

# ***GRACE & TRUTH***

M A G A Z I N E

- 
- ***God's Illuminating Light***
  - ***Importance Of God's Written Word***
  - ***The Spirit Of This Season***

December 2018  
Vol. 85 • No.11



## EMPHASIS

### 1 Is This Child Special To You?

*Paul Alberts*



## WORSHIP

### 2 The Savior Of The World

*William Y. Fullerton*



## FEATURES

### 3 The Lord's Character As Light

*Alfred Bouter*



### 9 God's Illuminating Light

*Stephen Campbell*

### 14 "And God Said, Let There Be Light"

*Roger Penney*



## SERIES

### 20 Why Did Jesus Come? - Part 5

*Shereen Ghobrial*



## RESPONSE

### 23 The Series on "Dispensations" was especially appreciated.



## DISCOVER

### 24 The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

*Alan Groth*



## UPLOOK

### 26 The Importance Of God's Written Word

*Alfred Bouter*



## YOU-ASKED

### 31 How can I tell which social organizations are okay to join and which are not?

*Eugene P. Vedder Jr.*



## ISSUES

### 34 Avoid Abortion

*Emanuel V. John*



## OVERVIEW

### 36 2 Timothy

*Leslie M. Grant*



## GOOD-NEWS

### 38 The Spirit Of This Season



## NEXT MONTH: THE APPROACH TO GOD

# GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE

#### PUBLISHER

Grace & Truth, Inc.  
210 Chestnut Street  
Danville, IL 61832-2699  
USA

*Grace & Truth Magazine* is prepared with the help of an editorial staff and counsel from several advisers. Use of an article does not imply agreement with other teachings by the author.

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#### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

*Grace & Truth Magazine* is sent free to all who request it. Annual cost to produce and mail is: \$10.00 (USA) and \$15.00 (Foreign). Donations to support this ministry are needed and appreciated.

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*Grace & Truth Magazine* is published monthly (except July/August is a combined issue) by Grace & Truth, Inc. Printed in USA.

ISSN 1061-2521

# *Is This Child Special To You?*

**T**here are many kinds of darkness in the world. Spiritual darkness is associated with unbelievers, wickedness and Satan. “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers ... what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14 NKJV). “The way of the wicked is like darkness” (Prov. 4:19). When Paul spoke of his conversion, he quoted the Lord: “... To turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18).

Because we are still in the world, we are not yet free from darkness. We give “thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:12-14). However, we find that we “wrestle ... against the rulers of the darkness of this age” (Eph. 6:12). We may struggle in our walk personally too, as noted by John: “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is

in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:6-9). Our behavior impacts our relationship with other believers as well as with God Himself. Therefore, we are strongly encouraged to “walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8).

God is light (1 Jn. 1:5), and He is its only source. His light dispels every kind of darkness; and we know it through the Lord Jesus. Simeon, as we read in Luke 2, took the Child Jesus “up 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’” (vv.28-32). This Child was very special to Simeon; is He – the One who is the Light – special to you?

*Paul*

# The Savior Of The World

I cannot tell why He whom angels worship  
Should set His love upon the sons of men,  
Or why, as Shepherd, He should seek the wanderers,  
To bring them back, they know not how or when:  
But this I know, that He was born of Mary,  
When Bethlehem's manger was His only home,  
And that He lived at Nazareth and labored,  
And so the Savior, Savior of the world is come.

I cannot tell how silently He suffered,  
As with His peace He graced this place of tears,  
Or how His heart upon the cross was broken,  
The crown of pain to three and thirty years:  
But this I know, He heals the brokenhearted,  
And stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,  
And lifts the burden from the heavy-laden,  
For yet the Savior, Savior of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how He will win the nations,  
How He will claim His earthly heritage,  
How satisfy the needs and aspirations  
Of East and West, of sinner and of sage;  
But this I know, all flesh shall see His glory,  
And He shall reap the harvest He has sown,  
And some glad day His sun shall shine in splendor  
When He the Savior, Savior of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,  
When, at His bidding, every storm is stilled,  
Or who can say how great the jubilation  
When all the hearts of men with love are filled:  
But this I know, the skies will thrill with gladness,  
And myriad, myriad human voices sing,  
And earth to heaven, and heaven to earth will answer;  
At last the Savior, Savior of the world is King!

— William Y. Fullerton (1857-1932)



# The Lord's Character As **LIGHT**

by Alfred Bouter

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." —Genesis 1:1-2 NKJV*

**Y**ears ago, I read a story about how the Lord used a missionary to convince a high-ranking army officer of his need to turn from darkness to light just by reading Genesis 1:1-3. The missionary first read Genesis 1:1-2 and then left him alone – very abruptly. This caused the officer to reflect on what he had just heard, especially after the same thing happened again the next day. On the third day the missionary returned. He saw a change in the officer and then read to him the same passage once more, but included verse 3: "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." Through a work of God's Spirit, this man had begun to see

his lost condition of darkness and turned to God's light, our Lord Jesus Christ. What about you, dear reader, have you turned to Him, confessing your sins with true repentance? Have you turned from darkness to light?

This true story illustrates God's wisdom and power. He used the biblical account of the creation of physical light to bring spiritual light into a realm of darkness, producing life and a new birth. This is what happened to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3-18), as he later wrote, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

How about us who believe? When He called and drew us to this marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9), we learned how it is needed also for our daily walk: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart" (97:11). Furthermore, walking in the light implies having fellowship with each other as believers (1 Jn. 1:7) and with God, even though we are surrounded by the darkness of this world. David prayed therefore, "That I may walk before God in the light of the living" (Ps. 56:13).

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## The Arrival Of The True Light

When the Lord Jesus came to His people Israel about 500 years after their return from the Babylonian captivity, He found them living in darkness. “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned” (Mt. 4:16 ESV). After three and a half years of His public ministry, the Lord Jesus said, “While you have

Most professing Christians – those who say they are Christians – are attracted to all kinds of outward things but are not really born again, for they do not believe with the heart. However, those who truly believe have become lights themselves, as the Lord Jesus told His disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden ... In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they

may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt. 5:14,16 ESV). “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men ... the light shines in the darkness,

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**“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”**

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the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light ... These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them” (Jn. 12:36 NKJV). Why? The true Light gave light to every man when the Messiah came into the world, but His people did not see or recognize this light (1:9-11) – except for a few who believed (v.12). The Lord, who knows the hearts (Acts 1:24), was not able to have true fellowship with the rest of the people even though they believed in the miracles He performed (Jn. 2:24-25). Believers today also belong to a remnant, just as a few believed in those days. Do you truly believe?

and the darkness did not comprehend it ... That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (Jn. 1:4-5,9 NKJV). Matthew, quoting from Isaiah 9:1-2, summarized this as “The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned” (Mt. 4:16 ESV).

However, they rejected it, as they rejected the Messiah despite the irrefutable, or undeniable, signs He gave showing that He was the Messiah. Many years later John wrote, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the

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darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (Jn. 3:19, also read vv.20-21). Later we read that John the Baptist had functioned as a light, of whom the Lord said, “He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light” (5:35). But the Lord continued, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (9:5 NKJV). His declaration referred to His earthly ministry, whereas now He shines from heaven.

