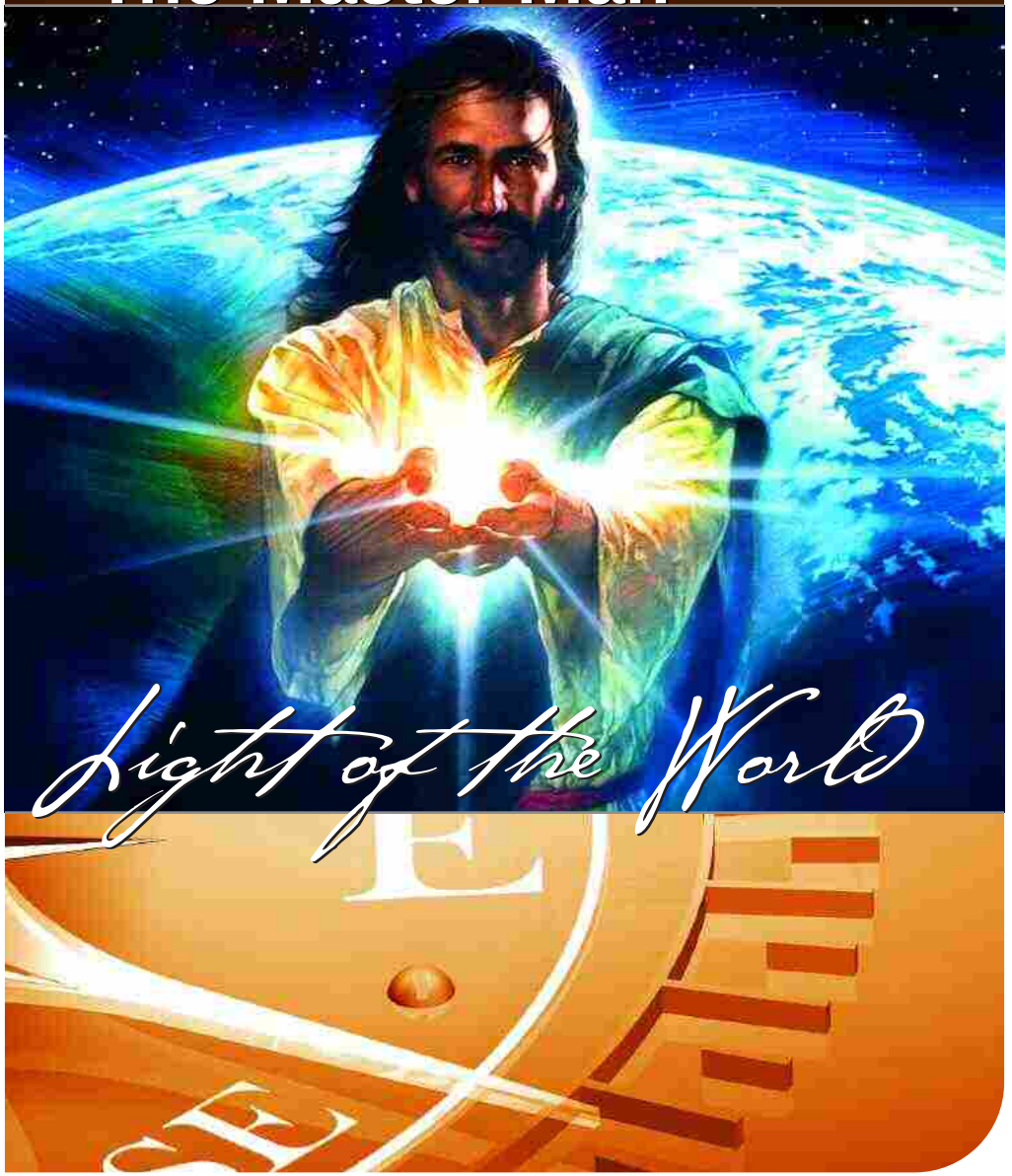
BOOKLET TWELVE

The Master Man


Light of the World

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

If Christ had failed in one point of exemplifying true virtue, we would have lost our Guide on the road to heaven. But he did not fail. Therefore, he is "the way" for us to go - in everything. We may safely imitate his example in our thoughts and actions. Charles Clayton Morrison once said -

If a man does not see in Jesus the "highest, holiest manhood," there is no argument that can convince him. Though one may be convinced that Jesus fulfilled the prophets, and wrought supernatural miracles, and rose from the dead, the belief of all this would not be faith unless one discerns the intrinsic beauty and strength of the moral character of Jesus and responds to it in terms of conduct. In the character of Christ we are privileged to see what kind of being God is. Treasury of Christian Faith, page 89

The perfect life of Christ revealed the perfect love and goodness of God the Father. This beautiful revelation of God's character was one of the most important accomplishments of Christ's mission.

During his earthly life Jesus won every battle that he fought with Satan. He said, ". . . the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me . . ." John 14:30. He could say to his enemies, as no man could say before him or since -

Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? John 8:46

In this booklet, we will see how gloriously Christ carried out his purpose to reveal the perfect character of God to the human family and how he proved that man's enemy, the devil, the instigator and perpetrator of sin, was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. See John 8:44. You will especially enjoy this booklet, because in it you will see the many sides of the personal life and character of the Master Man.



special notes

What IS THE CHIEF ATTRIBUTE OF GOD?







"God is love." 1 John 4:8. No matter how we look at him we behold his love. That one word, "love," best describes the character of the Father. The principle of love is his whole life. All his dealings with men and angels are charged through and through with divine compassion and tenderness.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 1 John 4:8-10

When a sinner approaches God for pardon, he may hope for mercy. The love of God revealed through Jesus Christ grips him and he surrenders himself to a loving Saviour. God's love has been expressed by his best Gift.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:16, 17

By his subtle misrepresentation, Satan had led men to believe that God was a tyrant whose anger and wrath could be appeased only by sacrifice and toil. Jesus came from the Father's bosom to correct this false idea and by his life and ministry to show that the opposite was true - that the Father was just like Jesus, "holy, blameless, pure." Hebrews 7:26

It was love that led the Father to give his Son, and it was love that led Christ to give himself. All heaven was emptied in that one gift. Could divine love for the human race have been expressed more convincingly?

How true are Paul's words -

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Romans 8:32 *(See also* Romans 5:6-10*)*

How IS LOVE DEFINED

The Apostle Paul explains the meaning of love in the following words -



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8



Since Christ is the living expression of God's love, we may rightly parahrase these verses as follows -

Christ is patient, Christ is kind. He does not envy, he does not boast, he is not proud. He is not rude. He is not self-seeking, he is not easily angered, he keeps no record of wrongs. Christ does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. He always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Christ never fails.

Christ is all that love is. His earthly life was heaven's own definition of the nature and character of the great God of love.

Love REVEALED IN CHRIST'S TEACHING







In the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, the love of God is revealed for all men. Firstly, it was toward those who, like the helpless sheep, are lost and know it and want to return to God. Secondly, it was toward the proud, self satisfied, "lost coin" sinners who don't know that they are lost, but who when enlightened may return to God's house. And thirdly, it was toward the lost prodigals who are lost and don't care, but the Father cares, and his love draws the wandering sinners home.

Where could such love and tenderness be found except in the Heavenly Father's heart and in the teaching of his divine Son? One well known writer has said -

Multitudes who were not interested in the harangues of the rabbis were attracted by his (Jesus') teaching. They could understand his words, and their hearts were warmed and comforted. He spoke of God, not as an avenging judge, but as a tender father, and he revealed the image of God as mirrored in himself. His words were like balm to the wounded spirit. Both by his words and by his works of mercy he was breaking the oppressive power of the old traditions and man-made commandments, and presenting the love of God in its exhaustless fullness. The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, page 205

special notes

Christ's COMPASSION FOR THE SICK

In his work for the sick and afflicted, Christ revealed his great compassion.



When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

One of the many instances where the mercy and kindliness of Christ are revealed is the following -



A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Mark 1:40-42

All who were the victims of disease - even the lepers - were the objects of his loving interest and care.



He was interested in every phase of suffering that came under his notice, and to every sufferer he brought relief, his kind words having a soothing balm . . . Virtue - the healing power of love - went out from him to the sick and distressed. Thus in an unobtrusive way he worked for the people . . . And this was why . . . so many heard him gladly. The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, page 92

And Christ is still the same today. See Hebrews 13:8.

special notes

Christ's SYMPATHY FOR THE BEREAVED







Jesus expressed keen sympathy for the friends and relatives who mourned the death of Lazarus.

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled . . . Jesus wept. John 11:33, 35

Here we see the sorrow that Jesus felt at the loss of a friend. He had great sympathy for Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha.

When Jesus came to the place where they had laid Lazarus, he was greatly troubled. Later, he raised him from the grave in which he had laid for four days (John 11:39). Jesus had the capacity to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice. He was -

. . . the fountain of healing mercy for the world . . . His life flowed out in currents of sympathy and tenderness. The aged, the sorrowing, and the sin burdened, the children at play in their innocent joy, the little creatures of the groves, the patient beasts of burden - all were happier for his presence. He whose word of power upheld the world would stoop to relieve a wounded bird. There was nothing beneath his notice, nothing to which he disdained to minister. The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, page 74

special notes

The PERSON AND MANNER OF CHRIST







While Christ's appeal to the people was largely spiritual, there must have been something about his person that attracted them. His countenance was strong and noble. He was God like in his bearing, and every inch a man. Jesus did not present the feminine appearance with which many artists represent him. He had no physical imperfections or blemishes (1 Peter 1:19). His hands were calloused by honest labour. He stood erect. His muscles were firm and strong. He had a mature and well balanced personality. No man ever lived who felt as deeply as he did. He wept and he rejoiced, but he always maintained self control, while confidently trusting in his Heavenly Father. In Christ, divine compassion was blended with conscious power. He had some very remarkable characteristics. Let's note them here -

1. *He was surrounded by an atmosphere of peace.* There was a magnetic spiritual power that attracted people into his presence. Only Christ could say -

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

2. *He had a commanding, yet pleasing, voice.* He spoke "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matthew 7:28. The scribes read the law to the people in a dreary monotone, but Jesus' voice was different - clear, unhurried, persuasive, and refreshing as the lilting sound of a flowing brook. His language was correct, yet it was not heavy and laboured. His teaching was powerful and expressive, filled with pictures and action. Christ charmed his listeners and thrilled the very soul of all who paused to hear his words.



3. *He had a message for all classes.* The deepest thinkers of Israel matched wits with Christ and found themselves humbled by his wisdom. Yet the uneducated could understand the theological discussions in which he engaged. Christ knew how to appeal to the heart of the Pharisees like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathaea, and Simon of Bethany. The illiterate also understood him, and the heathen, like the Syrophoenician woman and the Roman centurion of Capernaum, were won by his compassion. See Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 8:5-13. He knew how to reach the hearts of all. Christ's life was so filled with the unselfish love of God that his divine nature was readily apparent.

special notes

No matter from what angle we look at Christ, we see perfection. Let us consider some of his most prominent traits -







1. *Justice.* Three times in the Book of Acts, Christ is described as just. He is called "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3:14), and "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:52 and Acts 22:14). The implication is that Christ was equitable and fair. He was not biased nor prejudiced. He was merciful to Greeks, barbarians, Romans and Jews alike. From Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 8:5-13, we see that Christ freely offered his saving power to all men. See also Acts 10 and 11:1-18.

Since "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10), how happy and secure we should feel, knowing that he who will judge us is just and fair.

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son . . . And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. John 5:22, 27

Because Jesus is "the Son of Man," he can sympathise with us. Since he was once a man on this earth and understands every event and incident in our lives, he is the One who has been appointed as our judge.

2. *Simplicity.* There was no self assertion or false pride in Jesus' life. Neither was there any outward display. If men had been attracted to him because he possessed wealth or prestige, there might have been some ground for doubting their sincerity. Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, it had been prophesied of him -

He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.







In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope. Isaiah 42:2-4

Christ was not a noisy preacher. There was no ostentation or show. Jesus attracted men by the beauty of his character and the power of his message. Malachi described him as "the sun of righteousness." Malachi 4:2. The sun does not burst upon the world suddenly to blind us, but gradually and gently. The prophet Hosea (6:3) had written of Christ, "As surely as the sun rises, he will appear." As the sun rises quietly and spreads it light and warmth over all the earth, so Christ came to our world with healing in his wings. Malachi 4:2

3. *Faith and Courage.* If we should put ourselves in Christ's place, we would know something of the struggles and conflicts of his life. Judging from the response of the masses, his work here on earth was a failure. Even his own disciples left him and fled just when he needed them most. Yet Jesus was always of good courage and full of faith. He himself declared through the prophet Isaiah -

"I have laboured to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing. Yet what is due me is in the Lord's hand, and my reward is with my God . . . for I am honoured in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength . . ." Isaiah 49:4, 5

Jesus committed his ways to God. All his victories over sin, even his miracles of healing and his raising of the dead, were the fruitage of faith in God. Never did he exercise his divine powers without the consent and direction of his Heavenly Father. He lived in continual fellowship with God. And so, friend, may you and I.

The great preacher Chrysostom was a man of faith and courage, and when the Roman emperor threatened him with banishment, he replied, "Thou canst not, for the world is my Father's house. Thou canst not banish me." To this the emperor replied that he would kill him. "Thou canst not," said Chrysostom, "for my life is hid with Christ in God." The emperor then declared that he would take away his treasure. The mighty preacher said, "My treasure is in heaven, and my heart is there." The monarch then threatened to rob him of all his friends, to which he replied, "Thou canst not, for I have a Friend in heaven from whom thou canst not separate me. I defy thee. There is nothing thou canst do to hurt me."



Such courage is but a reflection of the nature and character of Christ, and by faith it may be an activating force in the life of every believer in Christ.

special notes

What WAS THE SUPREME TEST OF JESUS' CHARACTER?







Not only in his life but in his death, Jesus was the steadfast, courageous servant of God. He was never discouraged by criticism nor inflated by flattery. He was always the same. Not even the heart rending circumstances of his judgment and crucifixion could loosen his hold upon the Father. In spite of continual opposition, he determined to finish the work which God gave him to do without a stain on his conscience or a blemish on his character. He faced the cross with his spirit braced for suffering. He stood the test because he was anchored in God. From his noble example Peter learned to be faithful until the end. He says -

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:21-23

Character is developed in the midst of trials and heartaches (Hebrews 12:5-13). Face your problems, friend. Solve them and don't shun them. The power of Christ's righteous life of victory over sin is available to you. See Philippians 2:5-11 and Hebrews 12:2-4. By faith you may claim his victory and overcome the world. See 1 John 5:4 and Galatians 2:20.

One day a man in Scotland bought a small bottle of attar of roses and placed it inside a vase that he had just purchased. When he got home he discovered that the bottle had broken and all the precious perfume had soaked into the clay of the vase. He set the vase in the living room, thinking that the scent of the perfume would soon disappear. But he was mistaken. For years the odour of the roses lingered in the vase. One day that great Christian minister, G. Campbell Morgan, came to visit him.

Seated in the living room, he smelt the most delightful fragrance or roses, yet could see no flowers. When he asked the meaning of it all, his host explained it and said, "That vase has been giving out attar of roses to this household for more than twenty five years."



And so it is with Christ - his body was broken, his blood was spilled for us, and the fragrance of his lovely character has filled the earth with the savour of the knowledge of God. He was indeed the Master Man!

special notes

Booklet 13 will answer the following Questions -

- **Are the New Testament stories of healing true?**
- **Does Christ actually heal the sick today?**
- **How shall we exercise faith in God's healing power?**

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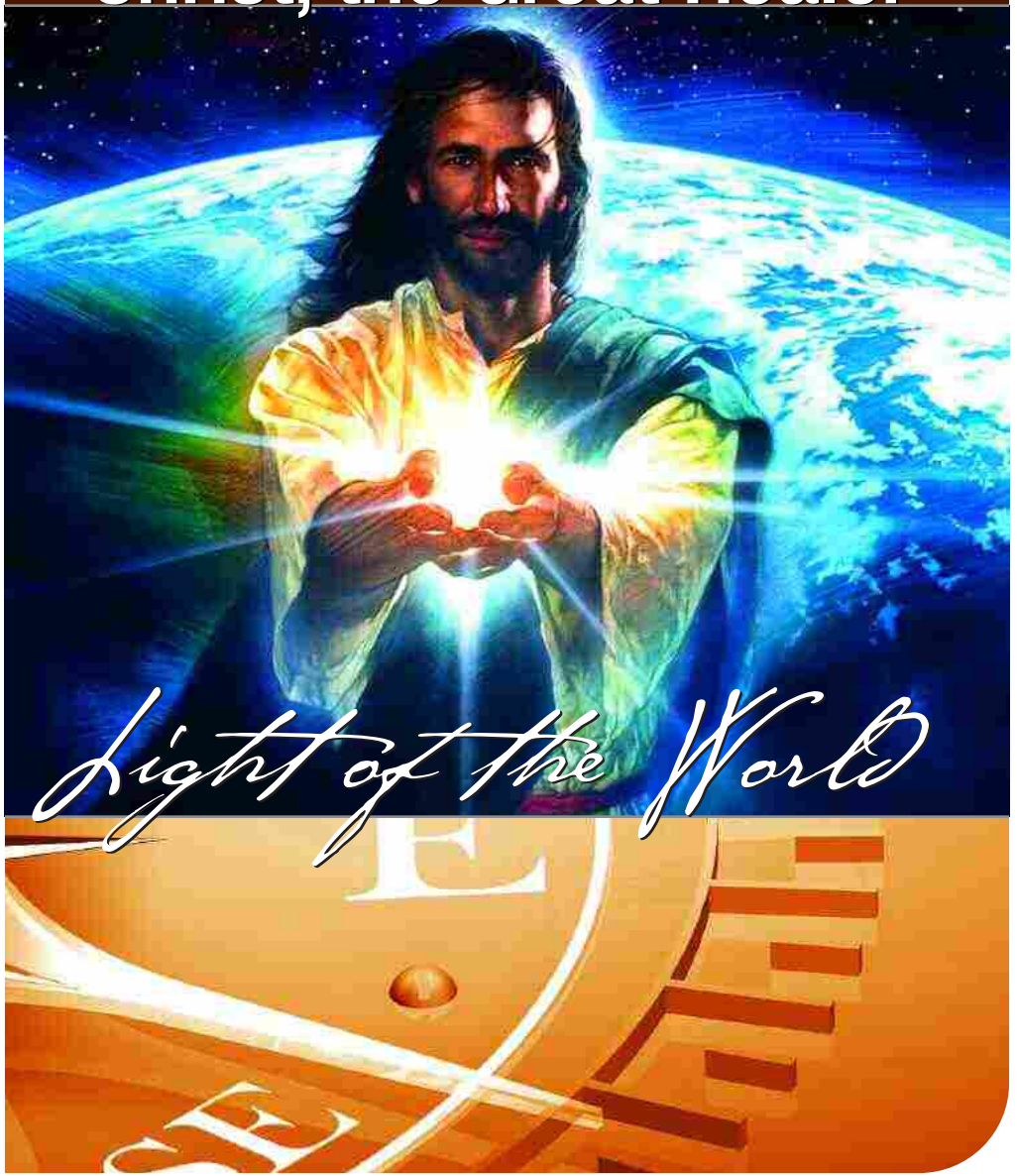
BOOKLET THIRTEEN

Christ, the Great Healer



Jesus went throughout Galilee . . . healing every disease and sickness among the people . . . and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralysed, and he healed them. Matthew 4:23, 24

A well known physician who was beloved for his cheerfulness was asked one day as he entered a sick room, how he could live in the midst of so much suffering and illness and still keep smiling. His answer was a classic: "I always look upon disease from a curative standpoint." This wise physician had learned that there is no really hopeless disease when the case is committed to the Great Healer and every useful remedy is employed.

Had not Jesus looked upon disease from a curative standpoint, he could not have wrought so many miracles of healing. The New Testament records many actual healings performed by Christ, such as the restoration of sight to blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52) and the healing of the lepers (Luke 17:11-19).

Christ, the Great Healer, restored the sick, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, and raised the dead. He came to "destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8) and to conquer sin, disease, suffering, pain and death. Looking in faith to his divine Father, the Great Physician overcame all of Satan's opposition and became a channel of life and health to a sick and dying world.



Keep in mind throughout this booklet that the real objects of Christ's miracles of healing were "the alleviation of human suffering, or the illustration of sacred truths, or . . . the increase of innocent joy." Life of Christ, Dean Farrar, pages 89, 90

As we open the pages of the four Gospels and read the accounts of the specific cures wrought by the Saviour, we are amazed at the exhibition of his grace and love. As you read these records of Jesus' healing miracles, remember that they were *actual cures* wrought through the power of God.

special notes

Healing OF THE NOBLEMAN'S SON







(Read John 4:46-54)

Now let us go back to Cana of Galilee where Jesus "turned the water wine." Christ had returned to this little town for a visit. While he was there a certain nobleman approached him to ask that he go down to Capernaum and heal his son who was at the point of death. This nobleman had made up his mind that he would not believe in Jesus *until* his son was healed. Jesus read his thoughts and said -

"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "you will never believe." The royal official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live." John 4:48-50

On his way home the officer was met by his servants who said that his son was alive. Then the father asked at what hour he began to get well, and when they told him, he knew that it was the same hour in which Jesus had said, "Your son will live."

God does not always show "signs and wonders" *before* we believe, yet he is willing to give us reasonable evidence upon which to exercise faith. If we act upon that evidence, God may see fit to perform a miracle of healing in response to our faith. But we must accept his terms and not insist upon our own. God knows what is best. Remember, the first law of healing is that we exercise a submissive faith in God. We should never insist on "signs and wonders" as a *condition* for belief in God.

There is a *nominal* faith that does little good, and there is a *saving* faith that delivers the soul and brings healing to the body. The woman who was healed of an issue of blood had a genuine faith. See Mark 5:25-34.

There are two kinds of believing: first, a believing about God which means that I believe that what is said of God is true. This faith is rather a form of knowledge than a faith. There is, secondly, a believing in God which means that I put my trust in him, give myself up to thinking that I can have dealings with him, and believe without any doubt that he will be and do to me according to the things said of him. Such faith which throws itself upon God, whether in life or in death, alone makes a Christian man. Best Modern Illustrations, page 144

Healing OF THE CRIPPLE AT BETHESDA

(Read John 5:2-9,14)







Soon after the healing of the nobleman's son, Jesus went to Jerusalem. On the Sabbath day he visited the pool of Bethesda, where a great multitude of sick people lay. Jesus observed the pitiful cases before him, and his heart went out in sympathy to them all. But one man who had "been an invalid for thirty eight years" received his special attention.

*When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."*John 5:6, 7

The Great Healer recognised that here was a case that needed immediate help. Challenging his faith in God, Jesus said -

"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. John 5:8, 9

Jesus did not question this poor cripple to see if he had faith. He simply said, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." The man believed him, and his faith was made perfect by obedience. Then the life giving power of God surged through every bone and muscle. Setting his will to obey God's command, he stood up.





The faith of the Bethesda cripple is the kind of faith that God wants us to exercise when we seek spiritual healing. Christ gives us assurance of forgiveness of sins and that we can have peace. We are to accept this pardon without doubting. *If we believe God's Word, we are forgiven.* Then we must put our will on Christ's side and determine to follow him wherever he may lead. This is the way to receive spiritual strength to be a Christian.

When Jesus later met the restored cripple in the temple, he gave him this word of caution -

"Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." John 5:14

These words of warning remind us that "sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death." James 1:15. A recurrence of disease often follows a return to sinful habits, and this may lead to premature death. It may also result in the loss of one's soul. This is a word of caution for all of us to heed.

Freeing THE MANIAC OF CAPERNAUM

(Read Mark 1:21-28)

On another Sabbath day Jesus was preaching to an interested audience in the synagogue of Capernaum in Galilee. As he taught the people the great truths of God's kingdom, he was interrupted by the cries of an enraged maniac, possessed by a devil. The frenzied man rushed toward Jesus screaming -

"What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" Mark 1:24

This may have been Christ's first encounter with a maniac, but he was destined to meet other such persons and cast out the devils that possessed them. See Mark 5:1-20, Matthew 8:28-34 and Luke 8:26-40.

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. Mark 1:25, 26

The people were amazed at Jesus' faith and power, and they questioned -

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. Mark 1:27, 28

Can CHRIST HEAL ALL DISEASES?

(Read Matthew 8:2-4)





One of the first miracles that Christ performed after the Sermon on the Mount was the cleansing of a leper. The curing of such a loathsome disease shows that Christ has power over all disease.

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. Matthew 8:2, 3

Notice, Jesus "immediately" cleansed the leper. He did not delay one minute, as he did on some other occasions when the sick came to him for healing. Imagine the scene as this unfortunate man, afflicted with this loathsome disease, approached Jesus. Required by law to announce his disease wherever he went, he shouted the words, "Unclean, unclean!" But now see the change after Christ had healed him. The muscles are rounded out, the skin has taken on the soft pink glow of healthy youth, the eyes sparkle, and his appearance is that of a normal, healthy man. There is a spring in his step and a note of praise on his lips as he walks away singing of the mercy and love of his divine Deliverer.

The cleansing of the leper illustrates God's work of grace in cleansing the soul from sin. It is his will that we be "immediately" cleansed from sin. When we pray, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10), the Lord does not delay the answer to that prayer. Like the pleading leper who sought cleansing from the pure, life giving Saviour, we too may find cleansing from the leprosy of sin by casting ourselves upon his soul healing mercies.

Healing OF THE PARALYTIC MAN





(Read Mark 2:1-12)

Many of Jesus' miracles were performed at Capernaum and one of the most notable of these was the healing of the paralytic man. This poor sufferer sensed that he must receive help at once if his life was to be spared, so he begged his friends to carry him on a mat to Christ. When they arrived at the house where he was preaching the crowd was so great that it was impossible to break through to the Saviour's side. So they took him up on the roof, lifted the tiles, and let him down at Jesus' feet. Impressed by this faith and determination, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5

Christ knew that this man needed peace with God more than he needed relief from his paralysis, but the religious authorities who were present complained. "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming!" they said to themselves. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Mark 2:7. Jesus knew their thoughts, so he asked -

"Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" Mark 2:9

They did not answer this question, but Jesus proceeded to show that he had power both to forgive sins and to heal the sick.

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . ." He said to the paralytic. "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Mark 2:10-12





If this man had been relieved only of his load of sin, it would have been a great miracle, for the sense of guilt was crushing out his life forces. Christ knew this, so before he cured him of his paralysis, he cured him of his sin. Thus the man received spiritual as well as physical restoration.

An eminent psychiatrist recently declared that he has never seen a case of severe despondence and mental depression cured "until the patient acquired a religious outlook on life". Guilt and sin must be removed from the life if the sick are to recover. Christ is the divine specialist in all branches of the healing art. He is able to heal mind, soul and body.

special notes

Jesus HELPS THE BLIND, THE DEAF, AND THE DUMB







Now we find Jesus in Jerusalem attending the Feast of Tabernacles. While in the great city he had the opportunity to teach a much needed lesson concerning the cause and cure of disease. His disciples saw a man who was blind from birth and asked the question -

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life." John 9:2, 3

After anointing the man's eyes with moist clay, Jesus instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. This he did, and when he had washed, he "came home seeing".

The Jews believed that sin is punished in this life by such afflictions as blindness and deafness, and by other handicaps and diseases. But here was a man who, Jesus said, had not sinned in such a way as to bring disease upon himself. Neither had the sins of his parents caused his trouble. Why then was he suffering? The answer is that good people may suffer from sicknesses over which they have no control. Job did not violate the laws of health and bring on his painful affliction of boils. But he suffered nonetheless. Paul likewise suffered from "a thorn in the flesh" of which God did not see fit to heal him. Yet in his affliction and weakness he found God's strength, and in his trouble learned dependence upon him. See 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

Jesus healed the innocent blind man "that the work of God might be displayed in his life". He also healed sick folk who had brought disease upon themselves. The Great Physician relieved the sufferings of all who came to him.

The compassion and mercy of Jesus toward the deaf and the dumb also are recorded in the Gospels.



While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." Matthew 9:32, 33 *See also* Mark 7:32-35, 37.

