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J E S U S C H R I S T , L I F E - G I V E R

OCT 1 '82

AN EDITORIAL

THE GOSPELS of Matthew, Mark, and Luke present Jesus Christ as the Son of God who came into this world to redeem the human race. Each writer, however, portrays Jesus in a special manner giving emphasis to a different aspect of the Savior. Matthew connects the gospel with the Hebrew scriptures, bonding the New Testament as fulfillment of the Old. Mark portrays Jesus as a wonder-working, miracle-performing Christ with special meaning for the Gentiles. Luke portrays Christ as "the son of man" with the broadest human sympathy.

The apostle John climaxes the portrayal of Christ by showing the historical Jesus to be the eternal Son of God. He portrays Jesus not only as Israel's Messiah, but also as the world's Savior. He wrote his Gospel account after the other three had passed beyond, as an eyewitness to the divine person of Christ amid the subtle controversy that soon appeared concerning the person of Christ.

The reader is invited, through the eyes of John, to behold Jesus as the world's Redeemer. Jesus is portrayed as the Bread of Life in chapter 6. He is called the Eternal One in chapter 8. In chapter 9

John portrays Jesus as the Light of the World. Christ is the Door in chapter 10. He is the Resurrection and the Life in chapter 11. John declares Him to be Lord and Master in chapter 13. He is the Way, Truth, and Life in chapter 14. John calls Him the Vine in chapter 15. In Revelation 1 John gives his final portrayal of Jesus as the Alpha and Omega—the first and the last.

The good news is, this Jesus still lives and is available to us today. His sacrificial death on Calvary efficaciously atones for our sins now. The life-changing transformation through the new birth is available to all who will receive it through Christ. Heavenly guidance for life's careers is available to all who will walk within His will. The comforting grace of Christ's presence is available to all who are surrounded by the baffling frustrations of modern life. The consolation of Christ is available to all who walk through the valley of shadows, and His assurance of a life beyond the sunset gives strength to the pilgrim who fearfully faces the final journey. □

MEET THE CHRIST OF JOHN'S GOSPEL



*By General Superintendent
Charles H. Strickland*

MEET JESUS CHRIST

God sent John the Baptist to bear witness to Jesus Christ, to point to Him as the Messiah awaited by Israel and the Savior needed by the world. John's mission, primarily, was to introduce Jesus to the people.

This witness is summed up in three titles—"the light," "the Lamb," and "the Lord."

Jesus is "the light" (1:7, 8). He is the One who reveals God to us. From earliest history the mind, heart, and conscience of mankind has asked, "What is God like?" The answer is given in Jesus Christ. In the human life of Jesus, the mind and heart of God has been truly disclosed. The invisible God became visible in Jesus.

The love, mercy, wisdom, justice, holiness, and wrath of God are spelled out in the life and death of Jesus Christ. "Anyone who has seen me," said Jesus, "has seen the Father" (14:9). In the words and deeds of Jesus, as He acted, reacted, and interacted with all kinds of people in all kinds of situations, you have a faithful transcript of the mind of God.

Jesus is "the Lamb" (1:29, 36). He is the One who redeems us from sin. A lamb was used in John's day and by his nation for sacrifice. The blood of a lamb was for atonement, for reconciliation with God. By that sacrifice the worshiper was confessing, "I have sinned. I cannot save myself. Innocent life has been given for the guilty. A sinner's substitute is bearing judgment in my place. For the sake of that substitute, forgive my sins and restore me to Your favor."

Animal life could be substituted for human life only in a symbolic and provisional way. Only human life could really atone for human life, for only human life has the value of human life. The sacrificial lamb pointed to Jesus, whose perfect, sinless life would be offered for us. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

God provided this Lamb, and there is no other way of atonement. Only Jesus Christ "takes away the sin of the world."

Jesus is "the Lord" (1:23). He is the One who rules us in love. John the Baptist was "the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" When Jesus Christ comes to our hearts as Savior, He comes also as Lord. He will not share the throne of our lives with us or with others. He must be first—before self, family, state, or church. We can only be His disciples as we submit to His Lordship.

His rule is our freedom. If we have our own way, or become dominated by others, the result is bondage and misery. The essence of sin is self-will, rebellion against God. The essence of freedom is obedience to His will, for He rules in perfect love and wisdom. He is committed to our highest welfare.

This is the Christ proclaimed to you by the Gospel of John. This is the Christ proclaimed to you by the Church of the Nazarene, as it seeks to make Him known everywhere.

Welcome this Christ to your heart and you will never regret it. □



HERALD of HOLINESS

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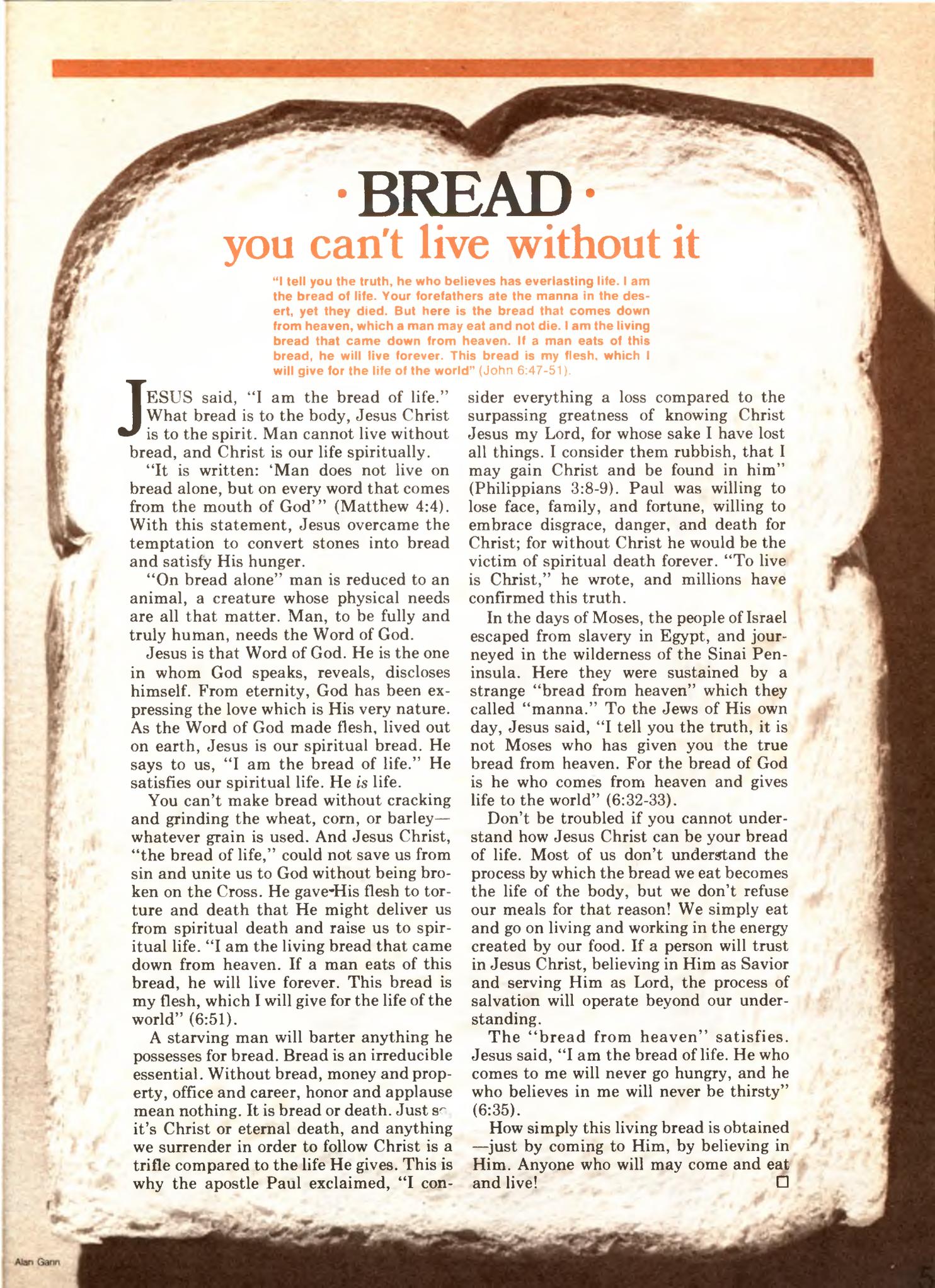
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• BREAD •

you can't live without it

"I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:47-51).

JESUS said, "I am the bread of life." What bread is to the body, Jesus Christ is to the spirit. Man cannot live without bread, and Christ is our life spiritually.

"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matthew 4:4). With this statement, Jesus overcame the temptation to convert stones into bread and satisfy His hunger.

"On bread alone" man is reduced to an animal, a creature whose physical needs are all that matter. Man, to be fully and truly human, needs the Word of God.

Jesus is that Word of God. He is the one in whom God speaks, reveals, discloses himself. From eternity, God has been expressing the love which is His very nature. As the Word of God made flesh, lived out on earth, Jesus is our spiritual bread. He says to us, "I am the bread of life." He satisfies our spiritual life. He *is* life.

You can't make bread without cracking and grinding the wheat, corn, or barley—whatever grain is used. And Jesus Christ, "the bread of life," could not save us from sin and unite us to God without being broken on the Cross. He gave His flesh to torture and death that He might deliver us from spiritual death and raise us to spiritual life. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If a man eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (6:51).

A starving man will barter anything he possesses for bread. Bread is an irreducible essential. Without bread, money and property, office and career, honor and applause mean nothing. It is bread or death. Just so, it's Christ or eternal death, and anything we surrender in order to follow Christ is a trifle compared to the life He gives. This is why the apostle Paul exclaimed, "I con-

sider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him" (Philippians 3:8-9). Paul was willing to lose face, family, and fortune, willing to embrace disgrace, danger, and death for Christ; for without Christ he would be the victim of spiritual death forever. "To live is Christ," he wrote, and millions have confirmed this truth.

In the days of Moses, the people of Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt, and journeyed in the wilderness of the Sinai Peninsula. Here they were sustained by a strange "bread from heaven" which they called "manna." To the Jews of His own day, Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes from heaven and gives life to the world" (6:32-33).

Don't be troubled if you cannot understand how Jesus Christ can be your bread of life. Most of us don't understand the process by which the bread we eat becomes the life of the body, but we don't refuse our meals for that reason! We simply eat and go on living and working in the energy created by our food. If a person will trust in Jesus Christ, believing in Him as Savior and serving Him as Lord, the process of salvation will operate beyond our understanding.

The "bread from heaven" satisfies. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (6:35).

How simply this living bread is obtained—just by coming to Him, by believing in Him. Anyone who will may come and eat and live! □

THE LIGHT STILL SHINES

JESUS CHRIST is “the light of the world.” Apart from Him, there is only the gross darkness of sin, in which all men are “blind from birth.”

Earlier, this Gospel refers to Jesus as “the true light” (1:9). There are false lights. Any man who claims to be the savior of the world is a false light, even though he bears the name of Sun or Moon. Any system of philosophy or politics which claims to have the answer to man’s problem of sin and guilt is a false light. Those who trust in anyone or anything but Jesus Christ to save them are like the man who rejoiced when he saw light at the end of the tunnel—and got run over by an oncoming train!

