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The Long-Awaited Kingdom

(Convention Address)

No student of God's word needs to be told what kingdom is meant—the only one that is of interest is God's kingdom, ruled over by His appointed king, the Lord Jesus. When we look around us at the governments and kingdoms of this world and see their feeble efforts to bring stability to a world in crisis, we pray the more fervently "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth".

Australia has a severe balance of payments problem. Each month we import very much more than we export so we have an ever-increasing overseas debt. Inflation is once again on the rise and we have soaring interest rates. From a recent inquiry into corruption we have seen that many of those in positions of authority are primarily looking after their own interests rather than those of the people. No doubt there are also many genuine and sincere ones who are striving to do the very best they can but are meeting with little success. Even when the very best people become leaders, they find themselves hamstrung by lack of power and authority. A Prime Minister, a President or a King has very little absolute power in these days; they are all subject to a Cabinet or similar body. The government itself is subject to many pressure and lobby groups seeking their own interests.

A speaker recently pointed out that Queen Elizabeth and most of the small number of monarchs that still remain are reigning kings and queens but not ruling kings and queens. They have no real authority or power. A government made up of many members who each have different ideas of what should be done also can make only limited progress. In Biblical times and up to not so long ago, kings both reigned and ruled. Their word was law and no one could tell them what to do or not to do. Such power in the hands of an unrighteous king could be a very

dangerous thing, but in the hands of a perfect king would provide the very best form of government possible.

THE COMING KING

Just such a king is promised, our King, the One of whom we sing—"Praise to our King who is coming to reign, Glory to Jesus the Lamb who was slain". In John 18:37 Pilate asked Jesus "art thou a king?" Our Lord's reply was "thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world". Later in Matt. 28:18, after Jesus had risen from the dead, He said "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth". The Greek word translated power means privilege and authority. This mighty power and authority was conferred upon Him by His Heavenly Father. How beautifully this harmonises with the words of the second Psalm.

1. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?
2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,
3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.
4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.
5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.
6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.
7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.
8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel". (Psalm 2:1-9)

We tend perhaps to think of this psalm as being purely prophetic of our day, just the close of this age, but it seems that the Psalmist looking at it from the vantage point of his day, sees our Lord's first advent, then the whole Gospel Age culminating in the start of the kingdom reign. Verse 7 applies to the raising up of Jesus from the dead by the Heavenly Father. Here Jesus is the one speaking. Young's Literal Translation gives a better rendering, using the term "brought forth" in place of "begotten" (AV) "Jehovah says unto me, My Son Thou art, I today have brought thee forth". The New Testament writers quote this verse three times, in Heb. 1:5, Heb. 5:5 and Acts 13:33. The context of the last-named reads—"and we declare unto you glad tidings, how the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David". (Acts 13:32-34)

THE ANOINTING

The passage clearly applies Psa. 2:7 to the resurrection of our Lord. Young's translation of Verse 6 is also interesting—"I have anointed My King, upon Zion My holy hill". The allusion here would seem to be to King David, who ruled over the typical kingdom and established his throne on literal Mount Zion, being anointed by God three separate times. The final anointing of our Lord is on the symbolic Mount Zion in the heavenly Jerusalem, when he commences his kingdom reign from the throne of David. All authority and power was given to Jesus when the Heavenly Father raised him from the dead on the third day after the crucifixion, but it was not yet time for him to exercise that authority so far as the world was concerned, not yet time to take over David's throne. There had first to be a selection of joint-heirs to share the kingdom reign with their Master. The world was to be given a further period of time to experience what it is like to live in the kingdom of darkness under the Adversary's control, for he is the prince of this world.

Jesus has always been a ruling and reigning monarch so far as His true followers are concerned. They gladly accept Him as their King, they delight to obey His laws, though sometimes they may carry them out rather imperfectly through weakness of the fallen nature. Very soon, however, He is to be a ruling and reigning king over all the earth from God's holy hill of Zion.

Psalm 2:4 says "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision". Sometimes in translating from one language to another, it is hard to convey the subtle shades of meaning contained in the original tongue. One scholar has said the word 'laugh' would be better translated 'smile' but this still does not convey the full meaning. The thought is of calm serenity on the part of God; He is not in the least fazed or perturbed by all the tumult that is going on, by the raging of the nations and by the rulers banding together against Him and His Anointed. What indeed can puny man do against the almighty God? Everything is under His control, His plans are all made and will be fulfilled right to the letter at the appointed time. The outcome has never been in doubt, God has always known what the end result will be from the very beginning. God's attitude should be ours also, one of calm serenity and inner peace, no matter how difficult the days may become. If we see the symbolic sea and waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, it should not perturb us either. If our faith remain strong, we will know that God is in control and that all things are working out his plans and purposes which will be to the ultimate benefit of the whole human family.

