

OUR TIMES

*Behold
There Came
Wise Men To
Jerusalem*

—Page 10

DECEMBER 1964



prophecy interprets headlines



D. Kasbekar

Building Boom Highlights Development Decade

NOT SINCE ancient Babel has the building industry made headlines as it does today.

And for good reason.

At no period in history has building construction played a more prominent part in human activity.

That's what the commentators are saying. Note a few statements gleaned from widely-read magazines over the past two years.

"We are passing through one of the greatest building periods of all times."

"Manhattan [New York] is in the midst of a building boom that in volume, value and variety is unmatched in the history of the human race."

"Not only is man building his bridges longer and stronger than ever before, he is also erecting more of them than at any other time in history."

Perhaps as a traveller through cities and countryside you have been likewise impressed. Maybe you have even made similar remarks, limited of course to the area of your observation. But it's true of the whole world.

New buildings everywhere. Big buildings. Great housing projects. New colonies. Even completely new cities in some cases. It's tremendous.

House construction in the U.S.A. is at an all-time high. Americans bought 16 lakhs of new homes in 1963. If the trend keeps up they will be building and buying 20 lakhs of them every year for the next five years.

Other nations are running up their own records. What about the new Olympic village in Tokyo, feverishly completed against the deadline of October 10? What about West Germany with its marvellous restoration of bombed-out cities following the last war? What about Brazil with its new capital city of Brasilia built from scratch?

The same goes for Pakistan with its new national capital abuilding near Rawalpindi and for India with one brand new state capital and Delhi expanded to at least twice its pre-Independence size. And now a great new Bombay is being planned.

And that's only housing. We could mention the great dams and

power temples. Bhakra-Nangal, Hirakud, Nagarjunasagar, Lawpita Falls and Warsak.

Everywhere it's the same. The world's output of electricity has doubled since 1954 and is expected to double again by 1974. The race to meet rapidly rising demands keeps power in the news. Off the Welsh coast, Britain is building the world's most powerful nuclear station. West Germany has announced plans to build a second commercial atomic plant. Italy last year made Europe's biggest jump in power production. Kenya is about to start work on a huge project. Australia in its current seven-year programme is doubling its electrical output. And, of course, there's the Aswan High Dam now nearing first-stage completion in Egypt, and the tunnel under the English channel.

Two unique characteristics of modern society contribute to this unprecedented building programme: urbanization and population explosion. "Never in history has a society been so urbanized," stated *Time* magazine some months ago. This makes housing the world's No. 1 problem. That's what catapults a man like R. Buckminster Fuller with his geodesic dome into international fame. That's what makes building activity in Holland the source of livelihood for one in every ten Dutch families. It is this, as B. G. Verghese recently observed in a *Times of India* article, that makes the laying of a foundation-stone or turning the first sod an every-day occurrence in India.

Now how do these headlines figure into Bible prophecy?

In drawing parallels between the days of Noah and Lot and the time of His coming, Jesus mentioned building as one of the signs.

"Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; . . . Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:28, 30.

Thus the digging, shouting, pounding, drilling, blasting and riveting going on all round us is not just a 20th century coincidence. It is a phenomenon foreseen by divine prophecy and specifically pointed out as a sign that human history is moving rapidly towards its climax. ●

64-Dollar Question of '64

DURING THE 1940'S a quiz show in the U.S.A. made the expression "64-dollar question" famous. The phrase has since become a proverb. It stands for the crucial question on any problematical subject.

Sponsors of the programme, "Take it or Leave it," offered \$64 as the highest award to participants who volunteered to answer a panel of five questions. Prize money for correct answers, beginning with \$4 for the first, doubled with each succeeding correct answer. Players were free to drop out at any stage, taking what they had won to that point. Or they could continue to the end, risking total loss if they should fail on the final question. Thus the dramatic importance that came to be attached to the climactic "64-dollar question."

December brings us to the end of another year's contest of wits. We have fielded many questions thus far, for the most part successfully, we hope. Some were knotty ones, too. Toward the end they became harder, especially in the economic area. Some players found themselves almost stalled on "Where's the next meal coming from?" Especially people with large families and small incomes.

Statesmen were confronted with an exceptionally difficult list. "How to maintain world peace?" was particularly baffling.

"How to control spiralling food prices?" was an intricate one for India.

"What to do about unprecedented outbreaks of juvenile terrorism?" had psychologists and educationalists in many countries scratching their egg-heads. Also the problem of mounting racial animosities.

World Health authorities were fearful of flunking out on "Where to get food for increasing millions of population?"

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HUMAN MISBEHAVIOUR

has been examined from many different perspectives. Certainly one of the most fascinating viewpoints is the historical one. Ancient accounts clearly reveal that early in history man was confronted by this problem. Human injustices, violent actions, and other forms of human misbehaviour required that some differentiation should be made between permissible human behaviour and those types of behaviour which society could not condone or tolerate. Historical records being relatively incomplete, it is difficult to state just how those ancient civilizations actually formulated their codes of conduct. But a careful study seems to indicate certain definite trends, one of which is that historical necessity played a big though bungling part.

It is significant that in modern cultures one often encounters codes of conduct venerable with age. Where did these come from? Their origin is sometimes traceable to the beginnings of recorded history. Anciently, much attention was given to codifying and recording rules of conduct. Contemporary society is deeply indebted to those efforts of former generations.

The question logically arises, "Where did those people get their knowledge of what was right and what was wrong?" Also, Why did primitive civilizations attempt to regulate human behaviour? And why have men historically imposed religious, social, and other sanctions upon themselves? Leaving divine revelation aside for the moment, the reason was largely to guarantee human physical survival. In other words, men early recognized that those forms of human activity which deprive another living human being of life constituted a basic wrong to society as a whole and to the individual concerned. War, murder, and other violent crimes were therefore tabooed as misbehaviour of a most serious type.

Sanctions were imposed against these crimes. Punishments were prescribed. Almost universally they were condemned as sin or evil. All this, we repeat, was largely the result of historical necessity. Human survival was at stake.

Interestingly enough, this codifying process is still going on in every country and society. Every year, numerous laws are enacted by various governmental and other legal agencies seeking to clarify misbehaviour in human conduct. The historical necessity still endures. Your life and mine depend upon the efforts of contemporary lawmakers and enforcement officers.

Another reason why historical necessity tended to regulate human behaviour was the felt need of preserving accepted social usages. Not all human behaviour, it may be pointed out, may be categorized in water-tight compartments, as religious, social, domestic, etc. Many actions overlap into several areas. Social usages, for example, are often also distinctly religious. Be that as it may, historical necessity has played a large part in preserving these social customs and usages, which in turn have influenced human behaviour.

Take marriage, for example. In some areas polygamy is practised; in others, polyandry, and of course in most, monogamy. Whatever the social usage which prevails in a particular locality or society, the present status represents the outgrowth of centuries of inward striving, and is a product of the entire culture. Political, economic, religious, and other considerations may well be reflected in the social usages which have been preserved.

Not infrequently, a social usage has reflected a temporary situation. Perhaps the political fortunes of a locality have changed, and with them social usages. Changes in the religious, social, or political structure of a society frequently precipitate the passing away of a particular law or code of human conduct. In India, the passing of the centuries has witnessed an ever evolving attitude towards the question of caste distinctions. Governmental requirements in this regard today most certainly reflect a changing mentality on the part of millions of people when compared, for instance, with the post-Vedic era when the Brahmanas were at the zenith of their power.

Perhaps in no area of human behaviour has the influence of historical necessity been more felt than in matters of religion. And religion, in turn, has markedly affected, modified, and regulated all other categories of human activity. Especially is this true in India. It is difficult to contemplate any aspect of behaviour here without associating with it a distinctive religious philosophy and belief.

