

Greetings



SPECIAL HOLIDAY NUMBER
of "OUR TIMES"



By G. Van Honthorst

The visit of the shepherds.

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Bethlehem's New Babe

By A. B. Cheesbrough

WHAT excitement there is in the voice of the little toddler who, bursting with the news, informs you so confidentially, "My mummy's got a new baby!" You immediately conjure up in your imagination the comings and goings in the home, the parents' joy, the husband's relief when the doctor informs him that all is well, and as he looks for the first time upon his new son or daughter.

"Despise not the day of small things." So runs the proverb. What potentialities are wrapped up in these small bundles of life! They pull themselves up by the straps and gaze at you from their prams as you pass them in the causeway and you may be looking at a future prime minister, a

foreign secretary, or an archbishop of Canterbury for all you know.

In the Fullness of Time

But, nearly two thousand years ago there was born One who was destined to shake the earth. (Heb. 12:26.) Other babes had been born in Bethlehem before Him and many more would be born there after Him, but a psychological moment in the world's history had arrived. God in His mercy was about to reveal Himself to sinful man as He had never done before. "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Gal. 4:4.

The incarnation is and will remain a



great mystery so long as the world shall last. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

1 Tim. 3:16. Divinity became enshrined in humanity. In the birth of a human being the Son of God was sent by the Father.

This was the Lord's Christ. All who were born before Him were in the years B.C. All who came after Him were now in the years A.D. You and I thus acknowledge the greatest event in history every time we place the year 1951, or whatever it may be, upon our correspondence. The Mint acknowledges it every time it manufactures coins of the realm, and on December 25th, although not the actual birthday of the Saviour, we will all in some way or other commemorate the "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

But what strange ideas some folk have of celebrating Christmas! Some will carry home bottles of whisky for a carousal and some will deliberately set out to get drunk. Was it for this that God sent His Son into the world?

The World Was Unprepared

for this token of God's love and favour. When Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh were to visit Canada, vast preparations were made for their reception all over the Dominion, but when the Royal King of glory, God's only-begotten Son, was to come to this earth of ours as its Redeemer, few there were who were ready to receive Him, few indeed who were expecting Him.

But surely, you will say, the orthodox church, the specially chosen people, those to whom the sacred Oracles had been committed and who possessed the Holy Scriptures, surely they were expecting the Messiah! Is there any more pathetic passage in the New Testament than those words of John: "He came unto His own [people], and His own received Him not."

Messengers and prophets had at various times and in different ways written and spoken, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, words of instruction, guidance, and warning, but they had been persecuted, stoned, beaten, and killed. Last of all, God sent His Son, saying, "They will reverence My Son." But they went about to kill Him also and from His birth, Satan, through Herod, waged war against Him. "The dragon stood before the woman which was

ready to be delivered, for to devour her Child as soon as It was born." Rev. 12:4.

They Ought to Have Known

Over seven hundred years before, Micah had written: "But thou, Beth-lehem 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." Micah 5:2. When, therefore, the wise men came from the east to Jerusalem and asked the question, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him," they with Herod received the answer: "In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet." Matt. 2:5, 6.

These wise men who knew not where to worship were prepared to worship. They opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But sad to say, those who knew where He was to be

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From every clime and
race songs acclaim the
Infant King.





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The Wise Men from the East lay their rich gifts
at Jesus' feet.

FROM the very earliest times, by means of prophecy and history, men have been inquiring for Christ. It seems to be an urge which is inherent in human nature. Many millions, by His grace, have sought and found Him, to the saving of their souls. But many millions more, tragically enough, by refusing Christ's evident claims, have placed themselves in a position either of open antagonism or stolid indifference where Christianity is concerned.

Into the lives of most men who are surrounded by Christian influences, there comes a time when they become concerned regarding the Saviour's claims. For He is the Light that to some extent "lighteth every man that

Inquiring for Christ

• By Ernest Cox

cometh into the world." John 1:9. And He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

There are, however, many degrees of interest and earnestness of inquiry, which we might think of as lying between the sincere and evident homage of the Magi on the one hand, and the sinister intentions of Herod on the other.

The Wise Men from the East Seek Jesus

There is no doubt that the Magi were earnest and sincere seekers after truth. They had experienced notable guidance from God. They had "seen His star in the east" and were anxious to add their homage to that (as they probably assumed) of the Jewish authorities.