The following verse (Psa. 2:5) gives the contrast "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure". Down the ages, God has been sitting by, as it were, allowing mankind to go their own way, but the time has come in the divine program for the kingdom reign to start. The day of God's wrath has come, the great time of trouble in which the control of this world's affairs will be taken out of the hands of fallen mankind and given to God's appointed King. It is Jesus who then speaks in Verse 7 "I will declare the decree; the Lord (Jehovah) hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I brought thee forth".

Many scoff at the suggestion that Jesus who lived nearly 2000 years ago was anything more than a mere man. They ridicule the truth that He was God's Son brought forth from the grave by the Father's power. In this verse (V.7) Jesus is saying that the time will come when He is going to declare this decree, that He is in fact the Son of the living God who brought Him forth from the dead. No doubt the decree will go out to all the earth and this time they will believe. Israel will mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son. (Zech. 12:10) All the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matt. 24:30) "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power". (Psa. 110:3) The kingdom reign will be a success, the majority of

the people will be willing then when Jesus comes in power and glory. They will be brought to a realisation of their undone condition, their consciences will be sensitised. They will mourn over sin, what they have been, what they have done, just as the followers of Jesus at this time mourn when through weakness of the flesh they do something which they know will have displeased their Heavenly Father.

THE KING'S INHERITANCE

In Psalm 2:8,9, the Heavenly Father is speaking to His Son—"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel". There can be no doubt that these verses refer to the kingdom reign. It would seem to be the ruling authorities and powers that are to be broken in pieces. The rule by a rod of iron is pictorial language, an iron rod cannot be bent or broken. And so will it be with the laws of the kingdom, there will never be any compromise with unrighteousness. "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters shall overflow the hiding place". (Isa. 28:17) Different pictorial language is used in Isa. 11:4, but the thought contained is very similar—"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked". In Isa. 28:17, the water represents our Lord's words, which He said would judge the world in the last day. The hail is the hard truth which will hurt the unrighteous. In Isa. 11:4, "the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips" are again His word, the truth. The majority of the wicked will be figuratively slain in this way by the truth and turn to righteousness. Only those who are incorrigible will experience a literal slaying in the second death. We would hope and expect that these will be few in number.

Most Christians would admit to a belief in the kingdom of God but many do not understand either the scope or the grandeur of that kingdom. Some think of it as simply a sentiment in the hearts of believers, others understand the church in the flesh to be all that is meant by the term "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" as it is so frequently called in the scriptures. The true church in the flesh is indeed the kingdom, not the reigning kingdom but the kingdom in its embryonic stage, in its developmental state. It can rightly be called the kingdom of heaven because its members are the potential kings and priests who are to reign with Christ in the glorified stage of the kingdom.

THE KINGDOM PREACHED

In the New Testament, attention is first drawn to the kingdom by the words of John the Baptist in Matt. 3:2 "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". When Jesus commenced His ministry, He carried on the same theme. In Matt. 4:17 He repeated John's earlier statement, "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand". Then Jesus instructed His 12 apostles to preach the same message, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt. 10:7) The kingdom was always uppermost in our Lord's mind, and in Matt. 9:35 we read that Jesus went about all the cities and villages teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

Some have had difficulties in understanding these passages. John the Baptist and Jesus both declared that the kingdom of heaven was then at hand, yet nearly 2000 years have passed since that far away day and we are still praying and waiting for the kingdom to come. Has something gone wrong? No, nothing can go wrong with any of our Heavenly Father's plans. It is very clear that Jesus was speaking of the opening of the door to the high calling as the Apostle Paul later described it. The way into the spiritual phase of the kingdom was now open for the first time. A change of dispensation had taken place and God's program was entering a new stage. The dispensation of the law and the prophets was only until John the Baptist, from that time on the kingdom of heaven was preached. God was now making a selection of those of the right heart condition to be the future kings and priests and to rule under their Head at the appointed time. It was in this sense that the kingdom was at hand then, in the sense that now is the acceptable time, the time for one to consecrate his or her life and make ready to assist in the great restitution work, when the kingdom is reigning over the earth. All such are looked upon by God as being in the kingdom of heaven now, as the apostle Paul tells us in Col. 1:13, "the Father—hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son".