Strike In Orissa Colleges
On Reopening Day
"The Times of India" News Service
CUTTACK, October 22.
FOUR city colleges and some in district towns, which reopened today after puja vacation, were affected by the students' strike called by their council of action. At a rally this evening, the students resolved to continue the strike throughout the State until the Government conceded judicial exception newspaper mobbed it to leave compound. The president of the Association of Students of India" N Oct

27 Students Held In Bhubaneswar
SEC. 144 VIOLATED

Grain Shops Looted
"The Times of India" News Service
AGRA, July 11: An irate 1,000-strong crowd today raided the grain market in the Chhipitola area. The

POLICE FIRE ON STUDENTS
25 Injured
HYDERABAD, July 7: Twenty-five students were injured, one of them fatally, in a police firing in Nirmal town of Adilabad District yesterday, according to an official report. It was stated, had coolie

TOP LAW OFFICER STRANGLER
Burglary Believed
Be

But is the practice of religion the same today as it was in more ancient times? While it may truthfully be asserted that many beliefs and practices have steadfastly resisted any alteration, still, others have undeniably succumbed to change, much of it the result of historical necessity.

Not the least of these changes in religious practice due to historical necessity has been the ever-changing concept of what is right and what is wrong—what is good and what is evil. It would be comforting to many to be able to believe that what is considered as permissible behaviour today has always been thus considered and that what is condemned today as undesirable or evil behaviour has also been ever reckoned thus. But the facts will not allow this view.

Historically, it may be shown that much of what we permit today has at some time been condemned by religious teaching. Likewise much that was earlier believed has been relegated to the category of myth or religious fancy. So much so, that there is an ever-increasing secularism and materialism pervading the thinking of modern youth. Accompanying this trend is a tendency to cast aside all moral restraint simply because it has previously been associated with some religious belief. Is such a course logical or sound? If certain religious usages have been cast aside because of historical irrelevancy, does that mean that all religion is therefore obsolete and valueless?

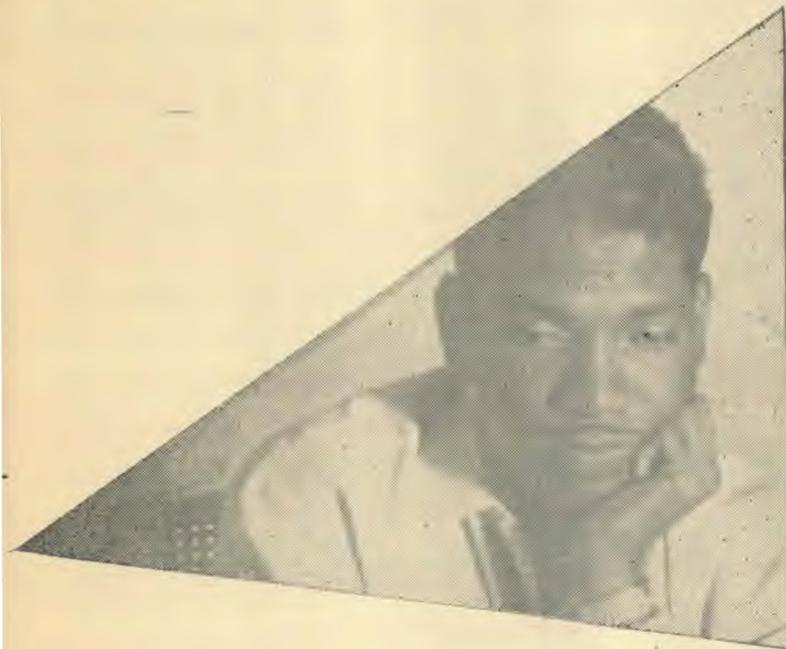
It is a relatively easy thing to cast aside an ideal or a religious belief. But the painful stark reality comes bursting upon the consciousness that human misbehaviour still persists and that some regulatory power is very much

THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL NECESSITY

needed. Justified or not, historical necessity has doubtless led misguided zealots to castigate religion and moral values; but does it follow that religion is therefore no longer needed to establish what is legitimate, permissible behaviour and what is not?

Many believe that man, given sufficient time, will so discipline himself through education and other processes that misbehaviour will entirely disappear. One wonders, in view of his past historical performance, if such confidence in human capabilities is well placed. The rampant crime and human misbehaviour of this advanced age suggests a strong possibility of error in this logic. No enlightened person today wishes to promote the acceptance of irrelevant or obsolete regulations. But the complexity of human relationships now makes it imperative for all to seek an answer to the problem of evil. The future of the human race may well hang on the solution of this problem. Never has it been possible for one person to work so much evil against so many as now in this atomic and space age. Scientists, statesmen, and scholars are unanimous in recognizing the peril. Human wisdom today seems incapable of solving this issue. Our greatest efforts seem thwarted by human selfishness.

The human heart cries out against evil. Millions yearn for a power greater than themselves to define truth and to guide and help them in following it. Does such a power exist? It does! In efficacy and trustworthiness it excels historical necessity as the heavens transcend the earth. The next instalment will be devoted to a disclosure of this power. The subject will be "Sin, victor or vanquished?"



GEORGE R. JENSON

"YOU CAN

do without this now, Mother, and you will not need that any more. You will have a nice comfortable room already furnished. Esme has chosen everything, and you know she has good taste."

"Yes, Charles, she certainly has, to choose my last dear son," replied little Mrs. Reynolds softly, with a smile of pride.

Charles was certainly very kind to offer her a room in his new home after the wedding. And Esme too. She had been quite pressing in her offer and would take no refusal—"We shall not need all the rooms, Mother," she had said, "We must have someone, so why not you? We'll pull together all right."

So Mrs. Reynolds, feeling too tired in body and weary in spirit to argue, agreed to everything.

She hid the funny little pain she felt when her old bedstead was sent away, and a sharper pain when the man from the second-hand shop carried off her rocking chair and her "mending table," as she always called it. Other little treasured things went too. She was thankful when the sale was over and she was helping Charles pack his books and the new things he had bought from time to time in readiness for his removal some day.

"We don't want anything old or old-fashioned in our new home, Mother," he had said happily.

"But, Dear, what about me?" replied his mother playfully. "I'm old-fashioned enough, surely."

"Now, Mother, you're not going to be old-fashioned any longer, You'll see." And Charles gave her a kiss which sent the colour to her cheeks, making her look years younger.

She would try not to mind losing her little old things, she told herself. They were both so kind to her, and she had dreaded living alone.

"I could go to my girl Dolly," she had told them, "I could help with the children."

But Charles had said firmly: "No, Mother. You have brought up one family, let Dolly bring up her own. Oh, yes, I know you're fond of them, So am I, but you need a rest now."

Dolly was her only daughter and Charles her youngest and best-loved son, her older sons having married and gone far away some years ago.

The new house was certainly modern, and the furniture chosen with "Esme's good taste," as Charles told everyone. The happy pair were very proud on the day they led Mother to her own cosy room. It certainly did look inviting with the new bedstead covered with a pretty covering. "One would think I was getting married, too," Mother said smiling.

A deep-seated modern armchair stood by the tiled fireplace. "Sit in it, Mother," said Charles, and as his mother sat gingerly on the edge, he gently pushed her back into it, "There," he said, "isn't it comfy?" "Yes, Dear, I feel like a queen," she replied.

That night in her new bed she did not sleep well. She was used to her own old bed and the patchwork quilt she had made so long ago with such pride, each piece of material bringing back memories. Oh, well, she must try and forget now. She must manage to fit into the modern ways of the young people who were doing their best to make her happy. She certainly was happy to feel she was wanted, but she did miss her "little old things." When one is in the seventies these things often mean so much when one lives on memories.

There was not much she could do at first in the new house. Esme told her she must rest and be waited on for a change. After a time she certainly felt rested. On fine days she enjoyed a walk, sometimes shopping with Esme, but more often alone.

One afternoon she decided to take a bus ride to her old neighbourhood and call on an old friend for a chat. Her way led her past the second-hand furniture shop and she looked in the window, a sad feeling again within her. There stood her old rocking-chair ticketed: "For sale, going cheap. A real bargain."

"So I should think," she said to herself, "It's a grand old chair." Her eyes filled with tears as she remembered how she used to clean and polish it, especially when grubby little hands and eager little feet had marred its beauty. Memories crowded into her mind of how she had rocked each of her four babies to sleep in this same old chair and sang to them. Little Charles had loved it, maybe more than had the others, or was the memory fresher in her mind? Hastily she wiped away the tears that fell unbidden. "Foolish of me crying like a child," she thought, and then she noticed in a far corner her old work-table.

"Many's the time I've sat and mended and darned at that old table," she said. "It's useful yet if anyone has the mind to buy it."