So they made their first inquiries at Jerusalem. There, they felt sure, the kingly Babe would be found in royal accouchement.

But it seems often that the earnest seeker after the Saviour finds Him in unexpected places. Nathaniel, openly incredulous, was astonished to learn that He came from the infamous Nazareth. The woman of Samaria found the popular Teacher, so constantly sought by the throng, sitting quietly by Himself at a well. Mary Magdalene found Him after His resurrection, not appearing in vengeful risen majesty to His terrified enemies, but calmly walking in a garden.

So the learned Magi, following a human reasoning, expected to find Him in the capital, Jerusalem, and in a palace. But their search only ended when they reached Bethlehem's obscure hamlet, and a make-shift cradle in a stable manger.



In the same way, we can never tell just when and where we shall encounter Christ. We may attend the solemn cathedral choral, and not find Him. We may be present at the humble cottage prayer-meeting, and *know* that He is there.

Many generations before the birth of Christ the great prophet Elijah found this a difficult lesson to learn.

Elijah had an appointment with God in the southern desert of Palestine. (1 Kings 19.) First of all the prophet experienced a terrifying tornado—so fierce as to tear great rocks from the very mountainside. Following that came an awful earth-tremor, to be succeeded in its turn by a raging conflagration.

Elijah had doubtless been looking upon God as One almost exclusively mighty through natural forces and in prominent places—the God of Carmel's descending flames, the God vindicated by the slaying of idolatrous prophets.

When the turmoil of natural elements had ceased, and Elijah was perhaps wondering if he was to be disappointed, he heard from the quiet and dim recesses of the cave behind him, a still, small Voice. And Elijah knew that God was there.

Elijah then realized that the Lord could not only work on mighty Carmel's crag, but that He also can speak, and does speak, quietly, but effectively, in the deep recesses of the human heart. He would have us find Him, not in the palace, but in the manger; not merely on the crowded mountain top, but also in the lowly cave; not only in the popular temple area, but also by the lonely Samaritan well.

There is, however, a striking difference between the often apathetic attitude of the professed seeker after truth and the zeal frequently displayed by the open antagonist of Christ.

What Herod Wanted

Whatever were the faults (and they were many and grievous) of Herod the Great, he could never be charged with incapacity. He knew both how to cringe to imperial Rome and how to dominate turbulent Jerusalem. He allowed no one, not even his nearest of kin, to question his prestige and authority. He caused his own eldest son, Antipator, to be put to death for plotting against the throne. Still less was he likely to have any scruples

about disposing of any innocent but princely "Pre-tender" from Bethlehem.

Upon receiving information that a probable aspirant to his kingship was in the vicinity, Herod immediately "gathered all the chief priests and scribes together" and "demanded of them where Christ should be born." Matt. 2:4. He also inquired of the wise men "*diligently* what time the star appeared."

It would seem that Herod was apparently much more concerned about his kingship than we often are about our soul's salvation. He determined not to fail of his felonious purpose through lack of diligent inquiry. At all costs he must find this reputed "King of the Jews" and cancel His claim by destroying His life.

While we should pray to be preserved from anything approaching Herod's motives, yet we may emulate his diligence in being determined to find Christ.

The Priests' Culpable Neglect

But probably even more culpable than Herod were the members of the Jewish priestly hierarchy. Unlike Herod, they were not ignorant of the way of salvation. They were able to inform the king where the "Wonderful, Counsellor, . . . the Prince of Peace" would be born. (Isa. 6:6; Micah 5:2.) They must have realized the portentous significance of this event. They knew the way to Bethlehem's manger. They directed others to the sacred spot. But they themselves went not.

It is tragically possible to *know* oneself of the way of salvation, and yet not to *take* it. It is possible to be acquainted with the content and significance of divine prophecies and yet remain indifferent as to their fulfilment. It is even possible, apparently, to be busy daily in a holy calling, as the priests were, and be unready or disinclined to pay homage when the King comes.

"These things . . . are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10:11. Let us not be among those, who, like Herod, dread His appearing, or who, like the priests, are indifferent to His claims. But let us rather be like the Magi and be able to rejoice "with exceeding great joy" when our King comes again.



