To This End Was I Born

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
—John 18:37

AS CHRISTMAS AND THE annual holiday season draws near once again, the attention of many Christian people is directed toward the most meaningful and precious life ever lived on this earth. The marvelous birth of our dear Lord Jesus as a perfect man was the Heavenly Father's grandest gift to the sin-sick and dying human family. Although his life has been broadly studied, the true meaning of Jesus' earthly ministry and sacrificial death will not be fully understood and appreciated until it is manifest to the whole groaning creation during the time of his future kingdom. At that time, mankind will realize the merit of his shed blood given on their behalf, and experience their delivery from the penalty of death here on a restored earth. Although students

of the Bible do not agree that December 25th is the actual date of our Lord's birth, we do recall his wonderful ministry with his proclamation, 'To this end was I born.'

In today's world, the celebration of Christmas has become the most popular holiday season throughout the entire year. There is a joyful spirit prevalent among many people that cannot be seen at any other time. The holiday season is also unique in that it is often the only time when family and friends have an opportunity to come together. However, in today's hurried world and the rapidly changing events of our time, there is also an accompanying atmosphere of feverish activity, anxiety and commercialization. Subsequently, there is less attention given to the true meaning and purpose of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the ultimate Savior of mankind.

LEARNING OF HIM

When reflecting on the life and ministry of our dear Lord Jesus, there are many important and essential standpoints from which we may consider him. We observe that there are special qualities of his character that we should emulate, and essential elements of his teaching that we should study. The Apostle Paul addressed the significance of this matter in his letter to the brethren at Ephesus. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."—Eph. 4:14,15

We must give careful attention to every phase of Jesus' life of faithfulness to the will of his Heavenly Father, and the meaningful truths that he taught.

BEARING WITNESS

In our featured text, Jesus confirmed in his statement made to Pilate that one of the main purposes of his birth was that he might bear witness to the Truth, and that those who were striving to understand his teachings would be blessed by his ministry. He also spoke the great truth of his own kingship, and the entire plan of God which was centered around him.

When Pilate asked the Master whether or not he was the king of the Jews, Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36) Jesus was speaking the greater truth of his future kingdom, and, as he proclaimed, all who are drawn to the Truth are attracted to it by that wonderful kingdom message. That kingdom will be established on the basis of righteousness, and those who would devote their lives to its ultimate purpose would become joint-heirs with him in his future kingdom. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." (I John 4:17) One of the ways in which we may become more like the Master is in our desire to walk in newness of life with him, and to cooperate with him in connection with the wonderful arrangements concerning his future kingdom.

JESUS NOT UNDERSTOOD

Throughout the present Gospel Age, countless numbers of people have believed in Jesus and his teachings. All of these Christians have no doubt known something concerning our Lord's earthly ministry, and to whatever extent his life has influenced their lives they have been blessed accordingly. But few have truly understood him and the important role he played in the Heavenly Father's ultimate plan and purpose for the reconciliation and recovery of the whole sin-sick and dying human family, who are under the Divine sentence of death. He has not been fully appreciated for giving his life for the sins of the people, and neither has he been seen as earth's future king under the establishment of his future kingdom for blessing all mankind. Few indeed are those faithful followers who have been inspired by his ministry and the prospect of reigning with him in that kingdom of truth and righteousness. This little flock have been willing to devote their entire lives to the grand work of his kingdom and its many and varied provisions.

THE LITTLE FLOCK

When attempting to make a distinction between the mass of churchgoing Christian people and the little flock of truly consecrated followers of Christ, we note Jesus' parable of the 'wheat and tares' in which he illustrates this important distinction. We read, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."—Matt. 13:24,25

The "children of the kingdom" to which Jesus refers in this parable are those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit of the Lord, and are inspired by the kingdom hope and message. (vs. 38) The "children of the wicked one" are those who put their trust in man-made institutions of this present evil world, instead of devoting their lives to the Heavenly Father with the hope of sharing with Christ in his future kingdom. In the Master's answer to Pilate in our featured scripture (John 18:37), he pointed out, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.'

THE KING OF PROMISE

Jesus was the future king of promise, the one through whom the Father's plan to bless all families of the earth was centered and that would ultimately be accomplished. It was to this great truth that Jesus bore witness, and he was the great light that shone in darkness. God sent forth his Son into the sin-sick world, and he gave his perfect human life as a willing sacrifice for the sins of Adam, and his human posterity. As earth's righteous king, the Master would destroy this present evil world based on the proud institutions established by fallen man, and set up a "new heavens and a new earth" based on principles of righteousness.—II Pet. 3:13

For this great truth Jesus died, not merely because he cherished it in his heart, but because his entire life was governed by it. His total commitment to his Heavenly Father caused him to refuse the devil's offer of giving him all the kingdoms of this world. We read, "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth

him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Matt. 4:8-10, Deut. 6:13

Our Lord knew that it was not God's plan that he should set up his reign through the kingdoms of this world that are established on selfishness and pride, but that he would receive these kingdoms in due time from his Father, as the psalmist foretold. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. 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 in pieces like a potter's vessel."—Ps. 2:6-9

WHAT IS TRUTH

When Jesus told Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to the Truth, Pilate then asked, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) Although Jesus did not give a direct answer to the Roman ruler, he tells us, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17) Truth was the theme of all God's holy prophets of old. Jesus' teachings were concerned directly or indirectly with their teachings, and it is the basis of the apostolic writings in the New Testament.