There was no disease, no trouble, no handicap, no affliction for which Christ did not have a remedy. Let this be a source of comfort and encouragement to all today who are burdened with guilt, trouble, or sickness. Jesus is the answer to all our woes and distresses. Then trust him with your problems, and "cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you". 1 Peter 5:7

special notes

The CROWNING MIRACLE OF ALL







(Read John 11:1-45)

The raising of Lazarus from the dead and his restoration to his sisters, Martha and Mary, was the crowning miracle of Christ's ministry. Already he had raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. See Mark 5:22-24, 35-43. He had also brought back to life the son of the widow of Nain. See Luke 7:11-17. Now, near the close of his ministry, and standing in the very shadow of the cross, Jesus performed the most notable miracle of all – raising from the dead a man who had been in the tomb for four days.

Christ might have prevented the death of Lazarus, as the people said -

"Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" John 11:37

But Jesus permitted a temporary sorrow in order to bring a more lasting joy. He waited until four days after the death of Lazarus. Then he went to the cave where Lazarus lay and requested that the stone be rolled away.

Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me . . . When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." John 11:41-44

In imagination, we can see Lazarus casting himself in adoration at the feet of Jesus while friends and relatives gathered around speechless with amazement, tears of joy trickling down their flushed cheeks. Oh, what a glorious scene of thanksgiving and rejoicing! Overcome with gratitude and emotion, Mary and Martha joined Lazarus at the feet of Jesus. Brokenly they expressed their thanks to the Great Healer. Then quietly Jesus disappeared from the scene, leaving his friends to enjoy the blessings of his life giving power.





Yes, Christ is the fountain of life and healing for all mankind. While Lazarus was still in the grave, he had said to Martha -

"Your brother will rise again . . . I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." John 11:23-25

Because he lives we will also live, not only in time but also in eternity. Those who profess and possess Christ have the gift of everlasting life. See 1 John 5:11, 12. And though death should cut life short, it will be restored on the resurrection morning. The death and resurrection of Lazarus represent what God will do for all his followers who pass through the tomb. That brief silence will be followed by the awakening to life. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

special notes

Does CHRIST HEAL THE SICK TODAY?







Are you, friend, in need of Christ's healing power? Are you or some loved one or friend seeking God for the restoration of health? If so, follow carefully these steps -

1. *The sick should confess their sins to God and their faults to one another.* "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:16. All wrongs should be made right, so far as possible. After this is done, let all sins against God be confessed *specifically*.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

2. *The sick should lay aside all unhealthful practices.* They must, as the prophet said, "Stop doing wrong, learn to do right!" Isaiah 1:16, 17. Unhealthful practices, such as the use of tobacco and alcohol, should be discarded. If the home is unclean, let it be tidied up. If there is impurity in the life, it should be confessed and forsaken. So far as one understands, he should eat and drink and do all things to the glory of God. See 1 Corinthians 10:31. Then the sick should trust in the Lord and be cheerful. Anxiety weakens the nervous system and encourages disease. Those who trust in God's mercy will find relief from all depression and gloom, and the prospect of their recovery will be brighter.

3. *The sick must have faith when they pray.* See Hebrews 11:6. But we do not always know what we should pray for. We cannot command God to heal all the sick. There are some who, if healed, would return to their sinful habits and thus be a reproach to the name of Christ. Others would glorify him, so their recovery would bring honour to Christ. Only God knows the end from the beginning. Therefore, when we pray for the sick, we must say, "yet not my will, but yours be done." Luke 22:42

When healing follows prayer for the sick, let us thank God. When it does not, we should not blame God or the one who prays for the sick. God does not always see fit to give us what we ask for, but he does answer our prayers and blesses the sick by forgiving their sins and giving them strength to endure. Remember, God knows best.



Paul asked the Lord three times that he might be healed of his affliction, but God did not grant his request. Yet Paul was the instrument in God's hand to heal many sick and afflicted ones. Some will fall asleep in Jesus, as John the revelator said -



"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labour, for their deeds will follow them." Revelation 14:13

All should follow the instruction of James when they seek prayers for healing. Read carefully James 5:14-16. God sometimes permits men to suffer in order to work out his purpose of mercy for them. *But God is not the author of their afflictions. Satan is the chief adversary of mankind and the principal instigator of disease and suffering.* He is the destroyer; God is the restorer. Never forget that, and trust your case fully to your Heavenly Father.



special notes

Booklet 14 will answer the following Questions -

- **Is Peter the rock upon which Christ built his church?**
- **Is Christ actually present in the communion bread?**
- **What is the meaning of the mysterious title, "I Am"?**

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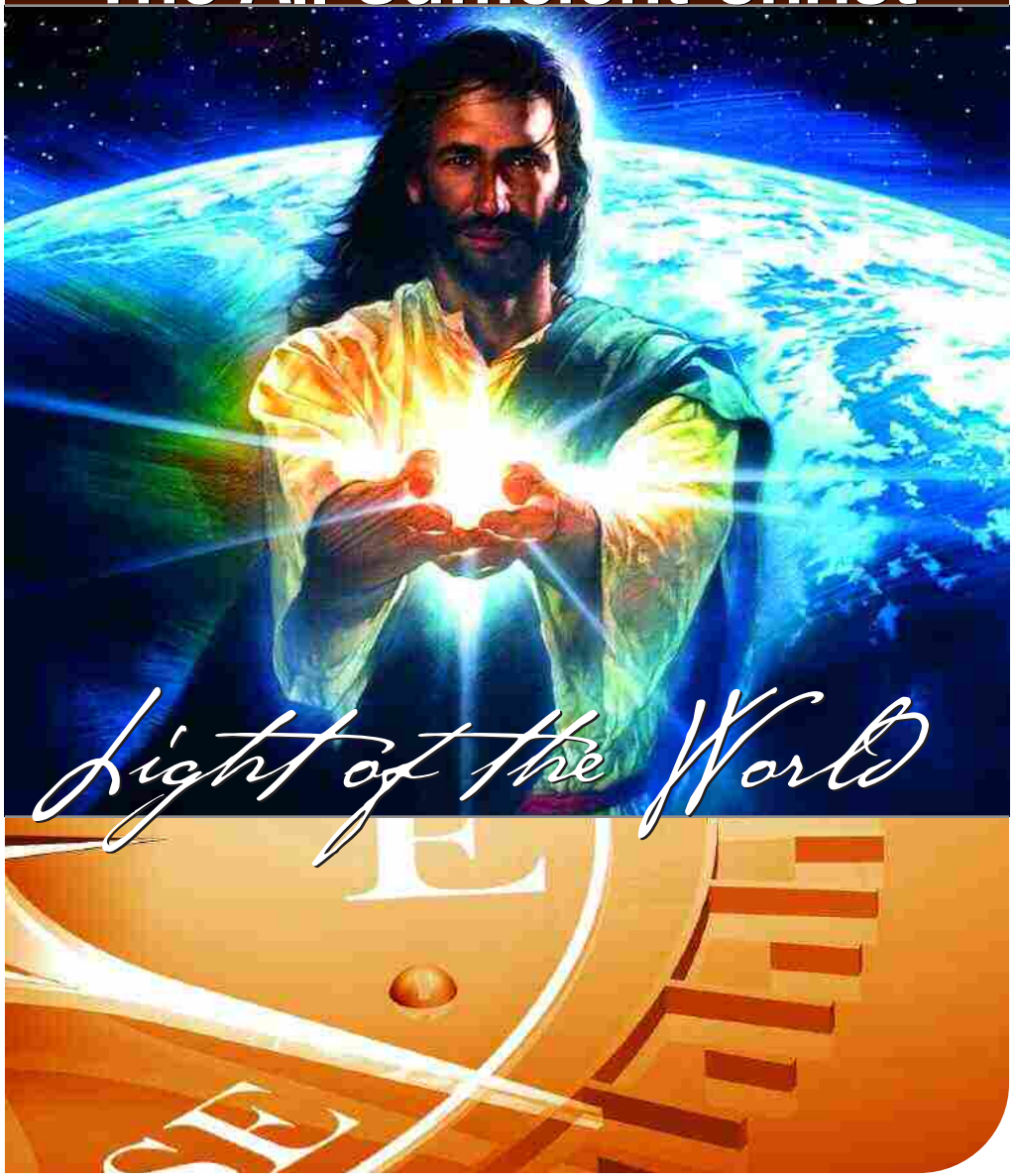
BOOKLET FOURTEEN

The All Sufficient Christ



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

The name "Jesus" means Saviour. See Matthew 1:21 (margin). This was the name given to Christ by the angel before he was born. The disciples addressed Jesus simply as "Master." This term of respect is the same as "Rabbi" or "Teacher." They also called him "Lord." By the unbeliever who doubted his claims, he was referred to as "Jesus the son of Joseph." Those who were convinced of his divine nature alluded to him as "Christ" or "Messiah." In this booklet we will consider the many names and offices of Christ.

There are many names in the Old and New Testament that refer to Christ, suggesting the all sufficiency of the Lord Jesus (Isaiah 9:6) as well as his character and work as man's Saviour. Jesus speaks to men of all races and temperaments by his many sided appeals. A careful thinker has put it this way -

To the artist he is the One altogether lovely. To the architect he is the Chief Corner Stone. To the astronomer he is the Sun of Righteousness. To the baker he is the Living Bread. To the banker he is the Hidden Treasure. To the biologist he is the Life. To the builder he is the Sure Foundation. To the carpenter he is the Door. To the doctor he is the Great Physician. To the educator he is the Great Teacher. To the engineer he is the New and Living Way. To the farmer he is the Sower and the Lord of the Harvest. To the florist he is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. To the geologist he is the Rock of Ages. To the horticulturist he is the True Vine.

To the judge he is the Righteous Judge, the Judge of all men. To the juror he is the Faithful and True Witness. To the jeweller he is the Pearl of Great Price. To the lawyer he is the Counsellor, the Lawgiver, the Advocate. To the newspaper man he is the Good Tidings of Great Joy. To the oculist he is the Light of the Eyes. To the philanthropist he is the Unspeakable Gift. To the philosopher he is the Wisdom of God. To the preacher he is the Word of God. To the sculptor he is the Living Stone. To the servant he is the Good Master. To the statesman he is the Desire of All Nations. To the student he is the Incarnate Truth. To the theologian he is the Author and Finisher of our faith. To the toiler he is the Giver of Rest. To the sinner he is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. To the Christian he is the Son of the Living God, the Saviour, the Redeemer, and Lord. Selected







In this booklet we will observe how completely adequate is Jesus' power and authority. His right to the position of Elder Brother, Saviour, and Lord of mankind is absolutely unchallenged, as we will discover.

special notes

How CLOSE IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND MAN?







Christ is Elder Brother to all of us, to the members of all races and tribes. It is encouraging to know that we have an Elder Brother who is not only God's Son but also the Son of man. He stands at the head of the human family to protect and to keep his own.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest . . . Hebrews 2:16, 17

The example and teachings of Jesus throughout the three and a half years of his public ministry emphasised the fact that not only the Jews (Matthew 10:5, 6) but also the Samaritans (John 4:40, 41), the Greeks (John 12:20-23), the Romans (Luke 23:47), and all nations of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20) may share in this close relationship with him.

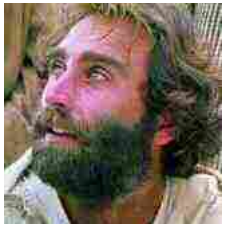
The brotherhood of man with Christ as Elder Brother, and the fatherhood of God with God himself as reigning Lord, are the great objectives that Jesus sought to bring about through his ministry. Christ, the Son of God, taught us all to pray, "Our Father in heaven." Matthew 6:9

God is the Father of all men everywhere, in all ages, and at all times. Those who receive Christ as their Saviour and Lord enter the kingdom of heaven as the adopted children of the Heavenly Father. See Romans 8:14-17. And since this privilege extends to men of all races, how respectfully we ought to regard those of nations and languages different from our own!

special notes

What DID CHRIST DECLARE HIMSELF TO BE?







Christ taught the brotherhood of man not only by precept but by example. But his ministry to non Jews was offensive to the Israelites, who were proud of being the children of Abraham and the favourite sons of God. They were offended by the willingness of the Messiah to share the blessings of salvation equally with all people. So Jesus often came into conflict with the Jewish leaders over this matter. He had come not only as the Light of Israel, but the Light of the world.
John said -

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. John 1:9

In the temple at Jerusalem, Christ enunciated this great truth -

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

In these words, "I am the light of the world," Jesus declared himself to be the Messiah. In this same temple where Christ was teaching, the aged Simeon had spoken of him as "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Luke 2:32. In these words Simeon was applying to Jesus a prophecy familiar to all Israel. The prophet Isaiah had declared, "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6. This prophecy was generally understood as referring to the Messiah, and when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," the people could not fail to recognise his claim to be the Promised One.

The light of truth that shone from Jesus' life and teachings transcends all other. Someone has remarked that Socrates taught for forty years,





Plato for fifty, Aristotle for forty, and Jesus for only three - yet the three years that Christ taught infinitely exceeded in influence the combined 130 years of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle - three of the greatest philosophers of all time.

The grandest paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci are but a reflection of Jesus, the Light of the world. Haydn, Handel, Bach, and Mendelssohn gave to the world their best melodies in the symphonies and oratorios they wrote to glorify Jesus Christ. Art, culture, music, philosophy - all have been enriched by his teachings. But Christ offers far more than philosophy, art, and music. These cannot save. Jesus offers light and life and salvation to sinful men. And if you will let his light shine in your life, you will find the way to peace and security.

special notes

What TITLE DID CHRIST CLAIM?

In discussing with the Jewish authorities the question of his divine origin, the Saviour declared openly and with deep solemnity -

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" John 8:58 *(See also* Exodus 3:13-15*)*

By this Jesus meant that he lived before Abraham - see Booklet 3. "I am" is the name by which God identified himself to Moses in order to express the idea of his eternal presence. When Jesus claimed that title for himself, the rabbis were infuriated and cried out against him as a blasphemer.

At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. John 8:59

A few months later they said to him plainly -

"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God." John 10:33

But the opposition of stubborn hearts could not destroy the truthfulness of Jesus' declaration. The Son of man, our Elder Brother, was also the divine Son of God who has lived forever. Christ did not say "I was," or "I will be," but "I am." He lives today. See Hebrews 13:8.

If you desire spiritual guidance, he says, "*I am* the Good Shepherd." John 10:11. If you desire food for your soul, he says, "*I am* the Living Bread." John 6:51. If you desire to know the way of salvation, he says, "*I am* the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6. If you want power, he declares, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Matthew 28:18. Jesus says, "*I am* the One whom you may trust now, today. Don't be afraid." Yes, Christ is the embodiment of all that men expect of divinity. No one who trusts him as Lord and Saviour will ever be disappointed. Go to him in prayer and he will provide the answer to every material and spiritual problem.







Christ OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS







In his sermon on the mount, Christ declared to the people in the presence of the rabbis -

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20

Pharisaical righteousness consisted of a theoretical knowledge of religion and the meticulous performance of the external forms and ceremonies of worship. The Pharisees thought that the gates of heaven would open widest to those who made the greatest profession of religion and who exerted themselves most strenuously in keeping the smallest requirements of the law.

Christ made it plain that this was not true righteousness, but ***self*** righteousness. The righteousness which saves is Christ's righteousness. He explained that the only kind of righteousness that is acceptable to God is that which comes from God. Right doing from right motives is a consequence of a right relationship between man and his Saviour. A mere profession of religion is not enough, neither is the strict observance of the requirements of religion. The life must be changed. Sincerity, kindness, patience, forbearance, joy, peace, and love must appear; and all of these virtues come from Christ.

Concerning the Saviour, Jeremiah declared that -

"This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness." Jeremiah 23:6

The only way that sinful men can become righteous and remain righteous is to possess faith in Christ. The stony heart must be changed. God must give us a tender heart, a heart of flesh.

In his early ministry in Judea, Christ said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again." John 3:7. See also Ezekiel 36:26, 27. This message to the proud Pharisee might have been spoken with equal force to all the rabbis of Israel and to all the people. And its message still applies today.



The ordinances of the gospel - which will be discussed in Booklet 22 - are a curse, even to Christians, unless they are interpreted to express faith in God and the plan of salvation. And good works are not adequate as a means of salvation. Men are saved neither by their profession nor by their works. They are saved by Christ. When he is in the heart as a living Presence, righteousness and good works will appear as the fruit of his grace. This is what is meant by having a righteousness which *exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Christ taught that this is essential for all who would be subjects of his kingdom. It is faith that makes Christ's righteousness a part of us. See Romans 3:19-26.



special notes

Jesus, THE SOURCE OF ALL SPIRITUAL POWER







The means by which Christians are to become strong in right-eousness is Christ himself. He said -

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

Christ spoke these words on the day following the feeding of the five thousand on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, when the people came again seeking him (John 6:24). The crowd gathered about the Saviour, and on this occasion he uttered the deepest spiritual truths of his ministry. Fearful that the people had come just for the loaves and fishes, Jesus said -

"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me . . . because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:26, 27

This "food," or bread, he declared, "is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life . . . For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink." John 6:54, 55

Here Christ is explaining the secret of the spiritual life. These words must not be interpreted to mean that Christ himself is literally present in our daily bread or in the communion bread. He makes his meaning clear in the following statement -

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." John 6:63





It is Christ and *his Word* that give life. What food is to the body, Christ is to the soul. We receive no benefit from bread unless we eat it and it becomes a part of us, and we receive no help from Christ unless we know him as our personal Saviour. Theoretical knowledge alone will do no one any good. As the physical life is sustained by food, so the spiritual life is sustained by Christ and his Word.

But the Jews misinterpreted Christ's words concerning the bread, just as many Christians do today. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they questioned in John 6:52. And they were offended, and many who professed to be his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" John 6:60. So they forsook Jesus and followed him no more. But Peter and the eleven were unshaken. "We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." John 6:69. This experience brought on a severe crisis in Christ's work. Soon afterward he withdrew from Capernaum, crossed Galilee, and made his way to the hill country of Phoenicia.

special notes

Upon WHAT FOUNDATION DID CHRIST BUILD HIS CHURCH?







Jesus is the rock upon which the true church is built. He, the Righteous One, and no mere human, is the foundation stone of the kingdom. Hundreds of years before the Saviour's birth in Bethlehem, Moses had pointed to "the Rock" of Israel's salvation (Deuteronomy 32:4). The psalmist had sung of "my mighty rock, my refuge." Psalm 62:7. Isaiah had written -

So this is what the Sovereign Lord says, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation." Isaiah 28:16

The disciples of Christ recognised this. After the crisis in Galilee the disciples were sent on a missionary tour. Upon their return, Jesus asked them pointedly -

"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16:13-19

When Christ spoke about "the Rock," he referred to the One whom Peter confessed to be "the Son of the living God," that is, himself, the Rock upon which the church is built. The gates of hell cannot prevail against the church, but the gates of hell did prevail against Peter when he was overcome with temptation and denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. See Matthew 26:69-75. Peter himself referred to Christ as the foundation ofthe church, upon which the "spiritual house" was built.

He said -

. . . now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house . . . 1 Peter 2:3-5



Paul said -

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:11



"On this rock," said Jesus, "I will build my church." Matthew 16:18. If Christ had made Peter the rock upon which his church was founded, the apostles would not have been contending among themselves as to who should be the greatest (Luke 22:24). They would have been willing to recognise the desire of their Master and honour the one whom he had chosen to be their leader.

Christ did not appoint one of the twelve apostles to a position of pre-eminence, but he did say to them -

"But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers . . . Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ." Matthew 23:8, 10



The disciples called Jesus "Master," but they did not call Peter "master." The Saviour gave the same authority and power to the other disciples that he did to Peter. See Matthew 18:1, 15-18. But Christ alone was the foundation and leader, "the head of the church." Ephesians 5:23

special notes

What TITLE DID A PAGAN RULER GIVE TO JESUS?







Not many of the Jews recognised Jesus as the leader of the kingdom. The Scripture says -

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. John 1:11

Finally his own countrymen brought him to Pilate, the Roman governor, and accused him of sedition. But while the Jewish leaders rejected Christ as the Messiah, Pilate, pagan that he was, recognised that there stood before him One who was more than a man. Conscience smitten, he exclaimed, "You are a king, then!" John 18:37. Jesus replied -

"You are right in saying that I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." John 18:37

Convinced, Pilate immediately sought the release of Christ. He said to the Jews -

"Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?" John 18:39

But they demanded his death, and Pilate consented to his execution much against his better judgment. Here was a weak character, willing that Christ should be crucified in order that he might retain the favour of the Jewish leaders. But on Christ's cross Pilate caused to be inscribed the words, "Jesus of Nazareth, *the King of the Jews."* John 19:19

The Jewish leaders objected to this and requested Pilate to change the inscription to read, "that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." John 19:21. Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written." John 19:22. This was providential, for Jesus was indeed the King of Israel.

Christ will yet be acknowledged and honoured by the Israel of God as their King, but not by Israel as a nation. The Israel of God today is a spiritual nation made up of men and women of all races. See 1 Peter 2:9.

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit. Romans 2:28, 29

In the coming kingdom of glory, Christ will reign over all the earth, not just the Jews. He will be the King of the ransomed throng who are redeemed from every tribe and nation of the earth. When Jesus returns we shall see "on his robe and on his thigh . . . this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." Revelation 19:16. Then, those who have rejected him will cry to the mountains and rocks -

"Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?" Revelation 6:16, 17

But there will be found among all the nations and races of earth a faithful company of Christians, the true Israel of God, who will be waiting and watching for his appearing. To these Jesus will say -

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world." Matthew 25:34

How important it is that we will be among those who look for his appearing! See Titus 2:13. The secret of being prepared for that great event is to know him, of whom Peter said -

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12







Booklet 15 will answer the following Questions -

- **What is true greatness?**
- **What did Christ say about bigotry?**
- **Why do Christians seek to make converts of all peoples?**

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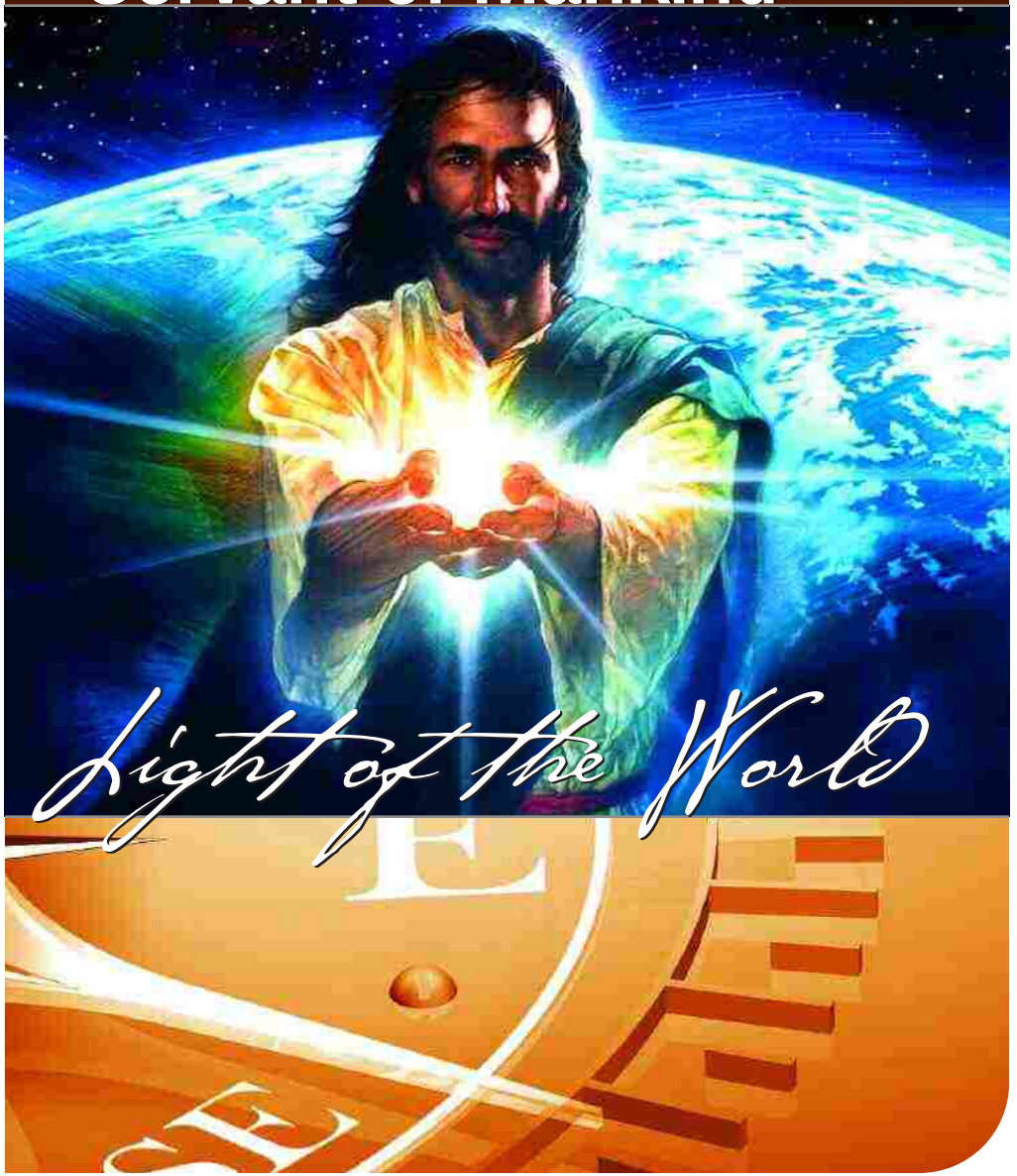
BOOKLET FIFTEEN

Christ, the Servant of Mankind



". . . I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:27

"Jesus Christ," said one writer, "is the most powerful spiritual force that ever operated for good on and in humanity." He came to earth to do us good - only good. He came "not . . . to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:45. Jesus did not live for himself, but to serve others. Though he was Lord of heaven and earth, he was the servant of mankind.

God in heaven does not live to himself. He who created the worlds sustains all things moment by moment and upholds these "things by his powerful word." Hebrews 1:3. And he reveals himself as an active God who is interested in all his creatures and supplies them with the necessities of life.

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

Not only does the Creator have a special interest in man, but he cares for the beasts and the birds, supplying them with food.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Psalm 145:15, 16

As the head of the human race, Christ showed us that the great purpose of every life is to give of yourself - all of yourself. And those who follow Christ and catch his spirit suddenly *find themselves.* They discover that God has a blueprint for their lives and, when they are willing to follow it, life takes on a new meaning.

The reason Christ is the greatest man, the best man, is that he is the most helpful and the most humble man. He taught that *true greatness is in proportion to true goodness.* His life and teachings were full of this principle, as we will see.

Who IS THE GREATEST?







The love of first place and high honour began with Lucifer when he coveted the place next to God's throne. See Isaiah 14:12-15. He was cast out of heaven because of his self seeking (Revelation 12:7-9), but his spirit is present on earth today even among Christ's disciples. Let us all beware of self centeredness. G. F. B. Hallock once said, "There is many a life which never sees beyond its own doorstep, its own comforts or convenience." But "in the estimation of heaven, greatness of character consists in living for the welfare of our fellow men and doing works of love and mercy."

The day before Jesus was crucified, "a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest." Luke 22:24. In the very shadow of the cross, Christ had to contend with selfishness among his closest followers. He had dealt with this problem before (Matthew 18:1-5), but the disciples were slow to learn the lesson. Jesus proceeded to repeat this important principle -

"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." Luke 22:25-27

Christ was the servant of sinful, fallen man. See John 13:1-17. This was the true glory of his life. He sought no position or title of honour for himself. He received no money for his work as a religious teacher. He was poor and homeless.

Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." Luke 9:58

He sought only the good of others. Unselfishly he worked to help his fellow men. Thus, by example and precept he could rebuke the unfaithful scribes and Pharisees and priests who sought the highest position and so often misinterpreted the true religion to their followers.

Christ REBUKES THE FALSE MINISTERS







(Read Matthew 23:1-33)

As Jesus taught in the temple, he said, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." Matthew 23:2. That is, they claim to have the same power that Moses had. They demand respect and submission in all religious duties and requirements, but they are hypocrites. Obey the rabbis when they teach according to the law, but do not follow their example because they do not practise their own teaching.