She peered through the glass eagerly and saw a framed engraving of Tower Bridge, and her tears fell again. So many, many years since it had been given to her by a loved one long since passed away. Oh, well, she must not be foolish, but as Charles and Esme had said, "move with the times" and let the past be forgotten. But it was hard to do so.

That evening when the young people came up to her room to kiss her goodnight as usual, she told them about the old furniture. "My little old things not sold yet," she said brightly, although the tears almost came again at the thought.

"They'll have a job to sell them, no doubt," said Charles. "Rocking-chairs are out of date, although I remember that I used to love riding on it."

Esme did not speak. She had noticed the tears which were bravely kept back, which her husband evidently had not.

Having time on her hands those late summer afternoons, little Mrs. Reynolds often visited the second-hand furniture shop. Sometimes she called on a neighbour, but



HER LITTLE OLD

more often she would stand looking in at her "little old things" which were still unsold. After that first time, she did not tell Charles or Esme where she had been, and they did not bother her with questions, and so the summer days passed and autumn was in the air.

"You must not go too far now, Mother," said Esme kindly. "There is a dampness in the air and we cannot afford for you to be ill."

"You must give me more to do, my dear, and then I shall not get into mischief," laughed Mrs. Reynolds.

She found a strange comfort in visiting her "little old things" and decided to make the journey just once more, now that the days were drawing in and weather unreliable. By the time she reached the shop there was rain in the air, which had turned chilly. But Mrs. Reynolds did not heed it; she was staring in at the window in dismay, for the things she had come to see were not there. A table stood in the place where the rocking-chair had been for so long. The work-table was gone, even the picture of Tower Bridge. One or two small ornaments she recognized still remained, and that was all.

"Oh, well," she sighed trying to hold back the tears, "someone has bought them at last. May they get the joy from them that I have had."

Wearily she retraced her steps homeward through the rain which was now falling. Esme was waiting tea for her.

"Come along in and dry your clothes, Mother," she said, "and I will make you a nice hot drink."

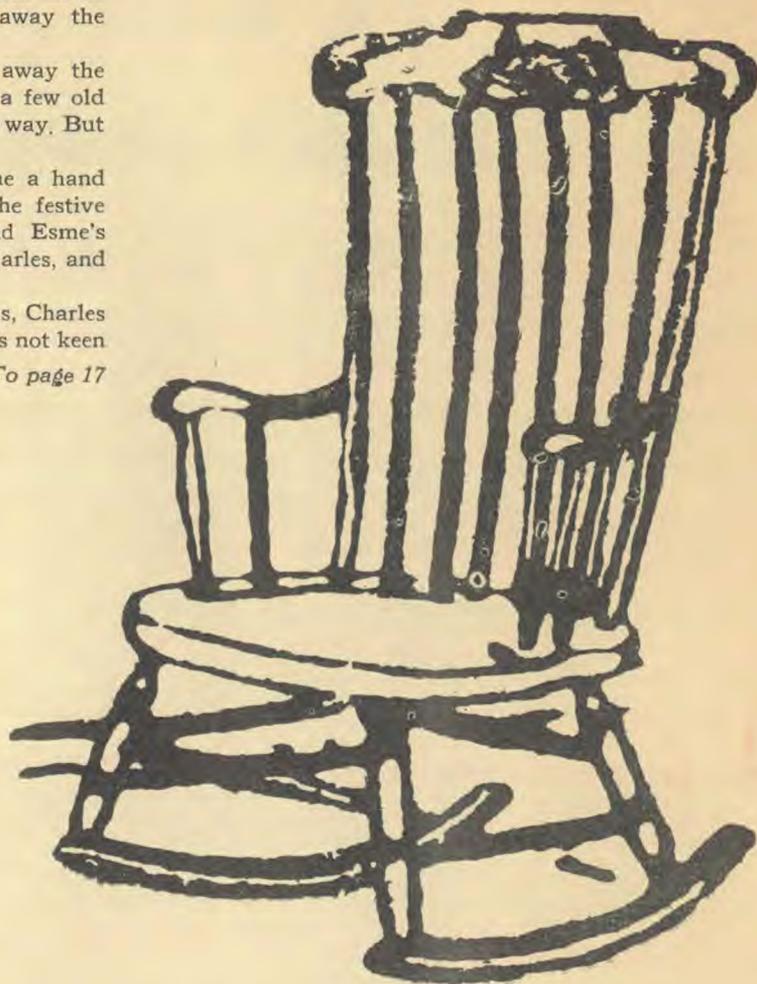
Thanking her daughter-in-law, she went to her own little room and sat staring into the fire sadly until Esme brought her the welcome drink, and carried away the damp coat she was forgetting to dry.

"So silly of me," she told herself, wiping away the tears that would come, "to feel so badly about a few old sticks of furniture, but 'twas part of myself in a way. But now I must try and forget."

She did try and it helped her to give Esme a hand with the Christmas fare and decorations, for the festive season was now only a few weeks ahead and Esme's parents were coming to spend it with her and Charles, and of course Charles' mother.

One afternoon about a week before Christmas, Charles suggested taking his mother to a concert. "Esme is not keen

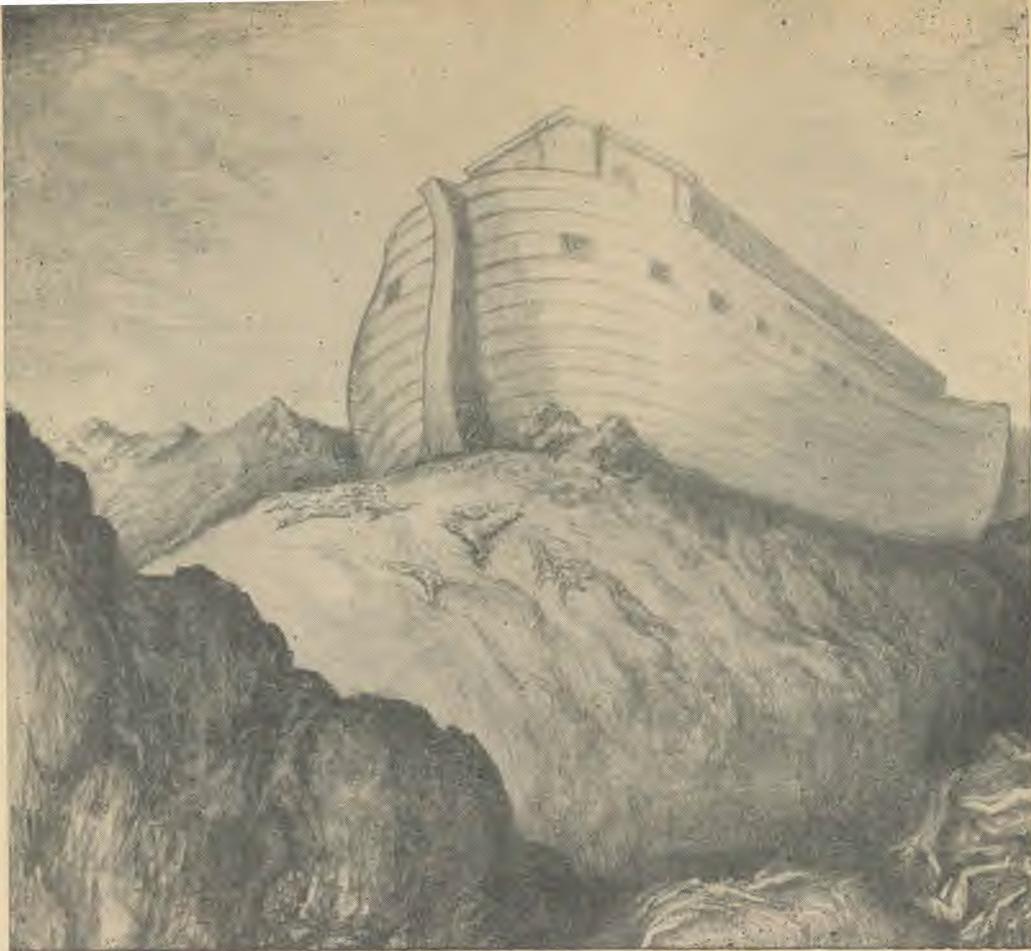
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M. G. BELLEINI

THINGS

Love's Overtures



J. S. Moses, artist

REPEATEDLY REPULSED

LUCILE J. SMALL, R.N.

THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF man's life on earth is continually brightened by God's love revealed in His effort to save His children in spite of themselves.

When God accepted the proposal of His Son to step down from the throne to redeem fallen man, He was giving the best that Heaven had to offer. All of His dealings with His erring children since that time have revealed a deep unfathomable love, appreciated by few and spurned by many. This account but briefly scans this relationship, highlighting salient facts gathered from God's word to man, the Holy Bible.

As men multiplied on the earth, there developed two distinct groups—those who maintained their loyalty to God and those who continued to rebel. The latter became increasingly numerous, while the loyal number dwindled. After some fifteen hundred years, the earth had become so corrupt that

God "was sorry that He had made man on the earth" (Genesis 6:6 RSV), and He was forced to take stern measures to check rampaging crime and violence.

One man of integrity, Noah, was selected by God to warn his fellow men that a flood of water was soon to destroy the earth. He was instructed to build a large houseboat or ark, in which those who believed his message might be preserved alive, together with selected pairs of animals. For one hundred twenty years Noah preached and built. Yet when the flood came, he and his family were the only humans who had chosen to enter the ark. The frightful storm which destroyed the earth's inhabitants left utter chaos and devastation in its wake. For one year and ten days the ark was home sweet home for Noah's family. When they finally left it to rebuild their lives, it was in a world vastly different from what they had previously known.

The story of the flood as found in Scripture (Genesis 7) is augmented by the silent testimony of geological formations, by the extensive coal beds and oil deposits, and by the lovely rainbow, symbol of God's promise that He will never again destroy the earth by water. It is also interestingly corroborated by legends in the folklore of many peoples.

God instructed Noah's family to scatter out and populate the earth. But the buds of rebellion unfortunately were not all destroyed, and this time revolt took the form of centralization. A city was built containing a tower which was intended to be a protection in case of another flood. God terminated this venture and scattered the people by confounding their language. A babel of many dialects has been a bane to civilization ever since.

As the population increased once more, so did the rebellion. God's desire to save man was as strong as ever. He called Abraham, a worshipper of Jehovah, from Chaldea over to Palestine, the cross-roads of the earth, where Abraham's posterity was to become a nation especially commissioned to keep alive the knowledge of God in the earth. A widespread famine later was instrumental in taking the family to Egypt.

Four hundred years after Abraham's call, his family, now a nation of some two million persons, was freed from Egyptian slavery, and with Moses as their leader (instructed by God) they set out across the desert on foot for the land of promise. This nation of Israel, under theocratic rule, provides one of the most fascinating stories of all time.

God led them, fed them miraculously with manna, the heavenly food, supplied them with water, shaded them with the cloud of His presence, instructed them in how they might become a healthy, happy, righteous nation. To refresh their memories while they were encamped at Sinai, He spoke His law, the law of Ten Commandments, in a very impressive demonstration of His power and majesty. He also gave them through Moses a system of laws governing every phase of their lives, social, physical—including hygiene and diet—and spiritual. Also laws pertaining to the system of sacrificial worship that pointed forward to the promised Redeemer, the Son of God.

This plan of worship was first carried on in the sanctuary and later in the magnificent temple built by Solomon. It typified in its every detail the plan by which God sought to save men, through Christ, from the penalty of their own wrong doing and to reinstate them as sons of God.

Both the sanctuary and the temple were built after a plan of divine origin. Indeed, they were a miniature replica of the temple of God in heaven, God's dwelling place.

The mercy seat in the most holy place, where rested the Holy Shekinah, the light of God's presence, was the focal point of the system of worship. Beneath it in the ark of the testament were the tables of stone on which God had written the Ten Commandments with His own finger. This law, which is as sacred and eternal as God Himself, is a word picture of the loving character of God and is the foundation of God's throne.

The sacrificial system of worship was intended to maintain in the hearts of its adherents a realization of sin's terrible nature. It was a constant reminder that the penalty for rebellion against God is death. It served as a perpetual promise of the only hope for man's life, the sacrificial death of our Substitute, the divine Son of God, in place of our own lives which the law claimed for its violation.

When the commandments were proclaimed at Sinai it was not the first time mankind knew of them. God's requirements had been handed down from Adam through successive generations of those who remained faithful to God. They were well known to Abraham (Genesis 26:5), but during the years of bondage in Egypt Israel had to a great degree lost sight of God's law.

The years (forty altogether) spent in the wilderness were years of preparation for citizenship in the land of promise.

Palestine, when the Israelites reached it, was inhabited by idolatrous nations who were in complete rebellion against God, nations which by their self-seeking revolt had earned for themselves the sentence of death. Here and there even in these condemned nations were men and women whose hearts had reacted to the Spirit of God, those who longed to know and serve Jehovah. Provision was made that such individuals might become members of the community of Israel and share in their blessings and privileges. God's ear is ever tuned to hear the cry of a sincerely repentant soul.

The nation of Israel itself, despite miraculous guidance and divine protection, had a very chequered career. Prosperity alternated with apostasy, with various afflictions in between, to impress the nation with a sense of its need.

For about four hundred years after the death of Moses the theocracy continued. Then the Israelites wanted a king, to be like the nations around them. They wanted the pomp and pageantry of royal leadership. The simplicity of direct rule by God had wearied them.

God permitted them to have their king. They learned some bitter lessons in the early years of the kingdom.

The second king of Israel, David, was a man of God. He is described in Scripture as a man after God's own heart. This was not because he never sinned, but because when he did sin, he was big enough to acknowledge his sin, and sincerely repent. He loved God and accepted God's disciplinary measures in a humble spirit.

King David's son Solomon, who succeeded him to the throne, was famous both for his wisdom and his wealth. He reigned in the years of Israel's greatest prosperity as a nation. But King Solomon had a weakness for beautiful women, and their influence over him was disastrous. Step by step he relinquished his hold on God, and joined his wives in their worship of false gods.

This idolatry, cushioned as it was with his wealth and power, had a devastating effect upon the nation's moral tone. His subsequent repentance could not make reparation for his once evil influence.

After Solomon's death, the ten northern tribes of Israel revolted against his son Rehoboam and were thenceforth known as the kingdom of Israel with their capital at Samaria. The remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin retained possession of the city of Jerusalem where the government palaces and the temple were located. This kingdom was known as Judah. The two kingdoms were never reunited.

Israel, having separated from the established worship of Jehovah in the temple at Jerusalem, rapidly apostatized. Her kings, a corrupt lot, led out in this trend of open rebellion against Jehovah. Naturally the worship and knowledge of God died out, until Israel went into captivity as God had warned would happen. Eventually the original Israel lost its identity as a nation.

The kingdom of Judah was more stable than that of Israel. It had several kings who did all in their power to

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"NOW WHEN

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the King, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem." Matthew 2:1.

The story is perhaps familiar, yet it remains ever new, ever appealing to young and old alike. Here were men whose origin we know nothing about, except that they came from somewhere in the East. Almost certainly they were not Jews. Yet, they came at the right time to the right place to find and worship the newborn King. The last we read of them is that they left in the morning for their own country by a different route from that by which they came.

Regarding the identity of these wise men, conjecture is rife. Who were they? Where was their actual home? Readers are entitled to their own opinions. In this study we are interested in a more pertinent question: Why were these particular men termed "wise" in the Bible?

Was it because they came from the East? Hardly so. Was it then because they were scholars or well-educated men? The apostle Paul, speaking of many earthly scholars, says, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Romans 1:22.)

But there are six reasons, based on the Bible's definition of "wise," which we feel rightly entitle these three Oriental strangers to the scholarly distinction attributed to them.

First of all, they found and acknowledged the existence of God. Their belief in Him is verified by the fact that they were searching for His promised Son, the coming Deliverer, "King of the Jews." They perhaps discovered this truth by studying the stars. For does not God say that the study of these heavenly bodies will lead men to a knowledge of Him, the Creator of all? "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number." Isaiah 40:26. That God used a star to lead these men prompts us to surmise that they were well acquainted with the orderly movements of stars and planets. Whatever the case may be, once they found that there is a God, they accepted Him. The patriarch Job said, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, *that is wisdom*" (Job 28:28.) And King Solomon reaffirmed this when he stated, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of



wisdom." (Proverbs 9:10.) So these men were wise. They knew God! They revered God!