As “the light,” Jesus was—and is—opposed by forces of darkness. He was on a collision course with political, business, and religious leaders of His day, and they hounded Him to a cross. But that very cross became the place where the light of God’s redeeming love shines the brightest. The Cross became a beacon, lighting our way to God. “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it” (1:5, margin). Has not, will not, cannot overcome it, for light is mightier than darkness.

We are so used to darkness, so accustomed to evil and deception, that we become overly impressed with darkness. The “bad guys” around us seem to triumph. The bad guy within us seems to win. Even worse, we have so many guilty secrets to hide that we seek darkness. “Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (3:19). Turn on a light and roaches will scurry into hiding. Evil people are like roaches. But when wicked men tried to rid the world of Jesus, they could not—not in the first century, not in this century. The light shines on.

One dark, almost starless night, I saw a light shining on the porch of a mountain

cabin in Tennessee. Its source of power was the Norris Dam. Linked to that source, one small light could not be quenched by all the darkness surrounding it. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God, who “is light” (1 John 1:5). All the combined systems of evil in our world cannot overcome Him.

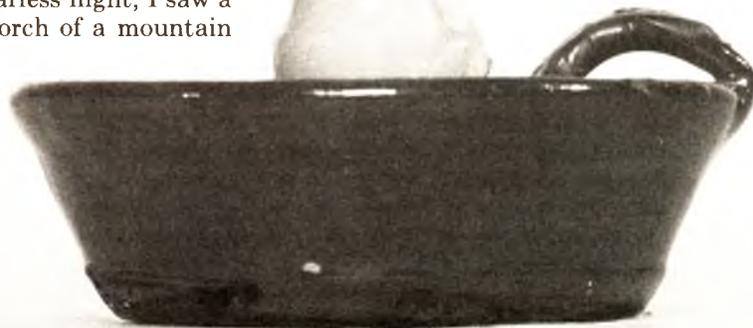
Christ referred to His saving work as God’s light in man’s darkness. He creates our opportunity to escape the blindness of sin, to enter into fellowship with God. But that opportunity is limited. “Night is coming, when no one can work.” A night of final judgment will fall upon those who refuse the light, who choose to remain in darkness, who prefer sin to God. When that night comes, no one, not even Jesus Christ, can work. That’s why the eternal destiny of those who reject the Lord is described in Scripture as “outer darkness” and “blackest darkness forever.”

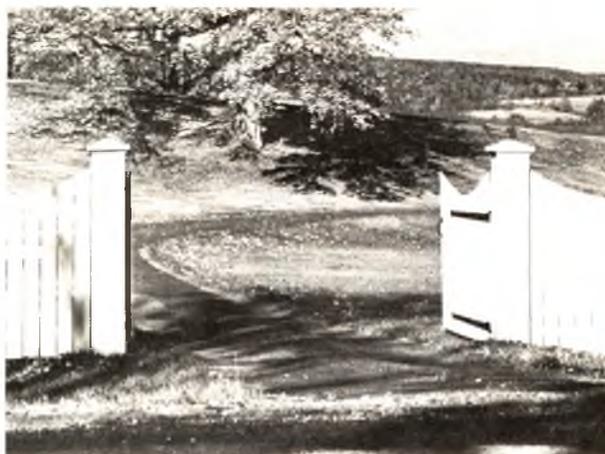
“While I am in the world,” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” He is still in the world. He is in your world. When you read the Bible, when you hear the gospel. He comes to you with an invitation to life.

How can you leave the darkness and enter the light? Quite simply. In another place in this same Gospel, we find these words of Jesus: “I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness” (12:46). By believing in Him, trusting yourself to Him, you can experience freedom from sin and fellowship with God. Does it sound too simple? Well, swallowing medicine is simple, but it has saved millions of lives! □

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work (John 9:4).





JESUS CHRIST is the gate into the kingdom of God. He likens the Kingdom to a sheepfold, and His followers to sheep. To most of us, this is strange language. Millions of moderns have never seen sheep, or have only viewed them from a car window for fleeting moments. In Jesus' time and place, sheep, shepherds, and sheepfolds were common sights.

But if our Lord's language is strange, His meaning is clear. He, and He alone, is our access to the "full" life, the life of fellowship with God. Through Him alone we can be saved from our sins and united with God. The others who claim to be saviors of mankind are "thieves and robbers," intent on fleecing the sheep for their own advantage. Whether they are called prophets, messiahs, reformers, or philosophers, their teachings lead to death. He alone gives eternal life.

Jesus is the door to life. Not the ancient priesthood and its ceremonies, not the modern ministry with its rituals and preaching—only Jesus.

Membership in any religious group is not the gate. Baptism is not the gate. A fellow can be baptized until his skin wrinkles, but unless he believes in Jesus Christ, he is lost. Wet sinners are just as lost as dry ones. You can join a church, attend its services, affirm its creed, and share its work, but that won't save you. Salvation—eternal life—results from a personal relationship to Jesus Christ.

The healing of a blind man occasioned this claim by Christ. Be-



The Gate Is OPEN Come In

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:7-10).



cause the healing occurred on the Sabbath, influential religious leaders accused the Lord of violating divine law. In their eyes, the Healer was a sinner. These Pharisees argued with the healed man, whose logic was simple—a sinner could not give sight to one born blind. Jesus had to be "from God."

In their anger, these religious leaders "threw him out." They excommunicated him from the synagogue. In their thinking, this was tantamount to being cast away from God, from hope of salvation.

The excommunicated man was confronted by Jesus, who asked, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Who is he, sir?"

The Lord replied, "The one speaking with you."

The now-seeing man exclaimed, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped Jesus.

Then follows a controversy between Christ and these Pharisees, in which Jesus says, "I am the gate." They had cast him out, but the synagogue was not the gate, and the Pharisees were not the gatekeepers. Jesus Christ took him in, and that meant he was in whatever others thought, said, or did.

If Jesus Christ takes you in, no one can put you out. They may exclude you from their acceptance and fellowship. But He alone is the Savior, and through faith in Him you can have life "to the full."

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." You can stake eternity upon these words of Jesus Christ. □



JESUS is the Good Shepherd. There are bad shepherds, and the difference between them becomes apparent when the flock is threatened. "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." The false shepherd will sacrifice the sheep to save his own neck.

In Scripture, religious leaders are called shepherds. Their followers are called sheep. In ancient Israel there were wicked kings, greedy priests, and false prophets who ruthlessly exploited the people. They erected a religious facade, behind which they callously trampled God's laws and oppressed His people. They lived to accumulate wealth and exercise power. Arrogant and ambitious, they cared nothing for others, everything for themselves. Sounds quite modern, doesn't it?

Jesus came as a shepherd to gather the flock of God. He spurned material wealth and political power. He came to serve, not to be served. He did not stand at the center of life, pulling things toward himself with greedy fingers, saying, "Mine, mine, mine!" Instead, "he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil" (Acts 10:38).

The power structure of that day could not tolerate the Good Shepherd. They hounded Him to a bloody gallows, wiped their hands in self-righteous satisfaction, and thought, "Good riddance." But the Cross was more than a human miscarriage of justice. It was God's plan and provision for saving sinners. Jesus laid down His life for us, and He took it up again, triumphant forever over sin and death. Now the risen Christ, through the Gospel, is calling His sheep, forming His flock, and they will be united with Him for time and eternity.

Our own day has its share of false shepherds—hirelings. Perhaps the most conspicuous, dramatic example was the late Jim Jones and his so-called People's

The Shepherd Who Died for His Sheep

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flocks and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also.

They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:11-16).



Church. Sick in mind himself, he used every psychological weapon he could to deceive his followers. Finally, to escape accountability for his frauds in the U.S., he transferred them to Guyana. There in a jungle clearing, with his "empire" crashing down around his head, he perpetrated his final, terrible deception. He persuaded them to commit mass suicide, and the reports and pictures of their poison-bloated corpses stunned the world.

Jim Jones was but one of many. Some are cult figures, some are ministers in orthodox Christian churches, and others are social and political wielders of influence in our world. They are out to manipulate, exploit, and use people in order to satisfy deep, consuming lusts for money, notoriety, and authority.

Among us, however, stands One whose interest in us is not faked. His concern is real, written in letters of blood at His cross. His power is great—it broke the back of death—but He exercises that power for our good and not for His gain. To His sheep He offers salvation.

Who are His sheep? He tells us in plain words: "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (10:27-28). His sheep are those who hear and follow Him. They are characterized by faith in, and obedience to, the Shepherd. Many claim the security—"shall never perish"—while they repudiate the responsibility—"follow me." They are playing at religion and deceiving themselves. There are false sheep just as there are false shepherds.

Would you have eternal life? Would you be forever secure against the power of sin and death? Then listen to Jesus Christ, believe in Him, follow Him. □

The Voice that Wakes the DEAD

THE POWER OF JESUS over illness was frequently exhibited. Less often demonstrated was His power over death. Martha was sure that Jesus could have prevented her brother's death—but now that he was dead and buried, that was that until “the last day.”

The resurrection of the dead at the last day is not something that will happen apart from Jesus Christ. It will occur *because* of Him. Resurrection is not a natural law; it is a supernatural event. Jesus, the Son of God, said, “*I am* the resurrection and the life.”

As a sign of His person and power, He did for one man on that day what He will do for all men at the last day. He called into the tomb, “Lazarus, come out,” and the dead was alive again (vv. 43-44). Earlier Jesus had said of a shepherd, “He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (10:3). Lazarus heard his name called, recognized the voice of the Good Shepherd, and obeyed.

We can identify with Martha. Death looks and seems so final! Before its mysterious and awesome power, our hearts quail, our faith is shaken. But death cannot be final, because the personal, name-basis relationship we form with Christ is stronger than death. “I am convinced,” the apostle wrote, “that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

The power of Christ to raise the dead physically is surpassed by a greater miracle, His power to raise the dead spiritually. Jesus is “the life”—the very life of God in the souls of men and women. When we believe on Him as our Savior, He gives us new life—eternal life. And that life is a mightier force than sin and death with all their moral and physical corruption.

That life, as the Gospel everywhere makes

clear, comes to us by faith. It is the gift of God. It cannot be generated within us by our resolutions and efforts. Neither does it come to us apart from Jesus Christ himself. It is not an entity having existence independent of Him. Christ *is* our life. By His Spirit, He lives in us and we live in Him. A relationship is formed which survives death, overcomes death, reverses and negates the apparent victory of death. “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

These words constitute the most amazing claim any man ever made. Either the claim is exaggerated nonsense, or Jesus Christ is the arbiter of every person's destiny. He is either a liar, unable to give life; or a lunatic, who only thought He could give life; or He is the Lord, able to save now and forever all who believe Him. These are the only choices. We can't dismiss Him as a good man or a great teacher, while we deny Him as Lord. Unless He is Lord of life, as He claims to be, He is not good or true. We need to cut out the polite blasphemy that would reduce Him to our manageable level and face up to His piercing question—“Do you believe this?”