Luke 17:20,21 records that the Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come, and our Lord's reply was that "the kingdom cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is among you". (AV margin) Jesus and His followers were the nucleus of the kingdom at that time. They were among the people, but were unappreciated and unrecognised and this has been so all through the age until today — the true kingdom of heaven class has not been recognised by the world. Yet they have been in the midst of the people just as Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is among you".

KINGDOM PARABLES

Matthew 13 records a number of parables which our Lord gave and which we refer to as the kingdom parables. Each begins with the words "the kingdom of heaven is like unto this or like unto that". These again are speaking of the church in the flesh during the Gospel Age, which is described as the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom which contains both true and false Christians, as the parable of the wheat and tares shows. The wheat which is the good seed is sown by Jesus and represents the true children of the kingdom. The tares are the children of the wicked one, whose seed is sown by the devil in an attempt to confuse and choke out the true wheat. A similar picture is given in the parable of the dragnet, but using different symbolism. The parable commences with the words "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net", a net which gathers in both good and bad fish, corresponding with the wheat and tares of the earlier parable, the good being retained and the bad rejected. We should note that both classes had previously been in the net representing the kingdom. None of these parables is speaking of the wicked people of the world in general but only of imitation Christians who have come into the church masquerading as true wheat.

In Matt. 13:33 we have the parable of the leaven showing the spread of error and false doctrine by the counterfeit church. The verse reads "the kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened". Some understand this parable to show the spread of truth throughout the whole world. If we were to extend the duration of the parable to the end of the Millennial Age, none would doubt that this would be the ultimate result. However this interpretation presents several difficulties, firstly that the parables do not seem to depict the outcome for the world in general during the Gospel or Millennial Ages but are confined to the church, true and nominal, which is the kingdom of heaven of the parables.

It is notable that a woman hid the leaven in the meal. There are two prominent women mentioned in the scriptures, one being referred to in Gal. 4:26 where we are told of "Jerusalem above, the free woman which is the mother of us all". (Diaglott) This is a symbol of the true church. The other woman is Babylon the Great (Rev. 17:3-5) which depicts the false church. This would be the woman who hid the leaven in the meal. The meal would represent the basic fundamental truth of God's word, the Christian's genuine spiritual food, originally pure and uncontaminated. This woman hid the leaven, something she did secretly, furtively, unobserved and unknown to most that it was there. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole

lump". (1 Cor. 5:6) Leaven never pictures anything good in either the Old or New Testaments. Under the law, Israel were to observe seven days of unleavened bread when no leaven was to be found in their homes. This was at the time of Passover and pictured a sinless condition which should be the aim of all God's people. At Memorial times we partake of unleavened bread, symbolic of our Lord's perfect, sinless body.

Furthermore, our Lord's advice to His followers (Matt. 16:6) was to "take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees". Verse 12 in the chapter tells us that the leaven represented their false doctrine. These were the recognised religious leaders of that day and the same warning applies with equal force to us — we are also to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees of our day, those presenting doctrines of manmade origin.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

It is most appropriate that the church in the flesh bear the title of the kingdom of heaven, because that is exactly what it is. God's government reigning over the earth in the next age will be made up of its members, the true wheat class. These will live and reign with Christ for 1000 years. (Rev. 20:6) As the Master said to His followers (Luke 22:29) "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me", or as the Diaglott renders it "I covenant for you even as my Father has covenanted for me a kingdom". Daniel 7 shows the fulfilment of our Lord's words. In verse 13, we have a picture of Jesus coming before the Heavenly Father to receive the Kingdom, then verse 14 goes on "and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed".

This verse is very comprehensive and should be source of very great encouragement to all who can accept it. Verse 27 in the same chapter shows the saints receiving the kingdom as the Lord said, "and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him". Christians who fail to see this future aspect of the kingdom miss its main point and objective. It would be true to say that all of past history from the Garden of Eden until today has been but a time of preparation for the kingdom reign. In the centuries before Christ, a selection of the Princes, the visible rulers in the earthly phase of the kingdom, was being made; after Christ, a selection of the kings and priests to reign with Him in the spiritual phase has been

going on. The great majority of people understand none of these things, they see a world virtually crying out for help and they ask, "If there is a God, why does He not do something about it?" His plans have, however, been steadily progressing for the last 6000 years, unhindered by the many and varied upheavals that have taken place in the social order during that time. But these plans have been unobserved and unknown to most.