"So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." Matthew 23:3, 4

Jesus denounced the pride and ambition which grasped for positions of power and influence. This vanity was especially noticeable at feasts, where guests were seated according to their rank. Jesus not only condemned this practice, but he exposed the shallow pride which clamoured for titles of honour. Of the rabbis he said -

". . . they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.' But you are not to be called 'Rabbi.' For you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father', for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher', for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." Matthew 23:6-12



There is danger today, as in Christ's time, that mere men in the church will usurp the place of God by assuming titles and positions of dignity and honour that belong only to him. Jesus taught that the affections and loyalties should be centred in the Supreme Being, not in man. If God is given his rightful place as the true object of worship, his followers will naturally find their place and live to serve one another as brethren.

special notes

Christ COMMENDS SELF SACRIFICE







(Read Mark 12:38-44 and Luke 21:1-4)

In the midst of Christ's denunciation of the scribes and the Pharisees, an interruption occurred which gave him the opportunity to teach a lesson in sacrifice. Christ sat near the temple treasury where the people came to bring their gifts and tithes. The rich gave large sums which they deposited in the treasury chests with great pomp and show. The Saviour warned against these selfish men who "devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely." Mark 12:40

A poor widow approached, hopeful that no one would see her. She had a gift for God, but it was small. She was reluctant to give it openly but, thinking that no one was watching, she threw in her two mites and started to leave. Observing her action, Christ declared to his disciples -

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." Mark 12:43, 44

The widow probably heard Christ's words and was greatly encouraged by them. When she gave her all, she did not realise how far her influence would reach. And so, if your gifts are small, friend, God will bless them if they are given with cheerfulness and in the spirit of sacrifice. There are few of us who cannot do some little thing to advance the cause of Christ. Listen to the words of Paul -

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

On this same occasion Christ called attention to the practice of tithe paying. He did not condemn this but on the contrary said that tithing ought not to be left undone. The Jews paid tithe of "mint, dill, and cumin." They were particular about details but "neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness," important things that they ought to have done. Matthew 23:23







The tithe is one tenth of our increase. See Leviticus 27:30-32. This is "holy to the Lord." In addition, freewill offerings are to be given to God's work. Here is his invitation -

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it." Malachi 3:10

In ancient times the Levites, who were ministers of the sanctuary, were supported by the tithe. The ministry of God's church today ought to be supported by the tithe, or one tenth of the increase in earnings of believers. See 1 Corinthians 9:8-14.

Those who pay tithe are in business with God - junior partners with the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. Try it and see. With God's blessing, nine tenths of your income will go much further than the whole amount without God's blessing.

special notes

Christ's DISCIPLES WORKED AS HE DID







(Read Matthew 10 and Luke 10)

During the height of Christ's popularity in Galilee, he called his disciples to him and gave them orders to go forth and teach and heal, putting into practice the things they had observed in his life and ministry. They needed an experience in working as Christ worked for the souls of men, so he sent them out into the surrounding towns and villages. They did the same work that Jesus did, preaching the gospel, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, casting out devils. Freely they had received, freely they were to give.

They went out two by two. Friends worked together and brothers worked together. In this way they helped and encouraged each other. Later on, Jesus sent forth seventy lay disciples in the same way. In Luke 10:1-17, Jesus speaks to all ages and to all times, telling the church in what spirit all her missionary enterprises must be undertaken and carried on.

Every Christian is to be a worker for God, labouring as Christ and the disciples did, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the suffering and afflicted, bringing hope to the discouraged, the ministry of love to the despairing, despondent ones. If Christians would work in this way, the whole world would be lighted with the glory of God. Stop and ask yourself the question - What am I doing to help others?

special notes

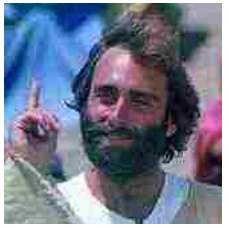
Jesus REBUKES BIGOTRY

A question asked by John should interest every worker for Christ in this age of many denominations and sects. Approaching Christ, he said -

"Master," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you." Luke 9:49, 50 *(See also* Mark 9:38-42*)*







Here this zealous disciple is telling Christ about an experience he had in openly opposing the work of an unnamed teacher who was casting out devils in Christ's name. This bigoted spirit did not please the Saviour, and he explained that if some other man or group should be carrying on work in his name, they cannot "say anything bad about me." Mark 9:39. That is, they would respect Jesus, for they were following him according to the best light they had.

No better lesson in goodwill was ever taught. God has loyal ministers and people in all the churches of Christendom. And remember, there are many honest hearted people who do not go to any church. There are many people of good moral character who are not Christians at all. And millions of non Christians worship God according to the best light they have. See Romans 2:14-16. The prayer of every true heart should be, "Lord, reveal your truth to me from your Word and give me grace to walk in all its light." See 1 John 1:7. Then we will find salvation.

God has his true church, and we should seek until we find it. But let us not judge those whose ideas and opinions on religious matters differ from our own. Christ is the Master Teacher and the only Saviour. Let us go to him and to his Word for instruction. Never should we condemn those who are sincerely serving the Master to the best of their ability.

Christ's COMMISSION TO HIS CHURCH







Just before Christ's ascension, standing as it were with only a step between this earth and the eternal world, he gave the following command to his followers -

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20

Mark states Christ's commission as follows -

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Mark 16:15

Christ was the unwearied servant of man's necessities, and his followers are to follow his example. They are to go "into all the world" with the gospel of love. "All nations" are to receive the message of his abundant grace. No race, however humble or exalted, is to be overlooked. Christ died for all men and he intends that all men everywhere shall receive the witness of the gospel. See Matthew 24:14.

The disciples understood that the Christian message was for the *whole world.* The light of heaven was to shine in bright, healing rays upon all people, high and low, rich and poor, free and bond. To "the regions beyond" the followers of Jesus were to go making Christians of all nations. As one writer has said -

Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; he abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field. The Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, page 823



Why not ask God to show you how you can do your part in bringing the Saviour to those who do not know his pardoning love and mercy. To every Christian, God has given us "the ministry of reconciliation." Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. Are you doing all you can to save souls for God's kingdom? Are you following Jesus' example as a servant of your fellow men?

special notes

Booklet 16 will answer the following Questions -
What did Christ teach about -

- **The authority of the Scriptures?**
- **The dignity of man?**
- **The creation of the world?**
- **The Christian and the state?**

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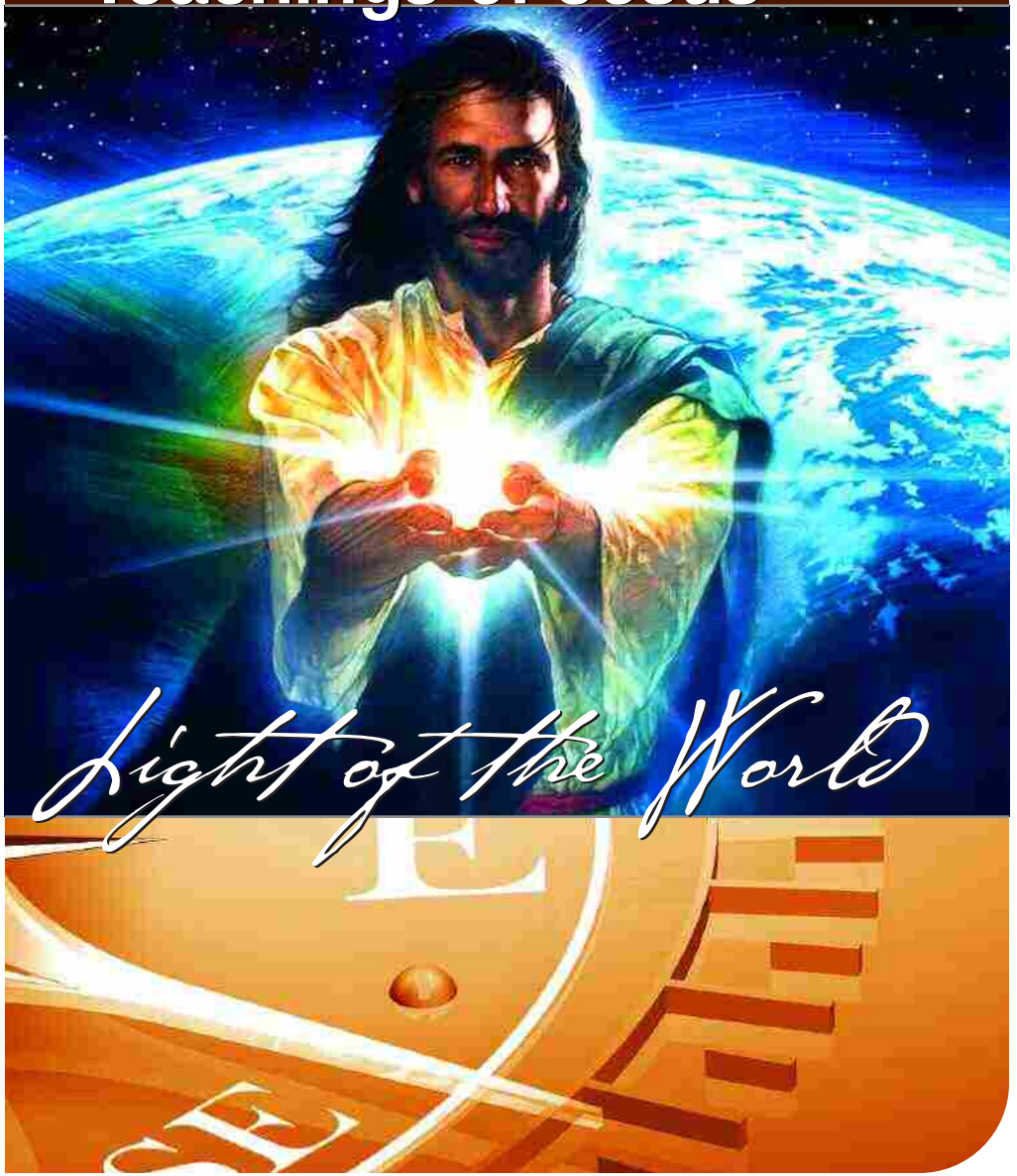
BOOKLET SIXTEEN

The Faith and Teachings of Jesus


Light of the World

"I am the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

Dr Aldridge, an American philosopher, was once asked the question, "If Jesus and Plato should return to earth for just one hour and were both scheduled to lecture on the same campus at the same time, which one would you go to hear?" Here is the answer, "Who would go to hear even so great a one as Plato talk on truth *when he might listen to One who is the Truth?"*

The teachings of Christ have moved the world as have those of no other man because he is himself the embodiment of truth. His words had perfect illustration and support in the life that he lived. The disciple Matthew had opportunity to observe the reaction of the large crowd that gathered to hear Christ's gracious words of power, and he said, "The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." Matthew 7:28, 29

When a delegation of officers was summoned to arrest Christ, they returned empty handed and reported to the priests in Jerusalem, "No one ever spoke the way this man does." John 7:46. The reason, of course, was that never man *lived* like this man. Jesus taught the truth because he was the truth. He was the Teacher sent from God, and he affirmed that his teachings were not human but

special notes

divine in their origin. To those who questioned his authority, he said -

"My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." John 7:16, 17







Jesus was the missionary chosen by God to reveal in person to the human family the knowledge and character of the Heavenly Father. He was the perfect ideal, and he showed in his teaching that this ideal was the standard which men should seek to attain. He encouraged those whom he taught to believe that, by the indwelling of God's Spirit, humanity might be charged with the divine life and character. His teachings moved them to seek with all their might for the divine grace that would restore them to a position befitting the sons of God.

In this booklet, we will see from the Scriptures what Jesus taught on some of life's greatest themes. As a foundation for this booklet, let us first of all turn to the New Testament for a statement from the lips of Christ himself regarding the authority of the Scriptures.

special notes

DID CHRIST ACCEPT THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES?







Jesus continually quoted the Old Testament Scriptures as divine authority. The New Testament was not written for many years after his death and resurrection. "These are the Scriptures (the Old Testament) that testify about me," Jesus said in John 5:39. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples on the way to Emmaus and explained to them the events of his life, death, and resurrection in the setting of the Old Testament prophets. See Luke 24:25-27. And to the Jewish leaders he said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me." John 5:46

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" Luke 10:25, 26. Jesus continually quoted the Scriptures as the Word of God. What would the Bible quoting Saviour say to the many Bible doubting Christians of today?

The New Testament likewise is a part of the Holy Scriptures. Peter refers to the writings of Paul as "scriptures." 2 Peter 3:15, 16. Paul recognised the inspiration of the Bible. The word "Bible," from the Greek *Biblia*, means "book."

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17

The sixty six books of the Bible came to us from God through his chosen messengers - the prophets and apostles. It is God's love letter to the world. Both the Bible and the life of Christ reveal the divine character to man.

Three historical questions concerning the Bible are answered by Roy F. Cottrell -

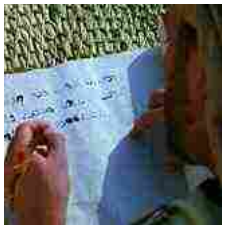
1. When were the thirty nine books of the Old Testament confirmed?

About the end of the first century of our era a council of Jewish scholars met at Jamnia, south of Joppa, in Palestine, and placed their official stamp upon the arrangement of the sacred books (Old Testament canon) that had existed for so many centuries. They made no additions or subtractions, but simply confirmed the position that Jews and Christians alike had held in New Testament times. In this belief nearly all devout Protestants and Jews continue to share unshaken confidence. The Review and Herald, 10 March 1955, page 6



2. What books form the canon of the New Testament?

Throughout the Christian world of today there is no controversy regarding the books that constitute the canon of the New Testament. This was settled by the internal evidence and inspired testimony of the writings themselves; for in the twenty seven books of the New Testament, as well as in the thirty nine books of the Old, devout men and women of the early church clearly recognised the voice of God. The Review and Herald, 10 March 1955, page 7



3. What is the origin of the chapters and verses of the Bible?

About the year A. D. 1244, Cardinal Hugo began work on a Latin concordance, and to facilitate the work, he divided the Bible into chapters. Although the division was arbitrary and far from ideal, nearly all future editions and translations have followed his arrangement. Three centuries later Sir Robert Stephens divided the New Testament into verses, and not long afterwards an entire edition of the Bible appeared with the same chapters and verses as are in use today. The Review and Herald, 31 March 1955, page 6



special notes

Christ's TEACHING ABOUT THE DIGNITY OF MAN







Jesus placed a high value upon every human being. In each one, however fallen, Christ beheld a son or a daughter of God. He saw him not as he was, degraded by sin or afflicted by disease, but as he might become when restored to physical and spiritual soundness and to a right relationship with God. See Booklet 9 for illustrations of this truth.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17

How could Christ denounce or condemn those who were struggling with sins from which he came to save them? He encouraged all his listeners to persevere in the battle with sin, assuring them that God was on their side and would give them the victory. Christ would have died to save *one lost soul.* Matthew described his great compassion for men -

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

The human philosophies of Christ's time were inadequate for man's spiritual needs. The people were tired of the traditions they had been taught to believe. They longed for a saving power from heaven to lift them out of the darkness of sin and selfishness. This Jesus came to impart, and to restore the knowledge of God to men. He set aside the false teachings by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented him. His life revealed the beauty of true holiness. As the result of his teaching, faulty men like James and John - the sons of thunder, Simon Zelotes - the implacable hater of Roman authority, the impetuous, self willed Peter, doubting Thomas, and the other disciples - not only the twelve, but hundreds of others, both men and women - became transformed in character.

A lady once showed Ruskin a costly handkerchief on which a drop of ink had been spilled. "My handkerchief is ruined!" she said in tears. Ruskin said nothing, but took the handkerchief away with him. Later he returned it to the owner, who was thrilled by the transformation. Using the blot as a basis, Ruskin had skilfully worked around it a beautiful and artistic design, changing what was ruined and worthless into a thing of beauty and value.



Even so the results of Christ's teachings in the transformed lives of men and women showed that the most worthless human being, changed by his grace, may become a beautiful trophy of the love and power of God.

special notes

What WAS CHRIST'S FAVOURITE THEME?







In all his teachings, Christ's favourite theme was the tendermercy and love of the Heavenly Father. To the Pharisees who had accepted the invitation to attend Matthew's feast, at which he was the guest of honour, he said -

"I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matthew 9:13

But the religious leaders did not understand the meaning of mercy and love, so Christ said, "Go and learn what this means." Matthew 9:13. The worship of God in spirit and in truth had been supplanted by the glorification of priests and rulers who followed an endless round of ceremonies. All this obscured the true glory of God and made him appear as a tyrant existing on the level of man and exacting from him a tribute of toil and tears and sweat and blood and money - a price man had to pay to appease God's wrath.

Christ removed this misconception of God. In his parables and in his teachings generally, he described the love and mercy of the Heavenly Father. By healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out devils, cleansing lepers, and going about doing good, the Great Teacher removed these false ideas about God. Thus he explained that God was not seeking sacrifice, but the health, security, and happiness of his children.

And today, as in Christ's temple, people have wrong concepts of God. "We . . . get all sorts of wrong ideas about him," wrote Hannah W. Smith. "We think he is an angry Judge who is on the watch for our slightest faults, or a harsh Taskmaster determined to exact from us the uttermost service, or a self absorbed Deity demanding his full meed of honour and glory, or a far off Sovereign concerned only with his own affairs and indifferent to our welfare" Living in the Sunshine, page 13

Naturally, with such false conceptions of God, it is easy for one to be plagued with doubt and fear. Thank God that in the four Gospels we see Jesus revealing to men the eternal tenderness and love of the Heavenly Father. And that, friend, is enough to make us love him. Like the minister who was asked the question, "What do you know about God?" we may reply, "Very little, but what I know has changed my entire life."



special notes

What IS THE NATURE OF TRUE WORSHIP?







There are many people today who say that it doesn't matter what you believe. This is an error of vast dimensions. Faith moulds the life, and we act out all the faith we have. Our lives testify to our understanding and appreciation of the truth.

The Jews were great sticklers for forms and ceremonies. They argued continually about the externals of religion (John 4:20-22). Jesus said nothing to discourage divinely ordained forms of worship, but he opposed all man made traditions and customs that perverted the teachings of Scripture (Mark 7:1-16). He taught that true worship was spiritual, personal, and experimental. Upon his return to Galilee after his early ministry in Judea, Jesus said to the woman of Samaria -

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." John 4:23, 24

In the worship of God, truth must be the guide, and Jesus said -

"Your word is truth." John 17:17

It is truth that leads people to God - not error, or error mixed with truth. It is important to worship God "in spirit *and in truth*." Those truths which proceeded from the mind of God will guide his stumbling, erring children back to him.

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Isaiah 8:20

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Proverbs 14:12

We are to have a "thus saith the Lord" for every form of worship that we hold and for every doctrine that we believe. Then, when we worship God, we will be worshipping him "in truth." Not until then can we bring the right "spirit" into our service.



special notes

Christ TEACHES RESPECT FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT







Jesus taught that Christians should obey the laws of the state and respect civil government. The Pharisees and the Herodians approached Christ on this question, thinking that he would discourage such loyalty.

"Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him. Mark 12:14-17 *(See also* Luke 20:20-26*)*

Jesus' reply surprised the Jews. He gave a direct answer and did not evade the question. He held in his hand a Roman penny upon which was stamped the image and name of Caesar. He said that because Israel was living under the protection of Rome, they should obey that power. Only if they were required by the state to violate their conscience and break the law of God were they to refuse to obey, for, as Peter later said, "We must obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29

The Christian is to carry out his duties to the state faithfully, obeying the laws of his government, respecting those in authority, paying his taxes, being a good neighbour, and patriotic and proud of his country. He is not to shirk the responsibility of citizenship. See Romans 13:1-7. We have no knowledge that Jesus ever violated the Roman law, nor would he have done so unless a particular requirement of the state conflicted with the law of God. And he is our example in all things.

What IS GOD'S PART IN OUR SALVATION?







In an interview with Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, the Master Teacher set forth the principles of salvation. To the learned Pharisee, Christ said with great frankness -

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again . . . no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." John 3:3, 5

It is impossible for the leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin. See Jeremiah 13:23. Nor can we bring clear water out of a polluted well. It is impossible for a bramble bush to produce figs. Therefore, Jesus said, "You must be born again." John 3:7

Salvation is a work of re-creation in the human heart, brought about by the Holy Spirit. We must look to Christ for this change of life, which is accomplished by the Spirit. See John 3:8. The grace of God alone makes this possible, for we cannot even repent unless God gives us repentance. Concerning Jesus, we read -

God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. Acts 5:31

Pardon comes from Christ. So does repentance. The spiritual rebirth is his work of grace in the heart. We cannot earn it by anything we may do. How then are we to be saved? Listen -

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14-16







"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. Christ dying on the cross, revealing the love of God, brings to our poor sinful hearts a sense of need. Then faith in Jesus as our Saviour is awakened, and we go to him confessing our sins. He forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. See 1 John 1:9. The spirit of God brings about a conversion in our hearts, in our thoughts and habits. Our desires and aims miraculously come into harmony with the mind of Christ. We are created anew in his moral image. The law of God is written in our hearts as the psalmist said -

"I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."
Psalm 40:8

This experience is simply wonderful, and it is wonderfully simple. Go to God in faith, friend, and ask him to work a change in your life. With David pray -

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Psalm 51:10

And God will not, cannot, turn away any honest soul who seeks him for a new life. ". . . whoever comes to me I will never drive away." John 6:37

special notes

special notes

Booklet 17 will show that -

- **The second coming of Christ is near, even at the door.**
- **The fulfilling signs of his coming prove he will return soon.**
- **All who love his appearing will receive the gift of eternal life.**

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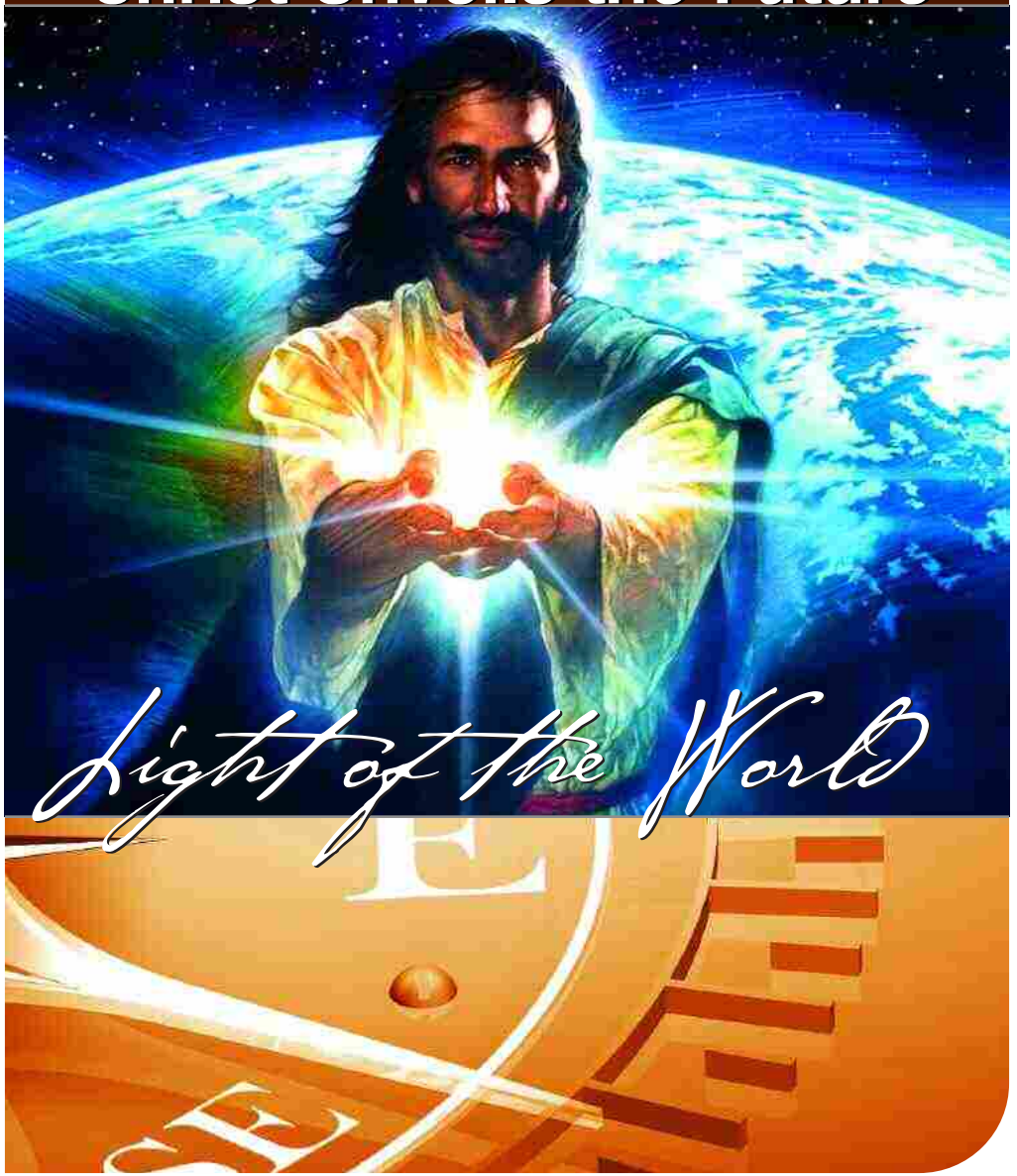
ADVENTIST DISCOVERY CENTRE

BOOKLET SEVENTEEN

Christ Unveils the Future*



The Lord said to me: ". . . I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."
Deuteronomy 18:17-19

These words were spoken by God to Moses and they hold out the promise that the Almighty One would raise up from among his people a Prophet like unto him. This prophecy from Old Testament times met its fulfilment in Christ, the greatest of all prophets.

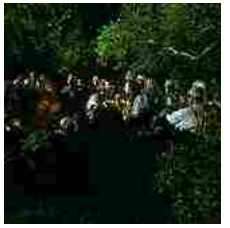
Many who heard Jesus teach and those who witnessed his miracles exclaimed, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." John 6:14. Christ was not an ordinary prophet. He was "*the* Prophet." Jesus was God's messenger and teacher, the mouthpiece and voice of the Eternal One, the infallible guide for all mankind. Adam Clarke, said, "Every word spoken by him is a living, infallible oracle from God himself."

Now prophecy is "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." 2 Peter 1:19. That Day Star is Christ. It is he who removes the dark veil from the future and gives us a clear, understanding look into the unknown. Prophecy is not given merely to satisfy men's curiosity about future events - it is given to *inspire faith and confidence in God.* Jesus said -

"I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."
John 14:29

The apostles lived to see many of Christ's predictions fulfilled, for example, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. See the prophecy in John 14:16-18 and Luke 11:9-13, and its fulfilment in Acts 2. As the Holy Spirit came upon the praying apostles, they believed more fully in Christ, and their faith was greatly strengthened. The promised blessing came as he said it would (John 14:29), and the disciples believed with all their hearts.





In this booklet we will study two great lines of prophecy given by our Saviour during the week before his crucifixion. These predictions have special meaning to us, for they apply to the very time in which we are now living.

special notes

What PROPHECY DID CHRIST MAKE CONCERNING HIS GOSPEL?







Christ's prophecies are found largely in three chapters of the New Testament - Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. These remarkable forecasts were given while he was seated on the Mount of Olives with four of his disciples - James and John, Peter and Andrew. Jesus knew when he made these statements that in a few days he would be apprehended by the Jewish authorities, tried in a Roman court, and crucified on a criminal's cross. Yet his prophetic eye scanned the future and he saw that his gospel would survive his death and resurrection and would be preached to all the world. Listen to his prophecy -

"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

In this one verse, Jesus foretold the triumph of the Christian message in the centuries which stretched before him. He had visions of the everlasting gospel going *"to every nation, tribe, language and people."* Revelation 14:6. The whole world would never be converted, but Jesus said that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14. All are to have a chance to hear and be saved.

Today with the great facilities of the internet, television, radio and print mediums, and with Bibles and Christian books in a thousand languages, *all the world* may hear the living or the silent messenger and find the way of life clearly outlined for them.