### **Shining Lights To Represent The Lord Jesus Christ**

When Jesus sent His disciples on a mission He said, “You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14). He then compared them to a city on a hill that “cannot be hidden.” In the same way, disciples today are to shine for Him to the glory of God the Father (v.16). Is this not a great privilege? For sure it is, but it comes with great responsibilities for which He provides the resources.

“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness” (Jn. 12:46 ESV). Nevertheless, He was rejected while on earth, but now He is shining from heaven, as Saul of Tarsus experienced. Furthermore, the Lord in glory uses the believers on earth

to shine as lights for Him. Of the many Scriptures about this topic, let’s look at a few in Ephesians.

“You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8 NKJV). The apostle described the tremendous blessings that the believers have received (see Eph. 1-3), and through these Scriptures he exhorted us all to walk in a manner worthy of the heavenly calling with which we have been called (4:1-6). To put his teachings into practice, we need the right attitude and spiritual maturity, as well as the will-

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**If we don’t grow we will remain vulnerable just as children, tossed to and fro, carried away and deceived.**

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ingness to hold the truth in love (v.15). God’s plan is that Christ may shine in and be reflected through all the believers who together form “the new man” (v.24) – to display Christ. Each believer has one or more gifts, but all need to grow to reflect the beauties of Christ who is now in heaven (4:7-32). If we don’t grow we will remain vulnerable just as children, tossed to and fro, carried away and deceived (v.14).

Furthermore, Paul explained that all believers individually are children of God and should walk

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together in love to represent God who is love (5:1-7). Therefore being light in the Lord, we must function as lights and walk as children of light (v.8), honoring the rights of Christ and of God in this world that rejects both.

Light is separated from darkness, and believers are to shine as lights in this dark world to reflect Him. This goes together with walking in wisdom (v.15) and doing His will (v.17). *Love, light and wisdom* are inseparable, and God wants us to represent Him as His children. What a privilege and challenge this is for us!

### Help From John's Gospel

We may study John's gospel in several ways, but for now we just want to see some links between it and what we have already considered.

This gospel describes the Lord's excellence in various ways,

the great miracle of His death and resurrection and those in His post-resurrection ministry. Showing that these elements are inseparable, the gospel written by John links *life* in chapters 3-7 with *light* (Jn. 8-12) and *love* (Jn. 13-17). What we saw earlier about love, light and wisdom cannot be realized without life (see 1:4), which is essential, as the Lord explained to Nicodemus (3:3-5).

We became followers of the Lord Jesus when we came to Him to be saved and accept the *life* He offers. Taking His yoke upon us (Mt. 11:29), we became His disciples and servants, walking in His *light* to represent Him in the darkness of this world. We cannot do this without true *love* to Him and His own, which also extends towards the lost (see Romans 9:1-5 for an example in Paul).

### Seven Signs And Other Sevens

Various words in John's gospel highlight the Lord's public ministry. The *signs* He worked clearly *signified* who He was: the promised Messiah. Jesus *worked* remarkable acts of *power*, often called *miracles*. He *operated* with special *energy* while drawing people's attention through these exploits, or *wonders*. Of these, John selected seven (see Jn. 21:25) that occurred during

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### Taking His yoke upon us, we became His disciples and servants, walking in His light to represent Him in the darkness of this world.

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especially in the seven great "I am" statements. His preeminence also comes out in His seven discourses, as well as in the seven miracles He performed during His earthly ministry – as distinct from



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Christ's ministry before His sufferings. His *light* shone, His *love* worked, and true *life* was manifested. They are listed in John's gospel as follows:

1. Changing water into wine in Cana, Galilee (2:1-11);
2. Healing an official's son in Capernaum, Galilee (4:46-54);
3. Healing a paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, Jerusalem (5:1-18);
4. Feeding the 5,000 near the Sea of Galilee (6:5-14);
5. Walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee (6:16-21);
6. Healing a blind man in Jerusalem (9:1-7); and
7. Raising dead Lazarus in Bethany, near Jerusalem (11:1-45).

The seven "I am" statements show that the Lord Jesus Himself is Yahweh, the LORD.<sup>1</sup> They are:

1. "I am the Bread of life" (6:35);
2. "I am the Light of the world" (8:12);
3. "I am the Door for the sheep" (10:7,9);
4. "I am the good Shepherd" (10:11,14);
5. "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (11:25);
6. "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (14:6); and
7. "I am the true Vine" (15:1,5).

In addition to the seven signs and the seven "I am" statements, John recorded the discussions the Lord had and the discourses

He gave. The other gospels emphasize more what He did than what He said, whereas the special focus of John is on what the Lord Jesus spoke, because He is the Word (Jn. 1:1-5,14). Therefore, we find the:

1. Discourse on the Father and the Son (5:19-47);
2. Discourse on the Bread of God (6:26-40);
3. Discourse during the Feast of Booths (Jn. 7);
4. Discourse on the Light of the world (Jn. 8);
5. Discourse on the Good Shepherd (10:1-18);
6. Discourse on the Grain of Wheat (Jn. 12:20-36); and
7. The Upper-room Discourse (Jn. 14-16).

Much more could be said about the Light of the world. John's gospel often mentions great contrasts, for we learn much through such comparisons, as in Hebrews and other Scriptures. Some examples are old against new, light against darkness, love against hatred, and life against death. All of this is in relation to our Beloved, the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us!

While this article is mainly about the Lord Jesus as light, we have seen that this point cannot be separated from who He is in His love or as the Giver and Sustainer of life. The topic of light is

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also important in Revelation, especially in relation to the new creation, where the adjective “new”<sup>2</sup> is another keyword with “light.” How wonderful this will be! **GT**

**Endnotes:**

1. When Judas was going to betray the Lord, Jesus identified Himself before the

band of officers and soldiers who had come to arrest Him, by saying “I am” (Jn. 18:3-6). The power of God’s presence – for Jesus is God – caused all to go backwards and fall down before Him. Soon, every knee will bow (Phil. 2:10).

2. This word (Greek: *kainos*) occurs 14 (2x7) times in John’s writings (gospel, epistles, Revelation) and in total 42 (6x7) times in the New Testament.



Nothing cuts so deeply as the truth; nothing heals so thoroughly as grace. What a comfort it is that we can go to God and welcome all the searching light of His presence, all its exposure of us down to the bottom of our nature and over all the story of our sin and wretchedness. We are assured that He only probes for our own good. He does this probing so that the resources of His grace may be brought out in all their comprehensive fullness.

Light and warmth reach us from one sun in the heavens; grace and truth subsist by Jesus Christ. They shine, if we may so say, in one face – that of the One who has come from the purity of God’s heaven and is the Healer of man’s disease. His is the hand that was once pierced for our sin that now removes its guilt and defilement from us, and the heart that bled for our transgressions and now reveals to us the heart of God.

—W. H. Westcott (adapted)



# GOD'S ILLUMINATING LIGHT

by Stephen Campbell

**S**cientists and philosophers have long examined the nature of light and vision. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Plato wrote that vision occurred because rays of light came from people's eyes and took hold of the objects they saw. Although not everyone subscribed to that theory, variations on the idea continued to be proposed as late as the 1400's by scholars as eminent as Leonardo da Vinci.<sup>1</sup> Of course, it is well understood now that the eye *receives* light by means of a complex, elegantly designed system of components, and the resulting images are interpreted by the brain.