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

The future aspect of the kingdom is brought out by our Lord in the parable of the nobleman in Luke 19:11-27. He said that a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return. Jesus Himself went to the far country of heaven and received the kingdom from His Father, but it is not until after His return that His reign commences. The apostle Peter tells us in Acts 3:21, that the heavens must receive Jesus "until the times of restitution of all things". The parable of the nobleman goes on to show the saints given ruling authority in varying degrees according to their faithfulness and labours. Verse 11 gives two reasons why Jesus told this parable just then—firstly because He was near to Jerusalem and secondly because the disciples thought that the kingdom would immediately appear. Jerusalem is synonymous with the kingdom and symbolises it in both its phases. It was the seat of God's government during the days of the typical kingdom and David reigned from there. We understand that it will be once again the seat of God's kingdom during the Millennium. The disciples at that time thought that Jesus would immediately bring in the kingdom which was to be restored, evidently not having yet come to understand about the heavenly, spiritual phase.

The two on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:21) said "we trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel" and in Acts 1:6 we read that when the disciples came together on the Mount of Olives to witness our Lord's ascension, they asked Him "wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" His reply was that "it is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father hath put in His own power". The Master's reply indicates that their hopes for Israel would indeed be fulfilled, though not as soon as they had expected. Acts 1:12 tells us that it was a Sabbath's day journey back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. Scholars tell that this refers to the distance the Jews were allowed to travel on the Sabbath, namely 2000 cubits or paces. This might well picture the 2000 years of the Gospel Age which were to intervene before the kingdom symbolised by Jerusalem was restored.

The words of the thief on the cross next to Jesus are recorded in Luke 23:42—"And he said unto, Jesus, Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom". These are indeed remarkable words. Jesus was hanging there on a cross, just about to die, and the thief asked to be remembered when he came into his kingdom. What a display of faith, this man evidently accepted our Lord's claim that he was a king and would one day in the future receive a kingdom, and also that God would raise him from the dead, for, after all, a dead king can grant no favours.

KINGDOM BLESSINGS

Our Lord's great prophecy lists the various signs that are to occur at the time of His second presence, right at the end of this age, and in Luke 21:31 we read "so likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand".

The Matthew account has the words "even at the doors". Have we not seen these signs? What a great blessing and source of encouragement our Lord's words should be to us who are living on the very threshold of the kingdom age! This sin-sick world, a world of sorrow and tears, is about to pass away forever and to be replaced by a new heaven and earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Then the world will surely know—

A new age in which all the wonderful promises of God will be fulfilled—

No more wars, sickness, sorrow or tears.
No more crime, violence or hatred.

A world whose inhabitants will forever remain in the flower of youth—

No more growing old, sick or decrepit.
Eventually, no more death.

A world restored to perfection, where nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy kingdom. (JGT:89)

"God has promised a glorious day,
And by faith we now see it draw near.
Our Redeemer has opened the way,
And soon will its glory appear".

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth
as it is in heaven". Amen.

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While it is our intention that these columns be used for teachings strictly in accord with the Lord's Word, we cannot accept responsibility for every expression used, either in the correspondence or in the sermons reported.

“Unto You Is Born— A Saviour

(Luke 2:11)

Once again the coming Christmas season will remind us especially of the so great love of God shown in the gift of His dearly beloved and only-begotten Son to be the Saviour of the world. In our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, coupled with full harmony with and obedience to the Father's will, we recognise the same so great love as the apostle Paul declares—“the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me”.

Yes, the Son of God so loved that He gave Himself not only for Paul, but for each one of us and ultimately for all mankind. Our response should surely be—

“He gave His life for me,
Lord, I give all to Thee”.

The condescension of our Saviour in leaving the heavenly courts to be born a babe in the little town of Bethlehem is made clear in scripture—“Christ Jesus,....though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”. (Phil. 2:5-8 R.S.V.)

The words of the Wise Man in Proverbs 8 seem also to speak clearly of our Lord's former glory with the Father—“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting to everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was. Then I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men”. (Prov. 8:22, 23,30,31)

In His great high priestly prayer our Saviour asked that He might be restored to this glory which He had with the Father before the world was and the apostle Paul assures us that following His perfect obedience even unto death, God has indeed even more highly exalted Him and set Him over all things in heaven, in earth and under the earth.. (Phil. 2:9,10) Meantime, His earthly ministry required the learning of obedience and being made perfect through suffering. (Heb. 5:8, 2:10) He by whom all things were created and who had long shared the heavenly home with the Father, on earth was to confess that the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.