It is possible for Christians to hasten their Lord's return by increasing the tempo of their witnessing. Peter says that we are not only to look for, but to *speed* the coming of the day of God. See 2 Peter 3:12. The Christian message of the gospel and the second coming of Christ is being carried right now to countries that represent nearly 99% of the world's inhabitants. Jesus said that when all have had a chance to hear, "then shall the end come." Friend, we are standing today on the very doorstep of the eternal world!

special notes

Christ GIVES SIGNS OF HIS SECOND COMING







As Jesus opened the future to his disciples, he dealt principally with two coming events - firstly, the destruction of Jerusalem, which occurred thirty nine years after the prophecy was made, or in A.D. 70, and secondly, his return to this earth and the end of the world. The signs preceding both of these events were mingled with a general forecast of the future. Here is Matthew's account of the scene in the temple at Jerusalem which called forth these prophetic statements -

Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Matthew 24:1-3

In answer to these questions, Jesus warned of the dangers and troubles that would precede his second advent to this earth. Let us note five specific signs that have appeared to warn us that the "great day of the Lord is near - near and coming quickly." Zephaniah 1:14

1. False Christs and False Prophets

PROPHECY -

"At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles . . . So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." Matthew 24:23-27 (See also Matthew 24:5)







Fulfilment - Most of us have seen or heard or read about false teachers and prophets. See Matthew 7:15-20, 1 Timothy 4:1, and 2 Peter 2. And we have heard of or seen the false christs who show signs and wonders to deceive. See 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10. Then there is the widely taught delusion that Christ returns at death.

Thousands go to the secret chambers seeking to solve the mysteries of the unknown. Is Christ there? No. He himself says, "Do not believe it . . . For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." Matthew 24:23, 27. When Jesus comes the second time he does not appear as a teacher or a healer. He appears personally in the clouds of heaven as a Ruler, Judge, Deliverer, and "King of kings and Lord of lords." See Revelation 19:11-16.

2. Repeating the Days of Noah and Lot

PROPHECY -

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot . . . It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30 (See also Matthew 24:37-39)

Fulfilment - First, let us get the setting of this prophecy as given by Jesus. In Lot's day and in the days before the Flood, multitudes had turned away from God and his holy will. "The Lord saw how *great man's wickedness on the earth had become,* and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Genesis 6:5

The inhabitants of Sodom were given up to unholy lusts, and because of their wickedness God destroyed them. The world today is following the order of the old ante-diluvian world and the Sodomites. The earth is filled with wickedness and violence, but the inhabitants seem unmindful of the







judgements that are coming, although the rumblings of disaster are all about them. They go on eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage, forgetful of God and heedless of the Saviour's warning that the storm of God's wrath is gathering and the cup of his retribution is about to be poured out. What a day of fearful, agonising surprise awaits this heedless, careless, godless generation!

3. Wars and Conflicts among the Nations

PROPHECY -

"You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains." Matthew 24:6-8 (See also Mark 13:7, 8 and Luke 21:9, 10, 25, 26)

Fulfilment - All the advances in education, science and technology have increased the horror of war and brought it into our living rooms as live entertainment. The threat of nuclear war is a constant gloomy shadow on our civilisation's consciousness. Super powers are increasingly concerned at the possibility of nuclear weapons ending up in the hands of rogue states. Droughts, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes have spawned a whole new industry of ecological conservation. Calamities by land and sea and air are also markers of the emerging 21st Century. The only alternative is the moral regeneration of mankind. With nuclear capability in the possession of increasing numbers of ideologically diverse nations, it is little wonder that men of science tremble for the future.

One noted scientist, Harold C. Urey, said, "I am the apostle of doom. I am still a frightened man and I wish to be frightened. The gravity of the present situation in the world is frightening beyond our ability to express. It is not possible to exaggerate this situation."
Town Meeting Bulletin, 16 May 1946, page 4

Soon the battle of Armageddon will be fought, the final struggle before the return of Jesus. Even now the rulers of the earth are preparing to fight for their lives. Armaments are piling up under the premise that preparedness is the only safeguard of peace. But unwittingly the nations are arming for the last great conflict in human history. See Revelation 16:12-16.



4. Distress of Nations

PROPHECY -

"On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke 21:25-27



Fulfilment - The world today is in a state of agitation. There is security nowhere except in God. Men are losing confidence in their fellow men, in human plans and organisations. While they may band together for strength, they secretly sense their helplessness. James S. Stewart speaks of "this immensely critical hour when millions of human hearts are *besieged by fierce perplexities;* when so many established landmarks of the spirit are gone, old securities wrecked, familiar ways and habits, plans and preconceptions, banished never to return." Heralds of God, page 12



Only the student of prophecy knows what the future holds. The signs of the times are ominous, and the crisis is stealing gradually upon us. While men's hearts are failing them for fear as they look after those things which are coming on the earth, they are turning to the pleasures of sin to drown their sorrows. This is another sign of the times. See Luke 21:34, 35, and 2 Timothy 3:1-5. But the human mind and spirit cannot stand the pressure, so we find mental illness at an all time high.







5. A Pleasure Loving Church

PROPHECY -

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:12, 13

Fulfilment - The abounding iniquity of our times has converted millions of professing Christians to the pleasure loving ways of the world. Gambling, self indulgence and bingeing are common. Hollywood, Broadway, and the gay-ways of San Francisco and Sydney, mould the lives of multitudes of theatre going, television viewing, alcohol consuming, recreational drug taking, amusement seekers. There is a continual round of excitement, and many Christians lose their interest in the sober realities of truth, the Bible, and the church. Their love waxes cold. Writing of our times, Paul said -

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud . . . without love . . . rash conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God - having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5

In the light of these prevailing sins, Jesus warned his true followers in the last days -

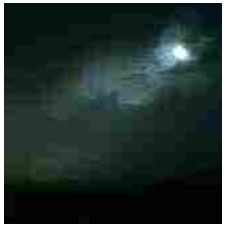
"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." Luke 21:34-46

special notes

What SIGNS WERE TO APPEAR IN THE HEAVENS?







In his great prophecy of future happenings Jesus explained that there would be signs in the heavens as well as on earth to remind his followers that his second coming was near. He was very specific about a series of remarkable events which were to occur in chronological sequence. For the background of this forecast of heavenly phenomena, let us note what the Saviour said about the destruction of Jerusalem. Speaking of the great buildings of the temple at Jerusalem, he predicted -

". . . not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." Matthew 24:2

This prophecy was made in A.D. 31, and was fulfilled thirty nine years later, in A.D. 70, when Titus, the son of the Roman emperor Vespasian, destroyed the city after a long siege. It is said that nearly a million Jews perished in the general slaughter. The very stones of the temple were torn up in the awful melee. Looking beyond the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ foresaw long centuries of darkness. His prophetic eye envisioned a period of 1260 years (Revelation 12:6, and Ezekiel 4:6) during which the Christian church would suffer tribulation and anguish. Jesus did not give the details of the events of these terrible centuries of trial, but passed them by quickly saying -

"For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now - and never to be equalled again. If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." Matthew 24:21, 22

The dark centuries of tribulation for the people of God *came to an end in the eighteenth century* when, after years of turmoil and war, a degree of religious freedom emerged in Europe, ending the persecution of the church. Maria Theresa of Austria granted such liberties to her subjects. In America







an asylum of freedom had opened for the oppressed who fled to its shores to escape the intolerance of established churches.

Now, with this in mind, let us turn to the signs in the heavens as Jesus gave them, with the time specifically noted for the first one to appear.

"Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' " Matthew 24:29

On 19 May 1780, there occurred the famous Dark Day. The unexplainable darkness of that day was followed by the mysterious withholding of the light of the moon on the following evening when the moon was at the full. See Webster's Dictionary, Edition 1869, *Dark Day*. Jesus had said that these remarkable events would take place "after the distress of those days." There was little or no public persecution in Europe after the Declaration of Independence was signed in America on 4 July 1776. "Immediately after," or in 1780, these two signs appeared - the darkening of the sun, followed by the withholding of the light of the moon.

On 13 November 1833, the greatest display of shooting stars in recorded history occurred over most of the United States. These signs in the heavens came in the precise order that Christ said they would. The last of them, the falling of the stars, occurred as we have just stated in 1833. After that, Jesus said, "the heavenly bodies will be shaken." Matthew 24:29. The powers of the heavens are the sun, moon, and stars. When Christ appears the second time in power and glory, these heavenly bodies will be shaken. The entire universe will tremble at the appearance of the "King of kings and Lord of lords." The fact that all these prophecies except the very last have been fulfilled in order should convince us of two things - that Jesus is "the Prophet" whom God sent to enlighten the world, and that we are now living in the very closing days of time, and that Jesus' second coming is near at hand.

Do WE KNOW THE TIME OF CHRIST'S RETURN?

Jesus made it plain that no man could know the exact day and hour of his second coming.



"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." Matthew 24:36

He did not mean by this that his coming need be a complete surprise to his followers, for almost in the same breath he declared -



"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Matthew 24:32-35



"When you see all these things," he declared, "you know that it is near, right at the door." Do we see that these signs are omens of his return? Are we living in the generation that will witness the second appearing of our Lord? Without a doubt we are. And the Lord has warned us to "be ready," for the element of surprise will always be present. ". . . the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." Matthew 24:44

special notes

Is THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST CERTAIN?







If the events to which Christ referred as signs of his second advent have occurred, will not the great and final event also take place? Nothing can prevent it. It is certain. Soon - we cannot tell exactly when - the prophecy will be fulfilled -

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." Matthew 24:30, 31

The coming of Jesus is to be literal, personal, and universal. It is the focal point of all the great prophecies.

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19

Soon the final day will dawn, and what a day that will be! But now let us ask - Has the morning star risen in your heart? That Day Star is Christ, the Light of the world, who has given us the hope of ultimate salvation at his second appearing. When that day comes, will we be ready? Jesus said -

"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near . . . Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near." Luke 21:28, 31

And now, as we return to the scene on the Mount of Olives, we can imagine that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were stirred as they never had been before. As they descended the mount with their Lord, after listening to his description of future events, theirs hearts must have been deeply moved,

for they had stood at the very threshold of the future, and witnessed one great scene after another. With a deeper faith and trust they followed Jesus, who is "the way and the truth and the life." John 14:6

special notes

Booklet 18 will answer the following Questions -

- **Why did Christ teach in parables?**
- **Why are there hypocrites in the church?**
- **Will all the world be saved?**

* For a good scriptural preview of this booklet, read Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21:5-38.

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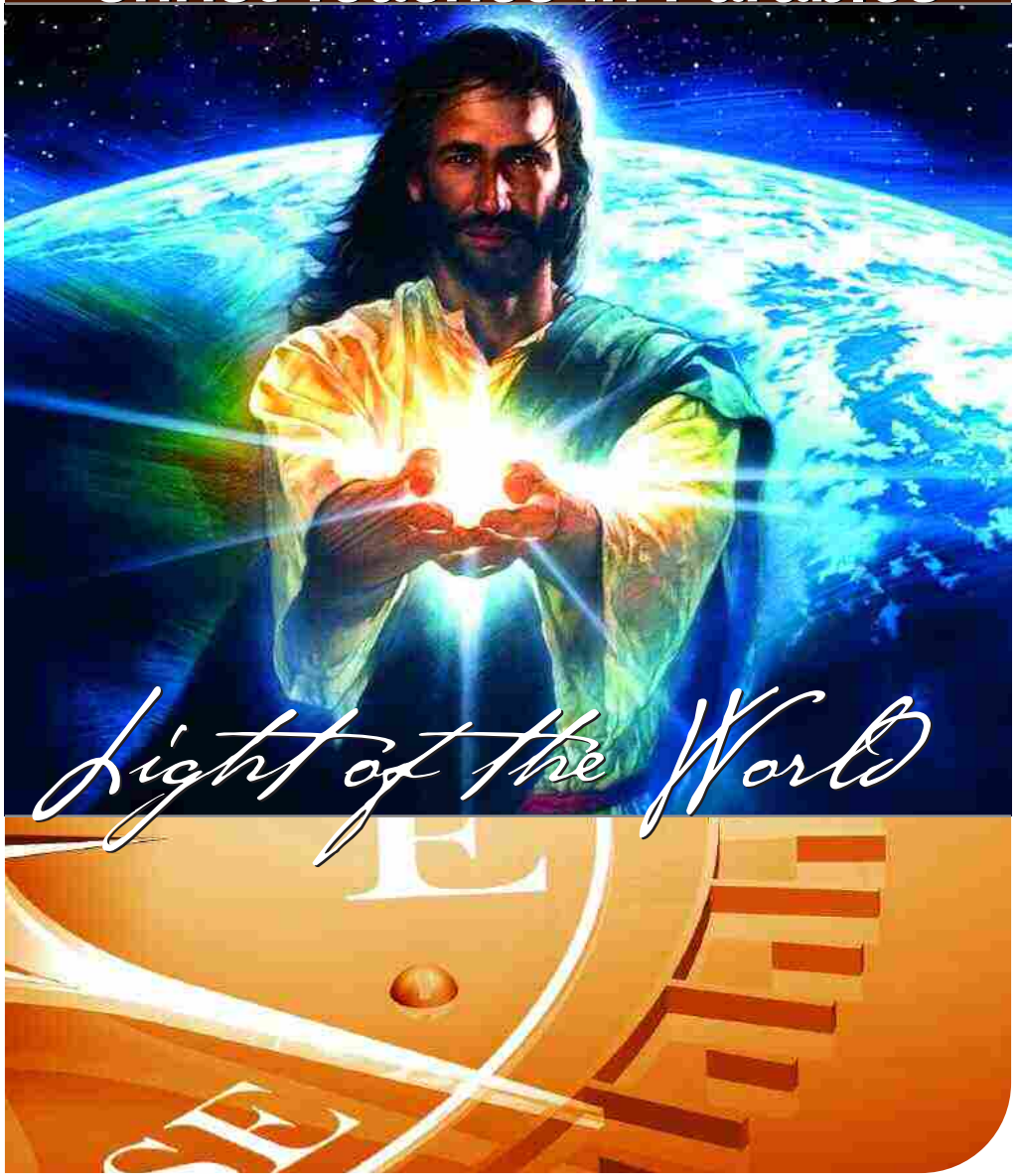
ADVENTIST DISCOVERY CENTRE

BOOKLET EIGHTEEN

Christ Teaches in Parables



Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." Matthew 13:34, 35

Everybody loves a secret, and you are probably no exception. In the parables of Jesus we discover "things *hidden* since the creation of the world." As the wise Master Teacher, he opened up life's spiritual mysteries by relating his various parables.

Parables were used by our Lord for the illustration of spiritual truths by referring to familiar earthly objects or incidents, and he used them to teach the huge crowds that gathered by the Lake of Galilee. He made use of the experiences of shepherds, businessmen, builders, tillers of the soil, travellers, and homemakers, to teach the people essential religious truths. Many of his parables were taught to the people who gathered to hear him in Capernaum or in Jerusalem. Near the close of his life, the most impressive parables were given on the Mount of Olives.

Jesus spoke in parables for two reasons. Firstly, he wanted to stimulate questions about his kingdom. He knew that sincere people who really wanted to know what was right, would not rest until they had searched out the meaning of the truths he taught. These parables acted like an alarm clock, arousing the sleeping minds of the vast audiences who heard him. Secondly, Christ found it necessary to teach certain truths in figures because the Jewish leaders were watching his words to find some cause for his arrest and condemnation. As opposition against him grew, Jesus used parables more and more to convey his warnings to Israel. If he had spoken more plainly and frankly, his ministry would have been cut short much sooner. Let us begin our booklet with the best known of all Christ's parables.



special notes

Christ ILLUSTRATES THE POWER OF HIS WORD







(Read Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23, Mark 4:1-20 and Luke 8:4-15)

Christ is seated in a boat on the Lake of Galilee while the eager multitude stands on the beach, listening closely to his words. As we join the crowd, we are thrilled by the simple but effective illustrations used by the Master Storyteller.

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed." Matthew 13:3

"… some fell along the path," he says, "and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil." Mathew 13:4, 5. They sprouted for just a little while and then the sun scorched them, and they withered because they had no depth of root.

Jesus then describes the seed that fell among thorns, which choked out the tender growth. Other seed "fell on good soil, where it produced a crop - a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." Matthew 13:8

As he speaks, we see nearby a farmer scattering seeds of grain on the freshly ploughed soil. Here is a living illustration of truth. But what does he mean by the parable? Who is the sower? What does the seed represent?

The sower is the Son of man. The seed is the Word of God. The soil represents different kinds of hearers. Let us look closely at each part of this parable.

1. The Sower - Jesus came from heaven to this earth to scatter the grain of heavenly truth. He is the Sower. By this parable he taught that his kingdom was to prevail by planting in men's hearts a new principle of life. It was not to prevail by the sword. Christians are to scatter the gospel seed as Christ did and then let God take care of the harvest. Patiently they must wait for the growth that will come if they trust in God.The Christian faith will finally triumph over all earthly opposition.

2. The Seed - There is spiritual life in God's Word. This is the seed. Jesus said -

"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life." John 6:63
". . . whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life." John 5:24

Those who say that the Bible cannot be understood do not know the secret of its life giving power. As you read the life of Christ with a purpose to know his will, do you not feel the stimulating power of the Word? If the good seed has taken root in your heart, do you not find the love of Jesus and all the Christian graces growing stronger every day?







3. The Soil - The growth of the seed depends upon the nature of *the soil.* In the parable the listeners themselves were the soil. If people fail, they have no one to blame but themselves. But if they succeed, it is because they have related themselves properly to God and to their fellow men. Life is a matter of right or wrong relationships. The power of choice lies with us. We ourselves must determine what we will become. It is true, we cannot change ourselves, but God can change us. As this secret of life is fully understood, there will be more transformed Christians.

4. The Seed by the Wayside - The wayside, where some seed fell, represents the careless listeners. And there were many of these in the crowd that listened to Christ, just as there are today. Like a pathway that is beaten down with the passing of many feet, the hearts of these people have become hardened by sin. The world of pleasure has made of their lives a through route to perdition, and the good seed cannot grow on such hard ground. This fact needs to be understood.

5. The Stony Ground - There is little depth of soil here. The plants may spring up for a time but, because the roots cannot enter the rock and find nourishment, they soon die. Many people who profess to be Christians have







only a superficial experience. Beneath the tiny growth is the natural, selfish heart, hard as a rock. Ezekiel calls that heart a heart of stone in Ezekiel 11:19. Their only hope is to "be born from above" (John 3:3 margin), and receive the new heart, the "heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

6. Among Thorns - Sometimes the gospel seed falls among thorns and poisonous weeds, which represent the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, sinful pleasures, and the desire for "other things" - many little things that encroach upon the Christian's time and life, and imperil his soul. See Mark 4:19.

7. Good ground Hearers - These are the ones who receive the words of Christ "not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." 1 Thessalonians 2:13. They receive the Scriptures gladly, willingly, and that is why they bear fruit. That is why they are different from the others. As they open their hearts humbly to be taught by the Lord, he plants the seed in their hearts, and then there is a moral transformation!

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God . . . And this is the word that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:23, 25

Not all good ground hearers produce the same amount of fruit. They all bear good fruit, but some are more fruitful than others. It is not the quantity so much as the quality that is important. Are you a *good ground hearer?*

special notes

What LESSON WAS DRAWN FROM THE GROWTH OF THE SEED?

We listen again to the Saviour, as he explains the nature of his kingdom in another parable about seed sowing -







He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain - first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come." Mark 4:26-29

The parable of the growing seed shows that God is at work in the natural world, and that he is at work in the spiritual world as well, building his kingdom into the hearts of men.

The growth of the plant represents Christian experience. As the plant grows, it lives. As the Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour, he lives - but not unless he grows. As the plant is perfect at every stage of development, so the Christian may be perfect at every stage in his development. This is known as *sanctification,* a work of grace that continues daily. Are these Bible studies helping you to become grounded more deeply in God? Be submissive to him and give him a chance, ample time, and all that there is of yourself. But remember, sanctification begins when you decide to follow Christ. Then you start growing.

special notes

What IS THE MEANING OF THE MUSTARD SEED?







By the parable of the mustard seed Christ taught that his kingdom, which in its beginning seemed so insignificant, would someday reach out like the roots of a great plant and cover the earth. But the scribes and Pharisees were contemptuous of his claims. He had no money or material possessions. He had no degrees from the schools of his time. His followers were mostly humble labourers and fishermen. The Pharisees and the Sadducees did not follow him. How could he expect to make an impact on the world? But Christ knew that his spiritual kingdom would triumph, whereas material things would fail. And so -

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." Matthew 13:31, 32

Christianity is like the mustard seed that takes hold of the soil and grows. First, it is small, but then it becomes very large. Within two or three decades after Christ spoke these words, his teachings had spread throughout a great part of the world. Within a few centuries the Roman emperor acknowledged himself to be a Christian. Today Christianity is one of the most widespread of all religions, and literally hundreds of millions of people acknowledge Christ to be their King. Approximately one out of every three people in the world today professes to be a Christian. And so the tiny mustard seed has reached out and literally covered the earth! This is the greatest miracle of all.

See Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:18, 19.

special notes

How WAS THE WORK OF GOD'S GRACE REPRESENTED?







Now we take a careful look at the great crowd that has gathered about Jesus to hear his teaching. There are people of all classes -

The poor, the illiterate, the ragged beggar, the robber with the seal of guilt upon his face, the maimed, the dissipated, the merchant and the man of leisure, high and low, rich and poor, all crowding upon one another for a place to stand and hear the words of Christ. Christ's Object Lessons, Ellen G. White, p 95

Does the kingdom of God consist only of these poor, downtrodden people? Many of the highly educated and powerful Jewish leaders wondered about that too. So Christ explained that His kingdom is for all who will receive it, regardless of their status in this life. Listen to his words -

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough." Matthew 13:33

Leaven, an agent introduced into the dough *from without,* is a symbol of the grace of God implanted by the Holy Spirit within the life. It is something *from outside* that takes possession of us, not simply the development of our own potential powers. A knowledge of truth is not enough. The truth must enter the life, even as leaven is mixed with the dough and completely permeates it. When the life itself is changed and the thoughts and acts are brought into harmony with the truth that is professed, we know that the leaven is working. The social or economic status of the man himself means little, but his attitude toward the truths which Christ taught means everything! How many there are who have never learned this secret! But those who have humbly received Christ as their Saviour know the meaning of that goodness and greatness that is acceptable to God.

The PEARL OF GREAT PRICE







The blessings of the gospel of Jesus are now compared firstly to treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44), and secondly to a priceless pearl (Matthew 13:45, 46). In Christ himself "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3. He "has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption." 1 Corinthians 1:30. His life alone is stainless and without defect, like a pure, white pearl. In Jesus is all the glory of the Father, and "the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Colossians 2:9. His words inspire the listening throng -

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." Matthew 13:45, 56

In this parable the pearl is not represented as a gift, for it took all that the merchant owned to buy it. And, while it is true that Christ and the gospel are held out to us as a gift, this priceless treasure is only for those who give themselves without reserve to God. Those who surrender body, soul, and spirit to him receive Christ and all the treasures of heaven in return. This is the kind of exchange that brings the greatest profit!

The parable has another meaning also. It not only teaches that men are seeking God, but that God is seeking men. Lost humanity is the pearl of great price, and Christ is the heavenly Merchant Man seeking our salvation. It is true that man is defiled by sin, but through Jesus he may become as pure and spotless as the pearl.

An insignificant grain of sand enclosed within the pearl oyster may, through a miraculous process of nature, be transformed into a beautiful pearl. So, through faith in Christ, all God's children may develop beauty of

character. God does not look upon us as worthless, but through his Son he sees us redeemed and saved at last. And Jesus, having found his precious pearls, makes them beautiful by setting them in his own glorious diadem.



They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. Zechariah 9:16

"They will be mine," says the Lord Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession." Malachi 3:17

special notes

Christ's TEACHING ABOUT THE JUDGMENT







By the parable of the net, Jesus taught that both good and bad people are gathered into the church. The casting of the net represented the work of Christians in preaching the gospel. The Saviour taught that unconverted as well as converted people would enter the church. This parable answers the question that bothers so many - Why does the church have so many hypocrites?

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 13:47-50

We should not forget that a traitor was found even among the twelve disciples. But Jesus did not reject him - Judas rejected Christ. He left the circle of the disciples and went out and betrayed the Saviour.

By this parable Christ showed also that character and not profession decides man's destiny. He didn't want the people to think that the position they occupied in the church would save them, or that God would excuse their sins simply because they held a church office. Only the righteous will enter heaven.

A parallel truth is revealed in the parable of the tares. Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43. From this we learn that there will never come a time when all the world will be converted and turn to God. At the time of the harvest, at the end of the world, the wheat and the tares will be separated. The good - the wheat - will be taken to heaven. The wicked - the weeds or tares - will be destroyed. This same truth is taught by the parable of the net and the fish in Matthew 13:47-50. The good and the bad are separated on the shore after the net is drawn in. This is evidence that the righteous and the wicked will be separated in the final judgement. So we see that the popular concept of world conversion is out of harmony with the teachings of Jesus.







The time is coming soon when probation will close for every man. Then the destiny of every person will be decided forever. That solemn hour is described by John the revelator -

". . . the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Revelation 22:10-12 (See Ezekiel 33:11*)*

God wants all to be saved. It is not his will that any should be lost. See 2 Peter 3:9. But the decision rests with us. Every man is the arbiter of his own destiny.

We are now living in the period of grace. Probationary time still lingers, and God's Spirit is pleading with us to accept the gift of life. Those who do so will be saved. Those who reject or neglect salvation will be lost. Sin is ruinous, and God must destroy it from his universe. Are you employing the hours of probationary time in a way that will ensure the eternal well being of yourself and your family? Let GO of sin - let GOD save you! Cling to him by faith, and you may be sure that he will hold you fast.

special notes

What IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN "THINGS NEW AND OLD"?







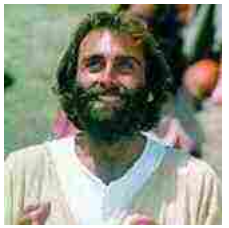
As Christ taught the people, he also taught his disciples. After giving the parable of the net, he asked, "Have you understood all these things?" "Yes," they replied. Matthew 13:51. Then he proceeded to show them what his followers are to do with the truths they had received from him.

He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." Matthew 13:52

In this parable the Master showed that truth has little value unless it is passed on to others. The disciples had *communed* with him and learned of him. Now they were to *communicate* what they had learned. As the truth is shared with others, its life giving power increases, and the one who is the channel of blessing is enriched by the experience. His Christian life becomes a vital thing like the lush green valley that channels the river to the sea.

We should never forget that the truths that Jesus taught were both *new* and *old.* The Word of God includes both the New and the Old Testament, and one is not complete without the other. It is as necessary to understand the lessons of the Old Testament as it is to understand those of the New Testament. Christ is the Great Treasure of the Old Testament as he is of the New. It was Christ who saved men in Old Testament times as well as in New Testament times. As one writer puts it -

The Old Testament sheds light upon the New, and the New upon the Old. Each is a revelation of the glory of God in Christ. Both present truths that will continually reveal new depths of meaning to the earnest seeker." Christ's Object Lessons, Ellen G. White, page 128



These parables to which we have listened are the best stories we have ever heard. Will Jesus continue to teach like this tomorrow and the next day? That is the question we ask as we leave with the crowds that have gathered to hear the Master Teacher. As we walk away, we think seriously of the truths we have heard. Many questions about the spiritual life are now beginning to be answered.

