Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus

"She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."
—Matthew 1:21

IN FULFILLMENT OF THIS long-promised event concerning the birth of our dear Lord Jesus two thousand years ago, many Christian people throughout the world will once again celebrate God's most wonderful gift to mankind on December 25th. Jesus had been born into the world to save the human family from the inherited ravages of sin and death, and the true meaning of his earthly ministry will be made plain to all men in God's own time and manner.

THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The annual Christmas holiday is a very special and festive occasion in many ways, and there is a general feeling of joy and a deep sense of anticipation throughout the weeks leading up to Christmas Day. More than any other time of the year, men's attention is directed toward thoughts of peace, love and goodwill toward others. It serves as a time to be reminded of the miraculous birth of our Savior,

his earthly ministry, sacrificial death on the cruel cross, and his ultimate resurrection as the firstborn from the dead. (Col. 1:18) His was the only perfect life that had ever been lived.—Heb. 7:26

There also may be a sense of nostalgia among some who recall the special day from their childhood, and recall with sweet memories a more secure time long past. The sobering reality, however, is that the spirit that once marked the Christmas season is now being ignored, and has largely given way to one of commercialism, stress, and anxiety. The spirit of our Lord that once prevailed has now been replaced by an indifferent and irreverent society marked by selfishness and pride.

In our modern world there is less interest and attention given to the true meaning of our Lord and Savior's humble birth amid a sin-sick and dying human family. The holiday season has thus become a hectic and busy time of the year in preparation for worldly pursuits and happiness. It is a time that is more and more being propelled by a sense of frenzied commotion and fanfare. Holiday shoppers are caught up in the last minute quest to find the perfect gift for someone special, as well as for others whose names may appear on a list of family and friends.

DECEMBER 25TH

A special day known as Christmas was set aside many centuries ago by Christian people who wanted to celebrate the birth of the Savior of the world. A great deal of attention was focused on the event and it became a sacred and festive religious holiday. Students of the Bible, however, point out the fact

that December 25th is not the exact day on which our Lord Jesus was actually born. Many scholars agree that the great event occurred during the autumn season of the year that corresponds to our month October.

The Scriptures do not specifically teach that we should celebrate Jesus' birth. Instead, we are instructed to remember our Savior's death which accomplished the redemption price for sin, thereby satisfying Divine justice. This is shown in the type where we read concerning the sacrificial lamb, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." (Exod. 12:14) At the institution of the last supper, Jesus, the antitypical Lamb of God, passed the emblems to his disciples which clearly represented his own sacrificed life. "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."—Luke 22:19,20

NO OTHER NAME

The name Jesus is defined as "Jehovah-saved" and no other name in the history of the world can ever claim such depth of meaning. It clearly points to the Master as the only one who could serve as the agency of our Heavenly Father in the ultimate effecting of mankind's salvation. The Scriptures clearly teach, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven

given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) The Apostle Paul wrote, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. 2:9) Our Lord paid the price for mankind's sin, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—Matt. 20:28

BELIEVING IN HIM

God's Holy Word teaches us the importance and necessity to truly believe in the Master Teacher, and the merit of his ransom sacrifice on behalf of mankind. This point is stressed in John's epistle, where he writes, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." (I John 3:23) The only foundation for the world's return to favor with the Heavenly Father is to have a true appreciation and understanding that Jesus alone paid the ransom price for sin. The purpose for which Jesus died was that the obedient of mankind would be given provision to be saved from sin and death.

THE CHRIST

Our Lord is often spoken of as Christ, or Jesus Christ, in the New Testament, which means the 'anointed' one, and is the counterpart of the Hebrew word Messiah of the Old Testament. Concerning this reference we read, "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered

together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together."—Acts 4:25-27

The Apostle Paul also wrote, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—Phil. 2:9-11

SON OF THE HIGHEST

In Luke's gospel record, he pointed out, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1:32) Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a descendant of David through Nathan (Luke 3:31), who was a brother to Solomon. (I Kings 1:10) Thus the earthly lineage of Jesus and the reference to the throne of David was through his mother. Jesus' connection to the severed line of Solomon came through Joseph, his mother's husband. (Matt. 1:16; Luke 2:4) We also note our Lord's words as recorded by the revelator, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."—Rev. 22:16

