

Via



BIBLE-BASED READING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

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EDITORIAL

We each make many choices every day. Some may be trivial as we choose what to wear or what to eat; others will influence matters in our work place; others will set the trend for our life as we choose a career, a partner for life, or a place to live. The most important choice that we can ever make is a choice to accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, as our personal Lord and Saviour.

This choice will decide the eternal destiny of our soul. It may seem illogical that a Man who was crucified almost 2,000 years ago can save us at this present time. However, when we appreciate the truth that "...*Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day...and that He was seen...*" (1 Corinthians 15:3-5), it becomes very logical and most acceptable.

No one can make this choice for you; you must make it for yourself. As you continue to read this little magazine, you **will** make a choice. Be sure you make the right one! "*I have set before you life and death...therefore, choose life*" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Shut Out!

For some people who had been officially invited to Washington to witness the inauguration of President Barack Obama, it became a day of bitter disappointment.

When those who had tickets to the purple section on the Capitol grounds showed up at 6:00 a.m., they were directed into the Third Street Tunnel, but something went wrong. They waited until 10:30 a.m., then walked out of the tunnel and made their way back to the closed gate where people were still yelling, "Let us in!" News headlines started appearing around the world: Purple Tunnel of Doom: Ticketed Inauguration Attendees Shut Out.

There is an event in the future far more significant than the inauguration of a president, and there will be people then who will find themselves on the wrong side of the gate. They too will cry, "Let



us in!" but that gate will never reopen. The Lord Jesus warned that the gate to His eternal kingdom would close some day. He said, *"When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and you begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open unto us,' He shall answer and say unto you, 'I know you not from whence you are'"* (Luke 13:25).

The people outside will knock and beg for entrance. They will claim special status based on their privileges in the past and their familiarity with the Lord Jesus Christ, but He will tell them He never knew them. Once that door shuts, it will be closed for eternity. The message to those on the wrong side of the gate will be clear: "Depart from Me." People on the inside will be enjoying Heaven, but those on the outside will be left to their eternal doom.

Are you sure that you will be entitled to get in? Some hold a ticket that says 'sincere and devout'. Others hold their 'faith' ticket. Some are holding a 'good works' ticket. Some cling to a ticket that says 'chance'. None of those tickets will give you admittance to Heaven. The Lord Jesus clearly said, *"I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"* (John 10:9). To continue with the analogy, only those who are holding the ticket marked: 'Christ is my Saviour' will be admitted. All others will be turned away.

Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ personally as your Saviour, or are you still holding an invalid ticket?



I was born in Israel in the city of Jerusalem and brought up, like the rest of my family and race, to love and honour God, to keep the Sabbath, the law and its traditions. As I grew up in a Jewish environment, I had a love for my country and my people.

My parents wanted me to learn English, so after I finished primary school they suggested that I should go to the English Mission School. I hated the name of Jesus and did not want to learn about Him, but in obedience to my parents, I went. Our primary teacher had warned us, "If you ever come across a book called



As I grew up in a Jewish environment, I had a love for my country and my people.

the New Testament, avoid reading it; but in any case if you do read it, destroy the book as soon as you have finished with it." I intended to shut my ears to its teachings and the name of Jesus.

We had prayers every morning and lessons from the New Testament. For

a whole year I fought against the truth, until one day the story of one of the miracles that Jesus did gripped my mind, and I could not forget it. There was a battle going on within me. Should I believe it, or not? If I did accept it then I had to admit that whatever Jesus claimed to be must be true of Him. In utter despair I cried, "O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, if Jesus is truly the Messiah, please reveal Him to me." God heard and answered my prayer. I proved His promise in Jeremiah 29:13: "*Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*"

From that day, my hunger and desire to know God seemed to be satisfied by reading the Word of God, in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Even

Born
Twice in
Jerusalem

BORN TWICE IN JERUSALEM *continued*

then, a shudder would go through me when “Jesus the Son of God” or “Jesus the Messiah” was mentioned, but His person and character became the centre of my interest and attraction. The more I read about Him the more I loved Him. The Bible became a living book. The Old Testament, which at one time was

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merely beautiful history to me, became an inexhaustible well of discovery. In its pages I saw that the despised Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy. His existence, birth, life, death and resurrection were all foretold.