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Christmas is a time of happy giving.

ROUND about Christmas-time, the busiest person in the land must surely be the postman. He has millions of letters to deliver, and tens of thousands of parcels. To help him in his very important work, many auxiliaries have to be employed: men and women, boys and girls, bicycles, trucks, vans of all sizes including pantechinons, so many are the packages that arrive from all parts of the country, and from the ends of the earth. There seem to be one or more letters or parcels for every member of every family.

The gifts Father and Mother enjoy best, next to those they give each other, are the mysterious packages they receive from their children, packages having a brief message of love scrawled on them in large, uneven letters; and the gifts the children enjoy most are those they receive from Father or Mother, addressed

The Best Christmas Gift of All

By F. A. Spearing

to "My darling son!" or to "My precious daughter!" How much love is poured out in these various gifts, who can tell? And who can estimate their cost? A few pence, perhaps? A few shillings? A pound or two? That would be the price in the coin of the realm; but not the real price; not the real cost. In many cases the gift has meant a sacrifice; while in some cases it has cost the giver all that he had to give.

God's Christmas Gift

The best, the most wonderful, the most incredible gift ever given by one man to another, during the Christmas season, or at any other time, would be a very poor thing if compared with the greatest Christmas gift of all, the gift which the King of heaven offers to every one of His subjects on earth. We read about this gracious gift in the Word of God; in the many loving messages our kind Father has sent to the children of men. Let us note an Old Testament text which tells of God's Christmas gift; it is recorded in Isaiah 9:6, 7: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

"A Child is born! A Son is given!" A cause for rejoicing for someone! But for whom? "Unto us a Child is born! Unto us a Son is given!" Here, then, is God's promised gift to every one who will receive it. This Child whom God has given to us, is none other than the



Child of God; this Son whom He has promised us is the very Son of God. He is to share with the Father the government of the universe; and He bears the Father's name: Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. *And He has been given to us!*

From century to century the prophets studied this Scripture, and asked themselves, and one another: "When will this Son of God be born? When will this great gift be given to us?" Some seven hundred years after the sacred promise was given, and placed in the Holy Writings, a group of shepherds who were guarding their sheep by night, in the fields of Palestine, had a remarkable experience: "The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid." Who would not feel afraid if such an experience happened to them? But the story is not yet told: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!" Luke 2:8-14.

Perhaps the humble shepherds had heard about the promise recorded in the prophecy of Isaiah; perhaps as they cared for the sheep entrusted to them, they talked over the words they had heard the scribe speak from time to time in the place of worship, and wondered whether such a promise could be fulfilled in their day. Well, it was fulfilled, as it was bound to be, and they were privileged to hear the words which declared the fulfilment.

"Unto You"

"Unto us!" wrote the Gospel prophet. "Unto you!" said the angel from heaven to the shepherds, seven centuries later. What did these words mean to the shepherds? They were a declaration of peace sent by the God of peace to a world of sinners. The angel was the forerunner; the Ambassador was to appear, as a little Babe, wrapped as any other little one might be in swaddling clothes. He would be known as the Prince of Peace, and through Him the shepherds would obtain forgiveness of sin, and full salvation.

But this Christmas gift, the best Christmas gift of all, is for you and me as well as for the shepherds. "Unto us!" wrote the prophet. "Unto you!" says the angel, whispering in our ear. If this precious gift of God's love which inaugurated the season now known as the festival of Christmas, brought peace, and joy, and salvation to the shepherds, it brings those same great blessings to us. Note the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Another text tells us that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23), so that every man must share the wages of sin which is death. Every man? Yes, death does come to all, because every one is a sinner. But a gracious Father does not leave us to such a fate. He wants us to live, and to live for ever, with Him! What a glorious prospect that is! God says: "You may die, but you need not suffer eternal death. I offer you instead resurrection from the dead, and life everlasting." This is the gift of God; not our wages, for no man can earn life eternal.

Can you think of a more wonderful gift? It comes to us "through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Our Saviour's own declaration regarding this gift is recorded for us in the best known passage in the Bible: "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. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16, 17.