THE STEM OF JESSE

Concerning Jesus' connection to the throne of King David the Prophet Isaiah says, "There shall

come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isa. 11:1) Jesse was David's father, and is thus an important link in establishing our Lord's earthly lineage. (I Sam. 17:17) Isaiah then says, "The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD." (Isa. 11:2) The prophet's account shows that the wonderful work of the future kingdom of truth and righteousness will be carried out by Jesus and his faithful church. "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. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." (vss. 4,5) Isaiah makes the connection again to the throne of David when he says, "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious."—vs. 10

THE BRANCH

The Prophet Zechariah also identifies the Branch and says, "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." (Zech. 3:8) The prophet describes the role that our Lord and his church will assume during the future time of Christ's kingdom. The prophet stresses this point again when he writes, "Speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD

of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; . . . and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."—Zech. 6:12,13

Truly our Lord Jesus is the Son of the Highest and his faithfulness was demonstrated by laying down his perfect life in sacrifice for the human creation. Having been raised from death by the powerful hand of his loving Heavenly Father, he will exercise his right to bestow the benefits of the kingdom as the antitypical King David. He will be the root and source through which life rights will become available for the whole human family.

DAVID'S HEIR

God made a special promise to David, saying, "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David."—II Sam. 7:16,17

When David died, the promise was passed on to his son Solomon. The Lord then spoke to Solomon and said, "If thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel."—I Kings 9:4,5

SOLOMON'S DISOBEDIENCE

Solomon's obedience was required to fulfill the will of God. "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people."—vss. 6,7

The new king did not obey the commandments of God. "King Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart."—I Kings 11:1-3

We learn of Solomon's disobedient actions in the scriptural record. "The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice. And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded." (vss. 9,10) We next learn the consequences of his disobedience to the Heavenly Father where we read, "The LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my

statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant."—vs. 11

NATHAN FAVORED

The lineage from King David therefore passed through Nathan rather than Solomon. Jesus' mother indicated that God had revealed to her certain facts concerning the reasons for this. (Luke 1:45) Solomon's lineage was tainted with arrogance and disobedience, whereas our Lord Jesus was born from the less honored and more faithful line of Nathan. We learn this from the scriptural record. "Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation." (vss. 46-50) Mary's statement shows her sense of humility in sharing in God's wonderful works. She continues, "He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."—vss. 51-55

TIDINGS OF JOY

When the birth of Jesus had taken place, the angel of the Lord made the wonderful announcement. "There were in the same country shepherds abiding

in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. . . . And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."—Luke 2:8-14

The humble surroundings of the baby Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger was a token of our loving Heavenly Father's goodwill toward his sin-sick and dying human creation. Our Lord was destined to become mankind's Savior, and he would be a great king to restore peace on the earth. The angels knew this and were glad.

A DARK WORLD

Although the heavenly hosts understood and appreciated the great event and the glad tidings that came to pass on that very special night long ago, the promises of peace were soon lost to a dark and sin-filled world. The world was about to enter its darkest period of history known as the Dark Ages. It has been two thousand years since the Prince of Peace was born, and even yet the prospect of peace between people and nations seems impossible and but a dream.

During this long period of time there has been a little flock of our Lord's footstep followers who are striving to know and to do his will faithfully unto

death. When the work of calling this class has been completed and brought all together, they will then share with the Master Teacher during the time of his promised kingdom in which all the families of the earth will be given opportunity to walk the highway of holiness and peace. Not until that time will the words of the Prophet Isaiah come true, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."—Isa. 9:7

The prophet speaks concerning our Lord Jesus, and points to his role as the "arm" of God during his future kingdom rule over the nations. "Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."—Isa. 40:10,11

THE LORD IS NOT SLACK

The Apostle Peter commented upon the long-promised kingdom and wrote, "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."—II Pet. 3:8,9

LASTING PEACE

The Christmas season is a time when many Christian people are once again reminded of God's promise—peace on earth and goodwill toward men. This year, again, we must acknowledge the fact that there is indeed no lasting peace anywhere on earth. We are living during a time of increasing lawlessness, and men's hatred toward their neighbors is being generated in many violent ways.

Although mankind continues to yearn for the spirit of goodwill, no nation or group of nations at the present time can establish peace in the world. This glorious condition cannot be attained without Divine intervention in the affairs of men. True peace will only be realized through our Lord Jesus' future kingdom of righteousness as the true Prince of Peace. Under that administration, all shall come to know and obey our loving Heavenly Father and learn of his marvelous and ultimate plans for blessing all the families of his human creation. During this holiday season may we continue to pray for that blessed time to soon come. ■