In Isaiah 53:5-6 we read, *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray...and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*

What a day that will be when the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 is fulfilled and they look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him. I knew that this Jesus is the Messiah Israel is waiting for, and He is the Saviour of the world.

I realized that if I was to obey and follow the Lord Jesus, it would be at great cost and so I decided like many have done, to forget it all and just bury all the truths within me. But I had no peace or rest, darkness overshadowed me, and the Word of God in Hebrews 2:3 really troubled me, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect, so great salvation?”*

On the one hand, I saw my Saviour on the cross bearing my sin and guilt, so that I could be reconciled to God. On the other hand were my parents and family, pleading with me to forget it all and to not cause them grief and shame. But like Saul of Tarsus, I could not be disobedient (Acts 26:19). I accepted Christ as my Lord and Saviour, and yielded my life to Him. I was born again (born spiritually) like Nicodemus of whom we read in John 3:3 *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

The peace of God filled my heart, for my soul was saved and my deepest need was met in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for me and rose again.

Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

Flora Meharg (nee Levy)

DOES IT **COST** TO BE A **CHRISTIAN?**

Some of you are already answering, "Yes, it would cost me some of my friends if I became a Christian. I would have to stop going to some of the places of amusement that I frequent. There are habits that I would have to change." You might name these and other things that you consider as costs, but let's look at the other side of the picture. What did it cost the Lord Jesus Christ?

It was for you and for me that He was condemned to die in Pilate's hall. It was for you and for me that He endured the Roman scourge and the crown of thorns. It was for you and me that He carried that cross to the place of death. It was for you and me that He was nailed on a cross. It was also for you and me that His blood flowed from His body that our sins might be cleansed.

Ask the question again, and I'll tell you what it cost for you to be saved! It cost the Lord Jesus Christ His life: *"Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed"* (1 Peter 2:24).

Are you willing to accept Him as your personal Lord and Saviour? The price has already been paid for your salvation. Yes, if you are going to live to please Him you may have to give up a few petty worldly pleasures.

Those who were once your friends may no longer want your company. But the scoffers will never place a crown of thorns on your head. They will never scourge your back. They will never crucify you on a cross. They will never spit on your face.

What did it cost the Lord Jesus Christ?

Will you accept the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour today? God is willing to save you now, if you will repent of your sin. *"Repent...and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"* (Acts 3:19). Salvation is free. Good works, prayers, or religious ceremonies cannot buy it. *"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

What must I do to receive this gift? *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). *"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God"* (John 1:12).

Evangelical Tract Distributors

JUSTICE OR Mercy?

Under police escort, the twelve-year-old girl shuffled into the courtroom. She was wearing shackles on her ankles. A couple of times while I listened to her short tragic history, she smirked at the police escort. My emotions were reeling!

This scene raises questions about our society: 'Who are we?' and 'Where on earth have we gone wrong?'

The judge listened to the details very carefully, as she studied the accused. What should a good judge do with this problem? Ignore the suicide threats? Find a correctional facility willing to admit someone younger than thirteen, and sentence harshly? Or should a good judge gather this child into her arms and weep.

There is a deeper reason why I am so effected. I see myself in that twelve-year old and I see all of my peers in fallen

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humanity. I know that we each stand alone before God. He is holy and He is just, and "*shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Genesis 18:25).

I saw the dilemma in that good judge's eyes, but I didn't see her step down from the bench and remove the girl's shackles. Nobody expected her to do that. We expected that the outcome would be more just than merciful, or maybe too merciful and not enough justice. We expected to leave the courtroom feeling somewhat



dissatisfied, but realizing that this was probably the best that could be done.

Conflict between the right thing and the nice thing is actually a big philosophical problem. We feel like 'good' should be both right and nice, but time after time that is impossible. We are frustrated because it seems like some part of goodness is compromised.

Yet I find that this problem poses no threat to the goodness of my Judge. His solution is described in John 1:17, "*Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*" As I stand guilty before the Judge of all the earth and, trembling, lift my gaze to His throne, I find that neither justice nor mercy is compromised. On the cross of the Lord Jesus is unflinching truth and perfect justice – because on His cross sin was punished. Yet on His cross is grace and wonderful mercy – because hanging there, He was taking my place.