In Booklets 19 and 20 we will continue our study of the parables of Jesus.

special notes

Booklet 19 will answer the following Questions -
In the Parables of Jesus what is the significance of -

- **The Lost Sheep?**
- **The Lost Coin?**
- **The Lost Prodigal?**
- **The Great Supper?**

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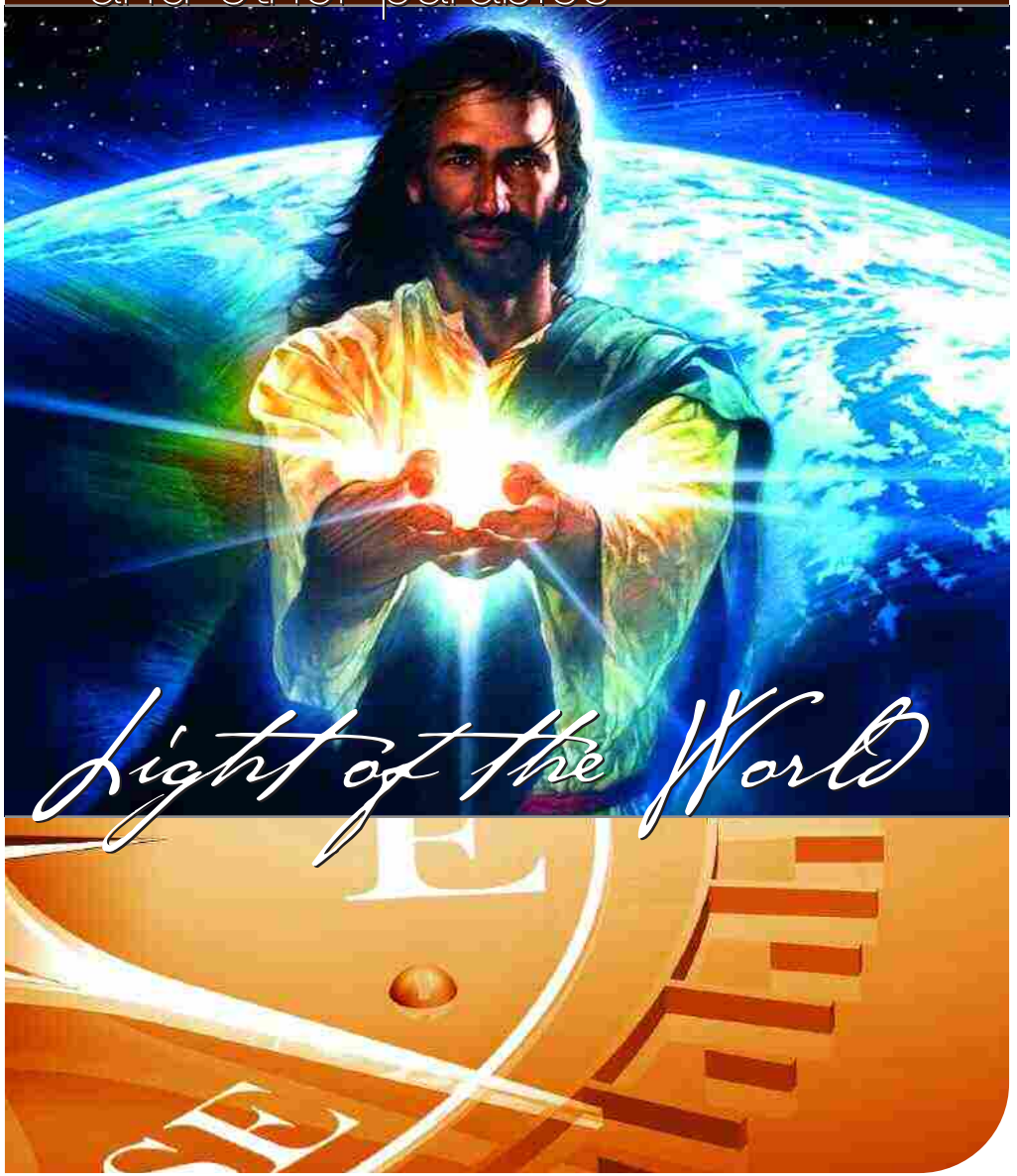
BOOKLET NINETEEN

The Good Shepherd
and other parables



"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me . . . My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me . . . My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. John 10:14, 27, 29

Three apostles refer to Jesus as the Shepherd of the sheep. John calls him the *Good* Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (John 10:11). Paul refers to Jesus as the *Great* Shepherd who rose from the dead (Hebrews 13:20), while Peter honours him as the *Chief* Shepherd who is coming again (1 Peter 5:4).

To represent the willing subjects of his kingdom, Christ used humble, faithful sheep - not goats, which are self willed. See Matthew 25:31-46.

Dwight L. Moody once said, "Christ's sheep have two marks - one in their ears - 'they hear my voice,' and one in their feet - 'they follow me.'"

David, the shepherd boy, sang in the pastures of Bethlehem, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want." Read Psalm 23. Jesus is the understanding Shepherd of his church on earth - he feeds his flock with the bread of spiritual life, he guides them in service, he teaches them how to pray, he protects them from the attacks of Satan, he binds up their wounds, he guides them into the true fold, and he watches over them.

Today we will join the crowds in Jerusalem who are listening to the wonderful parables of Jesus. As he speaks, we are led to think of him as the Chief Shepherd of the church - counselling, instructing, guiding, and warning his flock.

How DID CHRIST TEACH DEPENDENCE UPON GOD?







Jesus taught that the sheep must depend upon the shepherd in case they go astray and be lost. "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else" (Luke 18:9), Christ addressed his stirring parable of the Pharisee and the publican.

We learn that the Master has only recently dined in the home of a Pharisee (Luke 14:1). Soon afterward he met with a group of "publicans and sinners" (Luke 15:1, 2). He now contrasts the spirit of these two groups. Let us listen carefully to the important lesson which he teaches -

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men - robbers, evildoers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:10-14

The proud Pharisee in this parable presents a picture of self righteousness and self praise. He believes that his prayers will earn God's favour. Those who watch him can almost hear him say, "Don't come near me, for I am holier than you." He doesn't really pray to God, he prays "with himself."

But the poor publican presents a different picture. He does not mingle with the other worshippers, but draws apart by himself and "would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast." Luke 18:13. He knows that he has no merit to commend himself to God, so he pleads for mercy, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Luke 18:13. How he longs for peace and pardon!

Now, which of these men was blessed? Jesus said, "I tell you that this man (the publican), rather than the other (the Pharisee), went home justified before God." Luke 18:14. He received help because he felt his need. The Pharisee was rejected because he felt no need.

If you, friend, feel your need of the Good Shepherd's love and care as did the publican, take courage because there is hope. You may lean heavily on God and learn to depend on him. Mercy is freely extended to those who feel their helplessness and call on the name of the Lord, seeking him earnestly for salvation. See Romans 10:13.

PARABLE ILLUSTRATING THE NEED OF PRAYER





(Read Luke 11:1-13)

Christ had previously taught his disciples what to say when they prayed. See Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4. At that time he illustrated his instruction by teaching that his followers must persevere in prayer if they expect to have their prayers answered.

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs." Luke 11:5-8

The petitioner in the parable persevered in his request and refused to give up, so he got the three loaves. Jesus taught that we likewise should continue to pray even if we do not receive an immediate answer.

The man in this parable asked a neighbour for three loaves of bread so that he would have food for his friend who had come to see him. In this way our Lord taught that God gives to us when we ask, that we may give to others. Prayer makes us instruments of God's love and power. It is said that when Saladin looked at Richard Coeur de Lion's sword, he expressed surprise that such an ordinary blade could do such wonders. Richard bared his arms and said, "It was not the sword, Saladin. It was the arm that did the great things." So we are but instruments in God's strong hand.



Why SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN NOT SEEK REVENGE?

There are times when shepherds must be the protectors and avengers of the flock, when wolves, lions and bears must be attacked and destroyed. These beasts that prey upon the sheep must be exterminated. This Christ taught in the parable of God the avenger. In the day of judgment that is coming, the enemies of the church will be destroyed and the little flock (Luke 12:32), who in this life are so often attacked by their enemies, will find shelter and protection.

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said, "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!' " And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when







the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8

In this parable there are just two characters - the unjust judge and the persistent widow. The woman had a righteous case. The judge knew that he could and should help her, but he refused to do so, for no other reason than to show his authority. He was indifferent and hardhearted, and he was aloof. But she pressed her petition so hard that the judge finally had to give heed. "Even though I don't fear God or care about men," he said, "yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" Luke 18:4, 5. And so, to save time and annoyance, he decided the case in her favour.

Jesus declared that, if the unjust judge would avenge this mistreated widow, ". . . will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly." Luke 18:7, 8

For long centuries sinful men have lived in transgression of God's holy law. They act as though the Great Judge knows nothing of their deeds. "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Psalm 73:11. But the time is coming when this godless element will exceed the bounds of mercy, and the long suffering of God will end. Then the Lord will take the wicked in hand and work on behalf of his own honour, and to justify his faithful people.

In this time of God's judgments (Revelation 16), the loyal followers of the Good Shepherd will find protection and deliverance. See Matthew 25:31-46.

There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered. Daniel 12:1

If God himself is to undertake the punishment of the wicked, should we not forsake all bitterness, malice, and the holding of grudges against them?

"It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19. Forget the injustices you have suffered. Forgive your enemies and pray for them. This is the spirit of Christ.

The PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP







Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:1-7

As Jesus speaks, we learn that before the great day of vengeance, the Good Shepherd will make every effort to bring all his wandering sheep into the fold. In this parable of the lost sheep we notice four points -

1. *Only one sheep went astray.* To recover this lost sheep the Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine in the wilderness and went out to seek the one stray wanderer. This is to teach us that God loves the lost as well as those within the fold. See Ezekiel 34:12. One is the very least that can be numbered. So if there had been only one lost soul, Christ would have died for that one.

2. *The lost sheep is helpless.* "Apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus says in John 15:5. There is no way for the lost sinner to return to God except through him. See Acts 4:12. We are lost without him. If the shepherd







in the parable had not recovered this needy little stray sheep, it would have been devoured by wolves or plunged to its death over a precipice. We are just as helpless as lost sheep, but divine love has devised a plan for our rescue. The Good Shepherd seeks to take us in his arms and bring us back to God.

3. *The shepherd loves the lost sheep.* When the shepherd knows that one of his sheep is missing, he is filled with anxiety and cannot sleep. So, in the middle of the night he gets up and goes out in search of the wanderer. Making sure that the ninety-nine are safe within the fold, he proceeds on his perilous way. No effort is spared. His life is in danger, but he has but one urge - to recover that one stray sheep.

4. *The lost is found.* Following a lonely trail hour after hour, at last he hears a faint cry in the distance. Led by that pitiful sound, he comes to the edge of a great precipice. There the shepherd sees the little creature stranded on a ledge. Reaching down from the perilous height, he seizes the lost sheep, now about to die, and pulls the helpless animal to safety. And what does he do - punish the little thing? No. Bruised and bleeding as it is, he takes it in his arms and presses it to his bosom, where the warmth of his own heart flows out to revive it. With gratitude to God he returns, places it back in the fold, and binds up its wounds.

The parable ends with the shepherd calling his friends and neighbours together and saying, "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep." Luke 15:6. Then there is thanksgiving, with songs of melody and praise. What a beautiful picture of the rejoicing in heaven over one repentant soul who turns to the Good Shepherd for salvation!

special notes

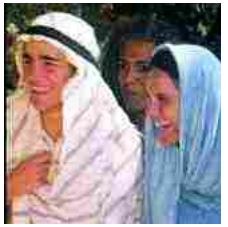
The PARABLE OF THE LOST COIN

In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus represented *those who are lost in sin and want to come back.* These he is able and willing to save. The parable of the lost coin represents *those who are lost and do not realise it.* These, too, he is able to save. Listen to his words -

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:8-10







The lost sheep wandered into the mountains away from home - far, far away. But the coin was lost in the house, nearby, close at hand. Even so, it could be recovered only by careful searching. Jesus must have been thinking of *families and homes* when he taught this parable, for there were many parents and children in the large crowd that listened to his earnest teaching.

Sometimes the spiritual needs of the children growing up by our side in the home are ignored. Family worship is neglected. The singing of hymns and gospel songs, the voice of prayer, and the reading of the Bible are not heard as often as they should be. Many parents seldom, if ever, talk to their children about the Good Shepherd. And they are careless about their own church going habits. Are not these children, or even their parents, the lost coins of today?

In order to find her lost coin, the woman had to light a candle. Then she and the other members of the household looked everywhere for it. Should we not light the candle of Bible truth in our homes and seek to win our children to God - and also our family and friends? Begin now to pray for the



salvation of some particular one who is outside the fold of safety. Why not enrol him or her in this Bible course on the life of Christ? God will help you to win *that very person* to the love and care of the Good Shepherd.

special notes

The PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

(Read Luke 15:11-32)







The parable of the prodigal son has also been called the story of the forgiving father. The prodigal represents *those who are lost in sin, those who shrug their shoulders and ask, "Who cares?"* They are bent on the pleasures of today, and do not think about the future. The past holds no lessons for them. All they want is a good time *now.*

The young son in the parable asks for the inheritance that would come to him at his father's death. He is impatient and can't wait until the money is in his hands. So he receives his inheritance, gathers together his camels, sheep, and cattle, loads his beasts of burden with bolts of costly cloth, and spices, and the money he has obtained, and hastens to his father's house for a quick goodbye. Then he is gone!

In the "distant country" to which he goes, he spends his fortune in "wild living." For weeks and months this goes on. Then his cash dwindles to a few Roman pennies. He must sell some of his possessions to provide money for his adventure. But now he is down to his last animal. His servants and friends desert him. There is nothing left now. Virtue and health have long since fled. He is left alone, sick and dejected.

In order to live, he gets a job tending pigs. What a situation for a Jew! But this is not the end of the story. He "came to his senses," the Saviour said. Luke 15:17. He begins to sense his wretchedness. Satan's deceptive power is broken. He reasons from cause to effect, and sees that he is suffering as a result of his own foolishness. At first he had thought that his father was to blame for his unhappiness because he was too strict, too religious. Now he realises that his father was right and that he was wrong. "I will set out and go back to my father," he said. Luke 15:18. He understands now that his







father has loved him all the time, but it had never dawned on him before. Indeed, it is the father's love that has awakened his conscience. Why has he been so foolish?

So he starts home. The father has been waiting for his boy, watching day by day, week by week, praying and hoping. As the son approaches the old home, the father sees him "a long way off." Yes, he sees his son before the boy sees him. When the returning prodigal is within sight, the father runs to meet him. With great compassion he takes him in his arms in a long, fond embrace. He "was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him," the Bible says in Luke 15:20. It is a beautiful picture, this home coming of the prodigal and the father's wonderful love.

Then there is feasting and rejoicing. The weak, emaciated boy is most repentant. "Father," he says, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." Luke 15:21. Then he is about to say, "Make me like one of your hired men," but his father gives him no chance." Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him," he orders. "Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Luke 15:22-24. And they began to be merry.

This thrilling scene of reunion and sweet harmony represents the welcome that God extends to all repentant sinners who will return to him.

special notes

The STORY OF THE GREAT SUPPER

(Read Luke 14:15-24)







While in Jerusalem, Jesus attended a feast in the home of a prominent Pharisee. Gathered about the table were many distinguished guests who were curious but not friendly to Christ, and they watched his every move hoping to find an accusation against him as a reason for taking his life. They had hardened their hearts and rejected Christ's invitation to repent. This feat gave Jesus an opportunity to show these men the results of the evil course they were following.

He told of a man who made a great supper and invited many guests. At a stated time his servant called on them saying, "Come, for everything is now ready." Luke 14:17. But those favoured people began to make excuses. One man, a farmer, had bought a new piece of property and wanted to go and see it. Another had purchased five pairs of oxen and wished to try them out. Another man had just married and wanted to stay with his wife.

So the frustrated servant came back and told his master what had happened. This made him angry, and he commanded -

"Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame." Luke 14:21

After the servant did as he was told, he returned and said, "Sir, what you ordered has been done, but there is still room." Luke 14:22. Then the master said -

"Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full." Luke 14:23

These substitute guests responded gladly to the invitation and came to the feast from far and near. But the lord was angry with those who had







shunned his invitation. Jesus concluded, "I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet." Luke 14:24

The leaders of Israel had despised the invitation of the Lord from heaven, and had rejected his calls of mercy. So the apostles were bidden to seek out others from among the Gentiles to take their place. This parable teaches the following lessons -

1. Those who say to God, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you," Acts 24:25, run the risk of losing their place in his kingdom.

2. God will turn from those who despise the light of truth and invite those to follow him who are receptive - the poor, the hungry, the naked - those who appreciate his mercies. Jesus once said to the astonished priests and elders, "The tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." Matthew 21:31

3. The gospel is to go to all the world - into the highways and byways, to the high and the lowly - that God's house may be filled with guests when Christ returns to this earth for them. Here the Saviour pointed to the work of the gospel, the final call of mercy to be made in the highways and byways of the whole wide world. That call is now being sounded. Have you accepted it? Have you heard the voice of the Good Shepherd? Are you following him? The promise is -

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me . . . My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10:27, 29

special notes

special notes

Booklet 20 will explain the following Parables of Jesus -

- **The Rich Man and Lazarus**
- **The Ten Virgins**
- **The Man without the Wedding Garment**

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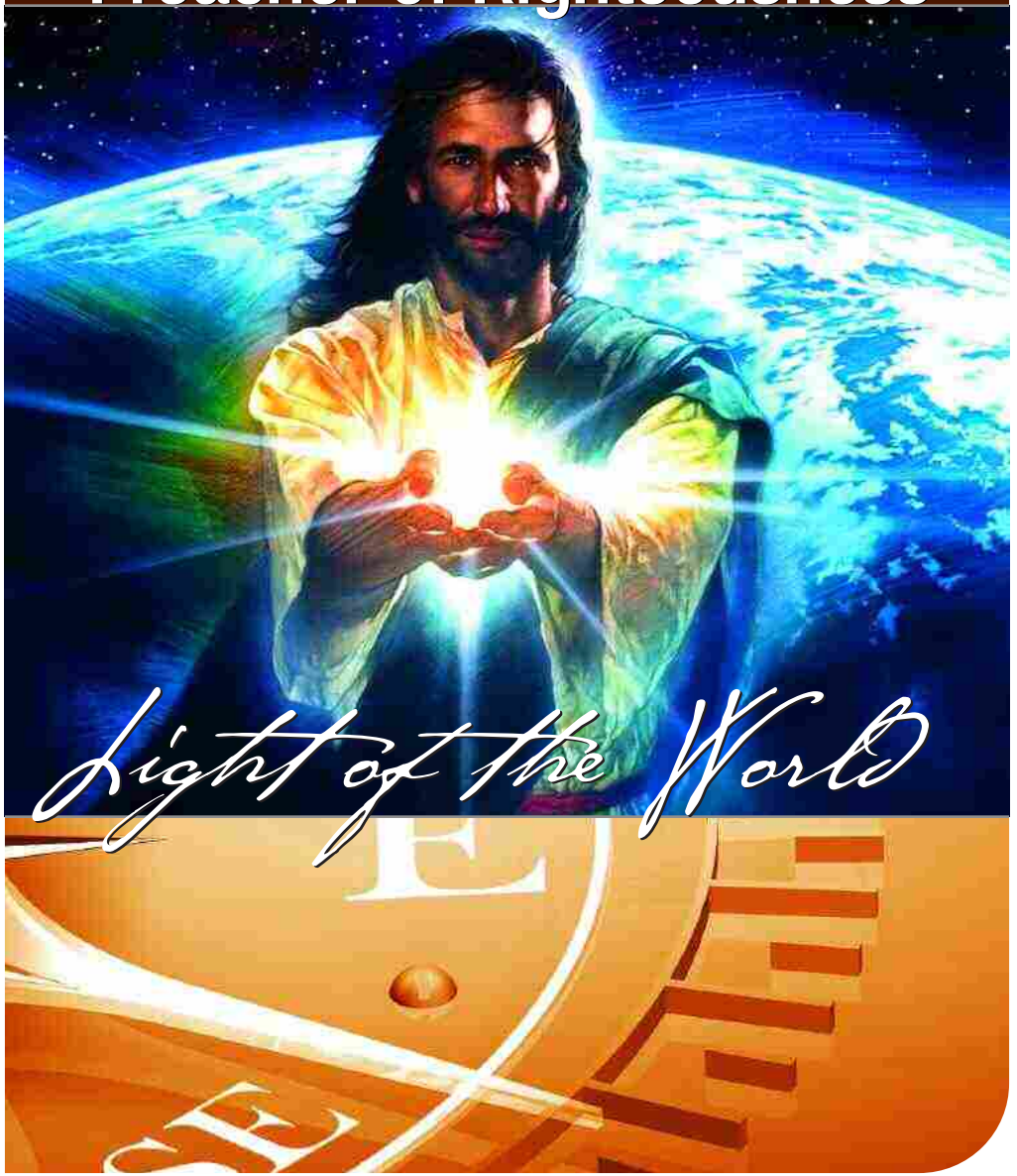
BOOKLET TWENTY

Christ, the Preacher of Righteousness



"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate." Matthew 23:37, 38

The Bible records the history of many courageous preachers who openly attacked the sins of their times and warned of judgments to come. To the people who lived before the Flood, Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), warning of calamities to befall those who would not repent. Jonah preached to the pleasure loving Ninevites of judgments to come within forty days (Jonah 3:4). Each preacher in his own generation was a voice divinely empowered with the startling message, "prepare to meet your God." Amos 4:12

Christ, the mightiest preacher of righteousness, came to his people preaching repentance for sin, but his warnings and calls of mercy were largely unheeded. Just as the world was unfriendly to Noah, so was it unfriendly to the Great Preacher. In fact, his own people witnessed against him in a Roman court and obtained the death penalty against him.

Why was Jesus unpopular with the religious leaders of his day? Why did they reject him and, like the citizens in the parable, say, "We don't want this man to be our king." Luke 19:14. There is no better answer to this question than in Christ's words to Nicodemus -

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." John 3:19, 20

The great crowds who listened to our Lord's sermons were drawn to him, but they stood in awe of the religious leaders who opposed him. In order to expose the hypocrisy of his enemies and make it easier for the honest in heart to come to a decision, Jesus publicly preached the daring sermon recorded in Matthew 23. Be sure to read this chapter. In this powerful message, he warned Israel's leaders of judgment to come if they did not repent. It was the only such sermon he ever preached.





In this booklet there begins to unfold before us the final scenes in the dramatic struggle between Christ and those who opposed him.

special notes

How DID JESUS STRESS THE URGENCY OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT?







(Read Luke 16:19-31)

Once more we take our place with the crowds that flock to hear Jesus. He is about to utter his most impressive parables. In the parables of the rich man and Lazarus, the Saviour directs his appeal particularly to the religious leaders, and teaches at least three forceful lessons -

1. *The question of destiny must be decided in this life before Death knocks at the door.* There is no opportunity to decide life's greatest question after the Grim Reaper beckons. By our own choice we fix an impassable gulf between ourselves and God unless, while we are living, we make the right decision regarding our eternal destiny. See Ecclesiastes 9:10.

2. *Those who are poor in this world's goods, but rich in faith, will someday be exalted,* while the rich, who in this life neglect God and their fellow men, will be lost forever. See James 1:9, 10.

3. *If men do not walk in the light they have today, they will ignore or reject light that comes to them tomorrow.* See 1 John 1:7.

Here Christ is relating a parable, not an historical event. The conversation between Abraham and the rich man did not actually take place. "Abraham's side" (Luke 16:22) is not enough to shelter one man, let alone all the saints whom death has claimed. By a striking allegory Jesus is here warning the Jews that this life is the only time given to men in which to prepare for eternity. Read the parable again and you will see the lesson clearly. It is hopeless to look for a second probation after this life ends. See Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10.

As we listen to this parable, we see three principal characters - the unrepentant man, Lazarus - the faithful beggar who sits begging at the rich man's gate, and Father Abraham. The rich man dies and is confined to hell, there to suffer in torment. The poor man dies and is taken to "Abraham's side," there to enjoy eternal rest and security. The rich man is represented as begging Lazarus to ease his awful agony by dipping his finger in water and cooling his parched tongue, "because I am in agony in this fire," he said. Luke 16:24. But Abraham announces that this is impossible -

"Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us." Luke 16:25, 26

Then the rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers who are still living, to beg them to follow the path of righteousness, "so that they will not also come to this place of torment." Luke 16:28. To this Abraham gives another negative reply -

"They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." Luke 16:29-31

The time of Christ's sojourn with the Jews was the time for them to decide the question of their loyalty to him. But they refused to accept him as the Messiah and follow him. Thus by their own choice, the gulf was fixed between them and God. So it is with every man who closes his eyes to the light.







special notes

What IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SAYING AND DOING?







(Read Matthew 21:23-32)

Jesus was eager for the people to understand that words without deeds are meaningless. So he gave the parable of the father and the two sons. These young men were asked to go and labour in their father's vineyard. The first said, "I go, sir," but did not. The second said, "I will not," but he later changed his mind and went.

By this parable Christ represented two classes of people who are always present in the church. The son who said, "I will not," stands for those who live in open violation of God's law, but who under the influence of the Holy Spirit repent and surrender their hearts to the Lord. The one who said, "I go, sir," and did not, represents those who are self sufficient and unrepentant, and who are sticklers for tradition and ceremony, refusing to repent, and who even now oppose Christ. The Saviour pointed out the danger of such when he said -

"Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition . . . They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." Matthew 15:6, 9

There is a sure proof of loyalty or disloyalty to God. See 1 John 3:18. It is obedience - "If you love me," Jesus said, "you will obey what I command." John 14:15

A visitor to a great factory asked the master mechanic how he got his job. He replied, "I began to work as a common labourer at a dollar and a half a day."

"But how did you learn to master so many technical problems? How did you have the patience to stay by?"

The simple reply was, *"I reached my present position by doing what I was told. That is the secret."* And it is the secret of success in attaining spiritual heights as well. Obedience is the proof and the test of true faith.

What HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO REJECT THE LIGHT?

(Read Matthew 21:33-44)







After giving the parable of the two sons, Jesus told the parable of the vineyard. In the first, he taught the leaders of his day that obedience is essential to religious faith. In the second, he revealed how abundantly God had blessed his chosen people, and explained that for this reason he had a right to expect them to bear fruit to his glory. He then drew the veil away from the future and showed the curses that would come upon those who despise the message of God's Son and turn their backs upon him. Read Deuteronomy 28.

Jesus explained that Israel was the vineyard, hedged about and equipped with a winepress and a tower. See Isaiah 5:1-7. The householder in the parable that he told let the vineyard out to husbandmen and then went away to a far country. At harvest time he sent his servants to the husbandmen to receive the fruit of the vineyard, but they beat one, killed another, and stoned yet another. Other servants were sent, but they were treated in the same manner. Then the householder sent his own son, thinking that they would respect him.

"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him." Matthew 21:38, 39

At this point in the parable Jesus paused and asked -

"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" "He will bring those wretches to a wretched end," they replied, "and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time." Matthew 21:40, 41







Then in answer, Jesus said -

"Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvellous in our eyes?' Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Matthew 21:42, 43

In these words "the chief priests and Pharisees . . . knew he was talking about them." Matthew 21:45. They saw that they were represented by the husbandmen who had slain the prophets of God, and were now planning the death of God's Son. This revelation of their inmost thoughts and intents confused and angered them. But they did not repent. Rather, they "looked for a way to arrest him." Matthew 21:46

Now, Jesus was "the stone the builders rejected," and he said that it "has become the capstone." Matthew 21:42. Israel might reject Christ, but they could not hinder the growth and final triumph of his kingdom. He said -

"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Matthew 21:43

If Israel would not accept the light, the Gentiles would.

The story is told that on one occasion George Bjornson, the Norwegian poet, aroused the anger of the Norwegian parliament, so several members of that body made their way to his home, just outside old Christiana, and broke the windows. These angry men then marched away singing the national anthem, "Yes, we love this land of ours!" But, as the story goes, Bjornson felt great satisfaction, for he was the author of that song. "They smashed his windows," said one observer, "but they had to sing his song."

So it is with Jesus. His own people shunned him as the Messiah, but let us pray that the time will come when many of them will turn to him and, with the redeemed of all ages, sing the song of Christ and rejoice in his love.

The MAN WITHOUT A WEDDING GARMENT

(Read Matthew 22:1-14)

Christ next pressed home to the hearts of the people the claims of his gospel. In the parable of the wedding garment he taught that personal religious experience and faith are necessary. He showed how God has made provision for all to avail themselves of heaven born opportunity.







Our Lord described a certain king who made a marriage for his son and sent out invitations. The servants went out to call the guests to the wedding, but they would not come. They made light of the invitation and went their respective ways - one to his farm, another to his merchandise. Finally, the king's servants were taken and slain by those who had been invited to the wedding. The angry king then sent his armies to destroy those murderers and burn their city. He declared -

"The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find." Matthew 22:8, 9

So the servants went out and gathered in the rich and the poor, the good and the bad "and the wedding hall was filled with guests." Matthew 22:10

In order to enter the banquet hall it was necessary for the guests to exchange the clothes they were wearing for a special wedding garment. When the king saw one man was dressed in street clothes, he said -

" 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are invited, but few are chosen.' " Matthew 22:12-14





By refusing to put on the garment provided for the feast, this self righteous man insulted his sovereign. The feast had been prepared at great cost. The wedding garment had been provided for him at considerable expense, but he stubbornly refused this necessary preparation. So he was cast "into the darkness."