Secondly, these men were wise because they believed in God's promise of a Redeemer to come. And, accordingly, they were watching for Him. The Old Testament, which the Jews had helped to distribute wherever they went, is replete with promises of the coming One. These men most likely had a copy of this book. Any of these beautiful promises would have made an impression on their sincere hearts. But I like to think that the promise recorded in Numbers 24:17 had a special significance and appeal to them because the words were uttered by Balaam, a man from the East, a non-Israelite, though a believer in God. Here they are. "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." Yes, the story strongly indicates that they were men who believed in these promises and were waiting for their fulfilment.

The words in Lamentations 3:25, 26 must also have meant much to them. "The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." So they believed! So they hoped! So they waited! In strange contrast, nearly the entire Jewish nation had meanwhile forgotten the promise.

Thirdly, these men discerned and believed the signs that spoke of the nearness of the Messiah's advent. It could well be that they had studied the book of Daniel and discovered that it was time, according to prophecy, for the long-looked-for event to take place. One thing is sure. When the most evident sign, the "star," appeared they saw it and understood it for what it was, a SIGN that the Deliverer had arrived! They testified, "We have seen His star in the east" (Matthew 2:2.) Many other astronomers, both Jews and gentiles, must also have seen the star. But it meant nothing to them.

It was a repetition of what happened in the time of Noah. Thousands then saw the last great sign of the impending deluge. They beheld animals and birds entering the ark of their own accord. Yet they chose to blind their eyes to the significance of this phenomenon. Only eight were wise. Speaking of our day and of the second coming

To page 16



BEHOLD THERE CAME WISE MEN TO JERUSALEM

BAXTER W. FANWAR



J. S. Moses, artist



THE GRACIOUS TOUCH

ERIC MOSER, M.B.B.S.

THE STATION was crowded—the usual 5:30 p.m. rush. Offices had closed for the day and now everyone was glad to get away from the maddening hustle to his home in the suburbs.

Months of travel had made this commuting crowd familiar with the maze of platforms and complicated train timings. Only one elderly man was obviously bewildered by it all. Scores of people rushed past him completely insensitive to his distress. A few glanced at him. One or two were amused at his distraught appearance. Not one bothered to ask where he was going and whether he would like assistance.

But then it happened, the gracious act. Like sunlight breaking through a dense overcast, a kind deed shed gladness over the scene. It was a youth who did it. Though doubtless on business as urgent as the rest, he stopped and made his way through the crowd to where the stranger stood. Gently placing a strong arm around the old gentleman's shoulders,

he said solicitously, "You do not seem to know your way about in this station. May I help you?"

"Thank you, thank you." The tremulous voice brightened at once with relief and gratitude. "If you could help me to platform No. 3 it would be enough," he eagerly responded. The young man paused a moment longer to pick up a shapeless bundle lying at the stranger's feet. Then, gently supporting the frail figure, the happy youth led the old man toward platform 3. As I watched from an upstairs window, I felt that the late afternoon sun had an extra burst of warmth. The station no longer seemed so cold and dim.

The incident set me thinking. What a refreshing sight in a world of selfishness. "I" and "My" are words used so often. My business, my future, my family, my friends and my gilded impression of them. Can I excuse my self-centred thinking by saying I have no time or energy for anyone else? Is the fact that "I" is a shorter word than "you," and "me" shorter than "others," a just cause for mean, selfish attitudes?

Some person near you may be suffering from love deficiency. Often there are troubles for which a warm smile or a kindly word is the only tonic necessary. No M.B.B.S. degree, no formal education at all, is required in order to administer curative doses of helpfulness. Many who have symptoms of despair, despondency, and failure can be steadied by a friendly smile and a tactful word. Once reoriented they can go on to success.

A prosperous-looking citizen bought a newspaper from a glum little newsboy. The lad made change instantly but didn't speak a word. The man lingered: "How many papers do you sell here a night, young man?"

"About fifty," said the newsie.

"You're an alert boy," said the man. "Do you know that when I was your age, I had this very corner for a stand? But I sold two hundred papers a day."

"Oooo! How?"

"Listen. I did it by carefully saying, 'Thank you,' to everyone who bought a paper. I said it loudly enough that they would be sure to hear it."

Three evenings later the man came by again, and bought another paper from the little chap on the corner.

"Thank you!" cheerfully responded Tim, not recognizing him.

"How's business?" asked the man.

Then Tim knew him. "I'm selling seventy-five papers every night, sir," he said. "I shan't forget that any more, neither," and he grinned all over his honest face. "Thanks, mister. And you know what? My customers say nice things to me. They've changed over too!"

Many need kind words, but how few

receive them. It is selfishness that gets in our eyes so that we do not see the needs of others. Yet there is no material loss in speaking encouragement to one in need of it. We sometimes forget that in God's order we are meant to *love* persons and *use* things. Reversing this order fails to bring peace and good will. How inestimable the results of gracious words touching a lonely heart!

Martha's experience is most remarkable. She worked in a music shop. On her birthday she was given the day off, so decided to spend her time at the sea-shore enjoying the breeze and lovely sunshine. By chance she saw there an old lady sitting alone in a wheel chair. She looked sad. As Martha passed by, she stopped and spoke to the woman and offered to get her a drink. Martha went and got her a glass of cold water. Appreciative of this cheerful thoughtfulness, the crippled old lady asked the young girl her name, where she lived, and what she did. So Martha told her these things. And she mentioned that the reason she had that day off was that it was her birthday.

As Martha went on her way, she had no idea that the old lady was even then jotting down this information. Martha went back to her work and completely forgot the incident. Another year rolled by and again it was Martha's birthday. This time she was in the shop. A gentleman came in. "Must be a customer," mused Martha as she hastened toward him to offer assistance.

"Is this Martha Culvert?" the man queried.

Then he said, "I understand you have a birthday today. And my mother has sent you a birthday present." He handed her a cheque worth thirty-eight thousand rupees!

"It must be a mistake," she exclaimed. "It must be for some other Martha Culvert, certainly not for me. It can't be! I hope you can find who it is really for."

Then the visitor repeated the story of the cold-water kindness at the beach, but Martha had even forgotten that. After all, truly kind deeds seek not remembrance.

Kindness, of course, isn't often rewarded like this. If it were, it would breed just another kind of selfishness. Yet kindness is *always* sufficiently rewarded. Anyone who has tried the gracious touch, unselfishly making someone else happy, has discovered the elusive jewel of joy. Even earth's millionaires would tell you that happiness is preferable to wealth. And the poorest man in your district, even the simplest child, can discover the untarnished happiness to be found in helpfulness.

Let's look in the mirror. Is mine the hand which readily reaches out to graciously touch a brother in distress and reassure him that he has a friend close by on whom he can depend? Are mine the lips eager to form words which would graciously touch the

soul of one in despair and make him feel that life is worth living—perhaps make him feel that death is an ordeal for which he can be prepared and need not fear? Is mine a smiling countenance, one which is not allowed to exhibit gloom or indifference? What is my contribution toward making this world a pleasant place? Do we need a transformation of mind at whose dictates the hands and lips move?

This month the thoughts of millions are revolving around the birth of a Baby almost 2,000 years ago. In giving Christ to come and live in this world, God demonstrated His supremely unselfish love for man. Christ's was a life of continuous loving ministry to His fellow men. He didn't have to come. He could have minded His own business, so to speak, and left mankind in his desperate condition. He didn't owe us any kindness. Yet His lips formed words which brought (and continue to bring) hope to scores of hopeless ones. His hand was extended many a time to lift a fallen soul, to steady shaky steps, to reassure the friendless of a friend. And today He holds out that pierced hand to help you and me.

Christ's coming to this world was not merely to teach us a better way of living. It was a means to an end—an end which has no ending. He has proved to all humanity that we also can live according to God's will and His Golden Rule. By doing for others what would make us happy if we were in their place, we prepare ourselves for endless happy living in companionship with God and sinless angels, as was His original plan.