Blessed are all they who, like Martha, can respond, “Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” They who believe have eternal life, a life of freedom, peace, and joy. □



Crاندall Vail

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (John 11:21-27).

THIS WAY PLEASE

JESUS is "the way." Prophets and apostles could point in the right direction, but Jesus is more than a way-shower. He is the Way.

Back of the English word *way* is a Greek word which translates "road." Jesus Christ is the road back to God for sinners who have strayed away. That includes everyone, for "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). There are many ways to get lost, but only one Way to be found. There are many ways to sin and death, but one Way to God and life.

Jesus talks about the "Father's house"—a beautiful metaphor for heaven. In its "many rooms" there will be light, peace, and joy forever. That house, unlike our homes, will never be saddened by sin, pain, or death. Pure holiness and, therefore, pure happiness, abides there. The only way to the Father's house is the Father's only Son—Jesus Christ. There He prepares a place for us. Here He prepares us for that place. He is the only way home.

In early Christian literature, followers of Christ were called followers of "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 24:14). To them, Christianity was not a matter of ceremonies, creeds, or codes. Essentially, it was a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the Way.

Jesus Christ is "the truth." Prophets and apostles spoke the truth. They lived and died for the truth. But Jesus is more than a truth-teller; He is "the truth" himself. He is Reality.

In the Bible, the devil is called "a liar" (John 8:44). The antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son, is called a liar (1 John 2:22-23). Everyone who disbelieves the testimony borne to Christ in the Scriptures is called a liar (1 John 5:10). And all liars, we are told, will be banished from God into eternal misery (Revelation 21:8; 22:15). What is at stake, when Christ is proclaimed, is our eternal destiny. He is "the truth," and the truth will prevail and endure when lies are vanquished forever.

Jesus is "the truth" about God. God is revealed in the life of Jesus Christ. "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." He is "the truth" about man. In the sinless life of Jesus, in His perfect devotion to the

Father's will, we see human life as it was meant to be. By contrast, we know our lives to be false and wrong. Jesus Christ is "the truth" about salvation. There is no other who can save us from our lies and bring us into real life.

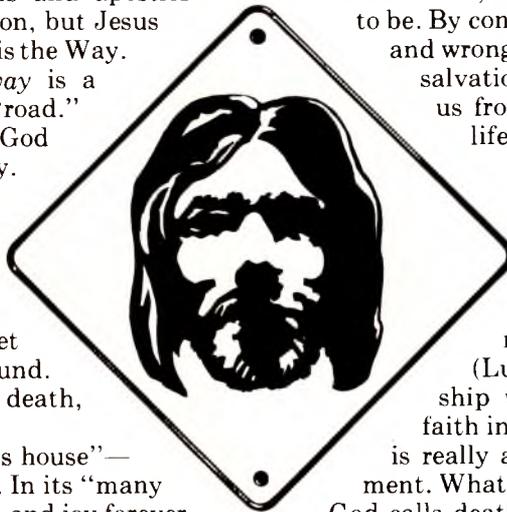
Jesus Christ is "the life." Prophets and apostles could "tell the people the full message of this new life" (Acts 5:20), but only Jesus is "the life."

Life is more than existence, more than comfort and pleasure (Luke 12:15-31). True life is fellowship with God, which comes through faith in Christ (John 17:3). "Living it up" is really a description of dying by the moment. What the world, in its illusion, calls life, God calls death. We have a passion for life, and in our sin-blinded condition, we confuse passion with life. Eternal, abundant, satisfying life comes only from God, as His gift. That gift bears the name of Jesus Christ.

The simple, profound words of Jesus tell us how to live: "Trust in God; trust also in me." As we follow Jesus, the Way, He leads us to the Father's house, to ultimate reality, to ultimate joy.

To seek another way than Christ is to wander in lies and be lost forever. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

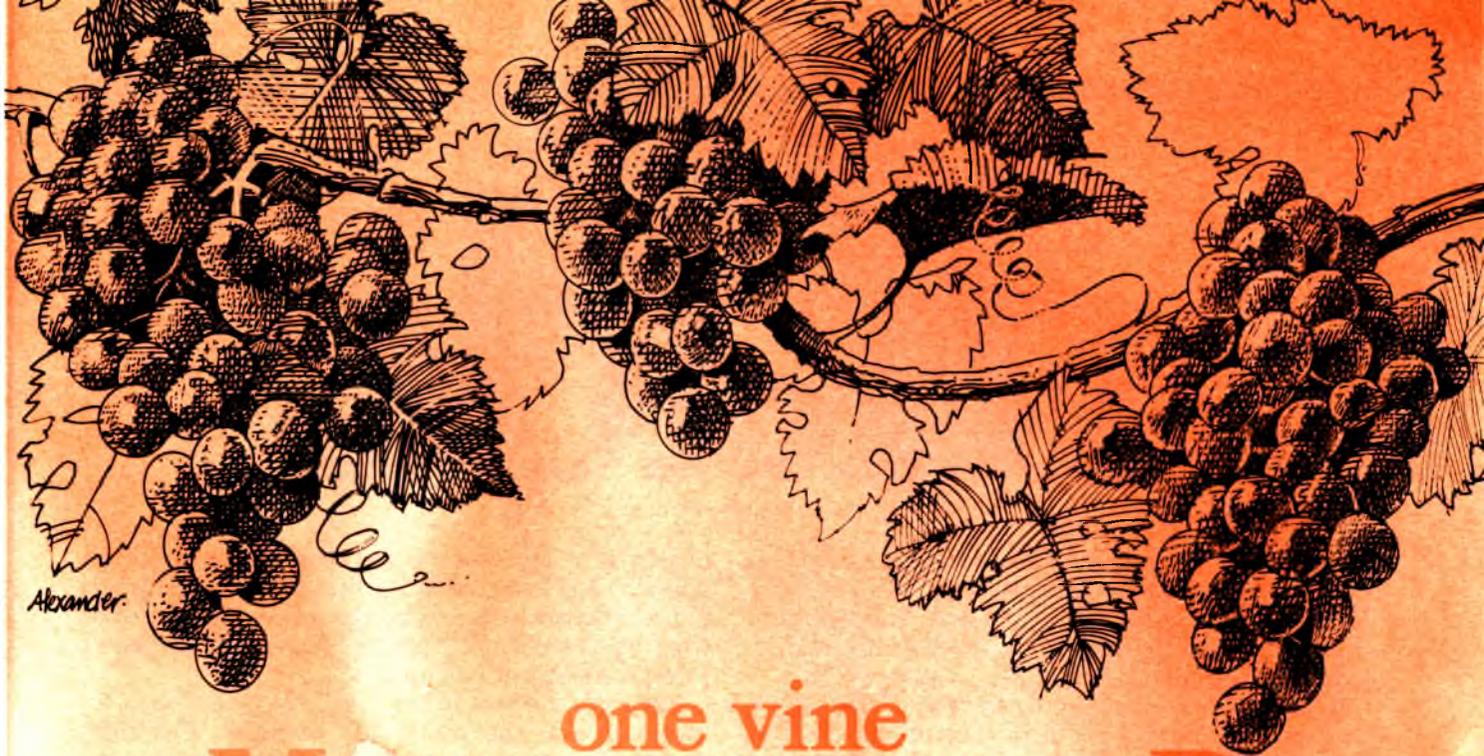
One Way! This way, please! □



"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:1-6).



one vine MAKES A VINEYARD

“I AM THE TRUE VINE.”

Why not simply, “I am the vine?” Well, ancient Israel was called a vine of God’s own planting. To belong to Israel was to belong to the people of God. But Israel rejected Jesus Christ when He came as the Messiah. That rejection was dramatized by His crucifixion. Now, shortly before His death, Jesus says, “I am the true vine.” To belong to Him, to abide in Him, is to be a child of God.

Followers of Christ are “the branches.” They receive life from Him, and that life comes to expression in ways that point to Him as its source. Fruit identifies a vine. As Jesus elsewhere says, “Do people pick grapes from thornbushes?” (Matthew 7:16). The “fruit” that Christians bear, which exhibits Christ as their life, is love. “All men will know that you are my disciples,” Jesus insisted, “if you love one another” (13:35).

Love is the proof of genuine Christianity, love like that of Jesus Christ. The badge of discipleship is not membership in a certain church, or adherence to a certain creed, or baptism by a certain mode, but love—accepting, forgiving, enduring love. The life that flows from the Vine to the branches is expressed in words and deeds of love.

The “vine saying” of Jesus comes in the context of His promise to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples. This is how Jesus abides in His followers, by the Spirit. The divine Spirit can interpenetrate the human spirit without confusion of identities. Place a piece of iron in a fire, and soon it will glow cherry-red, then white-hot. The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron, yet iron remains iron and fire remains fire. God’s Spirit suffuses our spirits when we belong to Christ, and “the fruit of the Spirit is love” (Galatians 5:22).

“The Father,” said Jesus, “is the gardener.” Under His watchful care, the fruitful branches are pruned,

increasing their fruitfulness. The nonbearing branches are cut off, and their fate is to wither, die, and be burned. Christians have two options only, to abide in Christ and bear fruit, or to be severed from Christ and be destroyed. Nominal Christianity won’t do. Playing church won’t make it. Life, not label, is the issue. Fruit, not profession, is the test.

How do we abide in Him? Grafted into the Vine by the “new birth,” how is our new life preserved? According to Jesus, two things are involved—His words are to remain in us, and we are to live by prayer. “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” Obedience to God’s Word and dependence on God’s grace are the keys to fruitful Christian living.

Just as there is one Shepherd to whom all the flock belongs, and one Way by whom all believers come to the Father, so there is just one Vine in whom all branches abide for their life. One Vine makes the vineyard.

Jesus is the true Vine. There are false vines, false Israels, false messiahs. But there is just one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Abiding in Him, we live. Apart from Him, we die. It’s that simple.

Death could not destroy the Vine. He lives forever. Abiding in Him, death cannot destroy us. In Him we have eternal life. □

“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned” (John 15:1-6).

the best wine ¹ ever made

Our Lord's first miracle was wrought at a wedding feast in a small town. That tells us, in itself, that Jesus Christ is interested in the lives and homes of ordinary people. He wants to be involved in your life, and in the life of your family.

He went to the wedding by invitation. He isn't a party crasher. He will not intrude upon your life. But if you choose to make Him welcome, He will be present in miracle-working power and love in your home. Listen to His gracious promise: "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Changing water into wine symbolized the power of Jesus to turn ordinary existence into abundant life. Later Jesus said, "I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full" (10:10). Fullness of life, life with overflowing meaning, value, and joy comes only from Him.

In the Bible, wine is a symbol of joy. Wine is used for celebration. A psalmist speaks of "wine that gladdens the heart of man" (104:15). Another psalm declares, "You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound" (4:7).

Jesus stepped in "when the wine was gone" and the feast was threatened with gloom, and He furnished a new, better, more satisfying supply of wine. He will intervene in the problems and burdens of your life, bringing fresh measure of peace and joy.

The "master of the banquet" was surprised by the

quality of wine Jesus created. He said to the bridegroom, "You have saved the best till now." This was a direct contrast to common practice. Usually, good wine was served until people's taste became jaded, then cheaper stuff was used.