In the Bible the church of Christ is represented as the Lamb's wife, dressed in "fine linen, bright and clean" (Revelation 19:7-9), "without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish." Ephesians 5:27. This clean, white garment is the righteousness of the saints which has been received by faith in Christ, his own unblemished character that God has imparted to those who fully receive Jesus into their hearts. Isaiah said, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6. "But now a righteousness from God . . . through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:21, 22), is freely offered.

This pure white robe of Christ's righteousness is our passport to heaven. Those who reach out by faith to obtain salvation through Christ will not be turned down, but will receive the wedding garment. Those who seek to enter, clad in the garments of self righteousness, will be lost. This the nation of Israel attempted to do, and many today try to enter heaven in the same way.

special notes

What PROMISE OF FINAL REWARD DID CHRIST MAKE?

(Read Mark 10:17-31)







The experience of the rich young ruler offers a classic illustration of Israel's leaders who turned away from the great Preacher of righteousness because the truths he announced placed so much emphasis upon faith and sacrifice. To them the heavenly treasure was counted less than their worldly possessions.

This wealthy young man approached Christ with a sincere question. "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Matthew 19:16. He was eager to know how to make sure of heaven. Jesus' reply was simply stated - "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." Matthew 19:17. The Saviour explained that in order for him to be acceptable to God, he must bring his life into harmony with the law which reveals God's character.

The young man probably thought that when Christ spoke of the commandments, he was referring to a ceremonial requirement, so he asked, "Which ones?" In reply Jesus quoted from the Ten Commandments. He mentioned five of the commandments that deal with our relationship to our fellow men. These he summed up in the command, ". . . love your neighbour as yourself." Matthew 19:19. But he did not cite the commandment against covetousness that struck at the young man's sin. See Exodus 20:17. The young ruler replied, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Matthew 19:20. To this Jesus said, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." Matthew 19:21. The record is that, "When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth." Matthew 19:22

As he turned away, the Master said to his disciples, ". . . how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:24. See also 1 Timothy 5:8 and Malachi 3:8-10. The disciples were disillusioned at these words. Like the







religious leaders, they believed that the rich were favourites in heaven, and they hoped that they themselves would be wealthy when the kingdom of Christ was set up. If the wealthy were not entitled to heaven, who were? Jesus replied -

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Mark 10:25, 26

In amazement the disciples exclaimed -

"Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Mark 10:26, 27

Rich man may enter heaven, but their wealth gives them no title to heaven. They, as well as the poor, enter the realms of glory only through the unmerited mercy of Christ. See 1 Timothy 6:17-19. But Jesus did not disappoint his disciples. He explained that if they were faithful and trusted in his redeeming grace, they would receive great honours in the future life. See Matthew 19:28. Then he added significantly -

"I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life." Mark 10:29, 30

special notes

The PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS





(Read Matthew 25:1-13)

In all his messages to Israel, Jesus presented the truth unflinchingly. Clearly he established the relationship between moral disaster and the judgment of God. The dramatic story of the ten virgins was not given for the benefit of the Jews only, for it has a special message for Christians today.

One day near the close of his ministry, while Christ was seated with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, he related this parable. It is altogether possible that a passing bridal procession suggested this thrilling story.

Near the bride's house were ten young women, each carrying a lighted lamp and a small flagon for oil. All were anxiously waiting and watching for the appearance of the bridegroom, but among them were two classes of watchers - the wise and the foolish.

There was a long delay. Finally at midnight, when all were sleeping, the loud cry was heard, "Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" Matthew 25:6. The five wise virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. Fortunately they had with them an extra supply of oil. They joined the bridal party and marched along to the wedding with their lamps burning. But the foolish virgins had no extra oil and their lamps went out. They pled with the wise virgins to share their oil with them, but they dared not in case they did not have enough for themselves. ". . . go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves" (Matthew 25:9), they said.

So, while the foolish virgins were out trying to find oil for their lamps, the five wise virgins joined the bridal party and moved on to the home of the bridegroom. Later the foolish virgins arrived and sought entrance, but it was too late. The door was shut, and they were left out in the cold, dark night.







This parable describes the experience of the people of God who are watching and waiting for their Lord's return. The lamps in the hands of the virgins represent the Word of God, and the oil stands for the Holy Spirit. Those represented by the five wise virgins have the Word of God in their hearts. Most importantly, they have the oil of the Holy Spirit to make their lives a light for God. They are ready when Christ, the Bridegroom, appears to take his church to the marriage supper in heaven. See Revelation 19:6-9. But, as the foolish virgins were refused entrance to the feast because their lights had gone out, so those who have only a form of religion without the power will never enter heaven. Christ and his Spirit have left them, and they walk in darkness.

The bridegroom came at midnight, the darkest hour. So the coming of our Saviour will take place at the darkest hour in human history. That time is near, and to those who are wise and watch for their Lord, it will be a day of great rejoicing.

In the days of our Lord, many acted foolishly and let their lights go out. Christ came as a preacher of righteousness to light their lamps again, but they spurned the light from heaven. So they were lost in the darkest midnight, for they had neglected their opportunity. Let us learn a lesson from their experience and watch for the bridegroom with our lamps trimmed and burning, waiting for our Lord's return.

We know not the hour when he cometh,
At even, or midnight, or morn;
It may be at deepening twilight,
It may be at earliest dawn.
He bids us to watch and be ready,
Nor suffer our lights to grow dim;
That when he shall come, he may find us
All waiting and watching for him.

special notes

Booklet 21 will answer the following Questions -

- **Why did Christ spend most of his time working for the Jews?**
- **Who actually plotted the death of Jesus?**
- **What criminal charges were brought against Christ?**

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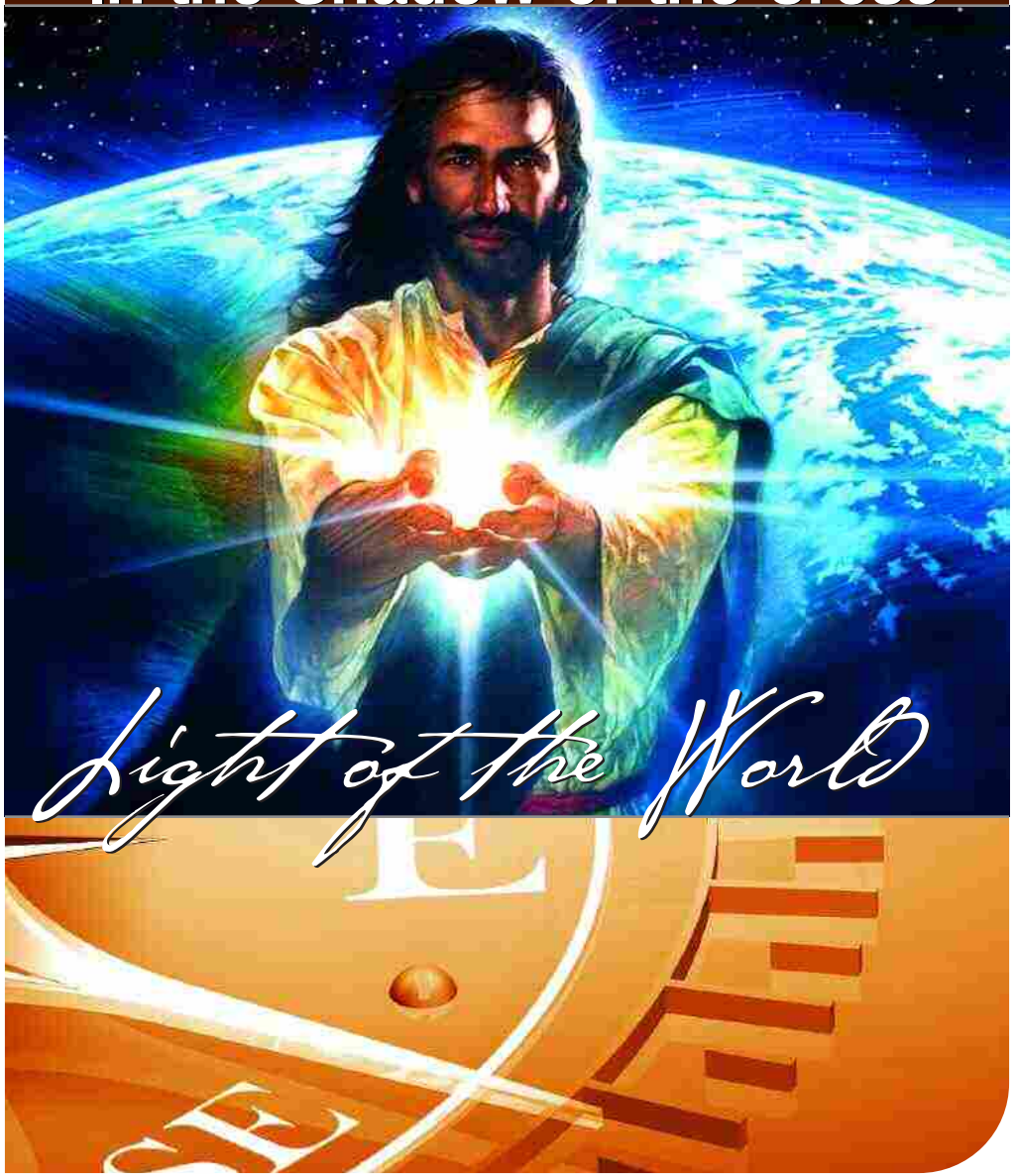
BOOKLET TWENTY-ONE

In the Shadow of the Cross


Light of the World

The chief priests and the teachers of the law . . . began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. Mark 11:18

For more than a thousand years the Jews had looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Their brightest hopes were centred in the appearance on earth of God's only Son. In songs and prophecy, in temple rite and household prayer, they had enshrined his name. Yet when he came, they did not want him. They were offended because his life and teachings exposed their sins and threatened to abolish their system of rites and ceremonies. The rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel was the most tragic event in their long history as a nation.

God himself had chosen the Jewish people to preserve among men the knowledge of his law and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. When God called Abraham, he said to him, "I will bless you . . . and you will be a blessing . . . and *all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."* Genesis 12:2, 3. But when Christ, the Seed of Abraham, and the Light of the world, appeared among them in person, they chose to walk in darkness.

The officials of Israel were united in their opposition to Christ and his work from the time that he first cleansed the temple of the money changers and priests until his final trial before Annas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate. In this booklet we will see how this opposition grew over the period of Christ's public ministry.

As we search the pages of the New Testament, we will see how Christ pleaded with his chosen people to accept the light from heaven. The merciful Saviour left no stone unturned to discover ways and means by which he might persuade them to receive him as their Lord.

For WHOM DID CHRIST LABOUR?





Christ worked almost exclusively for the Jewish people, and when he sent the disciples forth early in their ministry, he instructed them to work entirely for "the lost sheep of Israel."

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' " Matthew 10:5-7

The disciples did not minister to the non Jewish world for some time. Later their labours were for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews.

After his resurrection, Christ instructed his disciples to continue their labours for Israel and then to reach out to the very ends of the earth. Here are his words -

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

At the Feast of Pentecost three thousand were converted in one day. See Acts 2:41. Soon the number of believers increased (Acts 4:4), many priests joined the disciples (Acts 6:7), and thousands of Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Awakened by the events of Christ's death and resurrection, a multitude of Hebrews saw in him the fulfilment of all the Messianic prophecies. This gathering of Jews, however, did not take place until after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord.

Even then the nation, as such, officially repudiated Jesus. The Beloved of heaven was to them "like a root out of dry ground." He had "no beauty or majesty," and they saw "nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." Isaiah 53:2. "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." John 1:11

What STEPS WERE TAKEN IN THE REJECTION OF CHRIST?







We will retrace now the events in Israel's rejection of Christ, and as we do so, notice carefully that the repudiation of Jesus by an entire nation followed a gradual process, even as it does in the individual life. We are drawing closer to the Saviour day by day, or we are wandering farther and farther from him. Throughout the life of Jesus there were many evidences of his Messiahship, yet these were ignored by his own people. We list here some of the steps in his rejection by the Jewish nation -

1. The ignoring of the providences and unusual occurrences surrounding his birth - the visit of the angels to the shepherds, the appearance of the star in the east, the visit of the Magi to Jerusalem, Anna's remarkable prophecy in the temple, and Simeon's forecast of the Saviour's work. All these were signs that should have awakened Israel, but the nation took no notice of these evidences of the appearance of the Son of God in their midst.

2. The disregard of the supernatural at Jesus' baptism - the voice of the Father speaking from heaven, and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. There was also the public announcement by John that Jesus was "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29. These were signs in abundance. But what response was heard in official Jerusalem? None.

3. The discrediting of the miracles of Christ, which began at Cana in Galilee when the water was turned to wine. Here was abundant testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus, but his miracles were explained away on the basis of satanic influences. They accused Jesus of casting out devils by Beelzebub. See Mark 3:22-30.







*It was enmity to the **person** and **teaching** of Jesus which led to the denial of his claims . . . They regarded Jesus, as not only temporarily, but permanently, possessed by a demon, that is, as the constant vehicle of Satanic influence. And this demon was, according to them, none other than Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Thus, in their view, it was really Satan who acted in and through him; and Jesus, instead of being recognised as the Son of God, was regarded as an incarnation of Satan; instead of being owned as the Messiah, was denounced and treated as the representative of the kingdom of darkness. All this, because the kingdom which he came to open, and which he preached, was precisely the opposite of what they regarded as the kingdom of God.* The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, Volume 1, page 575

Christ warned the Jewish leaders that this sin of crediting the work of God to the influence of Satan would lead them to commit the sin against the Holy Spirit, and this they ultimately did. However, many individual Jews at that time believed in Christ and received him as their Lord and Saviour, and there are those today who are doing the same. How many there are in our own day who quiet their conscience by first doubting the origin of divine influences and then blaming the devil for their uneasiness of soul.

4. The malice and hatred of the priests and rabbis. This was first met when Jesus drove the moneychangers from the temple.

5. The open hostility of the elders caused by Christ's disregard of Jewish tradition, such as performing miracles of healing on the Sabbath day, thus violating rabbinical - but not divine - regulations for the observance of the Sabbath.

6. Violent opposition of his own neighbours and associates at Nazareth.

7. Definite plans to destroy him. At Capernaum Christ came to grips with spies who had been appointed by the elders of Israel to find a cause for





accusing him. The opportunity came soon enough. There upon the Sabbath, as he entered the synagogue, he saw a man with a withered hand. Notice what happened -

Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus. Mark 3:1-6 *(See also* Matthew 12:10-12*)*

These misguided men, although they would pull an animal out of the ditch on the Sabbath day, accounted Christ a sinner for healing the man with the withered hand on that day. This is the way all false religions or the perversion of true religion works. The proud heart of man exalts himself or his theories of religion above God and the legitimate needs of humanity.

Notice carefully now and see how Christ sought to recover the law of God from the Jewish tradition under which it had become obscured.

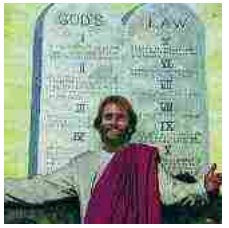
special notes

Christ REBUKES THE TRADITIONS OF THE ELDERS

The spies who were sent to Capernaum to fix on the Saviour the charge of Sabbath breaking had been left frustrated and confused. But the rabbis who had sent them did not give up so easily. Later, another deputation was sent to watch Christ's movements to find an accusation against him. This time the spies complained that his disciples had violated the traditional precepts of the rabbis by not washing their hands before eating. This was such a vital requirement of Pharisaic duty that a rabbi would rather suffer death than eat with unwashed hands. These traditions were intended, so they said, to protect and guard the observance of the law. But actually the Jews regarded their man made observances as more sacred than the Ten Commandments themselves. If a choice had to be made between tradition and the law, they preferred tradition.







Christ and his disciples were acquainted with these rabbinical requirements, but they ignored them. The Jewish spies observed this and accused the disciples in Christ's presence of breaking the laws of Israel. They said -

"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" Matthew 15:2

Jesus paid no attention to the accusation but came immediately to the heart of the whole issue and said -

"You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" Mark 7:9

"You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' " Matthew 15:7-9





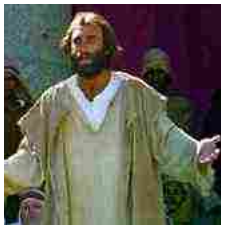
At this the deputies from Jerusalem were filled with rage. How could they find a cause for accusing Christ when he defended the law? Besides, his emphasis of great principles made petty their own defence of Pharisaical nothings. Jesus taught that real defilement of the soul comes not from without but from within. The evil deed, the evil word, the evil thought - these constitute the transgressions of God's law - not the neglect of ceremonial washings. See Matthew 15:1-20.

The disciples observed closely the conversation between Jesus and the spies. "Do you know," they said, "that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" Matthew 15:12. Jesus answered, "Every plant that my Heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots." Matthew 15:13. In these words he pronounced a woe upon any man made religious ordinance which had no clear basis in God's Word and his law.

special notes

What TROUBLE AROSE AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES?







At the feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2) which Christ attended about six months before his crucifixion, the spies once again confronted him. How his patience must have been tried by the continual scheming and plotting of his enemies who devised every method to silence and embarrass him! But he was ever the long suffering Son of God.

They now complained about his claim to authority. Who gave this man the right to teach the people? He was unlearned and untutored, so they said. See John 7:15. Jesus replied -

"My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether I speak on my own." John 7:16, 17

Christ made it plain that the truth he taught came from God, while much of the teachings of the rabbis were human speculation. Thoughtful observers noted the contrast and accepted Christ as the Teacher sent from God. See John 3:2. Jesus said that a true teacher may be distinguished from a deceiver in the following way -

"He who speaks on his own does so to gain honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." John 7:18

Christ was seeking the glory of God. He spoke God's words. This should have been evidence of his authority as a teacher of truth. His doctrine itself bore the stamp of inspiration.

Jesus knew that ever since he had healed the cripple at Bethesda on the Sabbath day, his enemies had been plotting his death. Now he gave them evidence of his divinity by reading their hearts.







"Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" John 7:19

Terrified by this revelation of their inward feelings, these men feigned indignation, and said, "You are demon possessed. Who is trying to kill you?" John 7:20

The wisdom and power of Christ was too much for the rabbis. How could they answer his questions or disprove his doctrine? Deeply impressed, many of his listeners were inclined to accept him as the Messiah. Some of them said -

"Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?" John 7:25, 26

The rabbis could see that the crowds were attracted to Jesus. Their efforts to discredit him were defeated, so they hurried away to the chief priests and revealed what had happened. Christ knew that this would only hasten the effort to take his life, and he said to the crowd assembled before him -

"I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." John 7:33, 34

By these words Christ pointed forward to his ascension after his death and resurrection. The time was coming soon when he would return to his Father in heaven. There he would be beyond the reach of these would be murderers. The rabbis said -

"Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks?" John 7:35

These scoffers did not know how soon their words would be literally fulfilled. The gospel of Jesus Christ did go to the Gentiles, and from among

those neglected people, to whom the Jews should have taken the knowledge of God, a people was raised up to take their place as God's children.

And now what is this? A small group of officers, delegated by the priests and rulers to arrest Jesus, press into the throng. At first they listen to Him with a critical ear, hoping to catch something that might be twisted into an accusation, but his amazing words reach their hearts, and they are entranced. Christ is revealed to them as the Saviour. They see what the priests and rulers refuse to see - a human being flooded with the glory of divinity, the light of heaven shining in the awful darkness. See John 7:37-44.

Returning to the rulers empty handed, they are faced with the angry question - "Why didn't you bring him in?" John 7:45. To this they solemnly reply, "No one ever spoke the way this man does." John 7:46

On this occasion Nicodemus, who was a secret believer in Jesus (John 3:1-21), broke up the council's attempt to bring the Saviour to judgment. He asked, "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" John 7:51. To this they replied -

"Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." John 7:52

This providential interference halted the proceedings of the priests. They could not at that time go any further in their plan to destroy Jesus. So they went to their homes, while Jesus left the temple and made His way slowly to the Mount of Olives.







special notes

What CIRCUMSTANCES LED TO THE CONDEMNATION OF JESUS?







(Read John 11:47-57)

As the last months of Christ's ministry passed, the strong feelings against Him culminated in His actual arrest and crucifixion. The resurrection of Lazarus brought the issue squarely before the priests. See John 11:1-46. Bethany, the scene of this great miracle, was only a few miles from Jerusalem, and the news of the raising of Lazarus from the dead had spread quickly to the large city. No one could deny that the miracle had actually taken place, for it was well known that Lazarus' body had been in the tomb for four days.

Immediately the priests, rulers, and elders gathered together for consultation. What would they do with this Christ? It seemed that all the world was going after him. They had to face the question which every man must some day settle - "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Matthew 27:22. It was either crucify him or enshrine him in their hearts as Lord.

The Pharisees were in favour of Christ's destruction, but there were some men in the council who secretly believed in him and doubtless spoke in his favour. As the discussion continued, there was great confusion. Deeply puzzled, they asked, "What are we accomplishing?" John 11:47. At the height of their perplexity, Caiaphas, the high priest - a proud, cruel, overbearing and intolerant man - arose and maliciously declared -

"You know nothing at all! You do not realise that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." John 11:49, 50

Even if Christ were innocent, Caiaphas suggested, he must be put out of the way. We can imagine him saying - "The authority of the priests and rulers is undermined through the influence of this man. Wouldn't it be better for him to die than for our authority to be despised by the people? After all, he is only one man, and he is very troublesome. Think of what would happen to our nation if the people went after him - our whole system of religion would perish!"



The arguments of Caiaphas won over the Sanhedrin, and the council received his words as if God himself had spoken.

So from that day on they plotted to take his life. John 11:53



They determined to bide their time and to watch for the opportunity to destroy God's Son. They would not have long to wait. Within a few weeks Jesus was taken away and executed. But of this and his unfair trial, we will read in the next two booklets - perhaps the most stirring of the series.

So now we must leave Jesus in the shadow of the cross, there to contemplate the scenes of trial so soon to come upon him.

special notes

special notes

special notes

Here are some of the events discussed in Booklet 22 -

- **The triumphal entry into Jerusalem**
- **Institution of the Lord's Supper**
- **Christ in Gethsemane**
- **Jesus' betrayal and trial**

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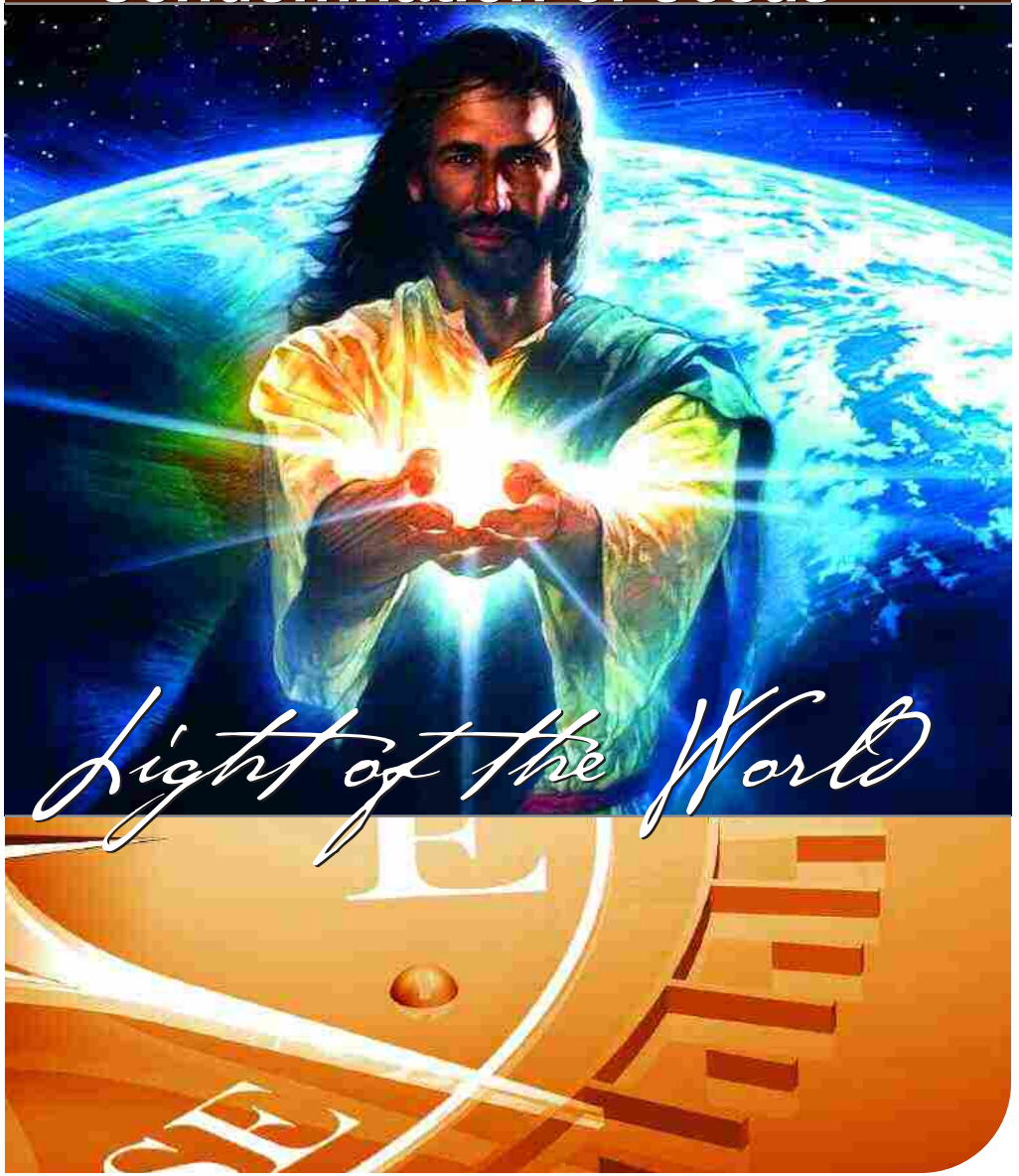
BOOKLET TWENTY-TWO

The Trial and Condemnation of Jesus



Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" John 19:4, 5

In this booklet we will follow Jesus through the final scenes of His earthly life - from the hour of fateful decision when the Sanhedrin "plotted to take his life" (John 11:53), to that dramatic moment when the governor, Pontius Pilate, sought to deliver him from the envious priests who bitterly complained that he was an enemy of the state and the church and should be crucified.

Never in the life of any man did so much of importance to the whole world occur as in the moving events that befell Christ in the last few weeks of his life on earth. As you read this Scripture account, pray that the relationship between these experiences of our Lord and your own spiritual life will be clearly understood.

special notes

Where DID CHRIST GO AFTER THE RAISING OF LAZARUS?

Jesus left Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from the dead, and "withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples." John 11:54







The Sanhedrin, following the lead of the wilful Caiaphas, had already decided that Jesus must die. The Saviour knew this and so avoided the priests for the time being and quietly disappeared from the scene, but he did not stop his work. At Jericho we see the Master speaking words of hope to an honest hearted publican by the name of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10), and restoring sight to two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34). And standing as it were in the very shadow of the cross, he graciously deals with the selfish ambitions of his own disciples (Matthew 20:20-28). But the Saviour's thoughts are centred on the final crisis so soon to come. With prayer and boldness he plans to face the leaders of the nation that he had come to save.

As the Passover feast drew near, Jesus and his disciples made their way for the last time to Jerusalem. He knew that there he would be lifted upon the cross as a criminal, but the knowledge of the dreadful suffering that awaited him did not in the least break his purpose or his spirit. Turning his face bravely into the gathering storm, he went to Jerusalem. To prepare his disciples for the ordeal that awaited him there, he said -

"We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise." Mark 10:33, 34

special notes

Christ's FINAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM







Six days before the last Passover of Christ's life, he was entertained in the home of Simon, the leper. Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead, was with him (John 12:1, 2), and Martha served at the feast. Mary came also, bringing a token of gratitude to her Master - an alabaster box full of costly ointment of spikenard which she poured over his head and feet. Knowing that soon he would die, Jesus remarked -

"When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial." Matthew 26:12

Already the shadows of the cross fell upon the Saviour's head, but here was a disciple who loved him enough to pay her tribute to him while he was still alive.