The debate about vision is more than just a historical curiosity, however. It symbolizes two ways that people evaluate the meaning of life itself. To some, "man is the measure of all things."<sup>2</sup> We look at the details of life, assign meaning to what we see, and proceed according to our best evaluation of the situation. In other words, figuratively speaking, rays of light come from our

minds, and by that light we interpret what is in front of us. This is a very common view. In fact, all our training as children and adults is essentially designed to strengthen our powers of discernment and interpretation so we can reach effective conclusions about life.

To Bible readers, though, there is another view: Just as light is something external and objective that enters our eyes, the illumination of life's meaning is external too. It enters our hearts and minds from an objective source and reveals the true nature of what we see. That objective Declarer of Meaning is God Himself, who shines upon our lives. As the great Illuminator, He provides all the light we need for understanding life's meaning and purpose.

## God Is Light

When examining the theme of light in the Bible we must start with this declaration: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5 NKJV). Light and darkness are obviously exact opposites. Where there

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is one, by definition there cannot be the other. Light makes things plain, exposes what is dirty, helps someone find what is lost, repels what is evil. The statement that “God is light” implies that all these characteristics reside within His very nature. The declaration that “in Him is no darkness at all” means that no deceit or flaw can exist in God, and it implies that nothing unrighteous will be allowed to have a place in His presence. As the Father of lights, there is not even a shadow of variation in His care (Jas. 1:17); as the sovereign Lord, He dwells in unapproachable light, for no creature can ever fully comprehend His character (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

Therefore it is not surprising that, in creation, light was His first provision for the Earth. He could not allow darkness to rule an empty, formless world. “Let there be light!” He declared (Gen. 1:3). In fact, on that first day of creation, light was the only thing God brought into existence. This is not because it was hard for Him to do; rather, light is so significant that God gave it its own day, for it represents the nature of Himself. Later, on the fourth day of creation, specific celestial bodies – the sun, moon and stars – were formed to produce or reflect light, but light itself was brought out of darkness from the very beginning.

## God Gives Light

These facts indicate that God does not want us to live in darkness. Our own experiences show how little we can do without light. When we walk in the dark, we stumble; when it is night, we cannot work; and with these statements the Scriptures agree (Jn. 9:4, 11:9-10). Naturally speaking, various forms of artificial light have allowed humanity to conduct business 24 hours a day, and it has been argued that the electric light is one of the most significant inventions in history. This reality simply underscores the truth that we are not made to live in darkness.

Just as we depend on physical light, our souls require spiritual light, which God provides for us through the life of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Holy Scriptures. First of all, we are told that Jesus is the Light of the World. Although John’s gospel uses a number of metaphors to explain who the Lord is (the Door, the Vine, and so on), perhaps the apostle John most appreciated Jesus as the Light. In four different chapters (1, 8, 9 and 12) he explicitly presented Christ in that manner. He is the “true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (1:9). The life and perfections of Jesus shine upon every human being (con-



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sider Jn. 1:3), illuminating our lives by displaying the glories of the one in whom God found all His delight. This is even true for unbelievers who reject that light. If someone turns away from the sun, does that cause it to become dim? No, the light simply shines upon that person's back. All who read these words must determine a response to God's light that shines through Christ Jesus.

We who trust Jesus and follow Him find that we have been brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. We now possess the light of life and become children of light (1 Pet. 2:9; Jn. 8:12, 12:36,46). The same divine, irresistible power by which light overcame darkness at creation is the prevailing force which God applies to our salvation: "It is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The Christian faith is transformative! It is not a series of good ideas by which we can gradually improve ourselves, but a complete change of circumstances.

This change comes with a responsibility. Christians *are* light in the Lord, but we are exhorted to live *as* children of light (Eph. 5:8). Thankfully, God has pro-

vided for this need as well. The Word of God shines as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps. 119:105). Not only does the Bible show us where our feet are walking, but it also reveals where God's pathway is if we have strayed from it. The psalmist added, "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (v.130). The apostle Peter agreed, saying

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**Far from being merely ornamental, God's Word is bright and effective as a source of understanding and wisdom.**

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that the Bible's words of instruction and prophecy are like "a light that shines in a dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19). Sometimes homes are lighted with elaborate, decorative displays that are pretty but not very functional. The Bible is not like that. Far from being merely ornamental, God's Word is bright and effective as a source of understanding and wisdom. By its power we will live up to our character as children of light if we allow the Bible to illuminate us in the activities of life.

### **Christians Are Lights**

Certain chemical compounds have the property of phosphorescence, which produces the "glow in the dark" effect found in var-

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ious toys and other items. These compounds store light energy and then release it slowly over time. In a much more significant way, Christians shine as lights in this world – not only because we have been exposed to God’s light, but also because we have been *made* children of light. Yet we do not produce our own light; God and His Word remain our only sources of light, and we carry that light into our daily circumstances.

The experience of Moses helps us understand this reality. After spending an extended period of time with the LORD on Mount Sinai, his face took on a radiant, shining appearance that was noticeable to everyone. For the people of Israel this was distracting and even a bit frightening, so Moses veiled his face. This evidently happened with regularity, because after this occasion the text says, “Whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of his face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again” (Ex. 34:35). The veil of Moses symbolizes the temporary nature of God’s covenant with Israel, because that veil is taken away in Christ, and today we can see God’s glory clearly (2 Cor. 3:7-18).

The main point for our subject is that the light which shone from Moses’ face was caused

by his time in God’s presence. Our own light for God becomes brighter in the same way. As we look upon the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image with ever-increasing glory. This proves the deep importance of spending time with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer if there will ever be brightness in our testimony for Him.

Our light has particular characteristics that are helpful to notice. First, the Lord said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:14-16). This passage emphasizes that light must be visible to be effective. A city on a hill is constructed with the knowledge that everyone will see it at night. In a house, an oil lamp is placed on a stand so its light can shine upon anyone who enters the room. Is this how our lights shine for the Lord? Just as the life of Christ shines upon every human being, so our light should shine equally upon everyone who knows us. Furthermore, we won’t simply be known as a “nice person,” because those who see our light will

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be directed to our Father in heaven. They will not only notice our good works but will also understand that the source of our light is God Himself – and this will require our verbal testimony about His work in our lives.

The apostle Paul added that we are “children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). A light is not troubled by darkness! In fact, a dark room is where light does its best work, for there even the smallest light is noticed and appreciated. As we observe the surrounding darkness, let us not become distressed but determined! Does your world seem increasingly crooked and perverse? Those are perfect conditions for God’s light to shine through you. The next verse connects this light with “the word of life.” As we tell others what the Bible means and why its message is true, our lives will draw them from darkness and into God’s magnificent light.

### **A Burning, Shining Light**

The Lord Jesus described the effectiveness of such a witness. The people of His day had listened with interest to John the Baptist: “You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth ... He was the burning and shining

lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light” (Jn. 5:33,35). “Burning” means he had been lit for the Lord, and “shining” means he gave light to everyone who saw him. John was no miracle worker and he did not travel great distances. He simply served the Lord at the Jordan River, preaching God’s message. Yet people heard him, and afterwards they said, “All the things that John spoke about this Man [Jesus] were true” (10:41). What a grand summary of his life!