The writings of the revelator also included the glorious theme of the Lamb that was slain, and

exalted to Mount Zion with a hundred and forty-four thousand who are exalted with him. (Rev. 14:1) Together they will live and reign for a thousand years for the blessing of the whole world of mankind.

BEING SET APART

By the truth of God's Word we are sanctified, or set apart, for Divine service. The Apostle Paul encourages the Lord's people, and says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

We present our bodies as a 'living sacrifice' to our loving Heavenly Father and endeavor to be transformed by the 'renewing' of our minds by the Holy Spirit. This renewing takes place in our mortal bodies and is an evidence of the Truth in our lives.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE TRUTH

Our consecration to God and service of the Truth is demonstrated by our continued faithfulness to it. This is what occurred in the life of Jesus, and it is also shown in our willingness to die with him and to share in his death. We demonstrate our willingness to die with him by devoting our lives, and time, strength, and means in bearing witness to the Truth. No matter how faithful we may be in emulating Jesus in other ways, we must bear witness to the Truth as he did in order to be counted worthy to live and reign with him.

In our proud and selfish world, faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth has resulted in death. Darkness covers the earth, and the darkness hates the light. Darkness and error are the opposing forces of evil that stand against light and truth. Throughout the present Gospel Age, error has been enthroned in the halls of fame and the temples of learning. Honored centers of education have often been channels of error regarding the Truth and ultimate plans of God. Jude reminds us, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." (Jude 3) The Apostle Paul tells us that Satan is the great enemy of the Truth. "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."—II Cor. 4:4

CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

When speaking of our Lord's ministry, John recorded, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (John 7:48) When the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees learned that their recognized leaders frowned upon our Lord and his teachings, their minds were closed to anything he might have to say. However, "the common people heard him gladly." (Mark 12:37) The repository of Divine Truth has always been in the hearts of the humble and meek followers of the Master. These are the faithful little flock and children of the kingdom who have seen the vision of God's wonderful

plan for a new world, and have told the people that all human plans and institutions will fail. Nothing but the Divine kingdom will ever solve the problems of our fear-filled and chaotic present world. The children of God have received no help from the world when speaking of God's purpose, but on the contrary have often been handicapped by its opposition.

The Truth has been carried from heart to heart throughout the present age, and it has been as a light in a dark place. It has not enlightened the dark world, but it has served as a beacon light to point others to Christ and to show them the way by which they might enter into and enjoy the wonderful mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT

Through the witness of the Truth as taught by Jesus and continued by his consecrated followers from generation to generation throughout the age, each one of the prospective joint-heirs of the kingdom have been separated from the world of darkness. The Apostle Peter explains, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, *Marginal Translation*] people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."—I Pet. 2:9

The knowledge of God's glory will ultimately fill the earth. Isaiah has written, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." (Isa. 11:9) However, as long as Satan, the prince of darkness, continues to blind the minds of the people, the work of testifying to

the wondrous plans of God will not dispel the darkness. In Jesus' day, he was as a great light shining in a dark place, but only a few saw the light. The rest were blinded and walked on in their darkness. These blind servants of the prince of darkness included not only the vast majority of the people, but the religious and civil rulers as well. But Jesus, the Prince of light, was not deterred from letting his light shine.

JESUS' ENDURANCE

In the great economy of God's plan, this witnessing for the Truth has been the means both for calling his people and testing them. It tested Jesus and demonstrated his loyalty to the Heavenly Father and the Truth. It was a demonstration of faithfulness which called for endurance against Satan's attacks, and ended in the giving of his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The prophetic words of Isaiah speak of his faithful endurance. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with

the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."—Isa. 53:5-9

TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH

Jesus had faithfully borne testimony to the great truth of his coming kingdom, and because of his faithfulness he was crucified. But in the Divine providence his witness continued, and a few days earlier he declared that the testimony concerning his kingdom would surely be given. Luke records his response to some Pharisees who had witnessed the enthusiastic joy displayed by the multitude who had gathered together to sing praises unto God, "Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." (Luke 19:38) "And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."—vs. 40

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

When writing to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul pointed to the earthly life and ministry of our Lord Jesus, and said, "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26) It was not Jesus' life of perfection that caused him to receive the animosity of the world, but rather his testimony to the Truth. In Jesus' day the giving of a witness to the Truth was limited almost entirely to the spoken word. In the case of the Master, the spoken word was made more powerful by his miracles that demonstrated the authority by which he spoke. The testimony of the

written word was limited to a few copies of Old Testament manuscripts. These enabled the more earnest ones to verify the truthfulness of the words spoken by Jesus which he urged them to do. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John 5:39

OUR BELOVED JESUS

"He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."—Luke 4:16-19; Isa. 61:1,2

When his earthly ministry had been accomplished, our beloved Jesus said to Pilate, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world."—John 18:37 ■