Do you understand my wonder that this Judge is truly, peerlessly, good? The Judge of all the earth will do right; and for all those who continue to scorn His just offer of mercy, merciless justice must be His only good alternative. Do you sense the urgency? Please receive His mercy today.

I HAVE THE SCARS TO PROVE IT



One of John McCain's punch lines during his two-year campaign in the 2008 United States Presidential election was "I've got the scars to prove it." He was referring to the wounds he sustained when he was a prisoner of war. John McCain was engaged in a war of mortal combat when he sustained those wounds. Thank God, he is alive to tell the story.

There is, however, another Man who was engaged in a spiritual warfare against a formidable foe. His name is Jesus. This greatest of all battles was fought at Calvary for the souls of men, and the Lord Jesus "has the scars to prove it." Isaiah wrote of the Saviour, "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5). When

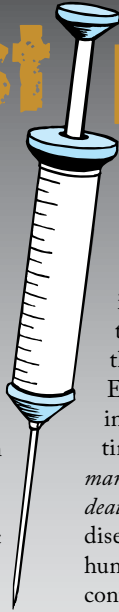
the apostle Thomas was told of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, he doubted. The next time the Lord Jesus appeared to His disciples, Thomas was there. When Thomas saw the wounds of Calvary he exclaimed "*My Lord and my God*" (John 20:28).

We are all in bondage to sin and Satan, because "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). God's righteousness must be vindicated, Satan must be defeated, and mankind must be liberated. How could this be done? Only God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ could deliver us. In the Bible we read, "*...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage*" (Hebrews 2:14-15).

For three agonizing hours the Lord Jesus was engaged in a mighty spiritual combat against Satan for the souls of men as He gained the victory for mankind. He has the scars to prove it: "*And I beheld and, lo, in the midst of the Throne...stood a Lamb as it had been slain*" (Revelation 5:6).

John McCain's scars are a testimony of his commitment to a cause and his love for His country. The scars that the Lord Jesus bears are a revealing testimony of His commitment to a greater cause and of His enduring love for mankind. The whole world owes a debt of gratitude to Him for His death on the cross and the victory He gained. Why not open your heart to Him today and invite the Lord Jesus to come in? "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20).

THE Worst Pandemic



The World Health Organization has set out three essential characteristics of a pandemic: It must be a new virus to which no one is immune; it is capable of producing a fatal illness; and it can be transmitted from one person to another.

In 1918 a flu pandemic (commonly referred to as the Spanish flu) spread to nearly every part of the world. Most of its victims were healthy young adults. That pandemic lasted from March 1918 to June 1920, spreading even to the Arctic and remote Pacific islands. When the killer disappeared mysteriously and without a trace, it had not only left behind a terrified world but also from 20 to 40 million persons dead. It is estimated that 20 per cent of the world's population at that time was affected in one way or another, qualifying Spanish flu as one of the most lethal pandemics in history.

Sin is a pandemic that commenced in the Garden of Eden.

With good reason many are concerned about the H1N1 flu that is spreading around the world. The Director of the World Health Organization said, "All humanity is threatened by a pandemic", and "Every nation must activate immediately its plans to prepare for a pandemic."

We have yet to hear the final number of those affected, but can you imagine a pandemic that affects 100 percent of the world's population and is still more deadly than H1N1 or even the Spanish flu? Sin is a pandemic that commenced in the Garden of Eden. The Bible teaches that sin was introduced into the world for the first time when Adam sinned: "...by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin..." (Romans 5:12). So this new disease emerged and infected the only two humans living on the earth. The verse continues: "...and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death is the result of this pandemic, and it has been passed from generation to generation. No one is immune.

We were not only born sinners, but we practice sin, and "the wages of sin is death..." Thankfully, the verse does not end there, but adds "...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Death does not terminate our existence, but we will exist forever in one of two places – Heaven or Hell.