On that first Christmas, God extended His arm in willingness to touch every human being. That touch will transform our minds into the likeness of His mind. Unselfishness will become automatic. And then happiness too. Could it be, dear friend, that you are in need of His gracious touch that you in turn might bless others? He's waiting to hear from you.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

Let us pray that strength and courage abundant be given to all who work for a world of reason and understanding;

That the good that lies in every man's heart may day by day be magnified;

That men will come to see more clearly not that which divides them, but that which unites them;

That each hour may bring us closer to final victory, not of nation over nation, but of man over his own evils and weaknesses;

That the true spirit of this Christmas Season—its joy, its beauty, its hope, and above all its abiding faith—may live among us;

That the blessings of peace be ours—the peace to build and grow, to live in harmony and sympathy with others, and to plan for the future with confidence.

—James C. Alley



A service conducted by
Pastor K. H. Gammon, Director of
Voice of Prophecy in Southern Asia

your questions answered FROM THE BOOK



Readers are invited to send questions related to Bible subjects or personal spiritual problems. Address them to "From the Book," Box 15, Poona 1, India. If personal replies are desired please enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. (This stipulation applicable only to India.) Anonymous questions cannot be answered.

Sabbath a Specific Day or All Days?

I believe the seventh day is the Sabbath and I am preparing to keep it. However, when I told my friends about this, someone told me that they lead good Christian lives every day and that in this sense they keep every day. They think I am foolish for being anxious to observe the Sabbath each week. Are they right or wrong?

It is indeed the obligation of every Christian to lead a "good Christian life" every day, but the Bible nowhere states that this cancels the equally important Christian obligation to observe the Sabbath. As a matter of fact, what does a "good Christian life" consist of if it does not follow the blueprint laid down in the Ten Commandments and the example of Christ? It has been my observation that those who say they keep every day holy actually keep no day holy. In the first place, it is impossible to keep a day holy which God did not originally make holy. Only the seventh day has been set apart as holy time. In the second place, the same commandment which enjoins us to keep holy the Sabbath also says, "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." It is a commandment to work six days and rest the seventh. The Lord has asked us to labour and to rest, and no one has been able to improve upon this plan.

Is Suffering Punishment for Sin?

I have a serious heart disease which has required frequent stays in the hospital. I had hoped for a time that surgery could correct it, but the doctors now say it would be fatal to operate. I have prayed earnestly that God would answer my prayer for better health, but I am completely discouraged. I wonder if God is using this means to punish me for my sins. What do you think?

The disciples once asked Jesus a question similar to yours concerning a blind man whom they encountered. To the query, "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he

was born blind?" Jesus replied, "Neither." Jesus always made it clear that when we suffer we need not think that this is God's punishment sent as the result of our sins. God just does not work that way. Many of the finest people who have ever lived have had to endure heartache and tragedy but to all of them God says, as He did to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

Paul's difficulties were probably allowed by God to make him a better Christian worker. Perhaps healing does not come to you for the same reason. Remember that His grace is also "sufficient for thee." As you begin each day, claim the promises of God's grace and strength for that day. Constantly remind yourself that you cannot go beyond His love and care. Then as you watch for evidences of His providences for you, you will surely find them.

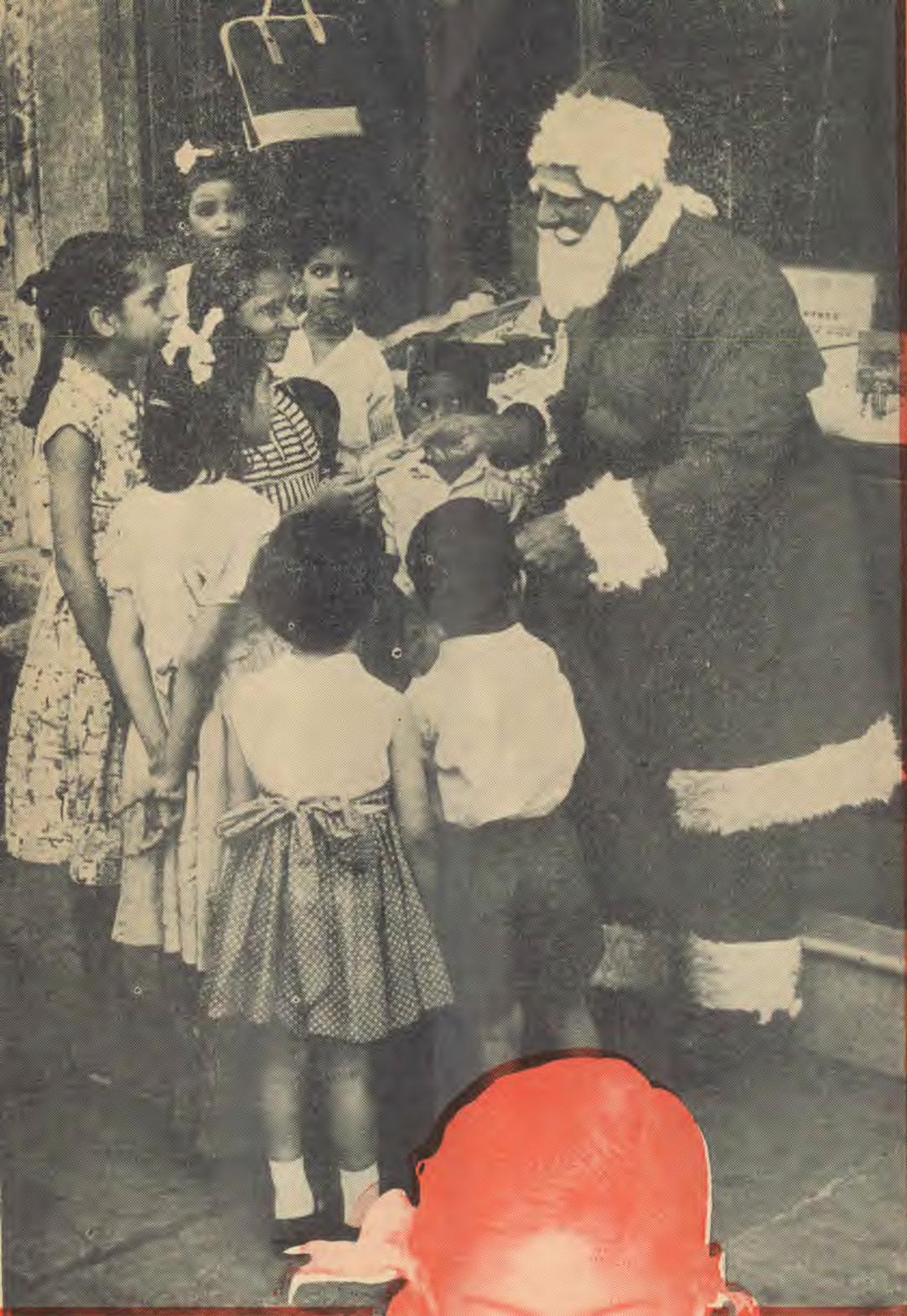
Does God Care for Me?

I have many problems every day and I am trying to learn to bring these to God in prayer. However, I find it extremely difficult to believe that God, with all the problems of running a universe on His hands, could be interested in the little things which concern me each day. How can I have faith that God will care about such things?

I think Jesus must have been trying to show us how God is concerned with such matters when He said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10: 29-31.

There is probably no part of the body which might seem less important than the hairs of our head, and the sparrow might seem to be the least important of creatures. Yet Jesus said that our heavenly Father is concerned about them. Like an ideal father, He is willing to devote attention to the bruised knees and lost toys of his small children. You would do well to remember that God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to this world to die for us. With such proof of His love, how can we doubt His interest in little matters which we find difficult? "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Peter 5:7.

Photos opposite: P. R. Shinde; G. T. Zachariah



ON CHRISTMAS EVE

*Dear Lord, I pray,
Just for a day
Let want be lifted
From every land,
And may no child
Have empty hand
When yule bells chime,
But let it be
The gladdest time
Since that bright morn
When Christ was born;
Your hand can sway
The universe—
And so I pray.*

Dolores Bradbury



THERE CAME WISE MEN

From page 11

of Christ, Jesus Himself, after giving signs by which we should know when that day was approaching said, "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." (Luke 21:31.) Those were wise men. They knew and heeded the signs of the times.