Sin gives the best it has first. The longer one continues in sin, the poorer life becomes. The thrill disappears, and remorse, guilt, and pain afflict the soul. The "way of the transgressor" becomes darker and gloomier until it ends in destruction.

But life with Jesus Christ gets better and better with passing years. No one ever regrets serving Him, but thousands bewail the emptiness and grief of mis-spent years. Someone has well said, "The devil has no happy people." You will never get tired of sharing life with the Lord. And beyond life here with Him, you can experience the perfect, endless life of heaven. He saves the best till the last!

In this first miracle, Jesus honored marriage, family, and home. And He "revealed his glory"—the glory of His life-changing love. His words, "my time," occur several times in this Gospel. They refer to the hour of His death, to the Cross. There He demonstrated a love beyond degree or description by dying for our sins. And it is this atoning death that makes possible our abundant life. Grapes are crushed to produce wine!

Jesus Christ invites you to His feast. Help yourself to the best wine ever made. □

On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

"Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come."

His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the

kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.

Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize

where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."

This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him (John 2:1-11).

The second miracle of Jesus, which John selected as a “sign” to point to Him as the life-giving Son of God, was the healing of a royal official’s son.

The stage was again “Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.” Now He would turn sickness into health for a lad who was at a distance, bedfast in Capernaum.

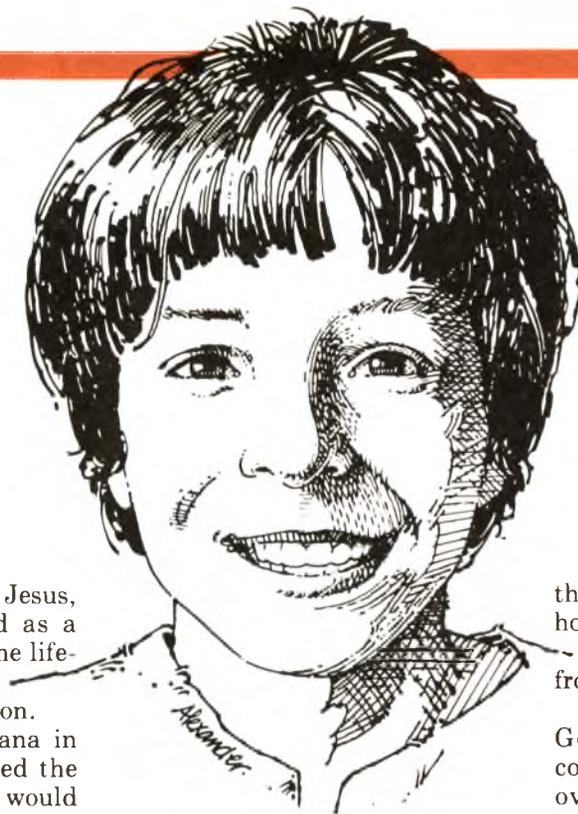
Time and space are not barriers to our Lord’s love and power. Neither is human status. Jesus Christ loved and saved the up-and-out as well as the down-and-out, and He still does. Whoever you are, wherever you live, whatever you’ve done, He cares for you and for your family.

This unnamed “royal official” heard about Jesus, looked Him up, and begged Him to come and heal the boy, who was near death. What a simple and serious illustration this is of intercessory prayer! Often we can do nothing ourselves to help our stricken loved ones, but we can tell the Lord about them in prayer.

Jesus challenged this anxious father to trust in His word of promise, not in “miraculous signs and wonders.” He spoke four simple words, packed with power: “Your son will live.”

“The man took Jesus at His word,” and headed home. Here is the essence of faith, taking Jesus at His word. The attitude of trust is, “God said it, I believe it, that settles it.”

En route home, the official met servants with good news. At the very hour Jesus spoke the life-giving words, the boy’s fever broke and recovery began. Faith was



YOUR SON LIVES

Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine. And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.

“Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.”

The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.”

Jesus replied, “You may go. Your son will live.”

The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour.”

Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and all his household believed.

This was the second miraculous sign that Jesus performed, having come from Judea to Galilee (John 4:46-54).

then enlarged, as “he and all his household believed.”

~ Clear, significant lessons emerge from this story.

Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God. Who but the Son of God could speak words of authority over sickness and death? Who but the Son of God cared deeply enough to get so involved with the needs of this grief-stricken family? Jesus is uniquely related to God, and therefore He is uniquely able to help us.

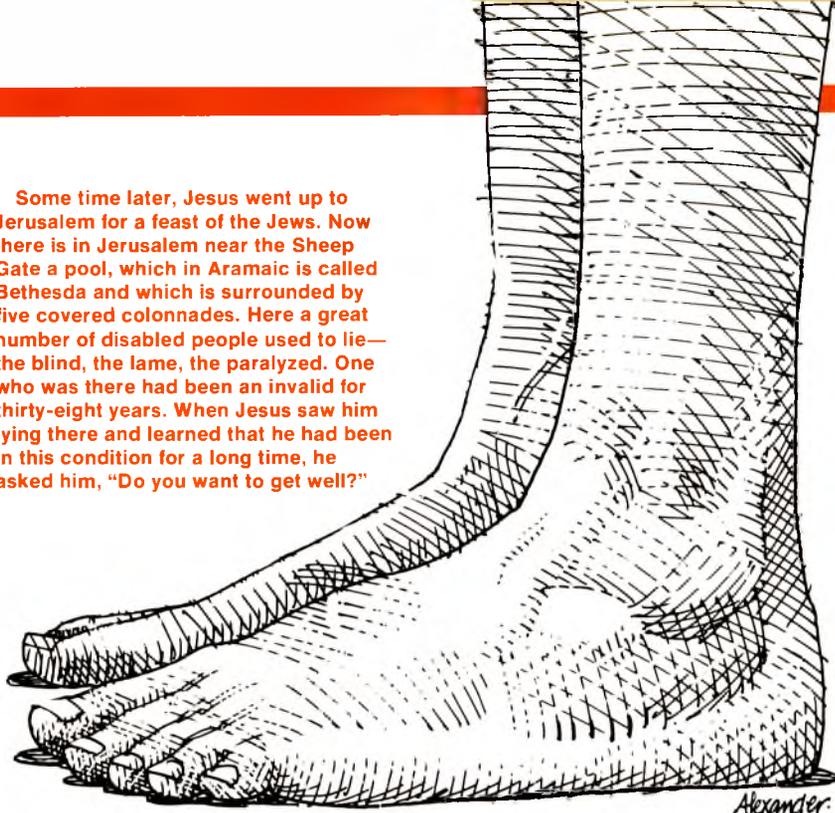
Jesus came to give life, and He gives it through His words. The words that He speaks are “spirit” and “life” (6:63). A spiritual dynamic infuses His words, and when we believe them, our lives are changed. He speaks words of healing, words of guidance, words of forgiveness—always the right words for each specific situation. And those words are freighted with power.

Jesus Christ links His life to ours through love. His love brought Him down to the level where we live—where sin abounds, where sickness rages, where sorrow multiplies. The Incarnation (1:14) was divine love’s response to human suffering.

We link our lives to His through faith. Faith is not some magic formula. It is trusting the words that Jesus speaks to our situation. Faith *acts* on His words, just as the royal official “departed” when Jesus said, “Go. Your son will live.”

Is there sin, or sickness, or sadness at your house? Tell Jesus Christ. Trust Him. Obey Him. He is the life-giving, life-changing Son of God. □

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”



“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (John 5:1-14).

ON YOUR FEET

He was one man in a huge crowd, but “Jesus saw him.”

You can be terribly lost and lonely in a crowd. Others may not know your name or feel your pain. Modern life can reduce you to a social security number, or to an odd-looking hole in a computer punch card. But Jesus Christ sees you, and cares about you, in all the individuality and particularity of *your* life.

This invalid man had battled his condition for 38 years. That’s a long time to be hurting and helpless. It can produce an awful burden of discouragement, and this poor fellow had almost given up. “I have no one to help me,” he lamented. Jesus became the Friend of the friendless, the Help of the helpless.

He wants to help you. The problems, burdens, and sins that have plagued you, even for years, will yield to His love, power, and wisdom. You will never know how changed for the better life can be until you turn it over to Him.

How did Christ help this man? By speaking to him. There is power in the words of Jesus Christ that defies analysis or description. The words that He speaks, when believed and acted upon, change the human situation.

Jesus spoke three times to this man. He spoke words of *challenge*. “Do you want to get well?” Sounds like a foolish question, doesn’t it? Every sick person wants to get well! Not really. The question means, “Are you willing to take responsibility for your own life?” Because of their fears, some people cling to dependency. They want others to make their decisions and supply their needs. Besides, this dependency keeps them in the center of attention.

The Lord wants to help us become responsible, productive persons. When He puts us on our feet,

whether physically or spiritually, He expects us to walk.

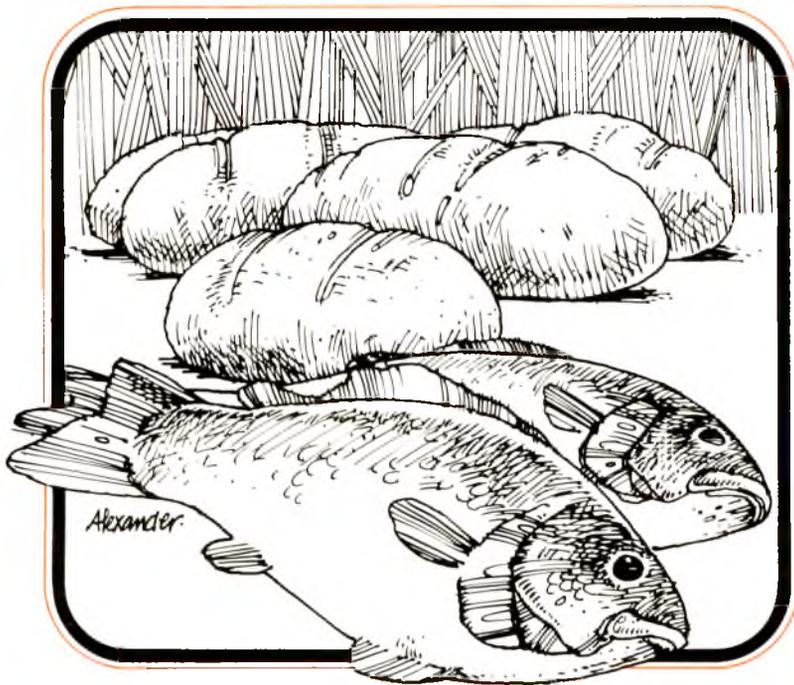
That brings us to His next words, words of *command*. “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” He commanded the impossible. He ordered the man to do what he had tried and failed to do. But our Lord’s commands bring with them the power for obedience, and “at once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”

Jesus says to the drunkard, “Be sober,” and raging thirst subsides. He says to the gambler, “Be content with what you have,” and the fever of acquisition is broken. He says to the adulterer, “Be faithful,” and marriage commitments are honored. He says to the sinner, whatever his sins, “Be holy,” and moral habits are transformed.