Have you put in motion your plan to prepare for dying? Is there such a plan available, a remedy for your sins? The Bible says there is. "The blood of Jesus Christ His (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The sinner who by faith accepts the blood of Christ as having been given for him is saved and has his sins taken away.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

A wide-angle photograph of Niagara Falls, showing the massive volume of water cascading over the edge. The water is a mix of white foam and deep blue-green. In the background, a large stone building is visible on the right side, and a line of trees runs along the top edge of the frame.

He REFUSED to be RESCUED

It seems bizarre that someone who was perishing would resist being rescued, and yet it happened

A 30-year old man climbed over the retaining wall and jumped into the rapids of Niagara's Horseshoe Falls. Quickly the currents carried him towards the 173-foot drop. Even if he wanted to, there could be no turning back. The 675,000 gallons of water that plunge over the cataract every second hurled him like a toothpick over the famous falls.

Very few have ever survived such a fatal plunge, but incredibly the man resurfaced at the bottom in the fierce currents. He was conscious and clinging to a piece of driftwood. A Niagara police officer yelled for him to swim towards shore. Letting go of the driftwood he headed in the opposite direction, swimming between the chunks of ice.

A helicopter flew low over the man and extended a pole but he refused the rescue attempt and swam away. Despite the treacherous conditions of ice, high winds and waves the helicopter pilot angled

the chopper blades to create a wave that would push the man towards the shore.

Rescuers were racing against the clock. After thirty minutes in the icy waters the man was weakening but remained totally uncooperative. A firefighter jumped into

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the river and pulled the perishing man to shore. He was rescued against his will.

God sees people from every walk of life heading towards the same end. Despite the warning of Hell ahead, people swim on in the swirling current of their sins. For some the current may be religion or pride. For others it may be drugs or sex. Everyone going to Heaven has a moment

HE REFUSED TO BE RESCUED *continued*

when Christ the Saviour ‘pulled them out of the turbulent rapids’ of sin. Do you have such a moment?

Are you thinking correctly? Do you understand that your sins are deadly, and you will eventually perish if you resist or refuse God’s rescue? Are you cooperating with God or struggling to keep your distance from Him? Tragically, people push on in their chosen path, dodging God’s efforts to stop them.

Has something ever happened in your life that gave you thoughts of God or caused you to think about life after death? Don’t brush those thoughts aside. That is equivalent to swimming in the opposite direction.

Are you avoiding the welcoming and saving arms of the Lord Jesus as He invites you to come to Him for salvation? The Lord Jesus said He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He came to rescue sinners and to give

them an abundant life (John 10:10). He invites perishing sinners, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

The looming precipice is not a mere 173-foot drop. Hell is ahead for sinners who refuse the Saviour. Unlike the Niagara incident, there is no possibility of being rescued once the plunge is taken. The time to be rescued from your sins is now – today. God rescues no one against his will. He speaks to you through life’s circumstances and through His Word the Bible. He urges you to trust Christ as your Rescuer. But in the end, the choice is yours.

Jesus promised that He will never cast out anyone who comes to Him (John 6:37). The Word of God promises that “Whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13).

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“He Careth for You.” (1 Peter 5:7)

He... the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Creator of all things and the Saviour of all who believe on Him.

Careth... with a depth of love measured only by the untold suffering He bore as the sin-bearer on Calvary’s cross.

for You... a sinner by nature and practice, but one whom He wants to save and have with Himself forever.

God Loved Me



I was the only son of my parents. One day, after my father left for work, a taxi pulled up to the door, and my mother told me that we were going away! Nine months later my dad obtained custody of me and I went to live with his sister. I did not know what ‘separation and divorce’ meant. I only knew it hurt. But thank God, He looked down on that hurting, confused, troubled little six year old boy, and loved him.

My aunt took me to Sunday School where I learned verses from the Bible such as “*God is love*” – but how could a God of love allow this to happen to me? We sang “There’s a home for little children above the bright blue sky, where Jesus dwells in Glory – a home of peace and joy”. God looked down on that little boy who was longing for a happy home and questioning His great love. God loved him anyway.

I looked forward to my father’s visits each weekend, and was upset when he had to leave. By the time I reached my early teens, my thoughts and actions revealed what I really was – a sinner and a rebel. God saw my frantic attempts to find happiness in a world that could not satisfy - and He loved me in spite of it all.