After Simon's feast at Bethany, Jesus and the disciples continued their journey to Jerusalem. They came to a place called Bethphage at the Mount of Olives, into which he sent two of his disciples. He said they would "find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me." Matthew 21:2

When the colt was brought, garments were placed on his back and Jesus "sat on it." Mark 11:7. Then, with the disciples leading on and following behind, the miniature procession started off for Jerusalem. Thinking that Christ was now about to proclaim himself King of Israel, hundreds of people joined the triumphal procession. Had the time come at last for the Son of David to take the throne? Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah had foretold the coming of the King of Israel -

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9

The shouts and cheers of the multitude filled the air. Shedding their outer garments and cutting branches from the trees, they spread the earth with a carpet, and cried -

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!" Mark 11:9, 10





Christ had a perfect right to be hailed as the Son of David, but the time for his coronation had not yet come. Before the crown must come the cross. He permitted this public demonstration in order to call the attention of Israel to what was so soon to happen on Calvary. The shouts of praise that ascended to heaven at this triumphal entry into Jerusalem were symbolic of the glorious hosannas and hallelujahs that will break forth from the lips of God's people when Christ comes the second time to take them from this earth to the New Jerusalem in heaven. There the real coronation of Christ as King will take place. See Isaiah 26:2, Revelation 21:27 and Philippians 2:9-11.

special notes

"In REMEMBRANCE OF ME"







The night following the triumphal entry, Christ spent in Bethany. See Matthew 21:17. The next morning he returned to Jerusalem, where he gave some of his last parables and preached his last sermon. Here also near the city he pronounced a curse upon the pretentious fig tree, and thus by an enacted parable showed how the nation which was about to destroy him would itself suffer divine wrath. See Mark 11:12-20. All of this took place early in the Passion Week. So also did the second cleansing of the temple.

On the evening before his crucifixion, Christ instituted the Lord's Supper as an ordinance of the Christian church. Gathering his disciples together in the upper room, he ate the Passover supper with them. See Matthew 26:17-19.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:26-29 *(See also* 1 Corinthians 11:23-30*)*

We are solemnised by the scene, but what is the significance of this service? One writer says -

Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present himself as a sin offering, and he would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to his death. As he ate the Passover with his disciples, he instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of his great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away for ever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by his followers in all lands and through all ages. Desire of Ages, Ellen G. White, page 652







The ordinance of feet washing (John 13:1-17) instituted by Christ in connection with the Lord's Supper had removed from the disciples the spirit of contention and rivalry, for there was strife among them - "Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest." Luke 22:24. Now they were in a frame of mind to appreciate more fully the message of redemption. These services were to be celebrated by Christians to humble their hearts and to keep the reality of salvation fresh in their minds. They were to remind them also that Christ would come again. Here are his words -

"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29

And the Apostle Paul said -

"For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." 1 Corinthians 11:26

At the second coming of Christ, the ultimate hope of the Christian church will be realised. Then the full salvation made possible by the spilled blood and broken body of our crucified Lord will meet its final, glorious consummation, and Christ "will see the light of life, and be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11

special notes

What FINAL PROMISE DID CHRIST MAKE?







Before offering himself as the sacrificial victim, Christ promised to send the disciples a Comforter.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:16-18

This promise was fulfilled fifty days after Christ's resurrection. See Leviticus 23:15, 16 and Acts 2. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought life and power to the lonely disciples. Christ had been their comforter while he was with them. Now another divine Comforter was to take his place.

The Holy Spirit was sent to be Christ's representative in the world and the unseen leader of the church. Only a divine being could adequately represent Jesus and lead the church to final victory. No man could do this - not even Peter with all his talents of leadership.

With the words, "Come now; let us leave" (John 14:31), Christ and his disciples left the upper room and the city of Jerusalem and made their way over the brook Kedron to the Mount of Olives. He now explained to the apostles the secret of power in their ministry.

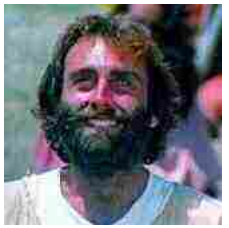
"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener . . . Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:1, 4, 5

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom Christ had promised, could live in the hearts of these men only by their own choice, only if they would cling to

Christ as the branch does to the vine. This would be the secret of their power. And this, Jesus explained, must be a continuing experience. The Christian life is no casual touch, no off and on connection. It is a living, abiding, and continuing communion of the soul with the Lifegiver. And the Spirit is the living Presence who makes spiritual life and communion possible. John said that Christ abides in us "by the Spirit he gave us." 1 John 3:24. Jesus had said -







"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34

Now Christ makes plain to his disciples that if they are filled with his Spirit they will love as he loves. This love was for them a "new" experience, for they had been jealous and critical of one another. Love is the *true evidence* of discipleship. See John 13:35.

After Christ had ended his instruction, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed -

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." John 17:1-3

Jesus was now to be glorified in his self sacrifice on the cross, and he wanted the Father to be glorified in his Son. The union of Christ with his Father is an illustration of the unity he wanted to enjoy with his disciples. If you want to know the secret of a life of power, pray and live the prayer of John 17.

special notes

Christ's PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE







Christ's heartbreaking cry to God in the Garden of Gethsemane brings us face to face with the reality of our Lord's sacrifice. There he began to shed his precious blood for us, and he prayed that he might have strength to tread the winepress alone. See Isaiah 63:3.

Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled." Matthew 26:36, 37

The sins of the world began to press upon God's Son. "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he declared. Matthew 26:38. His was the deepest mental and spiritual sorrow ever endured by man.

A grief beyond utterance, a struggle beyond endurance, a horror of great darkness, a giddiness and stupefaction of soul overmastered him, as with the sinking swoon of an anticipated death. It was a tumult of emotion, which none must see. "My soul," he said, "is full of anguish, even unto death. Stay here and keep watch." Reluctantly he tore himself away from their sustaining tenderness and devotion, and retired yet further, perhaps out of the moonlight, into the shadow. The Life of Christ, F. W. Farrar, page 445

Already Jesus was beginning to "taste death for everyone." Hebrews 2:9. Bidding Peter, James, and John, "Stay here and keep watch with me," he went "a little farther . . . fell with his face to the ground and prayed." Matthew 26:38, 39. The thought that the sins of the world were separating him from his Father after a lifetime of unbroken communion seemed more than he could endure. So the Son of God prayed -

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matthew 26:39

Thinking that he might have the assurance of human sympathy and comfort in his agony, he staggered back to the disciples. Perhaps - yes, perhaps - they might be praying for him. But he found them asleep! He said to Peter -

"Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? . . . Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak." Matthew 26:40, 41

Then "He went away a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.' " Matthew 26:42

"He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing." Matthew 26:43, 44. In that final moment of surrender, he firmly decided to go ahead with the ordeal of death. There could be no other way except the cross. And in that moment of triumphant decision, hope for you, hope for the world, and redemption for every sinner who believes in Christ, was assured!

Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." Matthew 26:45

When the disciples saw him, his face was lighted up with glory, for "an angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." Luke 22:43. But the marks of anguish were there on his face. Luke said -

And being in anguish . . . his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:44







special notes

The BETRAYAL AND TRIAL







All the disciples now joined the Saviour and stood in awe at the glory of his blood stained face. Jesus urged them to watch and pray in case they fall into temptation. How he longed to shield them from the disappointment that was so soon to come to them! But now, what is this?

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. Matthew 26:47-50

This was a most trying experience for our Lord to pass through, an ordeal of intense suffering.

Certainly if our Lord was to be brought into contact with the most painful form of sin, he must have experience of treachery. He had known the sorrow that death brings to the survivors; he had known the pain and disappointment of being resisted by stupid, obstinate, bad hearted men; but if he was to know the utmost of misery which man can inflict upon man, he must be brought into contact with one who could accept his love, eat his bread, press his hand with assurance of fidelity, and then sell him. Expositor's Bible, Volume 2, page 95

Peter was infuriated by this assault on his Lord. Drawing his sword, he struck off the ear of Malchus, the high priest's servant. But Jesus restored the severed ear, and then said to Peter -

"Put your sword back in its place . . . for all who draw the sword will die by the sword." Matthew 26:52

What a commentary on the vain glory and ultimate futility of material force and arms! Only the kingdom of God will triumph. Jesus did not need Peter's sword. He said, "Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53. He added, "But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" Matthew 26:54







The angry mob instigated by the priests and officers led Jesus away first to Annas, the high priest emeritus and father in law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Then he was taken bound to Caiaphas (John 18:24), where the scribes and elders had assembled for the trial. See Matthew 26:57. There Jesus was condemned as a blasphemer and judged worthy of death because he claimed to be the Son of God. See Matthew 26:57-68.

From Caiaphas he was taken in the early morning hours to Pilate, the Roman governor, and there in the judgment hall they witnessed against him. See Matthew 27:12 and Luke 23:1, 2, 4. Pilate sent him on to Herod, who had jurisdiction over Galilee where Jesus came from. See Luke 23:6-12. Then he was returned to Pilate again. In each phase of the trial the innocent Saviour was treated like a hardened criminal. He was like a helpless sheep torn by angry wolves. See Matthew 26:67, 68, and Matthew 27:27-31. Long centuries before, Isaiah had written -

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not . . . He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken." Isaiah 53:3, 7, 8

The priests accused Christ on two principal counts and obtained his condemnation. They condemned him for blasphemy - that is, claiming







kinship with God. On this charge the Jewish authorities judged him worthy of death. See John 19:7. To the Romans directly he was accused of sedition - that is, of stirring up a revolt against the empire and Caesar. But Christ was guilty of neither charge. He was no blasphemer, for he was and is the Son of God. See Matthew 26:63, 64. He was not guilty of sedition against the Roman authorities, for he never meddled in political affairs. See John 18:36. He confined his activities exclusively to the teaching of religion.

"Here is the man!" said Pilate. John 19:5. He saw that Christ was innocent and tried to avert the death sentence, but he was not man enough to stand alone against the railing mob. See Luke 23:1-25. What a contrast between him and the courageous Saviour!

So the death penalty pronounced upon Christ was the worst miscarriage of justice ever to disgrace a court of law, and his execution must be condemned as the gravest crime ever committed by an earthly power. The responsibility for it was assumed by Caiaphas and the people who said, "Let his blood be on us and on our children." Matthew 27:25. But think - are we not all to blame? Have not our sins made Christ's blood flow? Yes - your sins and mine. And as we go on to the final scene at Calvary, we will see that it was for you and me that Jesus suffered and died.

special notes

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Booklet 23 will answer the following Questions -

- **How fully did Jesus accomplish his mission on earth?**
- **Why did he die?**
- **What does his death mean to me?**

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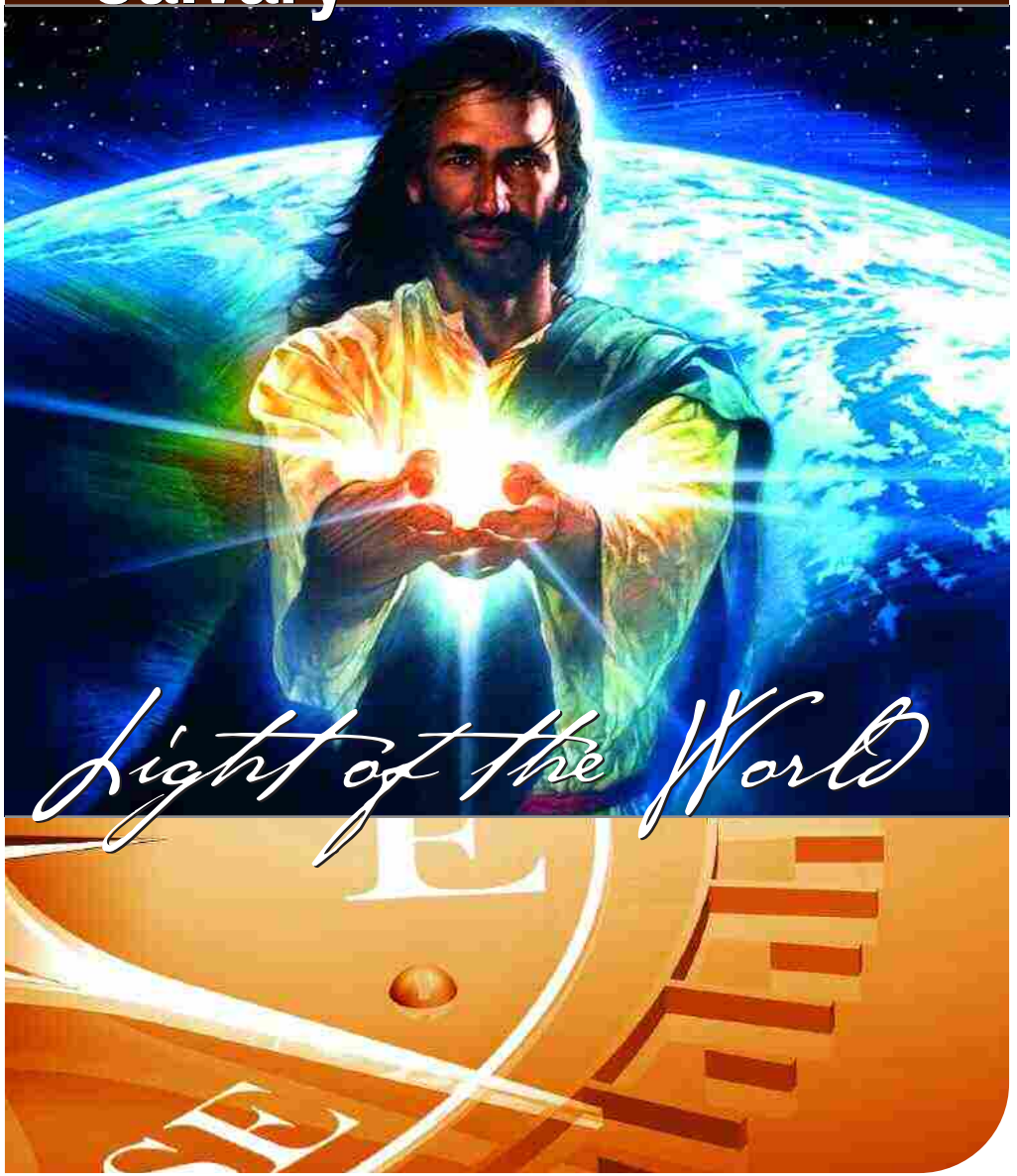
BOOKLET TWENTY-THREE

Calvary


Light of the World

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not . . . Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. Isaiah 53:3, 10

We come now to the last scenes of Jesus' life, his final suffering and death by crucifixion. When Cecil Rhodes, the great empire builder of South Africa, lay dying, he said, "So much to do; so little done." He could not say, as did Jesus when, with arms outstretched and nailed to the cross, he breathed his final prayer, dropped his noble head upon his chest, and exclaimed, "It is finished."

Christ came to earth to die as man's sacrifice, and on the cross he knew that his mission had been accomplished. From the years of his youth he had understood that he was to be "the Lamb of God." Now his blood was being shed as a sacrifice for the world's sin - for your sin and mine. True, the world did not love him, but he loved the world and gave himself for it. "He humbled himself," and on Calvary was "obedient to death - even death on a cross!" Philippians 2:8. In his crucifixion, Jesus fulfilled the highest destiny ever given to man.

In Christ's time, only the vilest criminals were crucified. Cicero called this method of execution "the cruellest and foulest punishment." A certain Roman is reported to have ridiculed Christianity because its leader was crucified on a cross. "This system cannot stand," he said, "because it is founded upon a cross, upon the death of its leader, upon a catastrophe. It cannot stand." But Christians know that

the reason why it has stood through the centuries and why it will finally triumph is that it is founded upon a cross - a cross of sacrifice.

A glorious light now gathers about the cross, for there the heart of Infinite Love paid the price for our redemption and freed the human race from the wages of sin, which is eternal death and separation from God. To the Christian, the cross of Christ is not foolishness. See 1 Corinthians 1:23, 24. Light pierces the darkness and the clouds hovering about it, and its message of love is appreciated. But to the carnal mind, the cross is a symbol of defeat.

Today we will thrill to the story of Calvary and the Christ of Calvary. As we follow Jesus into the powerful scenes of his tragic suffering and death, let us pray that the meaning of his great sacrifice for us personally will be understood and accepted.

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.
John Bowring



special notes

Why WAS JESUS CONDEMNED TO DEATH?







In the court of Pontius Pilate, Jesus had been judged an innocent man. Why, then, was he condemned to death by crucifixion? There is only one answer - the priests were envious of him. For that reason they had set their hearts upon his death and clamoured for his execution, and Pilate lacked the courage to release him. See Luke 23:4, 23-25.

Pilate . . . knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him. Matthew 27:17, 18

Caiaphas, the high priest, had regarded Jesus as his rival. That very morning Christ had stood before him on trial. The self centred prelate must have wondered at the divine composure that marked the countenance of our Lord. How could any mortal man have beheld the face of the suffering Saviour, still marred by the blood stains of Gethsemane, without feeling the impulse of wonder - even admiration! But Caiaphas, proud, envious, and cruel as he was, could not endure the thought that the attention of all Israel was being diverted from him, the high priest, to this lowly Galilean. Christ must be eliminated. He must be destroyed. And this Caiaphas resolved to do. While the Saviour stood before him in the throne room of the high priest, he demanded that Christ swear under oath to answer the following charge -

"I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matthew 26:63, 64

Christ did not refuse to testify under oath. He admitted that he was the Son of God, and he explained that the time would come when the positions of judge and defendant would be reversed. At that moment of agony, he was on trial before the high priest, but the time would come when the high priest would be on trial before him, the King of kings and Lord of lords. "In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven," he said with deep solemnity. Matthew 26:64





As Jesus spoke, the scenes of the judgment appeared before the terrified priest. He saw himself condemned for his rejection of the Messiah. In a supreme effort to stifle conviction, he arose from his pontifical chair, tore his garment, and said -

"He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spat in his face and struck him with their fists. Matthew 26:65-67

Now that the Sanhedrin had officially approved the death penalty for Christ, he must be taken to Pilate where the consent of the Roman court would be given. There the governor took one searching look at Christ and knew at once that he was innocent. The wily priests had not deceived him. He could see that the charges against him were wholly false. A private interview with Jesus only confirmed his conviction (John 18:33-38), and he said, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." Luke 23:4

Pilate saw that Christ was innocent and he knew that it was his duty to release him, but he dreaded the ill will of the people. To escape responsibility, he sent him to the court of Herod, the ruler of Galilee, the province from which Jesus came, for it so happened that Herod was visiting in Jerusalem at that time. Pilate and Herod were enemies, but "that day (they) became friends." Luke 23:12. Yet Herod did not free Christ, neither did he condemn him, but returned him to Pilate for final judgment.

God in his mercy then sent a message to the troubled governor to bring him to a point of decision in favour of Christ.

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." Matthew 27:19

Pilate was terrified. He did not know that the One who stood before him was the Son of God. He had not condemned him, neither had he released him. What would Pilate do next?

Who WAS RELEASED INSTEAD OF CHRIST?





Thinking that he might divert the enmity of the people from Christ to Barabbas, a truly hardened criminal, Pilate brought the two prisoners out into the full view of the multitude and asked which they would have him release.

Now it was the governor's custom at the feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" Matthew 27:15-17

Pilate hoped that the contrast between the innocent Son of God and the hardened seditionist and murderer, Barabbas, would inspire feelings of sympathy and human compassion, but he underestimated the bitterness and hatred of the priests and the mob. The chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas, and that Jesus be destroyed.

"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered." "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!" Matthew 27:21-23

Pilate, seeing that "he was getting nowhere," washed his hands before the multitude and said -

"I am innocent of this man's blood . . . It is your responsibility!" All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified. Matthew 27:24-26







Pilate made the mistake that many make today, of knowing what is right but failing to do it. And because Pilate wavered, Jesus was crucified.

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium, where the band of professional legionnaires gathered to mock him. Here is the record of the cruel treatment that he received -

They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. Matthew 27:28-31

Jesus was whipped and tortured. Barabbas deserved this punishment, and death as well, but he went free. Christ did not deserve such treatment, but he suffered and died. Why? He died in place of Barabbas. He died in the place of sinners like you and me. We deserved the death penalty for our sins, but God permitted the penalty for sin to rest upon his only begotten Son, in order that we "shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16. Oh, what a wonderful Saviour!

special notes

Simon BEARS CHRIST'S CROSS







As the innocent Saviour left the governor's court, a heavy cross was placed upon his shoulders, but he was too weak to carry it for he had been scourged and beaten and had had no food since the day before. See Matthew 27:26-31. Many sorrows rested upon him. His heart was heavy with the memory of his betrayal by Judas. Peter had denied him with cursing and swearing (Matthew 26:74), and all the disciples had forsaken him and fled. Poor, suffering Saviour! He had no strength to carry the humiliating burden of the cross. So "they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus." Luke 23:26

As they march away to Calvary, a great multitude follow the Saviour. Let us join the crowd and observe the awesome events of this fateful day. The multitude includes those who at the time of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem just a little while before, had shouted, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Matthew 21:9. But now these same people join with those whose coarse voices shout out their accusations against him. There is a fearful discord of jeering, raucous cries.

Lining the streets of the city are many women, doubtless some who have been healed by Jesus, and others whose children have been restored by him. These weep bitterly. But they do not lament the suffering Christ as one who is dying for their sins. Their tears are only tears of human sympathy. Yet Jesus understands their anguish of soul and says -

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then " 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" ' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?" Luke 23:28-31

By these words Christ represents two scenes - what is now about to take place when they would seize him, a green tree, innocent and pure, and crucify him, and that awful hour so soon to come (A.D. 70) when Jerusalem would be destroyed. The dry tree represents those who now torment him, many of whom would die a dreadful death in the siege of the city by the Romans. And in the final day of judgment, the calloused and indifferent will be judged worthy of destruction when Christ comes to punish the wicked.





Slowly the mournful procession moves on over the streets of old Jerusalem to Golgotha, the hill or place of a skull, just outside the gate, and there he is crucified. See Mark 15:22-24. In modern Jerusalem the route of the last journey of Jesus is marked out by the various stations of the cross and the Via Dolorosa - the street of grief and sorrow.

special notes

Who ARE CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS?







Two criminals are nailed to crosses next to Jesus - one on the right hand and the other on the left. These hardened men no doubt struggle with their tormentors, but not so Christ. Patiently, submissively, as a lamb dumb before the slaughterer, he permits the soldiers to place his hands and feet upon the cross and drive the cruel nails into his tender flesh. The rough wooden cross is dropped into the hole that has been dug for it, causing the most intense agony to the Son of God. But there is no word of bitterness on his lips, no reproach - neither of God nor of man - only a prayer, a prayer of forgiveness. He prays that his persecutors may be pardoned for their fearful crime.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." Luke 23:34, 35

But Jesus could not save himself and at the same time save humanity. He could have come down from the cross, but he was determined to pay the penalty for our sins, which is death. See Romans 6:23. Only the shedding of blood could provide remission for sins. See Hebrews 9:22. If Christ had saved himself, we would have had no Saviour. In that dramatic hour of his passion, the wrath of God against sin was poured out. The penalty was removed from us and placed upon the head of our Redeemer in his atoning sacrifice upon the cross.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." Galatians 3:13

In view of his crucifixion, we may say, as did Peter -

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 1 Peter 1:18, 19

Now, who in that rabble crowd senses that his only hope of salvation is in that dying Man? The record is that the pagan soldiers mocked him. The priests hurled vile epithets in his face. Jesus' mother and other women were there. So were the disciples - all except Judas, who had gone away and hanged himself. But the hearts of the eleven were broken, and their faith was almost gone. Only one voice expressed confidence. Here is the record -







One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him, "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:39-43

The dying thief turned to Jesus for salvation. But the malefactor on the other cross rejected him. One was a cross of reception, the other a cross of rejection. Christ's cross was the cross of salvation. One of these thieves will be saved in God's Paradise, the other will be lost forever. If we look to the Christ of the cross, as did the dying thief, and repent, we too will be saved. See Hebrews 12:2.

special notes

Light AND DARKNESS AT CALVARY







Before Jesus died, he entrusted the care of his mother to his beloved disciple John, and requested her to go to John's home and share his hospitality. John accepted this sacred trust. See John 19:26, 27. Even in his dying moments, the blessed Saviour had a tender regard for his mother. What an example to those who would shun their responsibility to their parents!

Christ was crucified at the third hour, in the middle of the morning. Since the day began at six in the morning, the third hour would be about nine o'clock. At the sixth hour - noon - darkness covered the cross, and continued until the ninth hour, or three o'clock. See Luke 23:44, 45. Finally, in mid afternoon -

Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:46

An earthquake accompanied this awful hour of anguish when the world's Redeemer died. The earth trembled, and so did the hearts of the multitude. And now what do we see?

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" Matthew 27:54

This Roman soldier, touched by Jesus' noble bearing and sacrifice, recognised him as the Son of God, and his convictions overflowed in a dramatic confession of his belief. But the unbelieving priests and rabble were terrified and depressed, for they did not have the comfort which faith brings.

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. Luke 23:48

On that awful day there was both light and darkness at Calvary - light for those who believed, and darkness for those who shunned the Saviour's love and sacrifice. What does Calvary mean to you and me - light or darkness?







And now "one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear" (John 19:34) in order to hasten his death. But, he is dead already! The physical agony of the crucifixion had not taken his life. Jesus died of a broken heart. The weight of our sins crushed out that holy life, and from his pierced side flowed "blood and water." John 19:34. Our Saviour's legs were not broken as were those of the thieves who were crucified with him. This fulfilled Scripture, as did every act in the awful drama. See John 19:35-57.

As you contemplate Calvary, you will see that Christ suffered there for our sins and paid the price of death in order that we might live. He suffered in our place. He died as our substitute in order that we might escape the second death and live forever. He took the sin which was ours and died to pay the price of transgression so that we might take the righteousness that was his and live forever!

Right now, will you quietly pray that Christ may not have died for you in vain? Look to the uplifted Saviour and by faith receive him into your heart.

There's life in a look at the sacred cross,
Jesus has said, "Look unto me;"
Earth with its riches is only dross,
Bright treasures beyond in the cross I see.

F. E. Belden

special notes

special notes

special notes

Booklet 24 bridges the span between the death and resurrection of Christ.
Here are a few questions that will be answered -

- **Was Christ raised bodily from the dead?**
- **What does the resurrection of Christ mean to the world?**
- **Will there be a resurrection of all the dead?**

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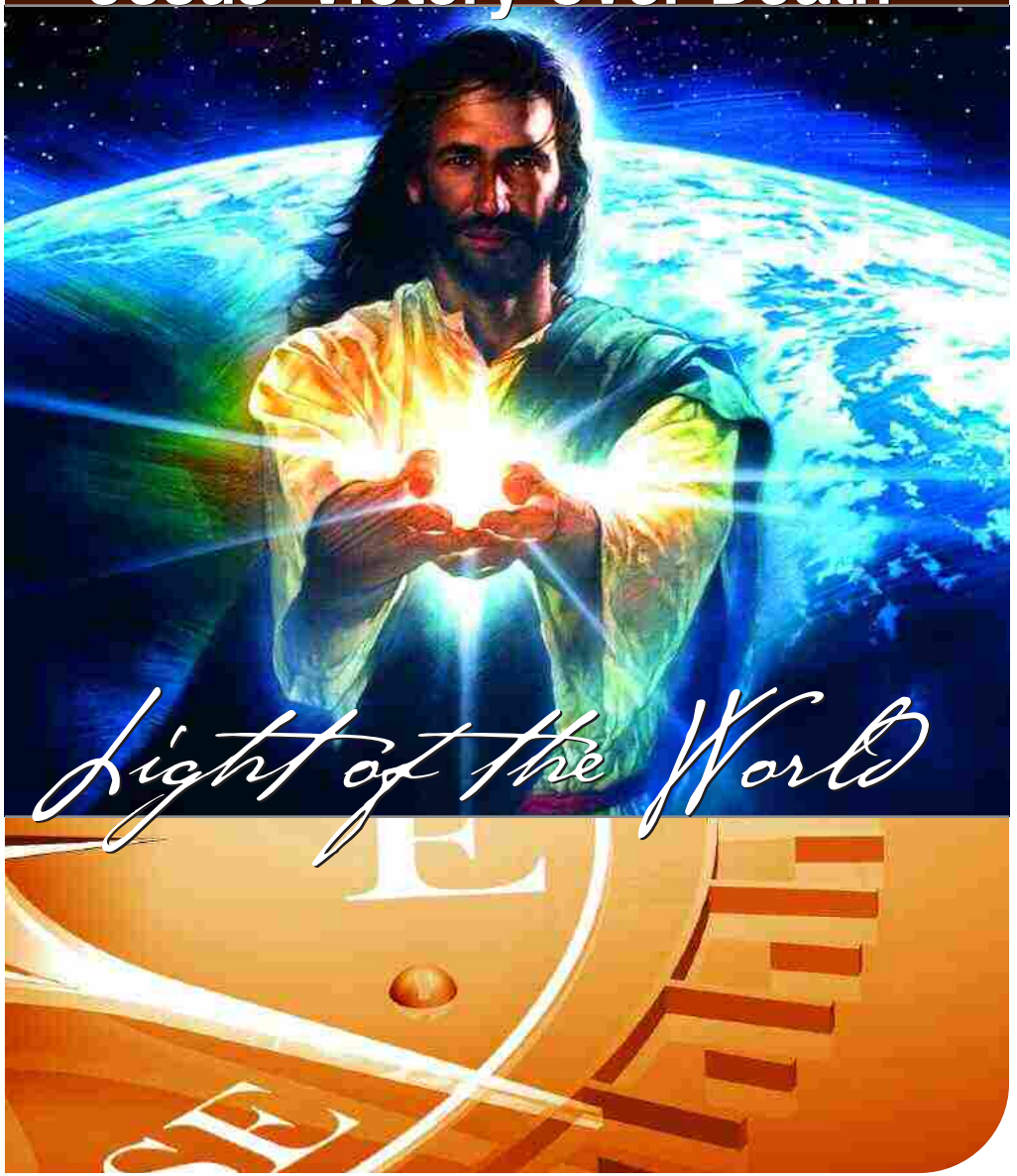
BOOKLET TWENTY-FOUR

Jesus' Victory Over Death



Light of the World

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4

"Christianity," said one writer, "is a religion of the open tomb." Keep that thought in mind as you study this booklet on the resurrection. The founder of Christianity could not be kept in the prison house of death. An angel rolled the great stone from the door of Joseph's new sepulchre, and the Son of God came forth triumphant over death. "I am the resurrection and the life," he said. John 11:25

The Apostle Paul argues that the Christian faith stands or falls upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ.