“The LORD is my light,” wrote David in Psalm 27:1. By Him we receive light, and through Him we give light. The Christian songwriter Chris Rice captured these details this way: “Carry your candle, run to the darkness / Seek out the hopeless, confused and torn / Hold out your candle for all to see it / Take your candle, and go light your world.” As we carry the character of Christ, we will shine for Him. **GT**

#### **Endnotes:**

1. Source: <http://web.stanford.edu/class/history13/earlscielab/body/eyespag-es/eye.html>
2. The philosopher Protagoras stated this view in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. He is widely credited with the beginning of relativism, a philosophy which holds that there are no absolute truths about human experiences but only perceptions that are true for each individual. Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protagoras>

# “And God said, Let there be light.”

by Roger Penney

**T**he above words, found in Genesis 1:3 (KJV), are the first recorded spoken ones of God, and as such they are highly significant concerning God’s plans for the world and His people. They also tell of the nature and character of God, as seen in what John wrote: “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn. 1:5).

## **The Nature Of God**

Light is the very essence of God’s being. It is difficult for us to imagine the Supreme Being, who has the purest, uncreated and infinite energy, but the Bible says God is precisely that One. There is no darkness in Him; He is all pure light, just and holy, yet gracious. The book of Hebrews tells us, “It is impossible for God to lie” (6:18). He, the Lord Jesus, is the ultimate and final Truth, and He said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6). This One who “cannot lie” (Ti. 1:2) also said, “I am the light of the world: He that followeth Me shall not walk

in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12).

“God is light” is an absolute and unconditional statement, and the verses we quoted in John show quite clearly that the Lord Jesus is God. God, remember, is a trinity – often referred to as “the Godhead.” Later in the New Testament, Paul stated that the Lord Jesus has and is the fullness of God (Col. 1:19, 2:9).

In our present situation and bodies of humiliation it would be impossible for us to exist in God’s presence, for such is the intensity of the light of God. We are in fragile and sinful bodies, but one day soon these bodies of ours are to be transformed. In heaven we will have glorious bodies, “like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21).

## **The Effects Of The Light**

His true light will be revealed, yet at present that light is shining in the darkness of human hearts and minds, dispelling ignorance and vice. Such is the work of Him who is the true Light.



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At the beginning of John's gospel we are told that the "light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended [overcame] it not" (Jn. 1:5). The prophetic words of the Lord Jesus just prior to the healing of the blind man are significant concerning His task then and now. He told His disciples, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no one can work" (9:4-5).

Then, after His resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the light continued to shine in the hearts and minds of men, dispelling the confusion, dissatisfaction and lies. This has been done by the gospel and the power of the Spirit of God. "But if our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

Just as God decreed that there be light in creation, dispelling the primeval darkness and chaos, so the same process occurs in the human hearts and minds by the gospel. Paul explained to the Corinthians, "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (v.6).

The face of Moses shone after being with God on the mountain (Ex. 34:29), but the Lord Jesus is the actual Light, shining all the time since He is God and is ever

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**The light is universal and dispels all the satanically imposed darkness.**

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with God the Father (2 Pet. 1:19). Now, as a result of our learning about the Lord Jesus and getting to know Him, we shine as lights in this dark world (Phil. 2:15).

### **The Dominance Of The Light**

The light is universal and dispels all the satanically imposed darkness. John stated that we are of God, but this world is under the control of Satan: the Wicked One (1 Jn. 5:19).<sup>1</sup> The apostle continued, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (v.20).

Isaiah described how the Lord Jesus conquers the satanic darkness of this world. It is by shining His light and causing it to reflect from His people, who have experienced living in the darkness and are now set free.

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“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation [distress], when at first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined” (Isa. 9:1-2).

“The people” were of Galilee. The Pharisees and other learned men despised them, saying with contempt, “This people who knoweth not the law are cursed” (Jn. 7:49). Nicodemus argued with the educated men, but then they taunted him, suggesting that he too was a Galilean. Compounding their display of ignorance, they declared that no prophet ever arose from Galilee (v.52). Clearly they did not count John the Baptist as a prophet, although he was, as well as the Lord Jesus – both of whom had come from Galilee.

The Lord spent much time with the people of that region. They were specially privileged and chosen to be the bearers of the light to the nations after His resurrection. He taught in their synagogues, performed miracles in their towns and villages, and instructed them by the lakeside.

Note that we carry the same light as has been done by generation after generation of the Lord’s people.

We see later that men of Galilee and others of despised occupations, such as a tax collector, were to take the gospel all over the world. Faithful men and women are still engaged in this work worldwide. These dear servants of the Lord Jesus are seldom from the upper classes of society, but they fulfil the means God uses according to His will. Paul explained to the Corinthians, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

The Lord Jesus is the Light of

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the World. This great message was first entrusted to the men of Galilee, then after to those who heard it. Now, when the world is in darkness spiritually, the same message is committed to us. The Lord said to His disciples “Ye are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14). It is only a reflected light, but nevertheless a reflection of the true Light.

### **The Darkness And A False Light**

Isaiah told about a world without light. It is a world where all the peoples are shrouded in gross darkness, but where there is hope for the true Light. He wrote: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall arise upon thee. And the Gentiles [nations] shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isa. 60:1-3). This prophecy is a call to the faithful remnant of Israel to shine for the Lord Jesus, for He also is about to arise and shine to defeat forever the darkness and its power. It is also a prophecy that has as its fulfillment all peoples at all times who are called to be witnesses for Him.

At this present time Satan is mustering his forces for the takeover of this world by the Anti-

christ. The Devil even has some success in confusing and leading astray God’s people. He does this by changing himself into the appearance of an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). We are not ignorant of his devices, yet we need to be reminded. Therefore Paul warned the Corinthians about false apostles and deceitful workers who were then and are now “transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ ... Therefore it is no great thing if his [Satan’s] ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:13,15).

God is at work, so Satan also puts his servants to work to subvert things and the Word of God. However, we have all the resources of God through the Holy Spirit and the power of the Lord Jesus. “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (4:6).

### **Evil And The Evil Ones To Be Destroyed By The Light**

One day soon the forces of darkness and evil are to be burned up. “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh

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shall burn them up, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 4:1, see Zech. 14:12). The Antichrist himself shall be burned up by the very brightness of the Lord's presence. "Rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God; and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Th. 1:7-9). In the following chapter of Paul's letter we read that not just the forces of evil are to be destroyed, but the very person who has ruled the world blasphemously as Satan's representative is also to be destroyed. "And then shall the Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Th. 2:8; See also Mal. 3:2; Rev. 19:15).

### **Just And Righteous Judgment By The Just And Righteous Judge**

In Revelation the Lord Jesus is depicted having "eyes ... as a flame of fire" (1:14). John's vision began with his being sudden-

ly confronted by such a wonderful and majestic personage that he was led to write: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead" (v.17). His description includes "His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out

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**We see in the prophets the Messiah coming in power, but in the New Testament the fact of the Lord Jesus as the Judge of all is clearly explained.**

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of His mouth went a two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (vv.15-16). This describes the Lord Jesus when He will come to judge the nations. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen!" (v.7). The sword is that of the warrior who is bringing judgment to His enemies. The "eyes ... as a flame of fire" tell us that He sees all things, including the secrets of the heart and the thoughts of intellects bound and perverted by Satan and the demon hordes.