His third words to the man were words of *caution*. “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” Christ does not give His help and blessings to those who want to continue in sin. God justifies the ungodly, but He does not justify ungodliness. He demands repentance if we are to have forgiveness, and repentance means quitting our sins.

There’s something worse than illness and its misery. There’s something worse than being friendless and broke. The final judgment upon sin, the sin we refuse to forsake, is worse than anyone can imagine. John calls it “the wrath of God.” Jesus Christ calls it “hell” and “fire” and “darkness.” It is the tormenting opposite of God and good and gladness. It is the pain, grief, and isolation caused by sin magnified greatly and lasting forever. It is eternal hopelessness and despair.

Jesus Christ is the Savior, Friend, and Helper of all who believe and obey His words. Let Him be that to you. □



History's Most Unusual Picnic

Jesus took a boy's lunch and fed 5,000 people. That has to be the most fantastic picnic in all history. John called it a "sign." Like a highway marker, it pointed to Jesus, saying, "There is the Son of God who gives life to men."

What are we to make of this ancient story today? What does it tell us about Jesus Christ that is important for our lives?

Well, for starters, it tells us that Jesus Christ wills bread for the hungry. He is concerned about our physical needs. We have stomachs as well as souls, and the Lord wants to fill both. Thousands of people, in every century, have testified to His concern for their needs. He has helped them to earn their bread, to stretch their resources, to survive in difficult circumstances.

He is opposed to want, and He is also opposed to waste. After the crowd had eaten, Jesus ordered the disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." Doggie bags are nothing new! If people would live by the teaching of Christ, poverty and waste could be eliminated.

Men are more than animals who walk on their hind legs. They need God more than bread. They need deliverance from sin in order to have fellowship with God. Their spiritual hungers are deeper and longer-lasting than their physical hungers.

Notice that John mentions "the Jewish Passover" in the context of this miracle (v. 4). The Passover was an annual feast which celebrated the deliverance of Israel from slavery in ancient Egypt. This event, known as the Exodus, moulded the slaves into a free nation.

And when the crowd had eaten, they said, "This is the Prophet who is to come into the world." You can read about that promised prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15.

Some time after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the miraculous signs he had performed on the sick. Then Jesus went up on the hillside and sat down with his disciples. The Jewish Passover Feast was near.

When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.

Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!"

Another of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?"

Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." There was plenty of grass in that place, and the men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish.

When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.

After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again into the hills by himself (John 6:1-15).

Moses, who led the people of Israel out of Egypt, declared, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." There was to be a new Moses, a new Exodus, a new Passover. This would be a spiritual deliverance. Christ would rescue people from their bondage to sin and guilt. He would free them to live in communion with God and at peace with one another. That is what He does today for all who trust in Him.

The people got excited and wanted to "make him king by force," so Jesus withdrew. He knew that He could save us, not by wearing a crown but by enduring the Cross. He came to die for our sins, to be an atoning sacrifice. He came to rule by love, self-giving love, not by self-asserting force. Just as the barley loaves were broken in order to feed the crowd, so Jesus would be broken by His death on the Cross in order to become the bread of life for perishing souls.

What love, what power is manifested in this miracle! And that same love and power are at work in the world today. He can change our lives, if we will give Him our lives as the boy gave Him his lunch. □

THE SEA WALKER

A friend of mine preached a sermon about Jesus walking on the water. In the congregation was his five-year-old son, deeply impressed. Next morning the little fellow charged into the house, soaking wet and sputtering in anger, "It can't be done! It can't be done!" He had been trying to walk on the canal behind the parsonage.

His experiment simply confirmed the point that John is making in this story. It can't be done by us, but it was done by Jesus Christ. Evidently He was like us but unlike us. He was human, subject to pain, grief, hunger, thirst, and weariness just as we are. But He was also divine, the God-man, capable of doing what we cannot.

Christ is affirmed in this Gospel as the son of Mary, but also, and emphatically, as the Son of God. He bears a unique relationship to God, one unshared and unsharable by us. Weary from a journey, He could need a drink of water (4:6-7). Mighty in word and deed, He could walk on the water. He could call a dead man back to life (11:43-44), yet He met death on a lonely gallows (19:28-30). He rose again, to claim the love and the lives of His disciples.

Obviously, this Jesus is no ordinary man. But how can one be man *and* God? How can God become man? We don't know. It passes understanding. It

defies our neat rules of logic. It transgresses the boundaries of our reason.

And that's the point! A Christ we could figure out, a Christ we could explain, would not be able to save us from sin and restore us to God. A Christ small enough to fit our categories would not be large enough to deliver our souls. The sea walker can!

We can identify with the disciples. They were menaced by storm and filled with fear. Rowing hard, they couldn't make real headway toward their destination. Life's like that! Then Jesus came, got in the boat, and they reached the shore safely.

Storms of sin, grief, and misery threaten to swamp our boats. Our struggles leave us exhausted and frustrated. Then Jesus comes, the Son of God with power to save, and we make the rest of the journey in peace.

Are you passing through strong wind and rough water? The very seas that would capsize you can be a highway under His feet. "Take Him into the boat." Let Jesus Christ enter your life as Lord. He will deliver you, calming your fears and changing your life. And He will make the crossing with you—a Friend for all seasons.

"It can't be done!" Not by you, not by me. But He can do it, for He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. □

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough. When they had rowed three or three and a half miles, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But he said to them, "It is I; don't be afraid." Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading (John 6:16-21).

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

JESUS “saw a man blind from birth.” He would. He looked for men, men whom the world overlooked. Our Lord was leaving the Temple grounds at the time. Around Him were large crowds and magnificent buildings. Others, we may be sure, saw these and were impressed (Mark 13:1-2). Jesus wasn’t concerned about stones that perish. His interest was in people, who live forever.

The disciples wanted to reduce the blind man to a theological puzzle: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Christ brushed the question aside—it was academic. What mattered was the man’s need and God’s help: “This happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

Then Jesus healed him. He did it in a strange way. Mixing spit and soil, He made mudpacks, laid them on the man’s eyes, and said, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” How simply a miracle can be recorded—“So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.”

Christ healed other blind men in other ways. One He spoke to—“Your faith has healed you”—and the words conveyed healing power: “Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus” (Mark 10:51-52). Another’s eyes were touched with spit and his sight restored in two stages (Mark 8:22-25). The man John writes about was addressed, touched with mud, and sent to a pool to wash.

Why did the Lord vary the procedure from case to case? Perhaps to remind us that God is sovereign and free. He is not locked into any one method of helping people. No two are healed alike, no two are saved alike. God’s love and power are constants; how He expresses them are variables. He will not work with

As he [Jesus] went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Having said this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go,” he told him, “wash in the pool of Siloam” (this word means Sent). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.” “How then were your eyes opened?” they demanded.

He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see” (John 9:1-11).

you precisely as He does with others. He respects your individuality. But He does love you and He will help you.

When this blind man was healed, the change was so radical that people were unsure of his identity. Some said, “It’s the same fellow.” Others said, “Can’t be—it’s a look-alike.” He settled their confusion, saying, “I am the man.”

There was confusion, also, about Christ’s identity. The healed man knew Him only as “the man they called Jesus.” But that is precisely why John includes the story. It is a “sign.” It points beyond itself to Jesus as more than just another man. He is “the Christ, the Son of God” (20:31), who can do what no other can.

The healed man only gradually learned who Jesus was. The stages of his growing knowledge are marked by his words about Jesus: “The man . . .” (v. 11); “A proph-

et . . .” (v. 17); “Lord . . .” (v. 38). Until we know Him as more than man, more than prophet, we do not really know Him. Jesus Christ is more than a man; He is the Son of God who entered history from eternity. He is more than a prophet; He is the Savior and Lord to whom the prophets bore witness (Acts 10:43).

As this man was blind from birth, we are all sinful from birth. As Christ restored sight to this man, He can save us from sin. He can change our lives till people hardly recognize us. It will not happen in the same way this miracle occurred, but we must make the same response to Christ as did this man—trust and obedience.

We can wash in a greater pool than Siloam—the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). □



FROM

DEATH

TO LIFE

JESUS was a Healer. He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk. All kinds of infirmities and diseases fled before His word and touch. He could have kept Lazarus from dying, but for this man He had bigger and bolder plans. Now He would demonstrate His power over death, mankind's "last enemy."

Coming to the grave, our Lord mingled His own tears with those of family and friends. What a picture! No one entered more deeply into the joys and sorrows of people than Jesus Christ. The shortest verse in the Bible is too deep to measure, and long enough to stretch from ancient Bethany to the graves by which we sorrow today: "Jesus wept."

He wept over ancient Jerusalem, because the city, by rejecting Him, chose war, ruin, and exile instead of peace with God (Luke 19:41-44). Sin broke the heart of Jesus.

He wept in Gethsemane, as He faced the coming cross on which He would die a shameful and painful death for our sins (Matthew 26:36-39). Sin broke His heart.

Now He weeps at the grave of His friend, Lazarus. Death is the final issue of sin (James 1:15), and sin broke the Lord's heart.

But while sin broke His heart, it could not match His power. He wept at the tomb, but He also robbed it of its victim in a majestic display of the glory of God.

We can appreciate Martha's reluctance to have the grave opened. Lazarus had been dead four days, and the body was not embalmed. In that hot climate it would deteriorate rapidly. Her words of protest

—"a bad odor"—are understatement.

There is in Scripture a progressive unfolding of the power of Christ over death. He raised a little girl who had just died (Mark 5:35-43). He raised a young man whose body was being carried to the cemetery for burial (Luke 7:11-16). Now He raises Lazarus, who had been dead four days and placed in a tomb. At His coming as the judge of all mankind, Jesus Christ will raise all who have died (John 5:24-29).

Jesus called the dead man by name. "Lazarus, come out!" A great American preacher, D. L. Moody, used to say that had Jesus not called his name, every dead man in the cemetery would have risen—such is the power of the Lord!

Still wrapped about with strips of cloth, Lazarus stumbled into the sunlight, while onlookers stood amazed. Very calmly, as though it was a most ordinary event, Jesus said, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

Jesus Christ has been calling the spiritually dead into new life every day. And some day, "the last day," He will call the physically dead into judgment. What our destiny will be beyond the resurrection and judgment hinges upon our response to Jesus Christ now. If we hear and obey His voice, He will forgive our sins and claim our lives for His kingdom. We will experience joyful fellowship with Him in this world, and on the other side

of death we will be at home with Him forever (14:1-3).

To give life, He had to taste death as an offering for our sins. It was this seventh "sign"—the raising of Lazarus—that crystallized the hatred of His enemies. "From that day on they plotted to take his life" (v. 53).

Death could not hold its prey! He rose again, and He lives today. The risen Christ offers you deliverance from sin, guilt, and death. □

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied. Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (John 11:32-44).

NEW LIFE for an OLD MAN

Nicodemus has been criticized for coming to Jesus at night. "Coward," the critics have scolded. But the Lord didn't criticize him; He helped him. At least Nicodemus came! Thousands who need Jesus Christ never come to Him. Whoever does, whenever he does, finds Him eager to receive and help him. He's always "in" to those who seek Him. You don't have to make an end-run around a secretary or knock down a door to see Jesus.

