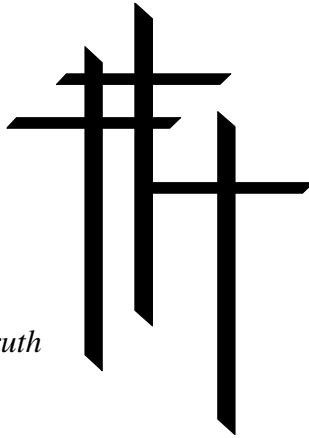


# Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth  
Speaking the Truth in Love*



Volume 65 No. 12

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## UNTO YOU IS BORN — A SAVIOR

By Gregg Bing

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One of my favorite Christmas movies is “A Charlie Brown Christmas.” As Christmas approaches, Charlie Brown finds himself depressed. It seems everything about this wonderful holiday has become too commercialized. His sister, his friends, even his dog, only seem interested in Christmas trees and decorations, getting presents, and just having a good time. In an attempt to help Charlie Brown get the Christmas feeling back, he is asked to direct the Christmas play.

No one really seems interested in doing the play, so Charlie Brown is sent to buy a Christmas tree to help bolster their spirits. When he returns with a rather small and pathetic looking Christmas tree, everyone gives him a hard time. In great frustration Charlie Brown asks, “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

Linus, his security blanket in his hands, walks to the center of the stage, asks for a spotlight, and then recites the following

passage from Luke 2:8-14:

*“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’”*

When he finishes, Linus walks over to Charlie Brown and says, “That’s what Christmas is all

about, Charlie Brown.”

The angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds glad tidings that would bring great joy to all people, “Unto you is born ... a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”—this is what Christmas is all about!



Most people focus on the celebrations, the festivities, the lights, the gifts, etc. Those who do think about the birth of Jesus never see Him beyond the babe in the manger, but there is so much more to this wonderful person than just His birth. He was the Christ, Israel’s promised Messiah and King. This should have been good news to the people of Israel, but they rejected Him and refused to have Him reign over them. But, He was even more than just the Christ, He was the

Lord. The angel had appeared earlier to Joseph, while he was still in Nazareth, and declared that the child to be born of Mary, his wife, would be called Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.” This, too, should have been glorious news to Israel, but they “did not know the time of their visitation” (Luke 19:44), the time when God would become flesh and dwell among them (John 1:14). The greatest news was that the child born that night was a Savior, not just for the nation of Israel, but for all people.

The angel of the Lord did not announce the birth of a Teacher. The Lord Jesus was certainly the greatest teacher who ever lived, but He did not come just to teach people how to live (i.e. the Sermon on the Mount). The angel of the Lord did not announce the birth of a Role Model. Though the life of Christ was the greatest life ever lived and, in many ways, provides a wonderful example for us to follow (Phil. 2:5-8), He did not come just to show us how to live. The angel of the

Lord did not announce the birth of a Prophet. God certainly spoke through His Son (Heb. 1:1-3, John 1:18), yet Jesus did not come just to reveal the person and purpose of God. The angel of the Lord announced the birth of a Savior, but what did this really mean and how would Jesus accomplish this work?

### Israel’s Deliverer

Israel knew from the Old Testament Scriptures that the Christ was anointed of God to be their King and that He would save (or deliver) them from their enemies and bring them peace, safety, and rest in the land promised to Abraham. The prophecy given to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, confirmed that Jesus was raised up to be this “horn of salvation.”

*“Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: ‘Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a*

*horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.’” (Luke 1:67-75)*

The words spoken by the angel, Gabriel, to Mary also confirm that the child born to her would one day sit upon the throne of David and be Israel’s King.

*“And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest;*

*and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:31-33)*

No doubt this was the type of Savior most of the Jews were looking for in Jesus’ day. A man named Simeon, a just and devout man, was “waiting for the Consolation of Israel.” He had been told by the Holy Spirit that “he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” When the child Jesus was brought to the temple at eight days old, Simeon took the Child in his arms and blessed God and said:

*“Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” (Luke 2:29-32)*  
*(Continued on page 4)*

## **Timely Messenger**

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*Gregg Bing — Editor*

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#### **Sunday Services:**

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*Thanks for you help  
in this matter!*

(Continued from page 3)

## Suffering Savior

While the Old Testament Scriptures clearly spoke of the coming Christ as a glorious and powerful King, they also presented a very different picture of Israel's promised Messiah, one that even the prophets themselves puzzled over.

*“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” (1 Peter 1:10-11)*

Before the Christ would come in power and great glory to redeem His people Israel from their bondage to other nations and restore them to peace and safety in their land, He must first suffer and die! Why? To deal with the issue that separated all men

from God—sin! The entrance of sin into the world (Genesis 3) resulted in the death of all men (Rom. 5:12), because the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). All men, being sinners, not only began to die physically, they also died spiritually; they were separated from a holy God because of their sins. In order for sinful men to be reconciled to God, their sins had to be dealt with in a righteous and holy way. This is what Jesus came to do. Before the Child was born, the angel of the Lord told Joseph: “You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

When we take another look at the prophecy given through Zacharias, he spoke of this issue of men's sins. Zacharias said of his son, John:

*“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, through the*

*tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” (Luke 1:76-79)*

John the Baptist was used of God to give the “knowledge of salvation to His people,” Israel. This salvation was not just deliverance from their enemies; it was provision for “the remission (forgiveness) of their sins.” Out of God's “tender mercy” He sent “the Dayspring from on high” to “visit” His people and to guide their feet into “the way of peace,” not just peace from their enemies, but peace with God Himself.