We see in the prophets the Messiah coming in power, but in the New Testament the fact of the Lord Jesus as the Judge of all is clearly explained. "For the



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Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (Jn. 5:22-23). This is stressed time and again in this passage. It goes on to say, “Verily, verily [Truly, truly], I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself: so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (vv.25-27). The Lord Jesus went on to say, “As I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not My own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me” (v.30).

We see in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians that the Lord Jesus will judge the works of His people and reward them, or not, accordingly (3:10-15). Later, the promise to the world is that all men will be judged according to how they have responded to God’s message. Paul told the people of Athens, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man

whom He hath ordained whereof He has given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

The Lord Jesus will rule the world in righteousness as well as conduct the final tribunal. That terrible event is again prophesied in Revelation where John described it in all its terror and despair: “And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (20:11-14).

In view of these things, may we truly ponder God’s first recorded words: “Let there be light.” **GT**

**Endnote:**

1. The term “wickedness,” as found at the end of this verse in some Bibles, is not an accurate translation of the Greek.

# Why Did Jesus Come?

## – Part 5

by Shereen Ghobrial

### He Came To Give Us Life

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” —John 10:10 ESV*

I think one of the funniest Sherlock Holmes stories is about a time when he and Dr. Watson were camping. Sherlock Holmes is a fictional investigator, appearing first in 1887 in British writing, and later with his friend Dr. Watson. As the story goes, after pitching their tent under the skies, they went to sleep. A few hours later Holmes woke Dr. Watson and asked, “Watson, look above and tell me what you see.”

Watson said, “I see the sky full of stars.”

Holmes then asked, “And what do you conclude from this?”

Watson answered, “If you are asking astronomically, then I see we have millions of stars; meteorologically, I see we will have a cloudy day tomorrow; time-wise, I see it is about four o’clock in the

morning; and theologically, I see we are a tiny particle in big universe created by a great God. But, why do you ask?”

Holmes replied, “Don’t you see that someone has stolen our tent!”

The moral of this story is we tend to focus on the peripheral, or relatively minor, meanings of life, missing its main meaning and purpose. So, what is the meaning of life?

#### The Meaning Of Life

The meaning of life is a philosophical question concerning the purpose of our existence as human beings. Many theories have been provided based on assorted ideological and cultural ideas, but we need to turn to the Bible to seek the divine and real meaning of life.

In Genesis 1:26-27 we find

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the creation of man narrated as follows: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Notice two thoughts in these verses. First, men and women are created in God's image. That means they have a shadow of His moral attributes, such as intelligence, holiness, love and will. Second, God gave them dominion over all other creatures on earth. You are not equal to the tree outside your home or pets and other animals; you are *superior*, created by your Designer for a higher purpose.

Look at another passage of the Bible: "... Everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory, whom I formed and made" (Isa. 43:7). In this verse God clearly indicates the purpose of creating man: "for My glory." What does glory mean? Glory is a reflection of greatness. The glory of a king is reflected in his wealth, personality and scope of his dominion. The glory of God is re-

flected in the greatness of His attributes, such as holiness, intelligence, justice, mercy and wisdom. Hence, the purpose of creating mankind is for God to manifest His attributes by exhibiting and exercising them in men and women.

For example, when we see the magnificence of human intelligence it gives us a glimpse of the wisdom of the Divine Creator. When we see the strong or the rich showing mercy to the weak or the poor, that reflects the glory of God, who abounds with mercy (Ps. 103:8). Alternatively, God exercises His mercy on the sinner by waiting patiently for him to repent. If he does not repent, God will manifest His judgment by sending the sinner to hell. In either case, God will be glorified.

In summary, the Bible reveals to us that the purpose and meaning of life is to glorify God by reflecting His attributes. Did Adam achieve this purpose in his life? How about his descendants?

### **The Lost Purpose**

The Word of God declares clearly that all mankind have missed the goal of their creation and the purpose of their life. This is the definition of "sin." Paul confirmed this when he wrote: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

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Notice the contradictory relationship between “sin” and “the glory of God.” The essence of sin is not so much about hurting others or breaking God’s moral laws as it is about not glorifying God in your life. This is a much wider and more inclusive definition because glorifying God would include, for example, being holy, honest, merciful, faithful and loving. When you fail to exhibit one of God’s moral attributes you are sinning, and “the wages of sin is death” (6:23).

The important thought to stress here is the contrast between death and life. This may seem obvious, but many people are looking for the meaning of their life while they are still dead in their sins. As a creature you have lost your life because of your sinful nature. This means there is no reason to look for a meaning of life, since there is no life in you anyway. Now you may wonder, “Is there any hope?”

Jesus said, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). Did Jesus come to restore to us the innocent life that Adam had? Is this the life that Jesus meant? Or was He talking about a different kind of life?

### **Abundant Life**

God had a great plan for us. It was for the Church – the individ-

uals called by the grace of God – to have a new type of life similar in nature to the life of Jesus Himself. The life in Adam was given from the Creator to His creature. The new life that Jesus is offering is given from God the Father to His sons.

In Genesis 2, God “breathed into his [man’s] nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (v.7). After His resurrection the Lord Jesus “breathed on them [His disciples] and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn. 20:22). God breathed into Adam to give him life; Jesus breathed into His disciples to give them God Himself: the Holy Spirit.

Every human being receives life through birth. A baby carries the attributes of his parents in terms of physical, mental and behavioral attributes. For the abundant life, a person needs to be born again; only a true Christian has the new life. The Holy Spirit does this work, using the Word of God, the Bible. Similar to natural birth, in the second birth the newly born believer carries the moral and spiritual attributes of his Father – God.

Peter built on this fact when he wrote: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may pro-

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claim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). What Jesus had in mind was not to improve some individuals, but to create a completely new race. The purpose and meaning of life is still the same: to reflect God’s glory, proclaiming His excellencies.

The major difference is the power that we have to achieve

that purpose. In Adam, we have life from God, yet we separated ourselves from Him and the result is death. In Jesus, we have God Himself living in us by the Holy Spirit. He has the power to lead us in the victorious life that reflects the glories and attributes of our Father. **GT**

*Look for Part 6 of this Series in next month’s Grace & Truth Magazine!*

## **RESPONSE**

• **I read the magazine and then as the Lord leads** I use the entire booklet as a tract, leaving them in strategic places and giving them to people. I get as much use of them as possible.  
– *New Hampshire, USA*

• **I wish to state that I really derived a lot of spiritual blessings** from the publications, especially this year. My prayer is that the whole world shall be for Christ. I thank you for your consistency and commitment. May God bless you.  
– *Niger State, Nigeria*

• **Thank you for our magazine subscription.** The *Series* on “Dispensations” (Oct. ’17 – Jan. ’18) was especially appreciated. Please renew our subscription.  
– *Nairobi, Kenya*

• **I received the November 2017 edition today.** Its topic of “Prayer” is one emphasized frequently during preaching in our church. God bless you all for preparing us for heaven.  
– *Abuja, Nigeria*

• **We appreciate your support to the men in this prison.** Those who read the magazine express their gratitude for your unconditional love. Thanks.  
– *Ohio, USA*



*The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.*



# **The Unsearchable Riches Of Christ – The Theme Of The Bible**

by Alan Groth

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## **Christ Our Life**

Paul stated in Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” In Galatians 2:20 he said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

By receiving Christ, Paul received a new life. Christ imparts His life to all who believe in Him.