Jesus got right to the point. "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Birth is the beginning of life in a new environment. From the warmth, security, and darkness of the womb, a baby is projected into the light, risks, and opportunities for growth of the outside world. Nicodemus needed to be born into a new world—the kingdom of God. Though he was religious and educated, his life needed to be radically changed.

But Nicodemus was no spring chicken. How can an old man enter into new life? He wouldn't fit into the womb again, and if he could, he would emerge into the same old world. When habits are fixed, and one is gripped by the irrevocable past, how can he change?

The answer of Jesus was "the Spirit." Like the wind, mysterious in its movements and powerful in its effects, the Spirit of God can change our hearts and lives. The new birth transcends understanding, but it's real.

To the second plaintive "how" of Nicodemus, Jesus answers, "the cross." He speaks of the lifting up of the Son of Man, a reference to His coming death on the Cross. From the Old Testament, He fetched an illustration with which Nicodemus was familiar. At God's command, when the Israelites were stung by poisonous snakes, Moses fashioned a bronze snake, fastened it to a pole, and displayed it at the door of the Tabernacle (Numbers 21:4-9). When a person looked to that bronze serpent he lived. Even so, the new life of the Kingdom would come through the death of Jesus Christ.

The remedy for death took the form of its cause—in each case a serpent. And Jesus was "made sin" for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). We were poisoned by sin and threatened by death, but He "bore our sins in his body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24), so that through His wounds we might be healed. His death was an atonement.

Like Nicodemus, we can't understand this. Those snakebitten Israelites were not saved by understanding—they were saved by obedience. They looked and lived. If any regarded the proposed remedy as an insult to his intellect, and refused to look, he died—not as the victim of poison but of pride. We can trust Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, and then spend the rest of our lives trying to understand it. But our trust, our obedience, brings new life, not our understanding.

Through the death of Christ, and the power of the Spirit, there is new life for old men—and for men, women, and children of all ages. Faith has no age barriers. And sin has but one remedy. □



Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak on heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life (John 3:1-15).

LIVING WATER for a THIRSTY WOMAN

Tired and thirsty, Jesus needed a drink from the well. Tired of sin and thirsty for God, the woman of Samaria needed the “living water” of eternal life. She did not express her needs in those terms, but Jesus did, and her heart agreed.

As they conversed, racial prejudice flared up. “Jews do not associate with Samaritans.” But Jesus is “the gift of God” and God is the Creator of races and classes of people. They all matter to Him.

Religious differences surfaced, too. The woman trotted out the ancient quarrel between her people and His about the true place of worship. Christ was concerned, not about the true place of worship, but about the place of true worship—the human spirit in communion with the divine Spirit. Not where but how was the issue. No location, no ritual mattered unless men worshiped “in spirit and in truth.” Reality, not locality, was what counted.

The Lord brushed aside the irrelevant matters and probed the real trouble spot. “Go, call your husband

and come back.” She had no husband. She had bounced from one husband to another until she had decided the formality of marriage was useless. Now she was just living with a man—practicing marriage without a license.

To this woman, so sinful, so cynical, yet so thirsty for real life, Jesus declared His Messiahship. He identified himself as the Savior long awaited by Israelites and Samaritans. “I who speak to you am he.”

He is the very Savior we need! One who rejects the social, racial, political, and religious walls we build against one another, and cares for us all as human beings. One who knows our sins and guilt, who doesn’t leave us in our sins, but offers a way out—a new life. One who addresses, not our merits, but our thirst, and quenches it with “living water.” That’s the kind of Savior Jesus is.

The story reminds us that *sin grows*. This woman’s ideals had been scrapped. Her life had been coarsened and cheapened through continual disappointments. Lust had displaced love. Weariness and disillusionment triumphed in her spirit. That is always the trail of sin. Moral compromises become immoral habits.

The story reminds us, too, that *religion fails*. This woman was familiar with her people’s religious heritage and hope. She bristled with religious arguments. None of this had rescued her from sin or reconciled her to God. Rituals and dogmas cannot save. You can be a slave to sin while you attend church, repeat prayers, and support charities.

But the story makes a vital point, that *Jesus loves and saves*. He cares for everybody, and ignores the barriers of sex, race, and custom to reach them for His kingdom. He exposes sin but offers pardon. He awakens thirst and offers the water of life. And His promise extends to all: “Everyone who drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to everlasting life.” Jesus Christ offers an artesian well of spiritual life to all who follow Him. □

Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep,

Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?”

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.”

“I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

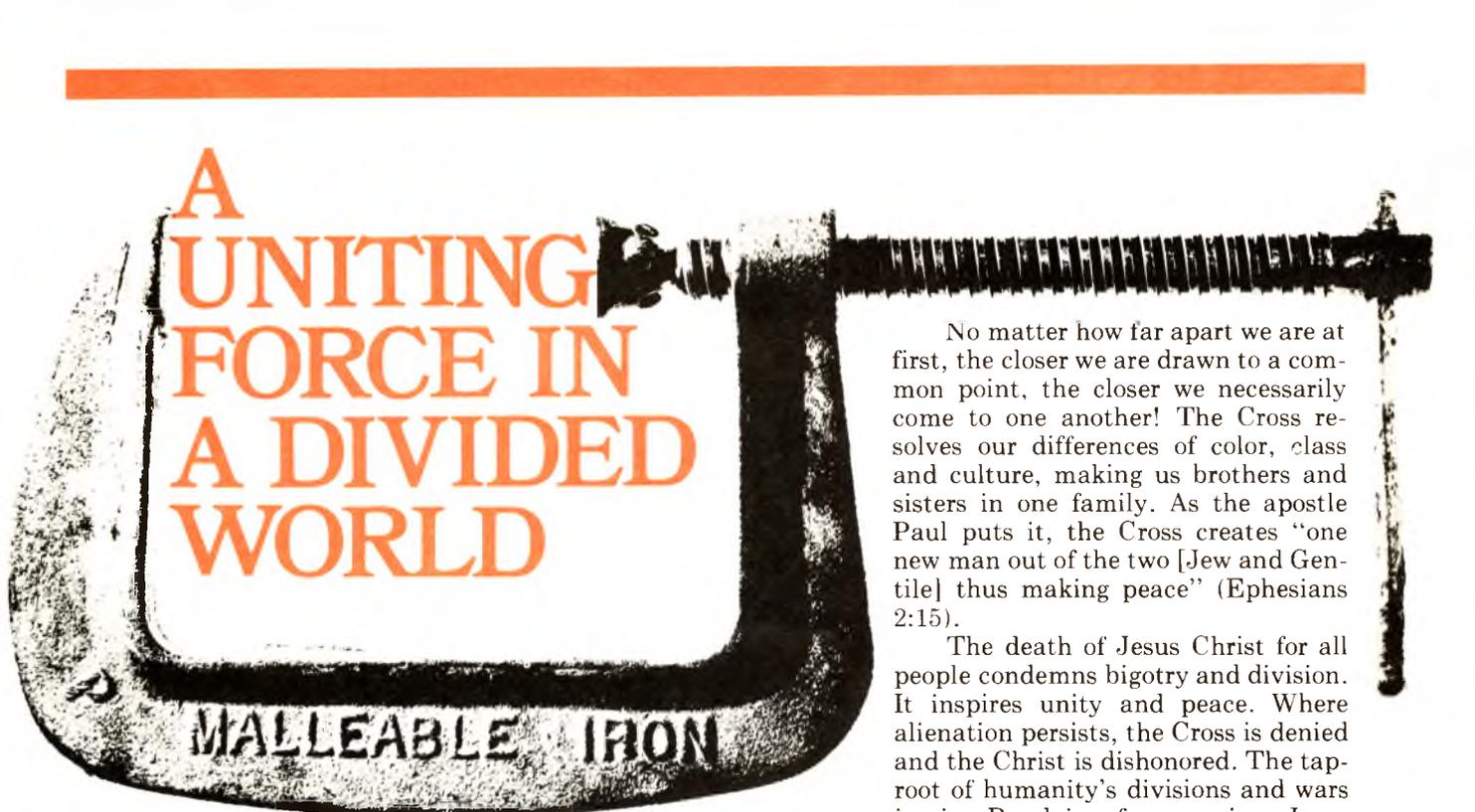
“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that

you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus declared, “Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”

Then Jesus declared, “I who speak to you am he” (John 4:4-26).

A large, dark, textured hammer and sickle symbol is centered on the page. The words "A UNITING FORCE IN A DIVIDED WORLD" are written in large, bold, orange capital letters across the top half of the symbol. At the bottom of the symbol, the words "MALLEABLE IRON" are written in smaller, black, bold capital letters.

A UNITING FORCE IN A DIVIDED WORLD

MALLEABLE IRON

A well-known symbol is the hammer and sickle. It has been seen by millions of people in thousands of places.

A better-known symbol is the cross of Christ. Through the centuries and around the world it has been greeted with cheers or jeers by countless people.

The hammer and sickle boasts of human power; the Cross speaks of divine love. The Cross is central to the Gospels, the reason for Christ's coming, the purpose of His life.

Jesus himself interpreted the Cross, an interpretation prompted by the coming of "some Greeks" to see Him.

The Lord thought of His cross as *a fertile seed*, saying, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (v. 24). He viewed those approaching Greeks as the firstfruits of a harvest of followers He would gather from among all nations. His death was necessary to produce that harvest. People are saved by His death as an atonement for their sins. John saw in a vision a numberless multitude from all nations who were before God's throne in heaven. Their salvation is ascribed to "the blood of the Lamb"—to Jesus' death on the Cross (Revelation 7:9-14).

The Lord also understood His cross as *a judgment upon Satan*. His "hour," His rendezvous with death, was drawing near, and He exclaimed, "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out" (v. 30). When men believe on Christ, the rule of Satan over their lives is shattered. The tyrant is evicted and a new King is enthroned in their hearts.

The Cross is a judgment, too, in the sense of *crisis*. It compels men to decision—to be ruled by Jesus Christ or to remain the slaves of sin.

Jesus Christ viewed His cross, also, as *a reconciling force*. He said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (v. 32). In this section of John's Gospel we see Jews and Greeks coming together to Jesus. The death of Christ not only reconciles men to God, it reconciles them to each other.

No matter how far apart we are at first, the closer we are drawn to a common point, the closer we necessarily come to one another! The Cross resolves our differences of color, class and culture, making us brothers and sisters in one family. As the apostle Paul puts it, the Cross creates "one new man out of the two [Jew and Gentile] thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:15).

The death of Jesus Christ for all people condemns bigotry and division. It inspires unity and peace. Where alienation persists, the Cross is denied and the Christ is dishonored. The taproot of humanity's divisions and wars is sin. By dying for our sins, Jesus Christ creates our peace.

On this occasion, when Christ interpreted the Cross, God spoke from heaven, declaring His name glorified by that death. Some in the crowd "said it had thundered" (v. 29). Don't mistake God's voice! It calls you to the Cross, to new life, to peace with God, to union with others. □

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:20-33).

GIFTS FOR HUMAN LIVES

WHEN JESUS was crucified, His disciples went into hiding, fearful for their own lives. When He rose from the dead, He found them huddled in a closed room like frightened sheep in a thunderstorm.

