

Christ is Victor

NOV/DEC 2003

“Picking Apples”

During the first twenty years of our married life we lived in four different houses. They were nice enough places, but not one had much of a garden. So it was a real joy to move into our fifth house, which not only had a nice garden, but also three mature apple trees.

The first autumn saw a magnificent crop of apples and we were determined to save as many as possible. So after they were picked, we wrapped each one separately in newspaper and stacked them on wooden trays in the garage as we wanted to use them during the Christmas season. We looked forward with anticipation to apples all the winter. But by Christmas they were all rotten.

I spoke to a farmer friend about this and he said it was because I had picked them too soon. I protested that they looked ripe. Yes, he said, but did they come easily? He explained that the right time to pick apples is when they come away from the branch easily into your hand. *‘If you have to tug, leave them’*, he said. *‘They are*

... “APPLES” CON’T ON PAGE 2

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“The Christ of Christmas”

“And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told

mission. In fact, the larger the congregation, the greater the confusion, quarrelling and division that is often present.

These shepherds had a mission and a midnight hour in which to accomplish it. The shepherds had to get up and move in order to accomplish the divinely appointed



them by the shepherds.” (Luke 2:16-18)

These shepherds had to leave their flocks in the middle of the night. It was a sacrifice to leave their flocks to seek Christ. After all, the flocks were their most important possession. The flocks needed to be watched. But these men chose to seek Christ instead. They had a mission.

Today people are fitful and unsettled. They have no mission in life. If you have a mission, if you have a heavenly purpose in life, then it does not matter if you have just one, or two, or three people to help you. You do not need a great congregation to accomplish a divinely appointed

task, in order to see Christ.

When the angel had departed, what did the shepherds say? *“Let’s wait ‘til morning. We must care for our flocks.”* If you take this attitude, then your whole life is going to be characterized by inaction. I have never believed in waiting for tomorrow; I have believed in seizing the opportunity of today. The Bible is full of ‘today’. Take the matter of conversion. If we put off our conversion, if we put off the obedience that God requires of us, we will waste our entire life. Today is our God-given opportunity! Go to the Cross, bring your nature to the Cross and say, *“Lord, it must be done now!”*

... “THE CHRIST” CON’T ON PAGE 4

not ready for picking and will go rotten.'

That was good advice on picking apples, but it is also good advice on dealing with the souls of men and women. How often in our churches have we been overjoyed to see people make profession of faith, but within a short time it is obvious that they are not saved and soon they stop attending church. This is so dishonouring to God. Also it is a cause of deep disappointment and frustration for us Christians, and it very often makes those who made the profession very hardened against the gospel. They say, 'I was saved- and it does not work.'

It is a very real problem. The modern 'invitation system' aggravates it, but even in churches who do not use this system and where more care is taken in dealing with souls, it still happens. Why is this so?

Often, like me with the apples, it is ignorance coupled with enthusiasm. We are so eager to see souls saved that we ignore basic biblical principles. As a consequence of this, we hurry souls to a decision before they are ready. How can we know when the right time has arrived to pick spiritual fruit?

Firstly, we must always remem-

ber that a true conversion is not the result of human decision but a work of the Holy Spirit. There are evidences of this divine work. We read in Acts 11:23 that at Antioch Barnabas saw the evidence of the grace of God. The prime evidence is always conviction of sin, which will lead to repentance. There can be no salvation without this. Conviction will vary in degree from one person to another, but it must be there.

In past generations Christians used to make a distinction between a soul awakened and a soul saved. By 'awakened' they meant that the Holy Spirit was beginning to deal with the person. Conviction was coming and a longing for pardon was being created. But this was not yet conversion. Perhaps we today ought again to make this distinction and not try to hasten the work, which the Holy Spirit is beginning.

This does not mean that we sit back and do nothing. If you see souls that God is awakening, then pray for them. Help and advise, but let the Holy Spirit do His own peculiar work. When they are ripe, they will come easily and no pressure will be needed.

There are no rotten apples in a harvest that is reaped by the Holy Spirit of God.

— Selected

"Function by Unction"

Luke 1:42-45 & 52

Here, is a young woman prophesying. A woman much older to her was calling Mary 'the mother of my Lord'. Already Mary was receiving honour. Thus God honours the humble. Elizabeth rejoiced at the sight of Mary. She used the language of the Holy Spirit. She understood many things by the unction of the Holy Spirit. These two families were related and spiritually they were on a very high level. If we heap sand together, the heap will be broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. The Jewish nation received the promises from God. But these few families had so developed their spiritual life that they appropriated the promises and were at the top of the nation in faith and contacted God. These families seemed to reach heaven. When parents are spiritual, sometimes the children become more spiritual. Without a real Fellowship you cannot have really spiritual people. John Wesley had a fellowship of earnest people. Each one's faith helps another.

Mary said "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." She realized she had become a world-figure. Jesus brought a power which could enable men to live a holy life. He brought power to men over evil spir-

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This Fellowship is an inter-denominational missionary and prayer group working for revival in churches and amongst students in several countries. We invite every layperson to become God's ally in changing his or her corner of the world. We train people in evangelistic work and to be self-supporting missionaries.

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its. When Jesus sent out His disciples, He first gave them power over unclean spirits. Jesus brought power in to this world. *“Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”* (Ephesians 2:2) These evil spirits are always prompting men into sin. *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Hebrews 2:14-15). The devil wants to frighten you about death. But Jesus took away the sting of death. Jesus has power over death. Power, you must remember, can be dangerous. To have power without character is dangerous. Do not think so much about power as about the new nature Jesus has brought you. When you disobey the Word of God the devil can tempt you into wrong ways. You will get correct guidance from God only when you obey God’s Word.