Fourthly, these men were wise because when they found Jesus they knelt down and worshipped Him as a King and as God and Saviour. If they were to have judged His divinity and kingship by the place and surroundings in which they found Him, they doubtless would have turned right around and left without rendering Him worship. For how could one ever imagine the Ruler of Heaven and earth, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, the promised Redeemer and King, in a manger? Yet these men had no doubts. Their faith itself was like a star on a dark night—the more obscure its setting, the brighter it shone. They did not question God's leadings nor His ways. They saw His Son. They accepted the fact in spite of the circumstances. They fell down and worshipped Him. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness: but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ* the power of God, and *the wisdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24.) Truly Christ is "wisdom" to all who worship Him. He was "wisdom" to those men 1900 years ago! They worshipped Him.

A fifth test which proved these men wise was their understanding and practice of the Christmas spirit. And what is the spirit of Christmas? Why, John 3:16 tells us: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The true, the original, spirit of Christmas is GIVING. The first Christmas was made possible because God GAVE. These men realized this and the story says, "When they had opened their treasures they presented unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:11.)

Into this world of selfishness and avarice God sent His Son to display the essence of real and lasting joy found in this one word, one act, "Give." These men did not lose sight of this vital lesson. They gave! And, the Bible says they were wise men. After all, God is the original Giver of every good gift. All things belong to Him. And when one comes to Him through Jesus Christ it is only reasonable and right that he also start giving, willingly and liberally. One should give to God what is His due, not from compulsion but from gratitude and love. Likewise one should give to his fellowmen. Christ's injunction is, "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8.)

Finally, these men were wise in that they did not betray Jesus to Herod. One of the most shameful stories of the Bible is that of a man who found Christ, believed in Him, followed Him, yet betrayed Him in the end. He thought he was wise. He thought he was gaining financially and socially. Ah, but what a tragic end he came to, when he "went and hanged himself." (Matthew 27:5.) Judas proved himself a fool in betraying Jesus Christ. In contrast, these men from the East were wise not to betray Him. Herod would gladly have rewarded them if they had done so. But they would not. They were wise!

Are we wise? Do we acknowledge the true God? Do we believe His promises? Do we watch for signs of Christ's

second advent? Do we sincerely worship Him? Do we have the "giving" spirit of Christmas? Do we realize the value of the salvation that is freely offered through Jesus Christ our Lord? Or, are we ready to sell it for paltry gain?

Whenever we are tempted to exchange Jesus and His salvation for the security and popularity that the world can offer, let us remember Christ's statement about the rich man who gave in to that idea. He collected until his barns were full and considered his success the sum and substance of life. He felt no need of God. Then while he sat back and relaxed on the sofa in his beautiful house one night, God appeared unto him and said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20.)

Oh, yes, he thought he was wise. To the world, indeed, he appeared to be. But God said he was a fool. Why? Because he did not seek the true riches and true wisdom that are found in Jesus Christ and in God. We cannot afford to betray Jesus or exchange Him for anything in this life.

Those long-ago visitors to Judæa were wise men. Doing as they did we can also be called "wise" by One who is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. When Christ returns to take the truly wise to Heaven with Him, it would be a thrill to hear the statement made of us, "Behold, there came wise men to Jerusalem,"—yea, to the New Jerusalem "whose Builder and Maker is God!"

LOVE'S OVERTURES REPULSED

From page 9

keep the nation loyal to Jehovah. Judah lasted more than a century after Israel disintegrated.

God's love was repeatedly shown by the messages sent through His prophets to curb the growth of apostasy in both nations during the less than five hundred years of their existence. Hear the love and pathos in the call, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" and the hope held out, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper," and the invitation offered, "Come now and let us reason together." But they refused.

The messages sent by the prophets in many cases went far beyond the time in which they were given, some foretelling events which are yet future even now. Prophecies, warnings, doctrines, corrections, and instructions written out during a millennium or so by more than thirty authors under widely differing circumstances are themselves proof, by a consistent harmony throughout, of their divine origin—that indeed "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter 1:21.)

In them were laid open God's future plans for His children on earth, His calls to repentance, His tender solicitude for their welfare, His unflinching mercy evidenced in behalf of all who sought Him with sincerity of purpose.

A seventy-year period of captivity under the kings of Babylon effectively cured the Jews of their propensity for idolatry. But their reformation was not complete to the point of their obedience being prompted by love to God. They retained selfish motives in their service to God.

Four thousand years after creation the knowledge of God had been well nigh lost to the sons of men. For more than three hundred years the prophetic gift had slumbered. The kingdom of Israel, the ten rebellious tribes, had long

since gone into oblivion. The kingdom of Judah had ceased to be an effective agency for good among nations. The darkness of ignorance and superstition had enveloped the world. The knowledge of evil, which had come by rejecting God's supremacy in favour of the rule of the great rebel, had filled the earth with pain, sorrow, woe and death. Yet under the oppressor's hand, many were longing for a knowledge of the true God. Heaven-directed forms of worship were still being carried on at the temple in Jerusalem, but few understood their significance.

It was at such a time that God chose to reveal Himself to mankind by sending His most-prized gift, His dearly beloved Son, Himself in human flesh. The next instalment will tell the story of God's Son as He demonstrated a love that was stronger than death. ●

HER LITTLE OLD THINGS

From page 7

to go," he told her, and wants to do one or two things she has set her mind on doing, so you and I, Mother, will leave her to it."

Mrs. Reynolds was pleased to go, for it was a long time since she had had an afternoon out with her son. Esme seemed pleased too, that they should go. It was long past their usual tea time when they returned, and Mrs. Reynolds felt very happy, for she had enjoyed the music.

After a refreshing tea, which she shared with the young people, she went to her room to rest. Esme and Charles, whispering together like the young conspirators they were, softly followed a few moments later.

Mrs. Reynolds was standing as if spellbound—in fact she was wondering if she was dreaming, for her room was not quite the same as when she had left it. By the fireside stood her own old rocking-chair, polished as new, with pretty new cushions, and near by, also polished, stood her own mending table, its drawer filled with useful mending requirements. Even the Tower Bridge picture hung on the wall, not looking at all out of place.

"My little old things," said Mrs. Reynolds softly, "How did they come back to me?"

"Well, Mother," said Charles at last, putting his arm around her, "aren't you going to sit in your own old chair, or shall we send it away again?"

"Such a wonderful surprise. Thank you, my dears, for your lovely thought."

"You must thank Esme, Mother," said Charles, "for it was her idea of a Christmas surprise. It made her unhappy to see how you were missing your old familiar things. I should not have noticed it myself."

"It takes a woman to understand a woman," smiled

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Esme, leading her mother-in-law to the rocking-chair where she sat, now looking proud and happy.

"You are very understanding, my dear," she said to Esme, "and some day you will realize how very happy you have made a silly old woman."

"We have yet one more surprise for you, Mother," said Charles, "Esme, you tell her for us both."

Esme with a happy smile, took her husband's hand and drew him nearer to the occupant of the old rocking chair.

"In the spring, Mother dear," she said shyly, "you will have someone else, we hope, to rock and sing to sleep as you did Charles and the others in the long ago."

Mrs. Reynolds, now wiping away tears of happiness, replied: "I shall just live for the day, my dears, and may your little son or daughter some day make you both as happy as you have made its Grannie-to-be this Christmas time." ●

EDITORIAL

From page 3

India's Bishop Sadiq, chairman of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, at Mexico City last December lumped all the problems of "this century of despair" into one trenchant paragraph:

"The time in which we live is marked by universal hopes and fears. Every day one hears of revolts, strifes, threats of war and actual conflicts. In parts of the world the racial conflict remains unabated. Half of the world continues to be hungry, and the rate of population increase remains alarming. . . . Moral advance is not keeping pace with the march of science."

Having said all this, we still have not listed question five. The 64-dollar question upon which hangs the destiny of every soul is the one Pilate in the first century bungled: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:22.)

Of all the 3,298 questions in the Bible, this one is most fraught with eternal consequences.

Basically, there are four possible answers but only one is right: Indifference, outright rejection, bargaining acceptance on our own terms, unqualified acceptance of Him as Saviour and Sovereign.

We may answer all other questions correctly. We may gain prize money, position and great possessions. We may even achieve fame by solving national or international problems. But all will have to be forfeited if we answer the final question wrongly.

The Ruler of this great contest in which all must take part has clearly stated the decisive nature of this last momentous question:

"Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:34-36.

As 1964 comes to an end, closing another chapter of life, it provides pause for needed reflection on our response to this 64-dollar question of the ages.