"The doors locked for fear"—now there's a phrase from Scripture that our society can identify with! Never has life been so threatened—in some nations by criminals, in some by government forces. More people huddle behind locked doors, fearful of impending violence, than ever before. Millions live in rooms closed by sin, fear, guilt, grief, failure and frustration.

"Jesus came and stood among them." He comes to us in our worst times, in our deepest griefs, in our severest trials. Uninvited, unexpected, undefeated, He comes to love us, deliver us, and lead us from our closed rooms to broad spaces of useful, happy living.

And He does not come empty-handed. He comes bearing gifts, the most priceless gifts imaginable. Not trifles, such as money, jewels, estates, and honors, but gifts designed to meet life's needs at its profoundest levels.

The risen Savior offers *peace*. Twice He says, "Peace be with you!" And between the two greetings "he showed them his hands and side." He still bore the marks

of the Cross, and on that Cross our peace was provided. Sin and guilt destroy peace. By atoning for sin Jesus made it possible for us to have peace with God, with one another, and within ourselves.

The risen Christ offers *purpose*. He says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Think of it! In spite of our past sins and failures, He invites us to participate in His ongoing mission in the world. He redeems, not only from sinfulness but from aimlessness. He invests our lives with huge meaning. To be fulfilled, everyone needs something greater than himself for which he can live and die. Jesus Christ shares with His disciples the "magnificent obsession" for which He lived, died, and rose

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

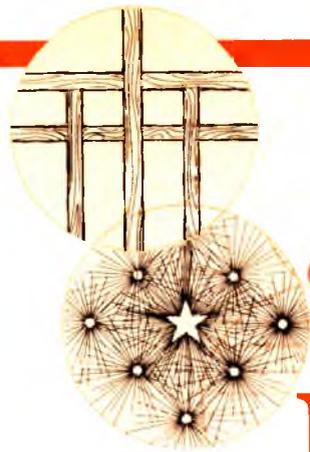
Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:19-22).

again. "The Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14). And the Son sends us to tell the world of Him that they might be saved. No nobler task ever engaged human energy and talent.

The risen Lord offers *power*. "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" The Holy Spirit is the power by which we live at peace and work for Christ. Power is not a gift He can confer upon us apart from himself. He is the power, and to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with power.

This power for Christian living is available to all who follow Jesus Christ. Power is not reserved for an elite few, for those in high places with "big" jobs. It is available to ordinary folks doing mundane tasks, enabling them to bear an influence for good far out of proportion to name, station, and privilege. Each of us can be Spirit-filled and fruitful as servants of the Lord.

"The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." Looking at their circumstances, they were discouraged. Looking at themselves, they were disgusted. But seeing Him filled them with gladness, for He was alive from the dead, victor over sin, and bearer of life's choicest gifts. He offers them all to you! □



THREE SUPREME MIRACLES

THE MESSAGE of the Gospels can be summed up in this statement: God has acted, in Jesus Christ, to save from sin all who believe in Him.

These mighty acts of God, in the Gospel of John, center around three supreme miracles—the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

INCARNATION

John opens his Gospel with these bold strokes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” From eternity God has revealed himself, communicated himself, through “the Word.” As human speech reveals human thought, as we “speak our minds” and “bare our hearts” through what we say, so God discloses himself through “the Word.” “The Word” is Creator: “Through him all things were made.” And in the course of history, wonder of wonders, the Creator became creature: “The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us.” “The Word” enfleshed was Jesus Christ, and in the words and deeds of Jesus, men saw the glory of God. “Anyone who has seen me,” Jesus said, “has seen the Father” (14:9).

CRUCIFIXION

Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus is seen moving resolutely toward the Cross. The Incarnation was in order to the Crucifixion. We are not saved by the miracles and messages of Jesus, marvelous as they were, but by His death. His death was an atonement. Calvary was an altar on which “the Lamb of God” was offered “who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29). On the Cross “the Son of Man” was “lifted up, that every one who

believes in him may have eternal life” (3:14-15). It did not take Him by surprise. He anticipated the Cross throughout His ministry, referring to it as His “hour” of destiny. And when He died, Jesus’ last words were, “It is finished” (19:30). God’s plan was completed. Our salvation was provided. Mission accomplished!

RESURRECTION

Death could not hold Him.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. . . .

The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14).

Carrying his own cross, he [Jesus] went out to The Place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle. . . .

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (John 19:17-18, 28-30).

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:19-22).

“Jesus had to rise from the dead” (20:9). He appeared to flabbergasted, frightened disciples, to offer the pardon, peace, and power which were provided in His death.

The Resurrection validated the Incarnation. It was God’s “Yes” to the claims of Jesus Christ to be His “only begotten Son,” to be the revealer of God and the redeemer of man.

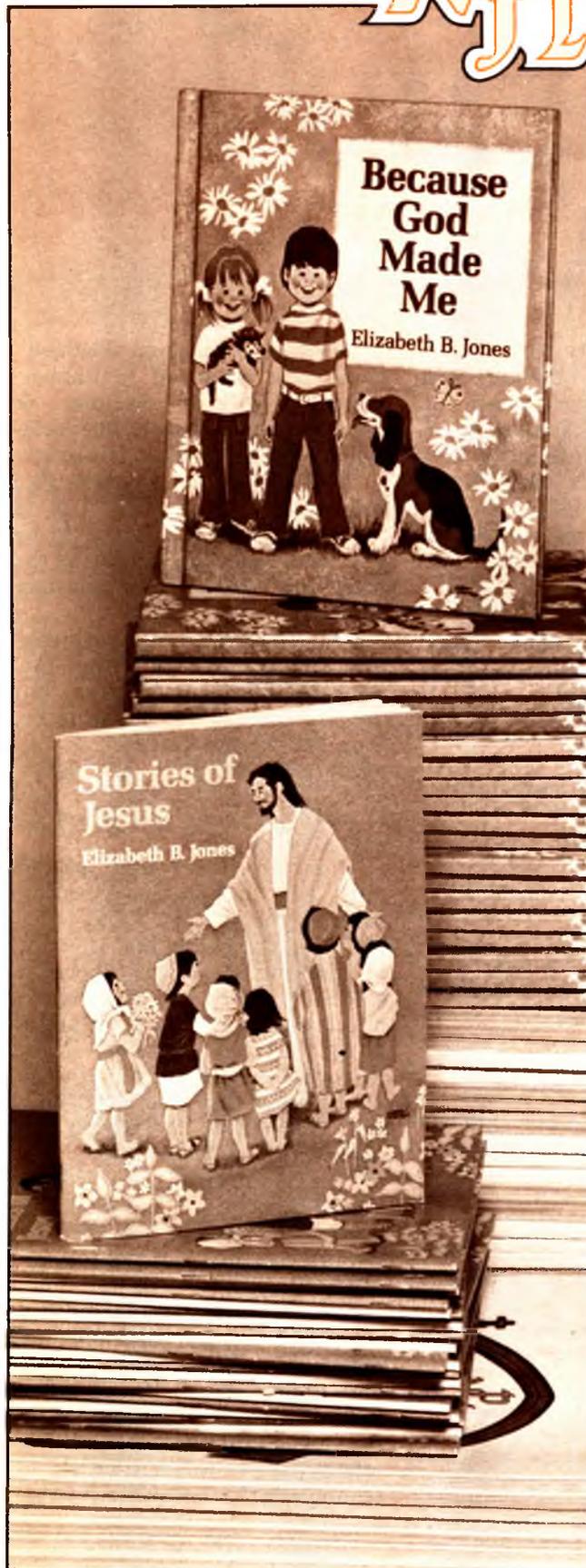
The Resurrection interpreted the Crucifixion. What looked like, from the human perspective, failure and tragedy was shown to be, from the divine perspective, triumph over sin, guilt, and death. God accepted the sacrifice and released its merit and power for our salvation.

That salvation comes through faith, and the word *believe* occurs often in this Gospel. Faith is not believing the incredible. It is not, as someone has put it, “belief in spite of evidence, but trust in scorn of consequence.” It is trusting the words that God has spoken in and through Jesus Christ; it is trusting in the deeds that God has done in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (3:16).

Jesus divides all mankind into two great classes—believers and disbelievers. The Gospel faithfully and bluntly reveals the destiny of both. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (3:36).

Do you believe on Jesus Christ? □



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By Elizabeth B. Jones. Whether read to small children or read by those a bit older, these 33 happy poems and blank verse expressions lead a child into a sense of wonder about fingerprints, the sky at night, talking with God, what happens to birds in winter, camping with the family, God's care, and Jesus' love. The many illustrations by Dorothy Wagstaff are delightful. Recommended for giving by doting grandparents, parents, friends, and teachers. 48 pages. 8½ x 9½". Cloth. **\$3.95**

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An excerpt from

BECAUSE GOD MADE ME —Elizabeth B. Jones

I Will Follow Jesus

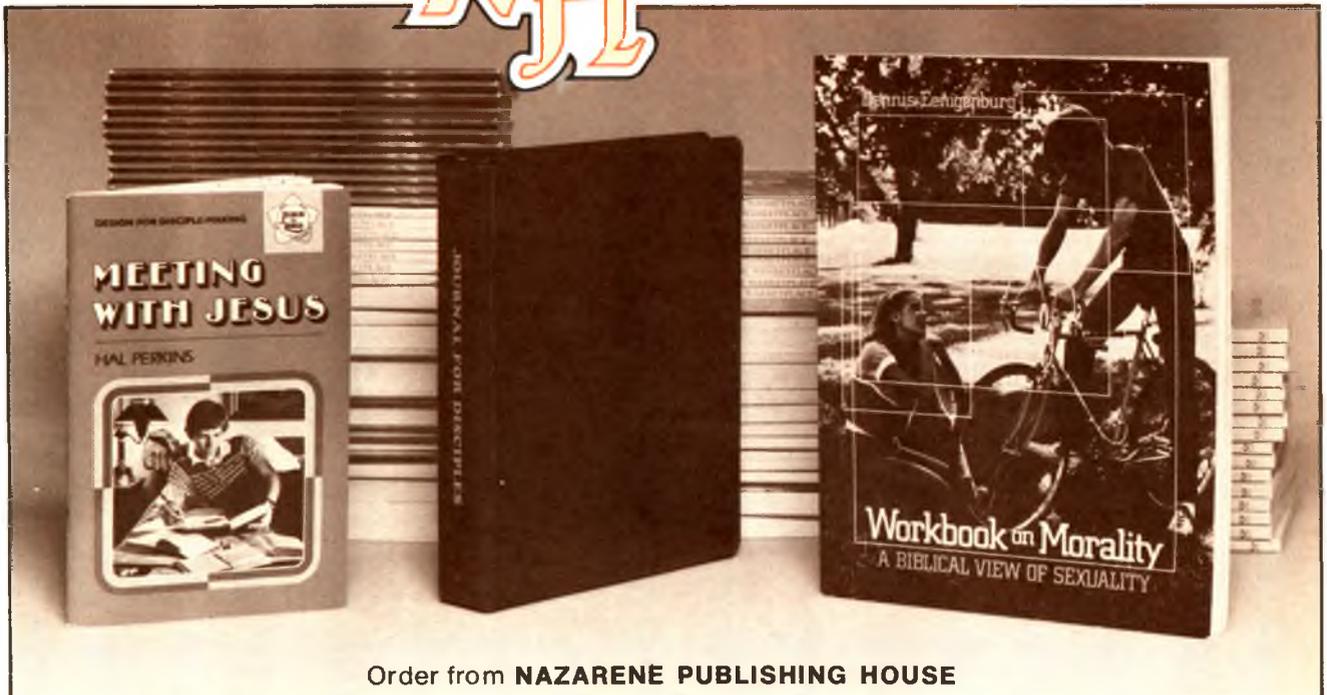
When I think about Jesus,
I remember His kind and loving ways.
I think how He helped people who were sick
And made the sad ones happy again.
Jesus told people about God's love.
He died on the Cross so that
We could have our sins forgiven.
Before Jesus went away,
He told His friends about heaven.
"I am going to prepare a place for you,"
Jesus told them.
That must have made His friends very happy.
I know Jesus wants me to go to heaven too.
No one will ever be sick there.
No one will be sad or cry.
We will be with those we love.
Jesus will be there and
We will live with Him for ever and ever.
And that is the very best of all.
*If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, . . .
that where I am, there you may be also. John 14:3 (NASB)*

Jesus Loves You

Do you know the story
How Jesus long ago
Welcomed all the children
Because He loved them so?
"Come to me," said Jesus
In His loving way,
As they gathered round Him
On that happy day.
I will tell to children
Whether near or far,
"Jesus loves and calls you
Anywhere you are."
I will send the message
Far across the sea,
Or to the friendly neighbors
Right next door to me!