Let’s look at some Bible passages where we see Christ as our life.

### **Read John 1:1-18**

1. In whom was life? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Where did the light shine? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How does one become a child of God? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who brought about the birth of these children? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Read John 11:14-45**

1. What did Jesus say of Himself to Martha (v.25)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How did He prove this? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read John 14:1-6

1. How did Jesus answer Thomas's question? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read 1 John 1:1-4

1. What did John declare about the Lord Jesus Christ in these verses?

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### Read 1 John 5:11-12

1. How do we have eternal life? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read Ephesians 2:1-7

1. What were we like before God made us alive? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What three things did God do for us together with Christ? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is God going to show in the ages to come? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read Philippians 1:21

1. How did Paul live his life? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-11

1. What are we to be carrying about in our body? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is to be manifested then in our mortal flesh? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read Colossians 3:1-4

1. What are we to seek? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Where is our life? \_\_\_\_\_

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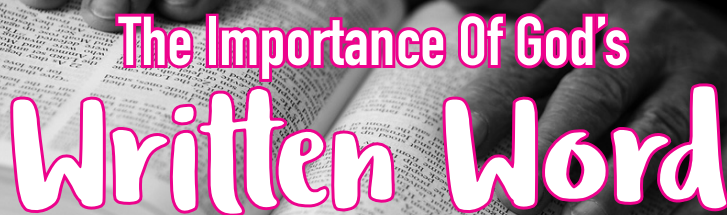
3. When will this life be in full display? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Read John 8:12

"I am the light of the \_\_\_\_\_. He who follows Me shall not \_\_\_\_\_  
in darkness, but have the light of \_\_\_\_\_."

In our next month's *Discover Column* look for more riches of Christ.



# The Importance Of God's Written Word

by Alfred Bouter

Sometime after the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:1-20), a group of wise men from the East arrived in Jerusalem. They came with an important mission: “Where is He who has been born King<sup>1</sup> of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Mt. 2:2 NKJV). How was it that they had come from so far away and yet knew what had just occurred?

In the days of the prophet Daniel, God used him to graciously and miraculously save the lives of many wise men. Nebuchadnezzar then placed Daniel, whom he called Belteshazzar, as head over them (Dan. 1:7, 2:48).<sup>2</sup> These wise men and their following generations had come to possess a book written by Daniel which described future events (see 9:24-27, 10:1-12:13). Around the time indicated in Daniel 9, the wise men of a later generation (Mt. 2) noticed miraculous things in the skies and, having been intrigued about

them and based on what they knew and observed, traveled to Jerusalem. Once there, they must have been surprised to find that the leaders were not prepared for the arrival of this King – and not interested either.

The reigning king, Herod “the great,” summoned the Jewish religious leaders to find out where this birth had happened, pretending that he wanted to go and worship Him. In reality, Herod was planning to kill this One whom he thought would seek his throne. The scribes quoted Micah (5:2-4) to confirm that Bethlehem of Judea was the place where the Messiah must be born, but they showed no desire to go and worship Him. Herod’s sinister plans were nullified by God’s intervention (Mt. 2:7-15) even though He allowed the slaughter of the innocent babes and infants (vv.16-18).

These details show us that faith and love for Him and His Word are needed to accept “as it is written” – a phrase repeated

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often in Scripture – and to act accordingly, with the right motives and intentions. Especially in our days of decline and departure, it is *essential* to hold fast to God’s written Word. Therefore the apostle Paul encouraged his young co-worker, Timothy, to continue in the things he had learned from him and known from the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14-17). All believers are encouraged to follow Paul’s example and teaching (1 Cor. 11:1), which are still valid and relevant today.

### God Made Known His Thoughts

God made His thoughts for His chosen people known through Moses in Genesis through Deuteronomy. Joshua, Moses successor, communicated God’s commandment to the people to build a special altar, “*as it is written* in the Book of the Law of Moses” (Josh. 8:31). The fourth generation and those that followed departed from God’s thoughts, causing much failure during the days of the judges, as “every one did what was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25). In time, God brought the rule of David, the king after His heart, to implement His thoughts (Ps. 132). David passed this reign on to his son Solomon, whom God had adopted as son (2 Sam. 12:24-25), despite David’s own failures.

The plan was that Solomon

would, as David exhorted him, “Keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, *as it is written* in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn” (1 Ki. 2:3). After his initial obedience, sadly Solomon failed, for his heart was turned to various idols while he officially served God (11:1-11). This led to the division of the kingdom.

In later generations mention was made and practice was observed of the instructions God had given “*according to what is written* in the Book of the Law of Moses” (2 Ki. 14:6). Much later, in the days of Jeremiah, after things had gone very bad, especially under Manasseh, God worked a great revival through King Josiah. During that time there was much emphasis on the Word of God, which had been found in the temple by the high priest Hilkiah (22:8). Josiah then “commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, *as it is written* in this Book of the Covenant’” (23:21). Remember, these events happened and were written as lessons for us today (1 Cor. 10:1-13).

Because of Israel’s ongoing unfaithfulness, God sent the Ten Tribes of northern Israel into captivity (2 Ki. 17), during the days

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of several Assyrian kings. Most of these tribes are still scattered among the nations, and they will be until their future restoration takes place (Ezek. 20).

The Two Tribes – Judah and Benjamin with a remnant of the Levites as well as some belonging to the other tribes – experienced the great revival under King Josiah, yet many of them were sent into the Babylonian captivity, in three successive phases, because of the disobedience of the kings after Josiah (Jer. 24; 2 Chr. 36). When the 70 years of captivity had passed (Jer. 29:10), a remnant returned to Jerusalem, also in three phases, and started to rebuild the temple and restore the city. However, after the 400 “silent years” following the last prophet, Malachi, the remaining Two Tribes were still not ready for God and His King. Then God sent John the Baptist “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Lk. 1:17; see also Mk. 1:1-13; Jn. 1; Mt. 3; Lk. 3).

### **The Word Of God Keeps Its Relevance**

Even though there was so much departure and failure among what remained of God’s people, it is striking to read seven times in 2 Chronicles that things were done *according to what was written*.<sup>3</sup> The Chronicles were prob-

ably written by Ezra the scribe many years after a remnant had returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. Second Chronicles in particular describes remnant conditions and *faithfulness to the Word* during the days before the captivity, despite the prevailing unfaithfulness. Following is a brief overview of those seven passages in 2 Chronicles.

1. “Jehoiada appointed the oversight of the house of the LORD to the hand of the priests, the Levites, whom David had assigned in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt offerings of the LORD, *as it is written* in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as it was established by David” (23:18).

2. Amaziah “did not put their children to death, but did *as it is written* in the law in the book of Moses, which the LORD commanded, saying, ‘Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons be put to death for fathers, but each shall be put to death for his own sin’” (25:4 NASB).

3. “They decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the LORD, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often *as prescribed* (30:5 ESV).

4. “A majority of the people,

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many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than *as prescribed*. For Hezekiah had prayed for them, saying, ‘May the good LORD pardon everyone’” (v.18). This shows God’s grace for His failing people who had the desire to please Him.