I dreamed that the Lord had come, and I awoke shaking. I realized that if the Lord really had come, I would have been left behind for judgment. Nevertheless, I went on as I was and He still loved me!

One day I looked into the deep dark waters of the harbour and thought, “I would gladly throw myself in, if only all this misery would end.” It seemed as though God said, “If you died today, you would drop right into Hell.” I did not want to go to Hell, and I knew I was not ready to meet God.

I attended a series of gospel meetings, where one of the preachers spoke to me personally. I realized that he really cared for my soul, and that

it was time I began to care about my soul too. He read verses showing that the Lord Jesus had died for ME. At that critical moment, God brought another verse to my mind. It was “*He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24). God’s promise was so real to me, I accepted it. I have peace and am ready to meet Him. I have His Word for it!

I dreamed that the Lord had come, and I awoke shaking.

Gary N. Sharp

CHILDREN'S FEATURE

Zacchaeus Listened

Will You?

Have you heard the story about Zacchaeus, the tax collector? He was not a popular man. No one likes a tax collector, especially a dishonest tax collector.

Zacchaeus was also very short. I can imagine him trying to see the Lord Jesus as He came through Jericho. I can picture the people being rude to him and not giving him an opportunity to get in through the crowd. I admire his determination. He really wanted to see the Lord Jesus, and even climbed a tree to get a better view (Luke 19:4).

Do you think the Lord Jesus was interested in this thief? Of course He was! He cared, and He cares about us too, in spite of our failures. The Lord knew exactly where Zacchaeus was. When the Lord called Zacchaeus, the Bible says he came down quickly.

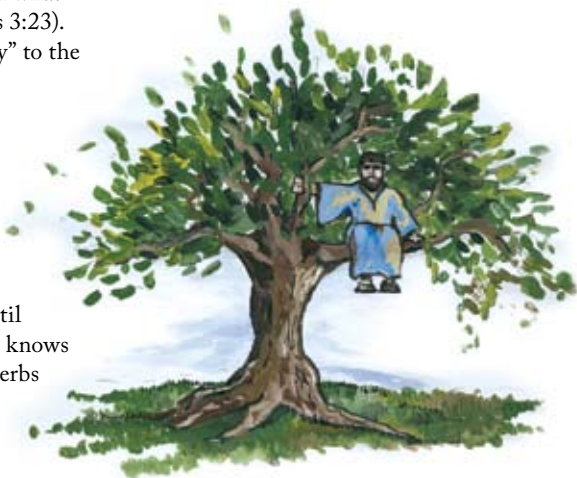
We are no different from this tax collector. We have fallen short of what God has required of us (Romans 3:23). Everyone needs to “come quickly” to the Lord Jesus.

Agreeing with God that you are a sinner is one of the first requirements for salvation. Zacchaeus obeyed the Lord and joyfully received Him! Wouldn't it have been foolish of Zacchaeus to say, “I'm so comfortable up here, I'll wait until tomorrow to come down”? Who knows what tomorrow may bring (Proverbs 27:1). If the Lord is calling you today, you need to listen.

Zacchaeus must have been a lonely man, but Christ met his need and changed his life. The Lord came right into his house (Luke 19:8-9), and He will do the same for you. He will bring a wonderful quality of life to you that will meet your every need at home, school or work. He gives abundant life!

Would you like the power to change the way you are living, and know beyond a doubt that your sins are forgiven? Follow the example of Zacchaeus. Seek the Lord Jesus, with all your heart. Where you will exist eternally depends on it.

The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost because of their sin. He will meet you exactly where you are, just as he did Zacchaeus. The question is, will you allow Him to do that?





WHO IS YOUR *Pilot?*

With stunning suddenness the flight from New York's La Guardia Airport was over. The pilot radioed to air traffic controllers that he had experienced a bird strike and was declaring an emergency. Flight 1549, bound for Charlotte, North Carolina, was airborne less than three minutes when it cleared the George Washington Bridge and landed with a gentle glide on the Hudson River. All 155 people were safe due to the experience and quick thinking of the pilot, Chesley Sullenberger.