*I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God. Psalm 104:33 (KJV)*

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An excerpt from MEETING WITH JESUS

"I am a Christian law enforcement officer. I deal primarily with murder, kidnapping, and similar crimes. Nearly three years ago I became a Christian. At that time I hated criminals and I treated them accordingly. Even to this day I struggle with the problem of distinguishing between the individual and his crime. I'm still learning that while God hates the crime, He loves the individual. Through His Word God calls on me to do the same. Although I knew this, my feelings and emotions would take over and I would forget God's will.

"Then my pastor and his wife began pouring their lives into my wife and me, as Jesus poured His life into His disciples. We began a devotional notebook. I have been growing in personal devotion, using my notebook, for over a year now.

"The days that I meet alone with the Lord I find that I am unusually sensitive to Him. He reminds me of His love and guides me in His way. He shows me when I fail Him. Since I have begun my devotions, the Lord has been helping me with my attitude toward criminals. He is teaching me to think the way He does . . . to love the individual.

"When I fail to meet Him, His influence and power gradually fade from my life. I tend to slide back into my old ways. When I fail to meet with Him, I am actually pushing the Lord away from me. I'm selfishly shutting Him out. I can't express how important daily devotions are to me. I show the Lord I love Him by meeting with Him to let Him talk with me."

That was Ed's testimony about the importance of personal devotion. He really means what he says.

I've got to tell you about Cal's excitement in devotion. Cal is a high school student who just started a regular meeting with Jesus. He has been working out this new commitment to discipleship for only two weeks. Know what's happening already in his life? A new sense of togetherness with God. A deeper joy. A stronger direction for living now. A greater understanding of God's will for his future. Cal is really getting into personal devotion and journaling.

You probably want to be a beautiful person. A study of the great Christian leaders of history reveals why they were so outstanding. All of them had one thing in common. It was neither type of home nor educational achievements, neither church size nor denomination. So what was it? Every day each one of them spent a significant amount of time alone . . . in prayer and Bible study.

They really were not alone. They were with the Lord.

—Hal Perkins



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HOLINESS IN THE MARKETPLACE

By Gene Van Note. An introduction to some "unknown Christians"—people whose exploits for God have never received wide publicity. They are among the "quiet in the land." Many of these folks could have lived comfortable lives if they had chosen the way of the world. But they did not! The subjects of these vignettes cover suicide, deviancy, divorce, and compassionate concern for others. This is inspiring reading. These are Spirit-filled Christians who have overcome. 84 pages. Paper.

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GETTING FROM PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK—SIMPLY

By Barbara Horak. According to Horak, a Texas C.P.A., living without debt is both possible and Christian. Beginning with basics, she shows the reader how to get control of finances, how to set up a workable budget, how to get out of debt, and how to stick to a "financial diet" long enough to save for future emergencies, luxuries, and needs. It is the author's belief that God can help you work out your financial problems that makes her words authoritative. Cartoon illustrations spice the book with pointed humor. 104 pages. Paper.

\$2.95

An excerpt from

GETTING FROM PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK—SIMPLY

The first time I took the rigorous, three-day Certified Public Accountant's exam, one fact became obvious to me—none of the fellow applicants had ever seen an eight-months-pregnant woman in that circumstance before. A year later, I received my certificate—five months pregnant with our third child.

Much has happened these last 13 years. The first nine years, I practiced public accounting in El Paso, Tex., specializing in income taxes. These last 4 years I have been officially the vice-president and secretary of my husband's general contracting corporation. In

reality, and more down to earth, I have been the tax consultant, bookkeeper, payroll and accounts payable clerk, receptionist, and typist for this multimillion dollar corporation.

But my work in the business world has always been part time! The first priority in my life is being a wife and mother. Being a Christian, of course, spreads out like an umbrella to cover all these activities.

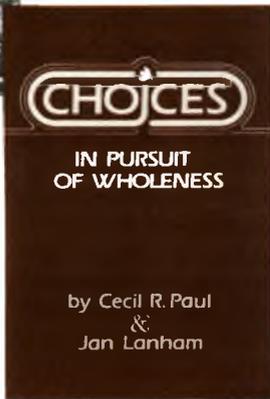
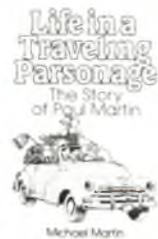
The last two years I have had a real concern for the many Christians who are burdened with financial worries. Where I have done counseling in money management or have led money management seminars, I have found that financial worries and problems generally stem, not from lack of finances, but from lack of money management skills.

How do you stack up as a money manager? If you need help, join the crowd. The truth is, we probably all have a great deal to learn about becoming more effective money managers, a problem that seems to be universal. According to the American Bar Association, 72 percent of divorces have financial problems as their root cause. Two out of five families have debt problems, according to a Federal Reserve Bank report.

Many times Jesus talked about money. He told 38 parables, 16 of which dealt with money and our attitudes toward money. I have searched the Scriptures and find that God's Word has much to say to us about our assets and liabilities. It's no secret to God that money is very important to us; we don't have to be ashamed of this feeling. If you are a Christian, you have a distinct advantage in money matters over nonbelievers. You've got God in your corner of the ring.

Do you recall the story that Jesus told in Matthew 25 about the master who left three servants in charge of his assets while he was away? The lesson we sometimes forget is this: The master required an accounting immediately upon his return. We have been entrusted with the use of God's assets, and we'd better believe we are going to have to make an accounting for them. Will you be able to do this?

—Barbara Horak



Of making many books there is no end...

So said the wisest human of all time—King Solomon. Imagine, if he could saunter into a B. Dalton Bookstore, or casually peruse the pages of the Nazarene Publishing House catalog, he'd certainly have an eye-opening experience. Business consultants report that evangelical bookshops are one of the fastest growing enterprises to be found anywhere. While the general book market has taken a dip in sales, the release and distribution of Christian publications continue to soar. The difference? Christian literature is designed to bring honor to the name and work of Jesus Christ, therefore finding receptivity in the minds and hearts of a growing segment of the North American and European population. So it has been from the first release of Mark's biography of Jesus down to our Beacon Small-group Bible Study workbook of John's Gospel. Granted, there has always been an interest in learning *about* Jesus Christ, but there is more. It is one thing to write a factually accurate account of God's Son, and it's another to show how His teachings and power apply to contemporary men and women. A wonderful new book, just released by Nazarene Publishing House (Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City), is *Choices*, by Cecil Paul and Jan Lanham. While written to college/career young people, and released at GREENLAKE '82, every reader will benefit from exploring this concept;

 Becoming a "new creation" in Christ is not limited to trusting Christ's work on the Cross . . . this is only the beginning of our growth journey.

 When we receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit, He gives us the power to follow Jesus' example, and to dedicate ourselves to the will and purpose of God more completely.

 When we choose to totally commit our lives to Christ, we discover new goals as well as new resources.

Choices underscores the benefits of pursuing Christlikeness. Authors Paul and Lanham see the need for an understanding that the desire and ability to make proper choices come from the development of workable life principles, based on Bible truths. Your Nazarene Publishing House will be turning out hundreds of thousands of pieces of Christ-honoring literature in the months ahead, but none will have more impact or reflect Jesus, the Giver of Life, any more than *Choices*. This will be \$3.95 well invested.

JESUS CHRIST, *Life-Giver*

In the first century, a man wrote a Gospel. He does not identify himself in this Gospel, and scholars are not fully agreed in their guesses of his identity. An old, strong, and persistent tradition regards the apostle John, one of the first followers of Jesus Christ, as this unnamed writer. For our purposes this will suffice.

We do not know for sure *who* wrote the Fourth Gospel, but we do know for certain *why* it was written. The author has clearly stated his purpose: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

A gospel was a new form of literature, invented for the purpose of proclaiming Jesus Christ. A Gospel is not a biography, though it contains biographical information. It is not a history, though it reports historical facts. The Gospels bear witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind. They record certain of His words and deeds, along with extended accounts of His death and resurrection, which point to

Him as the one and only Savior from sin, guilt, and death.

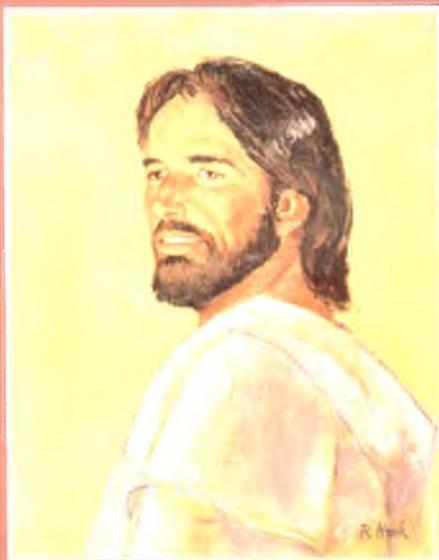
The Gospel of John records seven miracles performed by Jesus. These are called "signs," for they signify who He is—the Son of God—and what He does—He gives eternal life.

John's Gospel also contains seven important sayings of Jesus. Like the miracles, they reveal His identity and purpose. These sayings begin with the phrase, "I am..."

Other materials are included in this Gospel. Prominent among them are conversations between Jesus and certain individuals. His encounters with these people can mediate His encounter

with us. And that is what the Gospel is all about—proclaiming Christ, not as a dim figure in ancient history, but as a living Savior for today's world.

This issue of the *Herald of Holiness* presents Jesus Christ as He is proclaimed by John's Gospel. It comes to you with a fervent prayer that through Him you, too, may have life—life abundant and eternal.



W. E. McCumber