If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 1 Corinthians 15:13, 14

Our hope of deliverance from sin in this world (Romans 6:4, 11, 12) and the reality of life in the next (1 Corinthians 15:17-23) are dependent upon the resurrection of Jesus. The incarnation of God's Son, his sinless life and vicarious death would have availed nothing if he had been kept a prisoner of death. The saints of all ages would remain in their graves, sealed forever, if Christ had not broken the power of death and come forth to immortal life. And Christians would have been "false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised." 1 Corinthians 15:15

Frank Morrison, a sceptic, made a searching analysis of the Scriptural records of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, and then wrote a book entitled *Who Moved the Stone?* He confesses that he started out to write a book different from the one he finished with. The evidence in favour of the resurrection was so forceful that he was compelled to write of the event as a true historical fact. It has been affirmed that there is no single historic incident more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ.

The actual bodily resurrection of Christ was attested by hundreds of eye witnesses who saw him alive in his risen form. And there were witnesses who wrote down for future ages what they saw. John and Matthew, for example, who must be recognised as honest and sane men, were sceptical and incredulous of the resurrection until they actually saw the risen Saviour with their own eyes. See Mark 16:9-14.

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How IS THE BURIAL OF JESUS DESCRIBED?







As we return to Calvary we see that Jesus is now dead.

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last. Luke 23:44-46

When Jesus bowed his bleeding head and died, it was about three o'clock Friday afternoon. Friday was known as the preparation day. Since the Jews did not want to desecrate the Sabbath by allowing the bodies of the victims to remain on the cross during its holy hours, they requested Pilate that the legs of the three men might be broken and their bodies taken down.

The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. John 19:32-34

Christ's death occurred within six hours of his crucifixion. This was unheard of, for death on the cross was always a prolonged and lingering process. But his heart had been broken under the awful pressure of a world's guilt. His life had been crushed out by the weight of our transgressions. "He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. Because Christ's heart was broken for us, we may find pardon and peace with God. "By his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5. Scripture had declared: ". . . he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." Psalm 34:20. And this scripture was fulfilled. Because he was already dead, not a bone was broken. See also Exodus 12:46.

On the afternoon of that same day, Christ's body was taken from the cross and buried in a sepulchre provided by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. "And the Sabbath was about to begin," as Luke tells us.







Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. Luke 23:50-56

Now that Jesus was dead, the concern of the priests did not end as they thought it would. Indeed they were as worried as when he was alive. They had heard of his promise that he would rise from the dead, and they respected that word of power. Had he not raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead, and the son of the widow of Nain, and even Lazarus who had been in the tomb for four days? What was to prevent him from coming forth to life himself? So they went to Pilate and begged that the sepulchre be made sure and the stone sealed. As an excuse they argued that his disciples might come and steal away his body. See Matthew 27:62-66. Therefore the tomb was closed with the Roman seal and guarded by armed legionnaires. But nothing could hold the Lifegiver in that sepulchre, as we will see.

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The RESURRECTION SCENE







The Sabbath that Jesus spent in the grave and the Saturday night which followed it passed slowly indeed for the disciples. The darkest hour just before daybreak had come. Christ was still a prisoner of death in his narrow tomb. The great stone was in its place. The Roman seal was unbroken, and the Roman guards were keeping their watch. There were unseen watchers too. Satan and his angels were there. Like the priests who had followed their prompting, they hoped to seal the tomb of God's Son forever. But the Heavenly Father sent angels that excel in strength, and they too were guarding the tomb. And now, what is this?

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. Matthew 28:2-4

The angel of the Lord rolled the stone away as if it had been a pebble. And the Lord of life came forth in his risen form. The hour had come for the fulfilment of Christ's words -

". . . I lay down my life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." John 10:17, 18

The guards fell prostrate to the ground while the earth trembled beneath them. An earthquake marked the hour when Christ died. Another earthquake marked the moment when he rose from the dead.

When the dazed soldiers revived, they fled from the scene trembling with fear, and ran straight for the city as we read in Matthew 28:11: ". . . some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened."

When the guilty Caiaphas heard this news, his face must have paled like a dead man's. For a moment he was speechless. Then he blurted out these foolish words to the soldiers: "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' " Matthew 28:13. Caiaphas knew that if the soldiers were caught sleeping on their watch they would be executed. So he continued: "If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." Matthew 28:14

Then money was placed in the soldiers' hands. Thus they sold their integrity, bribed to keep silent about the greatest event in human history. How many voices since that day have been stilled by the touch of gold or the crisp rustle of currency!

When Christ arose from the dead many saints arose with him. He brought forth a multitude who had been held captive by death. These risen saints were a pledge and sample of the great host of the redeemed who will be raised from the dead when Christ comes the second time. When the Saviour ascended to heaven forty days after his resurrection (Acts 1:3), the multitude of risen saints ascended with him. See Ephesians 4:8. During the forty intervening days, these godly men and women appeared to many of the people in Jerusalem, testifying to the power of their Deliverer. See Matthew 27:52, 53







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Who WERE THE FIRST TO VISIT THE TOMB?







Friday afternoon, after the death of Christ, Mary Magdalene and the other women followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the sepulchre. Then they returned to their homes and prepared spices and ointments with which to embalm the body of their Lord. It was getting late, and the Sabbath, which begins at sunset, was approaching. Out of respect for its sacred hours, they waited until the day was passed. Then early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, they came to the tomb to embalm Christ's body. See Luke 23:54-56, 24:1-3. Sadness filled their hearts. Like the eleven disciples, they were crushed and broken.

Words cannot describe the consternation in which the friends of Jesus were plunged during the long hours which elapsed between the crucifixion and the resurrection . . . Nothing was farther from their expectation than the resurrection; they imagined that all was ended for earth, and felt nothing but the vast void created by such a separation. Their hearts remained tenderly attached to Jesus; but their love at such an hour could not but be full of sorrow and dismay . . . It was as though the great stone of his sepulchre had been rolled upon their feeble faith. They were like men crushed. Jesus Christ, Pressense, page 485

When the women arrived at the tomb early Sunday morning, Christ had already risen. Mary Magdalene was the first to arrive. When she found the tomb empty, she ran to Peter and John and told them -

"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" John 20:2

The two disciples then hurried to the tomb and found it just as Mary had said. See John 20:3-10. Mary followed the disciples to the tomb, and after they had returned to Jerusalem, she looked into the sepulchre and saw two angels who appeared to her as men. "Woman, why are you crying?" they asked. She replied, "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put him." John 20:13. Then she turned away, endeavouring to find someone who could tell her what had been done with the body of Jesus. Now another voice addressed her - "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" John 20:15. Thinking it to be the gardener, she said -





"Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." John 20:15

If no one else wanted the body of Jesus, she did. She would find a place for him. Now in his familiar voice, Jesus said, "Mary!" Instantly she recognised that voice. Turning, she sprang toward him and fell at his feet as if to embrace him. "Rabboni!" she cried. Christ raised his hands, saying, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' " John 20:17. Overjoyed, Mary hurried from the sepulchre to the disciples and told them that she had seen the Lord. John 20:18

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10 WHOM DID CHRIST APPEAR ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS?







Late in the afternoon of the resurrection day, two of the disciples, one of whom was Cleopas (Luke 24:18), were making their way to their home in Emmaus, a little town eight miles from Jerusalem. Discouraged and hopeless, they were joined by a stranger who suddenly appeared on the scene.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" Luke 24:17, 18

Then they told him of their Master and of the disappointment that had come with his death. They declared that he "was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people." Luke 24:19. But "the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him." Luke 24:20. And they added -

". . . but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place." Luke 24:21

Then Christ answered them -

"How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" Luke 24:25, 26

The disciples wondered who this stranger might be who spoke with such earnestness, tenderness, and sympathy, and inspired hope in their hearts. Then Jesus, "beginning with Moses . . . explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Luke 24:27. He wanted their faith to be anchored to the Scriptures.

The disciples had looked upon Christ's death as the end of all hope. Now he showed them from the prophets that his crucifixion was the strongest basis for their faith, and that the prophets had pointed forward to his death and resurrection as the very centre of the plan of salvation.



His cruel trials before Annas and Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod, his scourgings in the judgment hall, and his death on Calvary, had all been foretold by the gospel prophet.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away . . . For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. Isaiah 53:8



As Jesus died on the cross, the very words that David had written concerning the dying Saviour came to his lips -

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Psalm 22:1



His death by crucifixion was a subject of prophecy.

. . . they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. Psalm 22:16, 17

When the soldiers parted his garments and cast lots for his vesture, they were fulfilling prophecy.

They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. Psalm 22:18

Even the treachery of Judas was foretold.

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. Psalm 41:9

After reasoning thus with the two disciples from the Word of God, Jesus was invited to their humble home. There the simple evening meal was placed before them. As he stretched out his hands to bless the food,



he was recognised. "It is the Lord Jesus," they exclaimed. "He is risen from the dead." Then the Saviour vanished out of their sight.

They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" Luke 24:32

In their joy they hastened to Jerusalem to tell the disciples. Though night had fallen, they hurried on until they reached the upper room in the city and announced the glorious news to the disciples.

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Where DID CHRIST APPEAR NEXT?





Cleopas and his companion pressed into the room and "told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread." Luke 24:35. There was much excitement in that upper room. "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon," the disciples exclaimed. Luke 24:34. And as they talked Another stood before them, and every eye was fastened upon him. He had not been admired, nor did he knock for entrance. No footstep had been heard. So the disciples were startled as he began to speak. Clearly and distinctly the words came from his lips: "Peace be with you." Luke 24:36. The Scripture says -

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it, and ate it in their presence. Luke 24:37-43

They had not dared to believe that it was actually their Lord. But now he has eaten before them. Faith and joy take the place of unbelief, and with feelings that no words can express they acknowledge their risen Saviour.

The disciples had come to this room in Jerusalem for mutual comfort and protection.

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. John 20:19, 20







Not until the first day had passed - in the evening - did Christ appear among them as a group to establish their faith in his resurrection. Until then - all through that heartbreaking Sunday - they doubted and were afraid. When it finally dawned upon them that Christ was *alive*, "the disciples were overjoyed." John 20:20. That was an hour of supreme rejoicing!

On this occasion Jesus opened the minds of these beloved men that they might understand the Scriptures.

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Luke 24: 46-48

The disciples now began to realise the importance and extent of the great work to which they had been called. They were to be witnesses and to proclaim to the whole world the events of Jesus' life, his death, and resurrection. They were to preach the gospel of salvation through repentance and the power of the Spirit.

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." John 20:22

The Holy Spirit was not here fully manifested, for Christ had not yet been glorified in heaven. The more abundant impartation of the Spirit would not take place until after his ascension. But we will learn more about this in the next booklet.

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Booklet 25, the last booklet in this course, will answer the following Questions -

- **What is Christ's work in heaven during the interval between his ascension and his second coming?**
- **To whom should every Christian confess his sins?**
- **When will Christ come again?**

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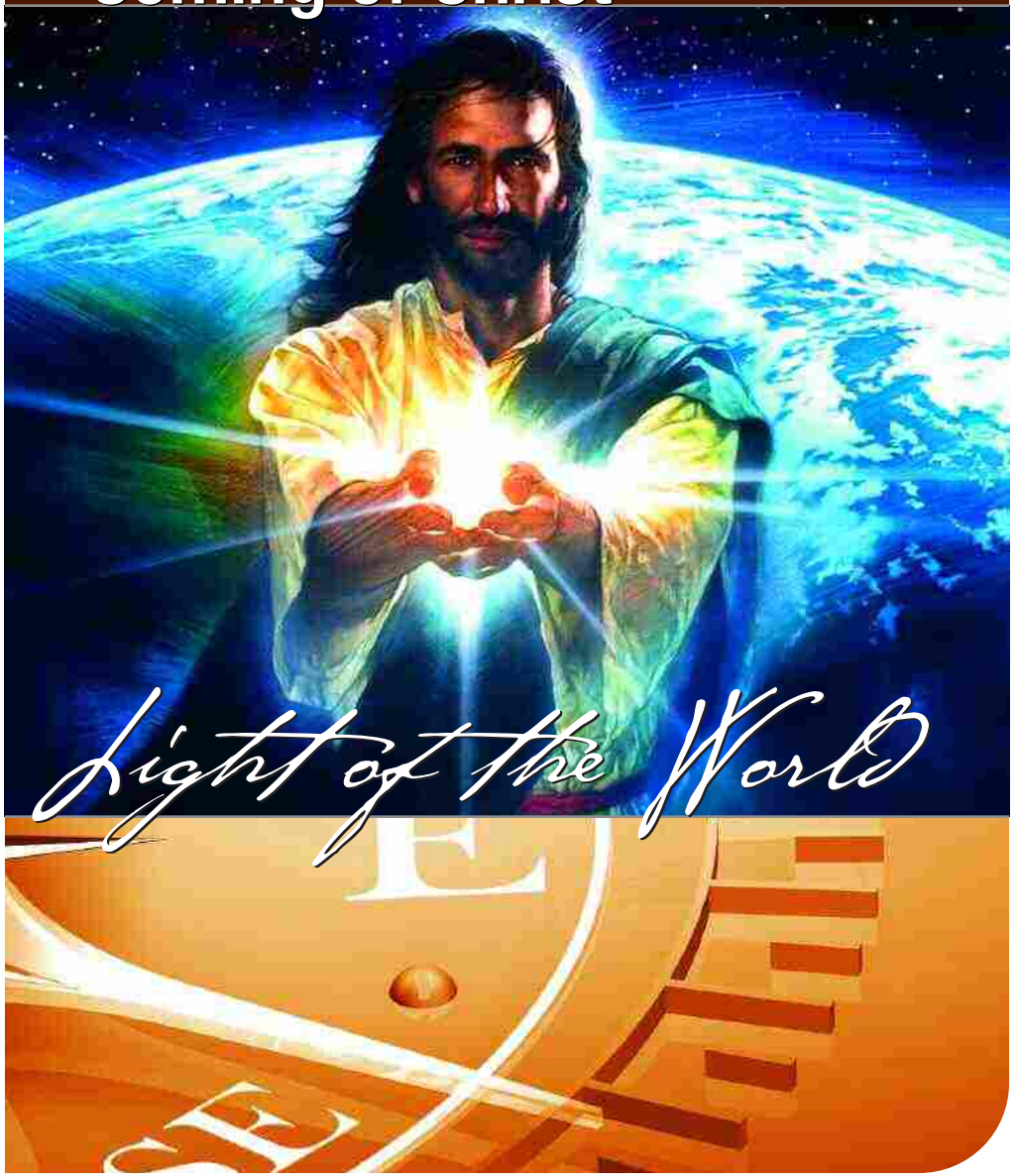
BOOKLET TWENTY-FIVE

The Second Coming of Christ



"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." John 14:1-3

The climactic event of all history, the return of Jesus, has been called "the key that unlocks the Bible." To the people of God, the coming of Christ brings deliverance from the prison house of death and sin. In his epistles the Apostle Paul speaks of it no less than fifty five times. The plan for man's redemption would not be complete without Christ's return to this earth. It is a matter of prophecy, not history. The Bible calls the advent doctrine "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13), for it holds out to Christ's followers the happy prospect of a new world and the promise of enduring happiness and security. It is when Jesus returns that all the righteous dead are raised to life and the living righteous are translated. See 1 Corinthians 15:50-55 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

This blessed hope was cherished by God's children in Old Testament times as well as in New Testament times. Enoch, only the seventh from Adam, saw in vision the coming of our Saviour.

"See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone."

Jude 14, 15

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The patriarch Job, sick with his plague of boils and saddened by the loss of his children, clung to the hope of final restoration, and exclaimed with unshaken trust -

"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth . . . in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another." Job 19:25-27

One writer said -

The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness, has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire. The Great Controversy, Ellen G. White, page 300

The psalmist sang of the power and majesty of Israel's Coming King. See Psalm 50:2-4, 96:11-13. The prophet Isaiah described the wonderful resurrection morning in the most beautiful language. See Isaiah 26:19, 25:8, 9. Habakkuk, one of the minor prophets, taken away in rapturous vision, beheld the return of Jesus. Habakkuk 3:3-13

In the New Testament, Paul, Peter, James, and John held forth the coming of the Lord Jesus as the final hope of the whole world. See 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23, 50-55, 2 Peter 3:9-13, James 5:1-8 and Revelation 14:14. And the champions of the Christian church from apostolic days down to our own generation have cherished the bright vision of Christ's return.

What does it mean to us who are living today? What does it mean to you and to me? These are the last days of time. The prophecies of Jesus (see Booklet 21) indicate that he will return to this earth very soon, so this hope should mean more to us than it did to any other generation.

Now let us return to the scenes subsequent to the resurrection of our Lord and follow him in the last events of his earthly experience and on through the Christian centuries to that final hour when he will return.

Christ's ASCENSION TO HEAVEN







After his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples a number of times and in a number of places. Paul tells us that -

. . . he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 1 Corinthians 15:5-7

Then, forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives. See Acts 1:2, 3.

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Luke 24:50, 51

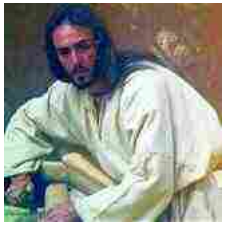
. . . he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand there looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

Notice that when Jesus was "taken up . . . a cloud hid him from their sight." And the angels who lingered to speak words of comfort to the disciples said -

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11

It was not a spirit or ghost that was taken to heaven. Christ ascended to heaven in his resurrection body, the same body in which he had appeared to the disciples on the day of his resurrection, when he said, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." Luke 24:39. See also Philippians 3:21.

On the morning of the resurrection Christ came forth bodily from the tomb, and he ascended to heaven in that same body. Now at the time of the ascension the angels said to the disciples, "This same Jesus . . . will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. He will come again literally, personally, physically, and gloriously with clouds of angels accompanying him. See Daniel 7:10, Revelation 5:11 and Matthew 24:30, 31.



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Christ's MINISTRY IN HEAVEN







When Jesus returned to his Father in heaven, he became man's representative at the throne of God. "I go to the one who sent me," he said, "and . . . you cannot come." John 7:33, 34. But he represents us there at the throne of God. He took our humanity and his victory over sin and death to heaven with him. Christ had made sure work of man's redemption while he was in this world as a man. He conquered Satan, sin, death, and the grave. Then he glorified humanity by taking our flesh back to heaven with him in his immortal resurrection body. In this way man was elevated to the throne of the Father at the ascension of Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother. Jesus "entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence." Hebrews 9:24. He came triumphantly into the presence of God presenting his own merits to cover man's utter helplessness and lost condition.

"He (Christ) entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption." Hebrews 9:12. Jesus had died once for sin. That was enough to save all who will accept his gift. He now offers his own sacrifice before God as the means by which all who believe on his name might be cleansed of sin, for "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." Hebrews 9:22. We may, therefore, come directly to God through Christ without any earthly intercessor, for Christ is now the intercessor between God and man.

Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Hebrews 7:25

"I am going to the Father," Jesus said. "And I will do whatever you ask in my name." John 14:12, 13

No minister or priest has been delegated to do Christ's mediatorial work.





Only Christ can forgive your sins and present your case before God. Therefore, he alone should hear your confession of guilt. Go to him in the secret place of prayer, and talk to him all alone as to a friend. Surrender yourself to do his will, and he will graciously forgive your sins. Pray in his name, do his will, and your prayers will be answered.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:5

As our Priest and Mediator, Christ's work of intercession is now going on in heaven. By his intercession he draws heaven and earth together. Through the work of his Holy Spirit, whom he has sent to be his representative in this world, he makes his atonement effectual in human experience for all who believe on him. For around two thousand years he has been our Mediator in the courts above. How long he will continue that work of intercession, no man knows, but some day soon, just before he returns, it will cease. Then the door of mercy for sinners will be closed forever.

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What HAPPENS WHEN CHRIST ENDS HIS WORK AS MAN'S INTERCESSOR?







When Jesus ends his work of intercession in heaven, a time of trouble comes upon the world. As he declares before the Father that his work of intercession is over, he makes this solemn announcement -

". . . the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Revelation 22:10-12

When this divine decree goes forth, human probation will end. Every case will have been decided for life or for death. Christ will have finished his work of mediation and the blotting out of sins. Every case is now sealed for eternity. The guilty are settled hard and sure in rebellion. It is too late for them now to be saved. The prophet Daniel describes the scene that follows the close of probation -

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered." Daniel 12:1

This time of trouble is the time of divine wrath. See Revelation 15:1 and Revelation 16. It will be similar to the awful time of judgment that came upon Egypt when the ten plagues were poured out upon that land. As the climax of those plagues, a single angel destroyed all the first born of Egypt and filled the land with mourning. See Exodus 7-12. The power of the heavenly messengers of wrath is great. In Hezekiah's time one angel slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. See 2 Chronicles 32:21 and 2 Kings 19:35.







Holy angels exercise destructive power when God commands, and evil angels exercise the same power when God permits. The unseen forces of Satan are now organised and ready to strike. These forces of evil are only awaiting divine permission to spread ruin and terror everywhere. When Christ's work as our Mediator ends and the signal is given, the awful plagues described in Revelation 16 will be poured out upon the earth.

Can you see that already a few drops of God's wrath have fallen upon this wicked world? There are terrible hurricanes, tsunamis and earthquakes. But the earth will reel under the impact of disasters far worse than these. In vision the prophet John heard a voice from heaven saying -

"But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short." Revelation 12:12

As the Spirit of God is withdrawn from the earth, the power of Satan increases. His rage reaches its climax in this fearful time of trouble. It is the time of God's wrath - his "strange work," as Isaiah describes it in Isaiah 28:21.

During this time of trouble many of the wicked lose their lives. But those who have followed Jesus are now protected by heavenly angels. God has given this promise of deliverance -

. . . then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. Psalm 91:10-12

special notes

The CLIMACTIC EVENT OF THE AGES

The second coming of Christ occurs at the time of the seventh plague. See Revelation 16:17-21 and 19:11-16. Long has the Saviour waited for this great hour when he will come to earth as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" to raise from the dead his sleeping children and translate to heaven those living Christians who have stood firmly in defence of his truth. See 1 Corinthians 15:51-55.







Now the greatest hour of history has come - the hour when all the world is to look upon the King in his glory. See Revelation 1:7. As Christ appears in the opening skies, the prophecy is fulfilled -

"'. . . and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." Matthew 24:29-31

The heavens are shaken as the King of glory descends the blazing sky. The mountains tremble. The very surface of the earth heaves and swells as its face is torn and broken by the mighty disturbance. See Isaiah 24:1-5, 19, 20 and Revelation 16:18. The oceans rise and fall in the raging fury of a worldwide earthquake.

In the midst of all this upheaval, God's children are safe, guarded by the angels, but it is a moment of deepest despair for the wicked.

Wail, for the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Isaiah 13:6

Desperate with fear, millions of sinners call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of him who sits upon the throne. See Revelation 6:14-17. Money and riches mean little now.







In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship. They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the Lord and the splendour of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth. Isaiah 2:20, 21

The faces of the Christians who have stood the test are blanched with paleness, but there is hope in their hearts. They know that the time of deliverance is near. Up to this moment the wicked have taunted them and sought to destroy them, but as Christ appears in glory the enemies of God's people are consumed by the brightness of his appearing. See 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8 and 2:8. At this time Satan is bound for one thousand years. See Revelation 20. This is the beginning of the millennium.

John describes the scene of Christ's great victory as he rides forth a mighty conqueror.

I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Revelation 14:14

The sickle represents the harvest or the end of the world (Matthew 13:39) when the wheat - the righteous - is gathered to heaven and the tares - the wicked - are burned with fire. See 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Now the time has come for the righteous dead to be raised and the living righteous to be translated to heaven.

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

What a wonderful day! The change from mortality to immortality happens "in the twinkling of an eye." 1 Corinthians 15:52. Children will be reunited with their parents. Then the ransomed of all ages will be caught up with a song of gladness and carried to the city of God, the New Jerusalem, to that "third heaven," which Paul describes as "Paradise." 2 Corinthians 12:2-4. There old friendships will be renewed and families reunited.







At last God's children are at peace. They enter the city of God and stand victorious on the sea of glass before the great throne. John describes the glorious celebration as they unite their jubilant voices in the great glory song of Moses and the Lamb. See Revelation 15:3.

And for the victorious Christ it is a scene of consummate joy and satisfaction. "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life, and be satisfied." Isaiah 53:11. All the ransomed hosts of God recognise that they are there because of his great sacrifice for them. Throughout the ages of eternity they sing his praises in the song -

"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!" Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!" Revelation 5:12, 13

What a day that will be! And soon it will come. We are almost home. The journey of life is almost over. "What! Are we almost home?" Roy F. Cottrell asks in *Dawn of a New Day,* page 354. "Yes, the certified Word of God assures the traveller that the journey is nearly finished, and the harbour just ahead. Then what wondrous surprises! Think of -

'Stepping on shore and finding it heaven!
Of taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand,
Of breathing new air and finding it celestial air,







Of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality,
Of passing from storm and tempest to an unknown calm,
Of waking up and finding it Home.' "

All of this is possible for you - through Christ, the Light of the world. In this Bible course the plan of salvation has been opened before you as a way of escape from the darkness of sin and its consequences. Stretching before us in eternity will be that life which measures with the life of God. This blessed hope gives meaning to human experience and shows us clearly the way through the impasse ahead. "I am the light of the world," said Jesus, "He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." John 9:5 and 11:25

This world is but a preparation for the happy life that stretches endlessly before you. It is our prayer that these booklets have helped you to make decisions that will prepare you for God's eternity.

Heaven will be cheap at whatever price we may have to pay for it, for we will be there forever with Christ and with God. John said, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." Revelation 21:22

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Mark 8:36

Is there anything more important than to respond to the love of God by being obedient to Christ and his commandments, and to join his people in their march to the city of God? Just now will you quietly drop to your knees and prayerfully settle the question, "Where will I spend eternity?" Ask yourself, "What will I do with Jesus?" May God give you grace to answer this question and to accept him fully as your personal Saviour, and to walk in his light. See 1 John 1:7, 9. God bless you now, and may we all meet with our loved ones and with our Saviour in the city of God where all our dreams will come true.

special notes

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