Every child of God, indeed all of mankind, have been redeemed not with the costliest of corruptible things but at far greater price, even the precious blood of Christ, who was ready to lay aside for a while His heavenly glory to share our human experience and to bear our sins in His body on the tree. This greatest of all gift of God is that which each true Christian especially remembers at this season of the year.

“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift”.

Two Men Went up to Pray

“God, I thank Thee that I am not as
other men are.”

“God, be merciful to me a sinner.”
—Luke 18:11, 13.

Two men went up into the Temple to pray...” A story so well known that it needs no repetition. Yet how often do we stop to consider whether we ourselves are become like the man who, fasting twice in the week and giving tithes of all he possessed, found cause for glory, not in the separateness to God but in the separateness from his fellow-men. “I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.” What a miserable confession to make. In looking upon his fellows he saw nothing to emulate, no characteristics or virtues which he could desire for himself, but only the sordid evidences of evil. The reign of sin and death was a very real thing to this Pharisee; and with an exquisite nicety he carefully dissociated himself from it all and explained to the Almighty that, living perforce in an evil world and amidst sinful men, he was nevertheless not of them nor with them, and that he at least was one to whom had come the superior inward knowledge which, separating forever from the plebeian multitude, rendered him a fit companion for the One who dwelt in the inner sanctuary.

We read the story, we smile pityingly at the vivid picture of this pompous Israelite, and mentally place ourselves with the publican standing afar off, as we continue our reading. But what of the lesson behind the parable? Is it not true that many times in the individual Christian life we find ourselves thanking God that we are not as other men? Does it not often happen that this wonderful separateness to God which we call consecration degenerates into a mere smug and self-satisfied separateness from the world? And worse still, at times the suggestion is made that in this latter day, when the purpose of God in calling from the nations a people for his name seems to be on the brink of

completion, a still more exclusive and narrow-minded outlook is called for: — to wit, that our age-old mission as witnesses of Jesus and ministers one to the other must be abrogated in favor of an individual contemplation of the sacred mysteries and a refusal to extend the privilege of fellowship and the Word of Life to all but the favored few who are accepted as being likewise the “sealed of God.” Alas, that the fruit of a one-time zealous response to be “not conformed to this world” should be, not a transforming by the renewing of the mind, with all the marvelous light of spiritual understanding that transformation can bring, but a gravitation to the lowest depths of bigotry, of self-delusion, of utter spiritual blindness which separation from our fellows must mean when we are not separated to God.

The spirit of exclusiveness is amongst us—we must fight it. It is within our hearts—we must root it out. No matter how discouraging our experiences with those to whom we bear the Word of Life—no matter how disappointing our efforts to serve and strengthen our brethren—we must not become narrow or bigoted. Our mission is not to evolve novel expositions and ordered theologies from the Sixty-six Books and demand acceptance of these man-made creations as the way to God. We are exhorted to be sure of our foundation and to have a reason for the faith that is in us, by all means. We are expected to be rooted and grounded in the knowledge which has come our way and we are warned not to compromise our understanding of Divine Truth for the sake of outward harmony. But above all things we are impressed, time and time again, with the necessity for continual progress and advancement in our personal understanding of Truth—and it is in recognizing this basic principle that we shall be able to take our stand in the Temple, with open face and open heart worshipping the Father who dispenses His blessings upon all who come to Him in spirit and in truth. There may be many things—there must of necessity be many things—upon which various disciples do not see eye to eye, and because of differences of thought there must upon occasion be a physical separation into groups for orderly worship and service. But the mystic communion which binds together all who truly name the Name of Christ, transcends such temporary divisions and triumphantly demonstrates the fulfilment of the Savior's prayer, “I will... that they may be one.”

Stand then upon this sure foundation, and we shall have cause to rejoice, not in work of righteousness which we have done but in that common standing in Christ which is our privilege and the seal of divine sonship. (B.S.M.)

Divine Detours

(A Testimony)

“A few years ago, while on a trip through a very hilly country, we came to a detour. We had only gone a few hundred feet when we said, “This cannot be the right road. The ones who routed this highway would not detour us over a road as bad as this one.” But when we looked at the road signs, we saw that this was exactly what they had done. The detour was about eight miles long, and it took us at least an hour to travel the entire length of it. But it led us along a mountain road where we saw some very beautiful scenery which we otherwise would have missed, and brought us again to an even better highway. When we saw how smooth and wide it was, we were not sorry we had taken the side road, for the detour was really a short cut to a better road.