God says He will give us the Holy Spirit who will guide us into all truth. We find in Mary a divine nature. As a young woman she was the recipient of the divine nature. How blessed we are to think of Joseph, Mary, Zacharias and Elizabeth and John the Baptist and Jesus. When we think of these people we are lifted into another atmosphere.

Jesus brought us a new nature. Your thoughts reach up to heaven and make glad the heart of God. Jesus made his disciples fishers of men, by

giving them a new nature. The deeper you go in understanding the nature of God, the more powerful your prayer will be. *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”* (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). Christ has come to make known to you the God of heaven and earth.

— Late Mr. N. Daniel

“Born to Die”

The important issue of Christmas is not so much that Jesus came, but why He came. There was no salvation in His birth. Nor did the sinless way He lived His life have any redemptive force of its own. His example, as flawless as it was, could not rescue men from their sins. Even His teaching, the greatest truth ever revealed to man, could not save us from our sins. There was a price to be paid for our sins. Someone had to die. Only Jesus could do it.

Jesus came to earth, of course, to reveal God to mankind. He came to teach truth. He came to fulfill the Law. He came to offer His kingdom. He came to show us how to live. He came to reveal God’s love. He came to bring peace. He came to heal the sick. He came to minister to the needy.

But all those reasons are incidental to His ultimate purpose. He could have done them all without being born as a human. He could have simply appeared- like the angel of the Lord often did in the Old Testament- and accomplished everything in the above list, without literally becoming a man. But He had one more reason for coming: He came to die.

Here’s a side to the Christmas story that isn’t often told: those soft little hands, fashioned by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb, were made so that nails might be driven through them. Those baby feet, pink and unable to walk, would one day walk up a dusty hill to be nailed to a cross. That sweet infant’s head with sparkling eyes and eager mouth was formed so that someday men might force a crown of thorns onto it. That tender body, warm and soft, wrapped in swaddling clothes, would one day be ripped open by a spear.

Jesus was born to die. Don’t think I’m trying to put a damper on your Christmas spirit. Far from it- for Jesus’ death, though devised and carried out by men with evil intentions, was in no sense a tragedy. In fact, it represents the greatest victory over evil anyone has ever accomplished.

REALITY CHECK!

“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHO-SOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVER-LASTING LIFE.”

JOHN 3:16

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When I gave my life to the Lord Jesus, it was entirely given. If sports stood in the way, then sports were put aside. If girls stood in the way, they went. If anything else intruded upon my communion with Jesus, then I immediately excluded them from my life. Nothing could deflect me from my mission. The mission was to be a simple disciple of Jesus- nothing could deflect me.

But Christians today have no sense of urgency. They have no mission in life. They feel they can just linger, dither, procrastinate, and postpone tasks and opportunities until life is wasted and over.

If eternity is important, then we should immediately obey the revelation, which the eternal God gives to us, "Let us go now and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has revealed to us" (verse 15). Did the shepherds doubt the vision of the angels, saying: "Weren't we dreaming?" No. They believed God and acted accordingly. The Bible teaches us that "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness."- he acted on his belief. When God told Abraham something, he acted in faith.

So the shepherds acted in faith. Please remember that obedience to God's revelation requires faith.

So what is God's revelation to us? Here is the Word of God before us, saying "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." The Word of God is plain and clear- are we doing it? It says "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people" - you are the priest, the communicator, the one who can pray, the person who should cry to God for your country. Do you act on this?

Let us learn from the simplicity that we see in these shepherds- "The Lord has revealed this to us, let us see this Saviour. Let us go now." To us supposedly intellectual people, we feel that inaction is a part of our superior intellect. We have lost that simplicity. We have become proud. It is pride that makes us so isolated and self-sufficient. We like to appear like anybody else except a disciple of Jesus. If you are not ready to deal with this pride, you will never fulfill God's mission for your life.

Look at the shepherds: "And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds" (verses 16-18)

Do you have this sense of wonder and amazement in your response to Christ? Many people have taken the wonder out of the Word of God. They have taken the wonder out of the Gospel and replaced it with sighs, grumbling, unbelief and inaction.

Let us be careful we do not project a different kind of Jesus. When the shepherds saw the Lord, they were filled with the wonder of the Gospel. To this day, God never allows the Gospel to become a second-hand revelation. When you share Jesus He reveals Himself to people! Jesus speaks to people. He works in people today. When you share Christ with others, the wonder of Christ's revelation will be yours to see. The modern, educated mind, with its skepticism and unbelief, tends to diminish the wonder of the Gospel. We wonder at a man going to the moon, but somehow Jesus Christ is stale.

It is time for us to amend our ways and humble ourselves. If the Creator humbled Himself for you and me, sending Jesus in the form of a servant, we ought to humble ourselves. My dear people, at this Christmas-time, let us be simple and real. The world has moved away from the Christ of Christmas. His manger is unattended. People view His miraculous coming as myth or ancient story. People feel that Christmas is a time to drink and dance- what for? "Because I love myself, I do not love the Saviour, I do not want to please the Saviour on His birthday." There is no birthday celebration in the whole world like the birthday of Jesus. If you go to a birthday party, you greet the person whose birthday it is. But many don't want Christ at His own birthday! O what a tragedy! What a total perversion of Christmas!

Worshipping Jesus- that is Christmas. Bringing joy to the heart of Jesus. By every means possible, let us bring joy to the heart of Jesus.

— Joshua Daniel

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