So the little Babe was born in Bethlehem, born to be the Prince of Peace, to bring about a reconciliation between a host of rebels and their rightful King. Herod had no welcome for this Ambassador of the Most High God; he sought to slay Him. And this Prince of Peace was eventually killed by His enemies. He had first to accomplish the work His Father gave Him to do. When this work was finished, He died on the cross of Calvary.

What God's Gift Cost

This, the best Christmas gift of all, cost the Giver something; the price our Lord paid for

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By B. Plockhorst

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The angel announces the birth of Jesus to the shepherds of Bethlehem.

PEACE

What can we do to hasten the time, the time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea?

There is imperative need for us to consider this question prayerfully this Christmastide. Our generation has suffered the calamity of two major world wars. A vast destruction of wealth and raw material, an appalling loss of human lives has impoverished the nations. Yet mankind is far removed from the hope of peace on Christmas Day, 1951. With war in Korea and the threat of war in half a dozen other places, the future is filled with fear. The world is divided by an iron curtain, and on either side of it, the nations feverishly prepare on a gigantic scale for another global outbreak. Ironically, each camp proclaims its passion for peace, each declares that it is arming for peace, yet the prospects for peace were never so bleak as to-day.

Grim and forbidding are the political portends of 1952. What are the causes of this deplorable state of affairs? Is there any hope of a change? Has Christianity failed?

Why There Is no Peace on Earth

There are many people who think that the cause of war is economic inequalities. It is true that greed and envy are aggravated by the fact that some have much goods while many have not even the necessities of life. But the

On earth peace, good will toward men." So sang the angels nineteen hundred years ago on the plains of Palestine. Was this an unfulfilled prophecy or a will-o'-the-wisp that has tortured the mind of man through the ages? Is peace on earth a phantom that for ever eludes our grasp, or is it a divine purpose yet to be realized?

What can we do to work God's work, to prosper and increase
The brotherhood of all mankind, the reign of the Prince of Peace?

ON EARTH



By J. A. McMillan

cause of war goes deeper than this. Inequality is merely a symptom of the real ill that plagues the human race. Those who are envious of their more prosperous neighbours often turn out to be just as greedy and equally as mean when prosperity comes their way. Peace would not be secured on any lasting basis if all the wealth of the world could be equally distributed among the nations.

Then political ideologies are considered as the chief cause of war. But here again we believe that the true cause lies deeper in the human heart. Given the right disposition, men could hold diverse views on political questions and live in peace. Hatred and intolerance spring from the heart. The current ideas in political thinking merely add direction to underlying forces that drive men to war.

The Holy Scriptures have much to say about this question of peace and war. Over and over again, the Word of God declares: "There is no peace saith the Lord, unto the wicked." Isa. 48:22; 57:21. And repeatedly the Lord warned His prophets that to ignore sin in the human heart is to ignore the real cause of war. "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Jer. 6:14; 8:11. (Ezek. 13:10.) Every device that ignores this sinful human nature is like an impotent poultice placed on the skin while the dread disease festers underneath.

The Bible has nowhere promised that there will be a warless world while sin remains unconquered in the human heart. Jesus, with His profound knowledge of the human race, said: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, . . . murders, thefts, covetousnesses, wickednesses (margin); . . . all

these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23. For this reason Jesus affirmed that we would "hear of wars and rumours of wars," and that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom," with increasing intensity to the end of time. (Matt. 24:6, 7.)

There is no easy optimism in the Scriptures about this problem of peace. Only by the eradication of sin can war be expelled and peace be established. And to remove sin, God sent His Son to die on the cross of Calvary. The cross of Christ bars the way of heedless man, with two arms outstretched to save. If men reject the love of God and persist in following the ways of sin, then war becomes inevitable because there is no peace in the sinful heart. Herein lies the futility of peace pacts. Scraps of paper cannot preserve peace. Passion and greed, fear and hatred will destroy any safeguard set up to prevent war. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" James 4:1.

It is for this reason that the Gospel of Jesus is directed to the heart of the individual. The purpose of His incarnation is expressly declared to be: "He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. 1:21. And when we accept Him as our Saviour, then, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1.