Passengers heard the bang and smelled smoke. They heard the pilot telling them to brace for impact. They had moments to prepare for possible death. The plane stayed afloat in the cold January waters. Coast Guard boats, police, fire and commercial ferries sped to the scene to rescue the passengers who were lined up on slightly submerged safety chutes. The pilot checked and double-checked that all the passengers were off the plane. He did all he could to ensure the safety of those flying with him that day. Governor David Paterson called it a miracle on the Hudson.

If you had been on that flight how would you have prepared for possible death? Would you have been able to call on the Saviour to help you in your time of

need? Do you know that your soul is right with God and ready to spend eternity with Him in Heaven?

The pilot did what he could for the passengers. The Lord Jesus Christ has done all that is needed for you. He left Heaven and came to earth, to a lowly manger. He was in constant communion with God while living among sinners like you and me. He reached out to needy people in love. He performed many miracles. He went to the cross, willingly and in obedience to God, His Father. At the cross, the Lord Jesus took the punishment for my sins and yours, then died. Three days later, He rose again and appeared to a number of people. Later He ascended back to Heaven where He intercedes for us.

All that is left for us to do is to place our trust in Him as our Saviour. He will pilot our lives, helping us through both difficult and joy-filled times, and will be our constant companion and faithful friend. Those who were rescued from the Hudson River have another opportunity to prepare for eternity if they are not ready. Our Pilot, the Lord Jesus Christ, is calling us. He says, "*...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). Be ready!

Dying of Thirst



At the crack of dawn, three excited young men headed their jeep into the heart of the Sahara desert. They were fulfilling a long-standing dream of tracking and bagging a gazelle. When they had not returned forty-eight hours later, a rescue helicopter was dispatched. By noon, all hope that the hunters would be found alive in the stifling heat and parched wasteland was dwindling.

In the afternoon, a lone vehicle was sighted. After continued searching, the three hunters were located four miles from the jeep. There was only one survivor, and thirst had driven his weary body to the point of madness. His distorted mind was mocked with the cruel image of an oasis, as he frantically dug with bare hands in the sand to reach the water. Rescuers gently placed him in the helicopter and began the struggle to save his life.

This man's thirst was great, but it was not the worst type of thirst. Physical thirst ends with this life. Spiritual thirst can go unquenched into eternity. The Psalmist expressed the fundamental need of the human race when he said, *"My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God"* (Psalm 42:2).

Some try to satisfy this thirst for God with natural beauty. Some give themselves to unending activity by driving themselves in the business and

commercial activities of the world. Some aim for political achievements. Others make great strides in medicine, combating disease and prolonging physical life. Yet all the while, deep in our hearts, we sense an awful void.

We form friendships and nourish relationships that we hope will support us through life. But, as we attend funerals, we find that even relationships cannot fully satisfy. In fact, if God is not the foundation of our purpose and desire, these final experiences can be emotional torture.

Behind every thought, activity and enjoyment in this world, there is something from which you cannot escape. It is something that says, "I am still unsatisfied." There is something missing.

When the Lord Jesus was on the cross He experienced the agony of thirst as no one else has. His physical thirst became symbolic of our spiritual thirst. His death is the only means of alleviating this thirst. Jesus said to the woman at Sychar's well, *"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst"* (John 4:14). The Lord Jesus Christ alone can satisfy the thirst and the cravings of the human heart, so that we can exclaim, "In God, my soul is satisfied!"



THE PERSONAL SAVIOUR

There is a special blessing in the Christmas message that is frequently missed by many. The birth of Jesus is not simply an interesting fact of history unrelated to your present life, but rather it has a direct bearing upon it.

When the angel announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds, the personal importance of His coming was emphasized. He said *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10-11).

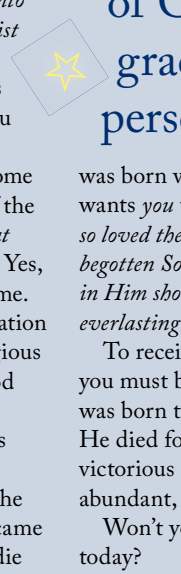
Have you ever thought that it was for *you* the Saviour was born? Do you realize that when God sent His Son into the world, He sent Him to become *your* Saviour? Listen to the words of the angel, *"I bring you good tidings of great joy... for unto you is born... a Saviour."* Yes, it was for *you* that the Lord Jesus came.