This salvation from their sins was to be accomplished through the sufferings of the Christ. Going back to the account of Simeon's blessing as he held the child Jesus in his arms there in the temple, we find that he spoke not only of seeing the Lord's salvation, but he also al-

luded to the sufferings Jesus would one day go through.

*“Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’” (Luke 2:34-35)*

Mary was told that her Child was “destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against.” He also told her: “yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also.” No doubt this refers to Jesus’ rejection by that evil generation, His subsequent death by crucifixion, and the agony that must have pierced through the soul of His mother as she watched Him on that cross.

The cross was God’s way of dealing with the sins of the world. The babe who was laid in that man-

ger was God’s only Son. He came into this world to give His life a ransom for the sins of all people (1 Tim. 2:6). Peter described it this way:

*“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” (1 Pet. 3:18)*

At Christmas, the thoughts of most people are on gifts, both giving and receiving, but few understand that God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, was the greatest gift ever given.

*“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23)*

Eternal life—This truly is “good tidings of great joy.” And God makes this gift available to all people, but it must be received. How do we receive God’s gift? That simple verse of Scripture, John 3:16, makes it so plain.

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

We receive God’s gift of eternal life by faith; not by doing good works, not by joining a church, not by shaking a preacher’s hand, but by simple faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross of Calvary for our sins.

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)*

What about you? Have you received this wonderful gift? Have you trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? As Linus told Charlie Brown, “That’s what Christmas is all about!”

**Thanks be to God  
for His  
indescribable gift!**

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## GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

*Lamentations 3:23*

By Charles F. Nix

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**T**he patient forbearance of the Lord is as amazing as it is beautiful. His love is everlasting and He does not forget His promises.

When He called Abraham out from among the idol worshipping heathen He made certain great and precious promises to him. (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 17:1-8). The seventh of those promises was: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." He promised Abraham and Sarah a son long after they were past the age to have children. Isaac was born at a set time the next year when Abraham was a hundred years old, and God told Abraham: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12). The promises were confirmed to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4) and to Jacob (Genesis 28:13-15). The Lord said unto Jacob: "Behold, I am with thee,

and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest;—I will not leave thee." We have the record in Genesis 32:28 of God changing Jacob's name to Israel.

Now Israel was the father of twelve sons from whom came the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The Old Testament records the growth of the Twelve Tribes into the Nation of Israel. It also tells of how that nation failed God repeatedly and rebelled against Him and how faithful He was to forgive them.

When Jacob (Israel) fled from the famine into Egypt God reassured him: "I am God, the God of thy father, fear not to go down into Egypt—I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will surely bring thee up again" (Genesis 46:3-4).

The Twelve Tribes grew into a vast multitude during their sojourn in Egypt. God delivered them

from their Egyptian masters by a great deliverance and under the leadership of Moses He brought them up out of the land of Egypt. God accompanied them on the journey as a pillar of cloud by day and as a pillar of fire by night, to keep them from harm.

The Lord brought them before Sinai where He instructed Moses to say to them: "If ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people," and the people promised: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:5, 8). He then gave them the Law Covenant from Mount Sinai. This was the thing they had promised to keep. But within a few hours they began to break their promise. Their history is the history of law breakers and rebels.

The Lord remembered His promise to Jacob and united the twelve tribes into a great nation. By His direction David, a man after God's own heart, was anointed king. David sinned against the Lord, grievously, but he repented

and the Lord forgave him.

The joy of his salvation was restored unto him and the Lord promised David: “Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:16).

For many centuries the Lord undertook for them, caring for them in a special way. They, in turn, forsook God, went into idolatry, blasphemed against God and stoned His prophets that He sent to warn them. The Lord had made other promises to Israel. Through Moses He warned them that if they forsook God: “The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth even unto the other, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest” (Deuteronomy 28:64-65). For centuries the wandering Jew has wandered over the face of the earth without a national home.

Because of their rebellion and sins against Him, God permitted the enemies of Israel to overcome them to oppress them and to carry them into captivity. But He remembered His promises and always kept

or returned a portion of the people to live in the land He had promised them.

Centuries after His promise to David, the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah saying: “Unto us a Son is given ... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace ... of His government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David to establish it with judgment and with justice from hence forth and for ever” (Isaiah 9:6-7). Even though He later permitted the nation to be destroyed and the survivors to be taken captive into Babylon, yet He returned many of them to the land, that His promise might be fulfilled.

In Luke chapter two we are given the account of the keeping of that portion of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would be a blessing to all people. Christ the Savior was sent to sinful, rebellious Israel one night in Judea. An angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds in the fields and said unto them: “Fear not, for, be-

hold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior: which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).

We know from the record that He has kept all His promises on schedule and that, in God’s own time, He will keep them all, because “For ever, O Lord. thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations” (Psalm 119:89-90).

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## **Winter Youth Retreat**

**December 29-31**

Our Winter Youth Retreat will be December 29-31 this year at Three Mountain Retreat in Clifton, Texas. This retreat is for young people, ages 13 through college age. The theme this year is “Whose Life is it Anyway? — Living a Life of Christian Integrity.” See the enclosed registration form for more details.

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- Ministry of the Church
- The Perfect Will of God
- Once in a Lifetime
- Fellowship in Christ
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- Thoughts on Vision
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- What Saith the Scripture  
(Set of 6 Diff. Tracts)

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- Seasons
- Spiritual Thoughts for Young Minds
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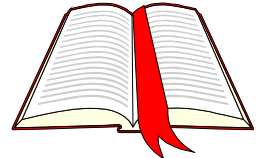
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- Making Good Choices
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