This pictures how sometimes we find ourselves in some trial or bitter experience and we say, “This must be some mistake. God would never arrange for me to have a trial like this. Others may have experiences like this, but such an experience is not for me.” But then we look again at the signposts, and we find the Lord has arranged for us to have this very experience. So we say, “Where He leads me, I will follow.” And just as on the detour we saw scenery we otherwise would have missed, so through this experience we get views of our Heavenly Father's love and sympathy and grace to help that we would otherwise not gain.”

*'Tis sweet to keep my hand in His
While all is dim;
To close my weary, aching eyes
And follow Him.*

And Where is Now My Hope?

Job 17:15

Job's dilemma challenges us to assess the basis of our hope. In the distinctiveness of divine purposes, hope is developed through what might naturally be considered the hopeless circumstances of life. It comes from patience born out of tribulation (Romans 5:3-5). The blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13) provides a daily source of strength and stimulates saints to a life of holy purity (1 John 3:3). —Garry W. Seale

*His oath, His covenant and blood,
Support me in the whelming flood,
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay.
—Edward Mote*

Come to Bethlehem

One mile from Bethlehem is a little plain, in which, under a grove of olives, stands the bare and neglected chapel known by the name of "the Angel and the Shepherds". It is built over the traditional site of the fields where, in the beautiful language of St. Luke—more exquisite than any idyll to Christian ears—"there were shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, when, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them", and to their happy ears were uttered the good tidings of great joy that unto them was born that day in the city of David a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord.

The associations of our Lord's nativity were all of the humblest character, and the very scenery of His birthplace was connected with memories of poverty and toil. On that night, indeed, it seemed as though the heavens must burst to disclose their radiant minstrelsy. The stars, and the feeding sheep, and the "light and sound in the darkness and stillness", and the rapture of faithful hearts, combine to furnish us with a picture painted in the colours of heaven.

But in the brief and thrilling verses of the Evangelist we are not told that those angel songs were heard by any except the wakeful shepherds of an obscure village;—and those shepherds, amid the chill dews of night, were guarding their flocks from the wolf and the robber, in fields where Ruth, their Saviour's ancestress, had "gleaned, sick at heart, amid the alien corn," and David, the despised and youngest son of a numerous family, had followed the ewes great with young.

"And suddenly", adds the sole Evangelist who has narrated the circumstances of that memorable night in which Jesus was born, amid the indifference of the world unconscious of its Deliverer, "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 among men of good will".

"Come now! let us go into Bethlehem, and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord made known to us", said the shepherds, when those angel songs had ceased to break the starry silence. Their way would lead them up the terraced hill, and through the moonlit gardens of Bethlehem, until they reached the summit of the grey ridge on which the little town is built. On that summit stood the village inn. The khan (inn) of a Syrian village, at that day, was probably identical, in its appearance and accommodation,

with those which still exist in Palestine. A khan is a low structure....it consists for the most part of a square enclosure, in which the cattle can be tied up safely for the night, and an arched recess for the accommodation of travellers.

Guided by the lamp which usually swings from the centre of a rope hung across the entrance of the khan, the shepherds found their way to the inn of Bethlehem, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. The fancy of poet and painter has revelled in the imaginary glories of the scene. They have sung of the "bright harnessed angels".... They have painted the radiation of light from His manger-cradle... But all this is wide of the reality. Such glories as the simple shepherds saw were seen only by the eye of faith; and all which met their gaze was a peasant of Galilee, already beyond the prime of life, and a young mother, of whom they could not know that she was wedded maid and virgin wife, with an infant child, whom, since there was none to help her, her own hands had wrapped in swaddling clothes. The light that shined in darkness was no physical, but a spiritual beam; the Dayspring from on high, which had now visited mankind, dawned only in a few faithful and humble hearts. (F.W. Farrar)

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Luke 2:20.

We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

An irate passenger complained to a crewman that the ship was travelling far too fast along the fog-covered St. Lawrence River of Canada, to which the sailor replied, "The Captain is on the bridge and can see well above the fog. He knows exactly where the vessel is going". The confident believer rejoices in knowing his Captain in Heaven sees well above the fog of this sinful world and will guide His children safely to heaven.

—Arnot P. McIntee

*Child of love, fear not the unknown
morrow,
Dread not the new demands life makes of
thee;
Thy lack of knowledge holds no cause for
sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to
Me.*

—Alfred P. Gibbs