Personal Peace

"Peace is indivisible," said Mr. Molotov. "Peace is individual," says Jesus. Standing within the shadow of the cross, He signed His last will and testament: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27. Then He proceeded to tell His disciples of the close relationship that must

exist between Him and them, of the scorn and hatred they would endure from the world, of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Then He concluded: "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

What an amazing contrast. "In the world," tribulation; "In Me . . . peace." The peace of Jesus. Do you possess this peace? It is a legacy from the Lord of life. Accept it to-day and enjoy it for ever. It will come to you as you surrender your heart to Jesus, and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4:7.

Peace, perfect peace—in this dark world of sin? The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace on Earth

The Christian believer knows this personal peace in God. But the angels sang of "*peace on earth*." Will that ever be? Yes, indeed. The time is rapidly approaching when the peace of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment." "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isa. 32:1; 9:7. Jesus will then truly be "The Prince of Peace."

The angels' song therefore embraced the first and second advents of Christ. This is not at all strange, for when Jesus ascended to heaven following His resurrection two angels appeared to the gazing disciples and announced: "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." Acts 1:11. When He comes again the second time, then sin and war will be banished from God's universe and there will be peace on earth, "as the days of heaven upon the earth." Deut. 11:21.

Take heart, dear reader, when the Prince of Peace comes, "He maketh wars to cease unto

the ends of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire." Psa. 46:9. War will be swallowed up in victory. Peace will be universal and complete.

The Best Christmas Gift of All

(Continued from page 7.)

our salvation; the price His Father paid that we might escape eternal death, was beyond computation. Is it possible that anyone would refuse this gift of a gracious and compassionate God, a loving Father? Yet there are many who seem to prefer to be in open rebellion rather than to accept their King's offer of mercy and love.

So when Christmas Day comes and we receive gifts from our children, or our parents, or our friends, ought we not to pause a moment to give thanks to our Father for His gift, the best gift of all? If we are planning to sing the well-known carols, beginning possibly with "Christians, Awake!" let us read thoughtfully before we sing: "Oh, may we keep and ponder in our mind, God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind." Or if our first choice should be: "Hark! the herald angels!" let us hearken, let us listen, for if our ear is attuned to the music of heaven, we may still hear the angels singing their songs of praise to their Creator and ours.

At Christmas time we give and we receive. We would not be very happy if we had to do all the giving, and received nothing, not even a word of thanks. Nor would we be happy if we received all the gifts and had nothing to give in return—not even a word of thanks! So it is with the plan of salvation: "Unto us a Son is given!" Do we accept this heavenly gift? Are we prepared to receive Him into our home? into our heart?

Yes, we receive and we give; we receive from our kind and loving Father the most precious of all gifts, the gift of His dear Son; and we give in exchange—a very poor exchange—we give our heart to Him, and we say: "Take it, dear Lord, and cleanse it; and take me altogether into Thy keeping for time and for eternity! Amen!"



Christmas shopping.

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Something for Nothing!

By Mary J. Vine

WE were alone, she and I, but in a house where one is scarcely ever alone, and when even the walls have ears, one takes precautions. "Mummy," she whispered from behind her hand, "do you think I could go and buy my Christmas presents?"

"You could," I said, "but isn't it a little soon? Wouldn't you rather wait awhile?"

"Oh, let me," she said. She had her money box in her hand. It is one of the unopenable kind, but she held a knife also I noticed. Through the years she has become expert at sliding pennies out of that particular slot, but I knew that if I let her go shopping completely unadvised her unguided generosity would not only empty her box but would bring her disappointment also.

"Couldn't you wait until I could come with you?" I said.

"Oh, Mummy —"

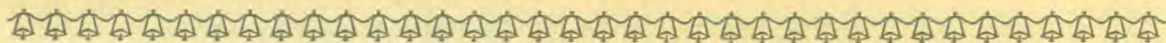
"Oh, I know," I said. Bless her heart, this little private Christmas shopping expedition has come to be one of the real highlights in her year, but I did so want to protect her a bit — from her all too lavish little self.

"Look," I said, "at least let me help you decide what you shall buy—for the others of course. That may help a little bit to keep you from being sorry afterward."

"All right," she said, and though the items we wrote down on her little list were perhaps slightly more prosaic than she would otherwise have chosen, at least they came within her means. She didn't, however, buy one of them.

Her little face was apprehensive as she came in.