He did not come to be the inspiration of sacred art, nor the theme of religious songs, much less to be merely a good man and a great teacher. The Lord Jesus came to be the Saviour, and as such He was born for *you*.

Bound inseparably together are the Saviour's birth and His death. He came to save, and to save He must die – die

in the sinner's stead, bearing the full penalty of divine wrath against sin. This too was personal. It was for *you*.

Such a very personal message of God's love and grace demands a personal response. The Saviour who



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grace demands a
personal response.

was born was God's gift to *you*, and He wants *you* to receive that gift. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

To receive the gift of God by faith you must believe that Christ actually was born to be *your* Saviour and that He died for *your* sins. Because He arose victorious over death, He offers *you* abundant, everlasting life.

Won't you receive the gift of God today?

ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTIES:

WHAT'S NEXT?

What's happening around the world is frightening for many. Things are happening with such rapidity that even the most seasoned analysts are not sure what will happen tomorrow. Governments are intervening at a national level to prop up the financial systems and to plug the holes in the dikes, but it seems that no sooner have they patched one hole with hundreds of millions of dollars, than something else breaks loose.

People *are* worried about the future and well they might be. According to the Bible, the darkest days this world has ever known are in the future. People try to laugh off apocalyptic fears. They have heard cults prophesying of coming doom that never materializes. They have heard the Biblical warnings of an antichrist who will emerge and dominate the world stage in the end times. But since 'nothing' has happened yet, they cynically mock.

These are uncertain times. Everything seems so volatile with only a hairline between order and chaos, stability and anarchy. What is your anchor? Are you absolutely sure of anything? No one knows God's timetable but God Himself, and no one has any right to forecast that within so many months or so many years this or that will happen according to the Bible. But be sure of this: the Lord Jesus Christ will return, and it could be at any moment. Are you ready?

Christians have faced the fact that their sins deserve eternal punishment. They have discovered that salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone, and have rested upon Him for their personal salvation. Even though Christians may lose their jobs, investments, children, marriages or homes, they have an anchor: They can never lose their souls and are sure of eternal life in Heaven.

Eternal life is offered during your lifetime as a free gift (Romans 6:23). You either accept it or reject it. *"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (1 John 5:12-13).

Have you ever received Jesus Christ as your own Saviour? *"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name"* (John 1:12).

Finding Righteousness in Istanbul

As Muhammad[†] and his friend were walking through the Bazaar Quarter of Istanbul, they heard a loud explosion, and joined the crowd that was gathering at the site. When they saw an American father trying to reassure his two young daughters, Muhammad offered to buy ice cream for the little girls. After the ice cream had comforted them, Mohammad and his friend asked the father about himself.

The American told them he was a Christian and was now visiting other Christians. Muhammad, who regularly went to one of the more than 2400 mosques in the city, was surprised to learn that there were Christians in Istanbul. He knew something about Christianity because a childhood friend had read him library books that contained Bible stories. However, as he had grown older, he was taught that the Quran was the only book of truth. After some discussion, both Muhammad and his friend accepted an invitation to go with the American to a Bible study.

[†]Muhammed not his real name.

Muhammad's friend soon lost interest and left, because he believed that he could only be accepted on the judgment day if he kept the laws in the Quran. However, Muhammad continued to attend the Bible studies, and soon met some Turkish Christians who had turned to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

He started studying the Bible and in particular, the tenth chapter of Romans. In verse 3 he read, "*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" He knew that God was holy, and understood that he was a sinner in God's sight. He learned that righteousness with God could only be attained by trusting in the atoning work of Christ, and not by following the Quran.

One day he accepted God's promise, "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...*" (Romans 10:9-10). That day, Muhammad gained a permanent righteousness and eternal life by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

How are you trying to establish your righteousness before God? Your good works and best efforts can never satisfy God's holy standard. The only basis of salvation for any of us is the Lord Jesus Christ who, on the cross, took the punishment for our sin so we could "*be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and God will grant you righteousness through Him.