5. “The king also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, *as it is written* in the Law of the LORD” (31:3 NKJV).

6. “Then they removed the burnt offerings that they might give them to the sections of the fathers’ households of the lay people to present to the LORD, *as it is written* in the book of Moses. They did this also with the bulls” (35:12 NASB).

7. “Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his goodness, *according to what was written* in the Law of the LORD, and his deeds from first to last, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah (vv.26-27 NKJV).

The remnant that returned to Jerusalem, to the place of God’s dwelling, was characterized by the

fact that they did things *according to what is written in God’s Word* (Ezra 3:2,4; Neh. 8:15, 10:34,36), and they maintained God’s interests in accordance with it.

Gradually, however, despite all good intentions, a system de-

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**When the Lord Jesus came to fulfill God’s promises, He challenged the leaders for keeping the letter but not fulfilling God’s thoughts.**

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veloped where traditions were placed above God’s Word. Malachi challenged the priests and the people belonging to this remnant because they were in their position according to God’s thoughts, but their spiritual condition was not right in God’s eyes. When the Lord Jesus came to fulfill God’s promises, He challenged the leaders for keeping the letter of the law but not fulfilling God’s thoughts. In other words, they acted according to what is written, but did so only in a formal way, not with love to the Lord and His people.

The Lord Jesus often challenged them on this issue, see for instance Matthew 23. In Matthew 5, the Lord said five times, “You have heard that it was said” – referring to those traditions. It may be of value to note that “five” in Scripture is a number that speaks of responsibility, like the five fin-



gers on each hand and five toes on each foot. He followed each with, “But I say...”,<sup>4</sup> and then He referred to the unchanging and unchangeable Word of God.

May we learn from these examples to put into practice *what is written* (Jas. 1:22). Today, this implies acting in accordance with the New Testament teachings

– because we are not under the law of Moses – and doing so with the right motives and intentions, for His honor and glory until He comes! God is not only interested that we keep and respect His written Word, but He wants us to do this from the heart, rather than outwardly in self-righteousness by keeping the letter. **GT**

Your have heard it said..."	"But I say to you.."
"You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment" (v.21)	Read verses 22-26.
"You shall not commit adultery ... Whoever divorces his wife" (v.27,31).	Read verses 28-32.
"You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord" (v.33).	Read verses 34-37.
"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (v.38).	Read verses 39-42.
"You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (v. 43).	Read verses 44-48.

**Endnotes:**

- 1. When a baby boy is born into a royal family he is called a prince, but when the Lord Jesus was born He was immediately called King!
- 2. To know how their lives had been saved, please read Daniel 2. The position Daniel received (2:47) does not imply that he practiced the same things as the wise men, but his special God-given abilities to interpret dreams caused the king to place him over the whole group.

- 3. The Hebrew text has 16 times a compound word that can be translated “as it is written” (Josh. 8:31; 1 Ki. 2:3; 2 Ki. 14:6, 23:21; 2 Chr. 23:18, 25:4, 30:5,18, 31:3, 35:12,26; Ezra 3:2,4; Neh. 8:15,10:34,36). The same Hebrew term, which occurs seven times in 2 Chronicles, is sometimes translated “as prescribed” or in other ways.
- 4. “But I say to you” is in Matthew 5 six times (vv.22,28,32,34,39,44). Interestingly, the same Greek word appears a seventh time in Ephesians 5:32.

# Q&A

**Some of my friends are encouraging me to join their lodge. How can I tell which social organizations are okay to join and which are not? To what extent should I get involved in one?**

**L**et me begin by asking you two questions:

- If the Lord Jesus, your Savior and Lord, were here on earth in person right now, which lodge do you think would invite *Him* to join?

- Which social organizations, if any, would *He* feel free to join?

I hesitate even to ask to what extent He would feel free to get involved in a social organization.

When we consider His life on earth 2,000 years ago we can be sure He was faced with somewhat similar questions. We are not specifically told of social organizations in the Gospels, but we find some respected and some not-so respected religious societies at that time. None of these give any indication that they would have welcomed Him as a member. Rather,

while they were quite different, the one thing they had in common was that they all displayed enmity, or hostility, against Him.

History tells us that the Pharisees were a relatively small, elite, much-respected organization. The apostle Paul, before he was converted, had been a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5). In Matthew 23:2 Jesus told the crowds and His disciples that the Pharisees and the scribes sat in Moses' seat. Back in Exodus 18:13-16 we see what this meant: Moses daily sat and judged the people, teaching them God's statutes and laws.

"Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do," Jesus told those who were listening. But He added, "Do not do according to their works, for they say and do not do" (Mt. 23:3 NKJV). He then gave examples of their lifestyle; it was a lifestyle that came far short of what they were teaching. In Matthew 15 He called them "hypocrites" (v.7) because by their traditions they were making the commandments of God of no effect.

Several times we find the Lord accepting an invitation from a Pharisee to dine at his house. But when we look more closely we see that they invited Him in order to watch Him and find fault in His talk. But He knew exactly what needed to be said to the

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conscience of His host. He always was Master of each situation.

Interestingly, we never find the Lord in the home of a Sadducee. Most of the priests at that time were Sadducees. They were known for not believing in all that God's Word taught: "For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection – and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). The Lord could have no fellowship with persons who went through all the forms and ceremonies of religion and yet did not believe basic elements of its teaching. A delegation of these Sadducees once asked Jesus a question that they felt clearly ridiculed Scripture, but He confounded them with His answer (Mt. 22:23-34, quoted on the next page in this magazine).

In this chapter the Pharisees even teamed up with the Herodians (v.16), a politically-oriented group of that day, to try to trap the Lord with a question about the tribute payment to Caesar. If He would answer one way, the answer would be seditious, or rebellious against the government. They felt if He were to answer the opposite way, He would lose His popularity with the people. However, He astounded them with the wisdom of His answer: "Render ... to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (v.21).

Many social organizations have some project of doing good as one of their purposes. Peter told Cornelius and those gathered at his house that Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). The Church – the organism rather than the organization, though often erroneously called that – has done and is doing a tremendous amount of good. And friend, as an individual you can easily find many ways of doing good and helping others! There is no shortage of needs in this world, and no shortage of opportunities to help meet them.

A very well-known passage of Scripture speaking on this subject begins with 2 Corinthians 6:14, which says, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." After pointing out the incongruity, or inappropriateness, of such a yoke, the passage concludes: "Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate,' says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (vv.17-18).

Social organizations offer opportunities to socialize with others who have similar interests. This often involves eating and drinking together, and the drinking may well involve alcoholic beverages. While these have their uses in moderation, as 1 Timothy

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5:23 shows us, there are numerous passages in God's Word warning us against overindulgence in them. A person might abstain from drinking, but one is known by the company he keeps. No man can serve two masters, our Lord has clearly stated (Mt. 6:24), and the attempt to do so inevitably has bad results.

Some of the foregoing state-

ments can also be applied to professional organizations, of which a worker is obliged to be a member in order to practice a trade or earn a living. We are not under law but must use the wisdom God so freely offers to give us. May our aim be to please Him, and may we ever weigh carefully before Him every invitation and inclination!

—Answered by Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

### **Matthew 22:23-34**

The same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Him and asked Him, saying: "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother. Likewise the second also, and the third, even to the seventh. Last of all the woman died also. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had her."

Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitudes heard *this*, they were astonished at His teaching.

But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

# AVOID ABORTION

by Emanuel V. John

**P**eople from every culture and custom, including Christians, are faced with making significant choices concerning life. We can never go wrong in doing what is right, by making the choice to believe God and obey His Word. The Bible is the Master Manual for life and daily living.

## Our Awesome God

God knows us absolutely, or wholly. God even knew us before we were born. This is expressed in the words spoken by Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5 NKJV). When we were still in our embryonic beginnings in the womb, He knew our very thoughts. "You understand my thought afar off," David pointed out, "... For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And

in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them" (Ps. 139:2,13-14,16).

## An Appeal To Christians

Avoid even thinking about abortion, nor yield to personal, family, political or social pressure as to it. Every person has a free will, but we must yield to God's will! Satan said, in effect, "My will, *not* God's will": "For you [Lucifer] have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation" (Isa. 14:13). But the Lord Jesus lived out "*Not* My will, but God's will." "He [Jesus] ... prayed saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, *not* as I will, but as You will" (Mt. 26:39). Likewise, the apostle Paul exchanged the *self*-life for the *Christ*-life, and said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in

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the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

We too must follow God's will and know that children are gifts from God to be loved, treasured and trained for Him. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is His reward" (Ps. 127:3).

### God's Amazing Grace

We discover more of His amazing grace when we believe Him in the midst of difficulties. My family told me that before I was born my dad was working on a crane along the coast. While at work, a telephone pole unhooked and struck him on his shoulder with a great force, which threw him into the sea. He was rescued, but his left shoulder and hand were severely injured, leaving only one living vein in his hand. Dad was hospitalized. At one point he was in critical condition, and the doctor gave no hope of his survival. However, he was a true believer, and in quietness God gave my dad this message: "[You] shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD" (Ps. 118:17).

Soon after, even though he was in pain, my mother brought him home, where she cared for him. Three years later, with six children in the family, a sick husband, and no significant source of support, my mother discovered

that she was pregnant with her seventh child. She believed God in spite of the odds, knowing that the baby could be born with various defects. But God honored her faith in Him and gave her a healthy baby boy. That child is the one who is now writing this appeal to you. Thank God for godly parents, for all seven children and the grandchildren are in the family of God. I am now 72 years of age, serving the Lord.

### An Assurance

I want you to know that there is hope, help and healing in our precious Lord Jesus. If you have had abortions and are haunted by the ghost of guilt, please know that God's grace is greater than your sin. God says, "Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom. 5:20). Do not cover your sins, but confess them to the Lord and receive His forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). Now that you are forgiven when you confess your sins, you do not want to ever, by God's grace, have another abortion. Conquer sins by walking in the light of God's Word and having fellowship with Him (1 Jn. 1:7). Thus, say "NO" to abortion and "YES" in your allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. **GT**



# 2 Timothy

by Leslie M. Grant

*"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God."*

—2 Timothy 1:8 NKJV

**L**ike First Timothy, Second Timothy deals with individual responsibility in connection with the *Church* or *Assembly* – two English words used to translate the same Greek word. Paul wrote this letter from prison. It was his last epistle, written knowing that he was about to be put to death for his witness for the Lord. Here he no longer spoke of the house of God, but of "a great house" (2:20). That which had once been God's house in some measure of purity and truth had degenerated to the point of allowing gross error and vessels to dishonor. Also, all in Asia had turned away from Paul (1:15), no longer desiring his teaching.

But he was not discouraged. Indeed, with a rejoicing heart he encouraged this young man to strengthen him against his own natural timidity. Timothy was to

be unashamed of the testimony of the Lord, rightly dividing the Word of Truth (2:15) and making full use of all its blessed truth, acting with firmness and decision for God. He was not to neglect any of it, whether in the work of an evangelist or in ministry to the people of God. Second Timothy 2 shows the believer in eight important aspects of life and is excellent for any believer who honestly desires to serve the Lord today.

During days of departure and spiritual carelessness, this book holds grand encouragement for the upright heart. It declares the blessedness of God's provision in view of His foreknowledge of present conditions. Thus, whatever may be the dishonor done to God's name in professing Christendom, one may yet be true to the meaning of Timothy's name: "honoring God." **GT**

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*This column is adapted from the book "The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief."  
It is available for purchase from: Believer's Bookshelf USA ([www.bbusha.org](http://www.bbusha.org))  
and Believers Bookshelf Canada ([www.bbcan.org](http://www.bbcan.org)).*

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He was embracing an old, dirty milk bottle. The judge, remembering the last time he was there, immediately called for the interpreter.

Through the interpreter the man said to the judge that he was sorry for being late and he asked for forgiveness. Then he said, "Judge, I know you gave me 30 days to raise the money to pay this fine, and I walked all last night to get here. I'm sorry I'm late." Finally with shaking hands he took the milk container and set it down before them. "Judge, this is all I could raise from all my friends and from everything I could sell, and I don't think it's enough."

The judge said to the clerk and the bailiff, "Count it quickly," and they dumped all those coins out and counted them while the judge waited. The fine was \$300.00, and the money they counted out totaled approximately \$240.00. It was not enough.

Told what it was, the old man said, "Judge, please, just a little time, and I'll be back with all the rest."

That judge had tears in his eyes. He told the people in the courtroom, "I haven't seen anything like this in all the time I've been on the bench. This man walked all the way, all night, and

brought what he could. Now he's begging for time to pay the rest!"

Then the judge said, "Because of your spirit, because of the way you repented and are sorry, I'm going to suspend the rest of the sentence. You go free!"

We feel better about that, don't we? But still it wasn't justice! The judge overlooked the judgment and the penalty that should have been paid.

### **Genuine Justice**

But God is *just* when He justifies a sinner, because He doesn't overlook one sin. Not one!

Christ on the cross in those three hours of darkness bore the penalty for all my sins – He didn't overlook one.

Isn't it wonderful to be free from judgment, the load gone, at peace with God and on your way to heaven? That is what is offered you through the gospel.

"Being *justified* by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1 KJV).

"God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now *justified* by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (vv.8-9). **GT**

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**I**t was December 24 in Southern California. A judge in his robes sat on the bench that morning in a crowded courtroom. The first case came before him. He pronounced judgment – a fine and a jail sentence – and then said, “I am in the spirit of this season and so I’m going to suspend it all. That’s it! Next case.” And he went through all the cases that morning the same way.

The word soon spread. Attorneys called friends who had cases coming up soon, and they rushed to have those cases put on the docket. At two o’clock that judge saw that he couldn’t possibly get done that day. He just forgave them all, because he was “in the spirit of the season.”

He said to the clerk, “Mark all of those that are here, and I will now pronounce judgment for all of them.” The same thing: “Forgiven – suspended.” But he wasn’t just! There was no justice at all!

### **Suspended Sentence**

On the same day, the same morning, a judge was on the bench in Tucson, Arizona. He was doing justice, honoring the law. In the middle of the morning he called the case of a man who had been in court 30 days before, a man who had received an extension of 30 days to raise the money for his fine. The man didn’t answer. The judge said, “I’ll set it aside till the end of the court.”

Later in the day that man came in. He was an immigrant, an old man, and he walked right up to the bench.

*- continued on inside back cover*