"Mummy, you won't be annoyed with me,



will you?" she ventured, "but I couldn't resist the temptation." Almost tremblingly she opened her parcels. A dolly sitting on a little life-belt to float in Baby Sister's bath, and a delightful little book for Little Brother, but nothing else. She had started out to buy seven presents and she had bought only two. She didn't know how completely I understood nor how very much I ached to make it up to her, indeed that I was already scheming and contriving, but for the present she must learn her lesson—when we have only so much money we can only have so much of what that money can buy.

You've Got to Pay

For several weeks there stood on a counter in a nearby store a tall pile of tins of soup, and in front of them a ticket, "Please Take One." They were obviously not samples placed there for purposes of advertisement. One supposed they were old stock and the grocer was using this method to dispose of them. Please Take One! Tinned soups are not cheap. One day at most should have sufficed for their disappearance. Not so, however. Many days later I stood beside a neighbour, waiting to be served. The pile was still there, save perhaps for one or two. So was the ticket.

"They're going very slowly," I said.

"For the same reason that they didn't sell in the beginning," she answered. "They aren't worth carrying home, much less the gas to heat them up. Believe me, you don't get anything worth having for nothing."

And that was exactly the cry of a fellow-traveller in the bus the other day, her arms already full of Christmas shopping. "I paid so much for this, and so much more for this," she said, "and I really don't know what I'm going to do. The fact is, of course, that if you get anything of any real use you've got to pay for it."

Oh, the burden of Christmas!

"Mummy, what can I get for so-and-so that won't cost very much?"

"Do you realize, there are only two more pay days before Christmas? What shall we do?"

"You'd never guess how much we spent last year—just on Christmas cards alone, to say nothing of the stamps."

Oh, it's grand to see the mantels overflowing

with friendly greetings from dear ones, the yearly renewal of contacts that might otherwise be broken, but it costs.

Oh, it's fun to see the parcels piling high, all tastefully done up in Christmassy paper, with Christmassy labels, and Christmassy twine, and Christmassy seals, but it costs.

The Divine Exception

And to some the cost becomes a burden greater than they can cheerfully bear, while we all get more or less caught up in the great yearly trade drive and are in danger of losing the realization that the glad and glorious message of Christmas is exactly the antithesis of that. The best things do, literally, cost nothing. They have been paid for by Someone Else. They are without money and without price.

On that first Christmas night, now almost two thousand years ago, there were certain folk who had just what we long for not only now, this Christmastide, but always. Happiness. They couldn't contain it, so greatly were they moved and stirred by their experience. It is something to feel the heart overflowing with "exceeding great joy," but such they felt, the Record says, those followers of that portentous star.

Joy!

It has been said that joy has fled this world of 1951, but it isn't true. It was the first and it was the last of the dear Lord Jesus' gifts to His followers, and if we haven't got it then it is our own fault, for He, bless His Name, wants nothing more than that we should just take it from Him, without money, and without price.

Unaware of any Herodian malice, the shepherd band gave voice to their intensity of glad emotion, and the quiet streets echoed to their songs of praise and glory. Is that our reaction? Do we want to sing? We should. We are every one of us inheritors of a great blessing, and if we are not sufficiently aware, may He, Himself, open our eyes this Christmas time.

In a world of doubt and sudden fear, He brings us assurance: When ye see "these things begin to come to pass, then look up; . . . your redemption draweth nigh."

In a world of want and anxiety He brings

us confidence: "My God shall supply all your need."

In a world of increasing uncertainty He brings the support of a sure hope: "What I do thou knowest not now. . . . In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 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."

Oh, friends, what gifts He offers, love and joy and peace and salvation, full and free. Let us not neglect to lay hold on them fully this Christmas time. Who knows, it may be our last. Let it be our happiest also.

"I will wish you," wrote Ruskin, "some new love of lovely things, and some new forgetfulness of the teasing things, and some higher pride in the praising things, and some sweeter peace from the hurrying things, and some closer fence from the worrying things."

Let that be my Christmas wish for you also. God bless you, every one.