He Lifted Up His Eyes

Bold explorations of outer space and stunning pictures transmitted back to earth have created new levels of wonder at the marvels of the universe. As current as this interest might be, it is certainly not new. Long ago, as David, a young shepherd, lifted his eyes and scanned the starry sky, he was awestruck with the Creator of it all, and wondered why such a great God was involved in the affairs of men (Psalm 8:3-4). Our amazing universe should motivate us to consider our relationship with God, the Creator.

The Lord Jesus Christ tells of a man who tried to adjust his relationship with Almighty God, but did it too late. Luke 16 depicts a person totally captivated by the good things in his life. His relationship with God was secondary, and his preparation to meet God was inadequate. The Lord Jesus described the man in Hell: *"He lifted up his eyes,"* but it was to plead for mercy. The final words to this desperate man denied him access into God's presence forever.

Our acceptance by God hinges on a definite, personal relationship with Him. Sin precludes a relationship with God. Because of sin, we fail to know and appreciate God – to truly love Him with

heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37).

Yet God loves us so much that He gave His own Son *"that we should not perish"* (John 3:16).

Picture the Lord Jesus Christ hours from the cross, with His focus heavenward! *"He lifted up His eyes"* and prayed that we might know *"the only true God, and Jesus Christ"* (John 17:3). This experience of knowing God and His Son could only happen through the death and willing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus in payment for our sin.

The onus then is clearly on us. We can live without knowing Him, or we can lift our eyes away from life's possibilities and problems to give this relationship with God our undivided attention. Life's uncertainties demand the latter, but what is required?

Our approach to God must be through the *"one mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus"* (1 Timothy 2:5). Our condition must be one of true repentance – an honest acknowledgment of our sin. We must lift our eyes in faith to grasp the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins. Only the actual acceptance of God's free offer of forgiveness will establish that intimate relationship with God that is precious in life and essential in eternity.





I Am Alive for Evermore!

It had been many years since the apostle John shared a fish breakfast, on the shores of Galilee, with Jesus Christ. He had seen the Lord on several occasions after His resurrection. Now, in the twilight of his life, banished by the Roman Emperor to the island of Patmos, John receives another view of the living Christ. Jesus said, “*Behold, I am alive for evermore*” (Revelation 1:18).

These five words capture the uniqueness of Christianity and the gospel message. The world is full of different religions. Some have billions of followers while others have only a few devotees, but at their core all of them are about what man can do to gain God’s favor. They are based on the writings of men long dead. Christianity is about what God has done for us through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christianity is based on a living Savior.

The words, “*I am alive for evermore*” should startle and amaze us. Resurrection is not normal in human affairs. All humanity is under a death sentence. Graveyards abound in every city. Death, which is the result of sin, is all around us. The Bible makes clear that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). “*Death passed upon all men, for all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12) and death is the future of every man and woman born into our world.

It is amazing that this resurrected Man who John saw was God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is the source of all life and the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. As the Son of God, He is perfectly righteous. Death had no claim on Him because He never sinned. Yet, the Son of God voluntarily died and suffered the wrath of God for our sins. “*He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Hebrews 9:26).

Christ died so that your sins could be forgiven. “*He was buried, and... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*” (1 Corinthians 15:4). By raising the Lord Jesus, God was declaring His acceptance of the death of Christ on our behalf. The work of salvation is finished. The Savior has conquered death and lives again!

Christ is alive “*for evermore*.” The death of Jesus Christ provided eternal redemption, and will never become obsolete, lose its effectiveness, or fail to satisfy God’s righteousness.

Christianity is about a relationship with a living Saviour. John was called upon to ‘behold’ this risen Man. You must also respond to Him. His resurrection guarantees that you will meet Him – either as Judge or Savior. Put your trust in Him and your sins will be forgiven.

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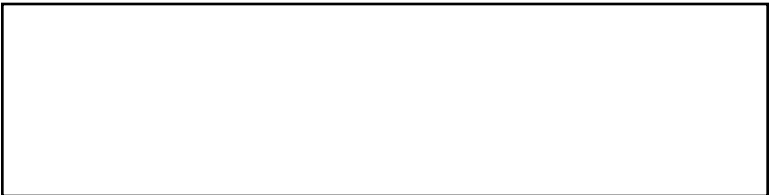
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