"What will you do with Jesus?"

—T. R. T.

(Note: That this study might be of permanent value, readers are invited to underline all the texts and to follow a simple plan of annotating alongside each text in the margin of their Bibles the next text in the study. Begin by entering the following information about the study on the flyleaf of your Bible as tabled below: serial number, title, first text, code letters, and total number of texts used. Then turn to the first text and write in margin alongside it the second text with code letters and so on in chain reference fashion to the end.)

2 S W
2 Tim 3:16

29 Je-sus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.
30 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.
31 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by

MARK YOUR BIBLE

Conducted by Bernard Pinghe

No.	Title	First Text	Code	No. of Texts
3	Jesus is coming again	Micah 5:2	JCA	16

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

Nineteen centuries ago Jesus was born as a babe in Bethlehem. It was an occasion for rejoicing both in heaven and on earth. A choir of angels from the courts above sang to shepherds watching their flocks by night and guided them to the manger where the infant Jesus lay.

This month the old joy is renewed as we watch little children with sparkling eyes stand in wonderment before decorated trees. The gladness of the first Christmas morn comes again as we listen to carols and recount the familiar story of Jesus' birth.

The giving of gifts and other pleasantries at Christmas matters much especially to children, but an issue of far greater significance is one's personal relationship to the Christ of Christmas, particularly to His second coming.

1. How was the first coming of Jesus to earth predicted centuries before the event?

Micah 5:2. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (2 JCA Isa. 7:14.)

2. What other important detail concerning the incarnation of Jesus was foretold in Old Testament prophecy?

Isaiah 7:14. "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." (3 JCA Titus 2:13.)

The record of the accurate fulfilment of this prophecy is found in Matthew 1:18-23. When "the fulness of the time was come," Jesus was born of a woman. It happened at a time in earth's history when "sin had become a

science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion." Poverty and degradation were rampant everywhere and the Hebrew people lived under the galling yoke of Satan and a foreign power.

3. After a lapse of more than nineteen hundred years, what great parallel event is now about to take place?

Titus 2:13. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," (4 JCA Heb. 9:28.)

4. In what definite terms does Paul express the hope of Jesus' coming again?

Hebrews 9:28. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (5 JCA John 14:3.)

The second coming of Jesus has long been expected by God-fearing men as the event which will terminate Satan's reign of sin and terror. Martin Luther wrote four hundred years ago: "I ardently hope that, amidst these internal dissensions on the earth, Jesus Christ will hasten the day of His coming."

5. What assurance do we have from Jesus Himself that He will return to this earth?

John 14:3. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (6 JCA Acts 1:11.)

An outstanding leader in the Anglican Church states in his challenging book, *On to Orthodoxy*: "The whole of history before Christ gravitates towards His appearance in time. That is the watershed of world history. . . . Since the life of Christ on earth, the world moves on to its climax in the second coming of Christ; when He will exercise judgment and wind history up."

6. In what words do angels testify that Jesus will come again?

Acts 1:11. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (7 JCA Matt. 25:31.)

To the weeping disciples gathered on the Mount of Olives to witness the ascension of Jesus these words of the angels were most comforting.

7. Who will accompany Jesus on His return to this earth?

Matthew 25:31. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." (8 JCA Rev. 1:7.)

At the resurrection of Jesus the glory of an angel caused the soldiers guarding the tomb to fall like dead men. When heaven's host of angels descend with their Lord the world will behold a scene of splendour unparalleled.

8. Who all will witness this glorious spectacle?

Revelation 1:7. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (9 JCA Ps. 50:3.)

Tragic indifference regarding Christ's second coming is widespread today among men. This neglect on the part of many prompted one poet to write:

"When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed Him by,
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die."

All who are indifferent today should take note that they too will see Him when He comes again.

9. How is the awesome event of Jesus' second coming further described in the Bible?

Psalms 50:3. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him." (10 JCA Matt. 24:26.)

Paul declares that the coming of Jesus will be heralded by the blaring of trumpets. It will be a majestic scene with all the grandeur that is worthy of this history-climaxing event. See I Thessalonians 4:16.

10. How did Jesus seek to safeguard His followers from deception regarding His second coming, particularly from the false teaching that He would come in silence or in a secret rapture?

Matthew 24:26. "Wherefore it they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not." (11 JCA I Cor. 15:51-53.)

In Matthew 24:41, 42, which is quoted to support the secret rapture theory, Christ was emphasizing the fact that when He comes one person will be ready and accepted while another in the same environment with the same privileges and opportunities will be unprepared and lost.

11. When the redeemed are translated at Jesus' second coming, what important change will take place in them?

I Corinthians 15:51-53. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." (12 JCA Rev. 21:4.)

12. What comforting promise to those who mourn will be fulfilled when Jesus comes?

Revelation 21:4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (13 JCA Rev. 6:14-17.)

13. What effect will the second coming of Jesus have on the unconverted?

Revelation 6:14-17. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (14 JCA Rev. 22:11.)

What a bitter experience for those who have neglected the warnings of Christ's return! With remorse they will see the result of their stubborn refusal to surrender themselves to God.

14. What decree to be issued at the close of the judgment precludes the possibility of anyone's turning to Christ for help and pardon at the moment of His coming?

Revelation 22:11. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still." (15 JCA Isa. 25:9.)

Those who delay the act of surrender to Christ and expect a sudden change at the time of His arrival will be disillusioned. To postpone acceptance of heaven's offer of salvation in order to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of the world is indeed perilous.

15. With what joyful words, according to the prophet Isaiah, will those who have accepted Jesus as their Saviour welcome their coming King?

Isaiah 25:9. "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." (16 JCA Rev. 19:16.)

16. In contrast with the Bethlehem story, what regal position will Jesus hold when He comes again?

Revelation 19:16. "And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (16 JCA//)

Queen Victoria once listened to her chaplain preaching on how the kingdoms of this world will one day become the "kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." Those near the royal box saw the Queen's lips quiver and her eyes fill with tears. When the service was ended she signified to her chaplain that she would like to see him alone. Coming into her royal presence, he saw that she was profoundly moved. Finally he said, "May I ask why Your Majesty is so moved today?" She replied, "O that I might be alive when the dear Lord shall come!" When he questioned, "May I ask why Your Majesty so wishes to be alive when the Lord shall come?" she replied with choking voice, "That I might lay this crown at His feet."

"Have faith in God
The days of toil and pain will surely end,
Have faith in God
In life's bitter hour He will always tend,
Have faith in God
Soon Christ Himself in clouds will descend,
Have faith, dear friend, in God."



How Was I To Know?

NANCY GILDERSLEEVE

THERE WERE rich merchants and their ladies. There were wealthy landowners from farthest Galilee. There were noble rabbis, and even His Honour Benyosef, who was to help the Romans with the registry of the families. Never before had my inn been filled with such distinguished guests. I was so proud to be able to shout,

"No room! No room!"

Besides, they didn't look important, those two, in their travel-soiled clothes. *They* had no servants or fine equipage—just an aged donkey on which the young wife sat, drooping and pale.

Of course, if I had known—but how was I to know?

After I had dismissed them so haughtily, Hannah, unbeknown to me, had slipped out and offered them the shelter of the stable.

Hannah, poor plain Hannah! I had bade her stay in the kitchen and superintend the preparation of the supper. This was a keen disappointment to her, I knew, as she had wished to wait at the tables and see the eminent guests. However, for this task, I had engaged her two more comely cousins, for

they would make a better showing in the gay assemblage.

There was a light, brilliant and resplendent, that drew many of the guests to the door. But I had no time for such phenomena with so many fine folk in my house. The service to the table was slowing up, and I hurried to the kitchen to find the cause. Hannah was gone! The servants informed me that the man who was lodging in the stable had come for her.

Almost immediately Hannah burst in through the side door, her face radiant, shining. She looked almost beautiful. I gazed in wonder for a moment.

"Reuben, Reuben," she gasped. "you have missed your chance!"

I neither heeded nor inquired as to what she meant. I reprimanded her for deserting her responsibilities, and strode out of the kitchen. I was eager to return to the dazzling company, anxious to enjoy my success to the full. My inn was filled with the rich and honourable of the land. I was exalted with pride.

How was I to know! How was I to know that I had refused lodging to the greatest Guest!