Bethlehem's New Babe

(Continued from page 3.)

born were unprepared and not desirous of worshipping Him. They had not believed their own Scriptures. "Had ye believed Moses," Jesus said later, "ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me." Not only Moses, but David and Isaiah and Daniel. They were without excuse. The leaders and rulers were blind to the significance of the hour. The priests were saturated with formalism and hypocrisy. Only a few, like Simeon and Anna, who had studied the prophecies, were full of expectation. And to the simple-minded shepherds, no doubt in the silence of the night, with the stars overhead, talking and praying about the One to be born in Bethlehem, was the angel of the Lord sent. Upon them is the glory of the Lord visited and the great announcement made.

"Ye shall find the Babe." Happy assurance! Blessed certainty! The hope of Israel for centuries past—the Seed of the woman, promised when man fell; the Seed promised to Abraham in whom all nations were to be blessed. Now, at long last, the light has shined in the darkness, though the darkness comprehended it not.

The shepherds would find the Babe, "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." What a sign! "Lying in a manger." Not in the lap of luxury, not in a king's palace, but because there was no room in the inn, Mary is compelled to place her firstborn Son in a manger. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

When He Comes Again

Like a grain of mustard seed Christianity had a small beginning, but since the Saviour was born thousands have accepted Him as a personal Saviour and experienced the peace and joy the angels proclaimed. Without Him there would have been no Christmas. The churches that stand as monuments all over the world would not have existed. How much the world has been enriched by the birth of this Babe of Bethlehem. How much we are indebted to the infinite love of God in providing for our salvation the gift of His Son! What does He mean to you? For next time He comes not as a babe. Not the sign of a manger at the second Advent. Rather, they shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matt. 24:30. "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Heb. 9:28.

The prophecies all point to the soon coming of the Saviour. Will history repeat itself and there be only comparatively few prepared and expecting Him? "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

You must be ready. You will be, won't you?

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Children's Pages

A Baby Was Born at Christmas

By Eirene Adair

"Oh, Mummy, I do feel so lonely," sighed little Mary Prescott as she gazed out at the big snowflakes tumbling to the ground and covering the barren moors with a soft, white carpet.

"Yes dear, I know it is lonely for you having no children to play with, but Daddy's work as a shepherd makes it necessary for us to live here. I've nearly finished ironing and then I'll tell you a story before tea-time. How would you like that?"

"O-oh lovely, Mummy," said Mary, dancing around with all her little brown curls bobbing up and down. "Will you tell me a Bible story, please?"

"Of course I will. What one shall it be this time?" asked Mrs. Prescott as she put away the ironing board and drew a chair closer to the fire-side.

"Tell me again about Baby Jesus being born in a stable." Mary sat down on the floor and rested her head against her Mummy's lap. Simply and softly the lovely old, yet ever new, story of the Saviour's birth was repeated.

"How I wish God would send me a baby brother. I would help you take care of him, Mummy," said Mary wistfully.

"Well, dear, perhaps He will one day soon and then you won't be lonely. But remember that Jesus is always near, and wants to live in your heart and life here, till He takes you some day to His beautiful heavenly home."

Christmas was approaching and the little family made many lovely plans for a happy celebration.

The snowy weather continued and Mary and her mummy were not able to pay their usual weekly shopping visits to the town which lay two miles away over the moors. So Mr. Prescott had to bring

home everything they needed, as well as the paper chains and bells to decorate the cottage.

A week before Christmas Day, Mr. Prescott went off for the week's supplies and when he came home that night Aunt Susan, Mummy's sister, was with him. Aunt Susan was a strong, country woman, and didn't mind a few miles' walk through the deep snow. She said she had come to stay over Christmas to make Mummy rest more. Mary felt puzzled as Mummy was not ill; but she was delighted, for she loved Aunt Susan who was a Sabbath-school teacher and was a great story-teller.

By the time Christmas Eve arrived, the tree stood before the window, sparkling with coloured balls, tinsel, and gaily wrapped parcels, and other mysterious packets were hidden about the house, too.

Mary got up early and felt disappointed when Aunt Susan told her that Mummy was staying in bed that day as she wasn't very well.

"I do hope she will be able to get up to-morrow, Aunt Susan," she said.

Aunt Susan took her into Mummy's room that evening to say "good-night," and she was glad to see that Mummy was smiling and didn't look ill. Mummy kissed her, and told her to be sure to hang up her stocking. Mary did so and, when she had said her prayers,

HE LOVES US SO

When Jesus came from heaven,
He laid aside His crown,
He left His throne in glory
And to the earth came down.
A stable was His shelter,
So dark and mean and low;
His cradle was a manger,
Because He loved us so.

He healed the hopeless leper;
He made the blind to see;
He fed the waiting people
And stilled wild Galilee.
He bore our sin and sorrow,
Our sickness and our woe;
He died on Calvary's mountain
Because He loved us so.

He rose and went to heaven,
Bright mansions to prepare
For all who truly love Him
And hope to meet Him there.
And when He comes in glory,
We to that home will go,
To dwell with Him for ever,
Because He loved us so.

Elizabeth Rosser.

her Aunt tucked her up in bed and she was soon fast asleep.

She was awakened the next morning by a strange sound. It was like the sound of crying. What could it be?

She called out, "Aunt Susan!"

The bedroom door opened, and Aunt Susan came in, holding her finger to her lips, and whispered, "Put on your dressing-gown and slippers and come to see the lovely Christmas present God has sent you."

Somewhat bewildered, Mary obeyed, and followed her to Mummy's room.

"Oh," she gasped, as she looked at Mummy's bed and saw the tiny, downy head on

the pillow. "Oh, Mummy, God must have heard me say how much I wanted a little brother, mustn't He?" "Yes, dear," agreed Mummy smiling.

Your Letter

My Dear Sunbeams,

Why is it that at Christmas time we love to send gifts to our friends? I am sure it is because we are reminded of the greatest Christmas gift of all—the baby Jesus. When we think of how God loved us enough to give His own Son as the first Christmas gift to the world, we too, want to show our love for those around us. It is wonderful each year to remember that holy Baby cradled in the manger. I wish I could have seen Him there, don't you? But Jesus has promised that we

"And didn't He send him at a lovely time? Just on the anniversary of the day little Baby Jesus was born nearly two thousand years ago."

shall see Him. Soon He is coming back to this earth—this time as a mighty King. I'm sure we don't have much longer to wait.

This Christmas, Sunbeams, shall we not only think back to His first coming, but also look forward, and thus be ready to meet Him when He comes the second time?

Yours affectionately,

AUNTIE MARGARET.

Results of Competition No. 21

Prize-winners. — Neville Kerry, 9 Wellesley Avenue, Norwich. Age 14; Hazel Harris, 119 Fallowfield, Cambridge. Age 7.

Honourable Mention.—Wendy Davies (New Tredegar); Ann Shoney (New Tredegar); Paul Martine (Stockton); Kenneth Baumber (Hove); Amy Randlestone (Beccles); Kathleen Weatherall (Coventry); Ann Berry (Hockley Heath); Siegfried Baron (Church); Miriam Harris (Cambridge); Dorothy Atkins (Derby); Judith Lacy (York).

Those who tried hard.—Sheila Proctor (Southampton); No Name (Clapham Common); John Rich (Launceston); Molly Rich (Launceston); Josephine Aldridge (Bishop's Cleeve); Alastair McCormack (Inverness); Lance Evans (Coventry); Raymond Allen (London, N.19); Jennifer Shackleton (Tadmorden); David Shepard (Birmingham, 19); Ruth Price (Wokingham); Barbara Sanders (Newquay); Eleonora Baron (Church); Penelope Donaldson (Sowerby Bridge); Audrey Tarling (London, N.10); Judith Garner (Cardiff); Pearl Rich (Launceston); Crystal Hamblin (Watford); Richard Payne (Bishop's Cleeve); Christine Baker (Cardiff).

Competition

See how nicely you can paint this picture and send it with your name, age, and address to Auntie Margaret, The Stanborough Press Ltd., Watford, Herts., not later than December 27th.



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THE ANGELS' SONG



On this birthday of our Saviour
We are thinking of the night
When the hills and fields were flooded
With a radiant, holy light;
When the angel voices chanted
"Peace on earth, good will to men;"
And to-day we hear the echo
Of that joyous song again.

We hear it through the clamour
Of approaching days of gloom;
For Christ who rose in victory
From the darkness of the tomb,
Is the Babe who in the manger
Came to pay the price for all
Who find in Him a refuge
As they heed His loving call.

So when bells ring out this Christmas,
We will hear the angels sing,
"Again He comes—in glory,
Jesus Christ, Redeemer, King."



By
Beth Briggs