

Issue 11 | December 2023

LIGHTHOUSE



*Faith
makes things Possible*

The Lighthouse e-Magazine is a bi-monthly e-magazine. You'll discover something unique and fascinating in every issue of our magazine.

We provide inspirational messages from experienced people, testimonials, and personal stories, as well as fun activities like Bible puzzles, quizzes, and historical facts. You are always welcome to share your stories and experiences with us.

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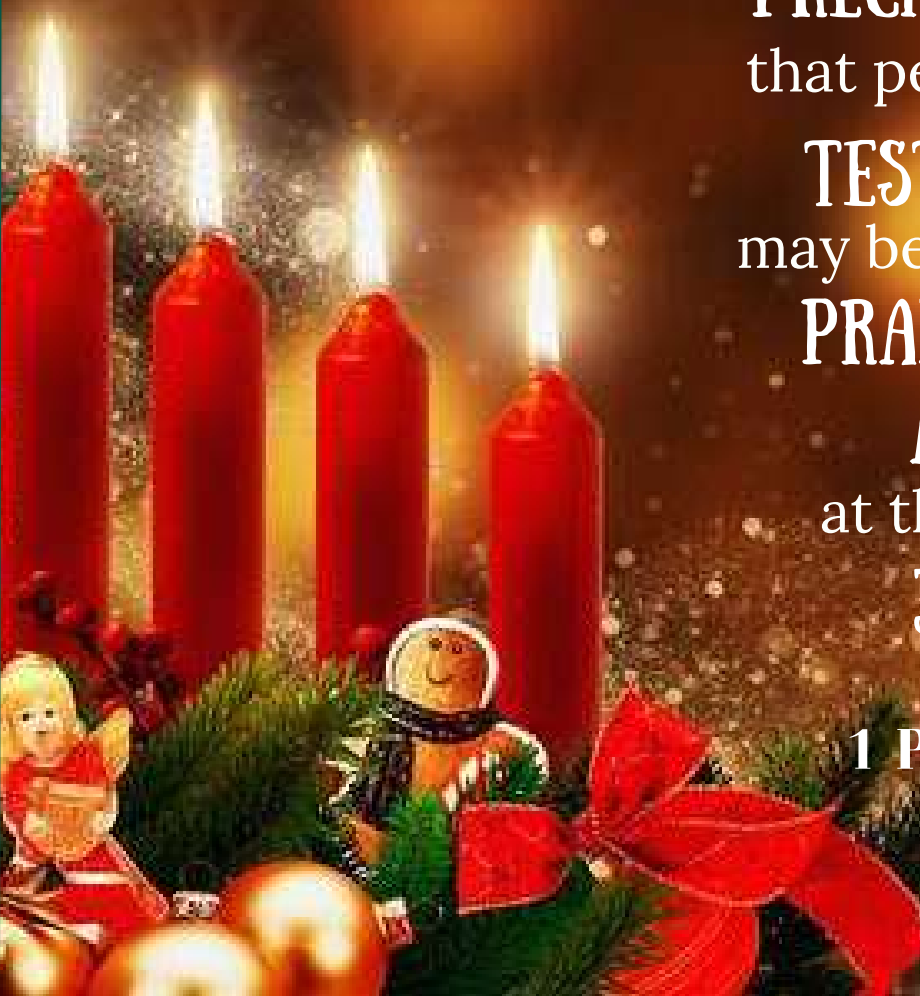
of your **FAITH**— more
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that perishes though it is

TESTED BY FIRE—
may be found to result in

**PRAISE AND GLORY
AND HONOR**

at the revelation of
JESUS CHRIST.

1 Peter 1:7 (ESV)



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Editor's Letter

WE WISH YOU A VERY HAPPY
Merry
Christmas

& HAPPY NEW YEAR

And except those days
should be shortened, there
should no flesh be saved:
but for the elect's sake
those days shall be
shortened.

Matthew 24:22

Have a safe, blessed, and wonderful Christmas and a magical and happy New Year. May you and your families experience the love, goodness, and grace of God in a special way as we celebrate Emmanuel—God with us and God in us!

The next year, our theme for "The Lighthouse e-Magazine" is **'His Strength in Your Weakness,'** taken from Philippians 4:13. **"I can do all this through him, who gives me strength."**

Well, another year has almost passed. Time seems to have changed gears and is moving faster than ever. I have heard many say that it was just like yesterday that we were welcoming the year 2023, and now we are preparing to welcome the year 2024. **We are in the period that the Bible calls the "last days."** When we look around us, we see things that have been prophesied as a sign that the last days are happening. However, in regards to time, God has told us in Matthew 24:22 that if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. **Our Lord Jesus Christ knows us so well that He will shorten the days to help us cope with all that is happening around us.**

As we reflect on the past year, there will be highs and lows that we have encountered. However, all through, our Heavenly Father has proven faithful to always deliver us from our day-to-day problems and issues that have been a challenge for us.

My prayer for each of you is that you will remain confident and abiding in Him as you face the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024—that He who is in you will enable and equip you to face whatever the situation may be in the future.

May you be blessed by the articles in this edition of the Lighthouse, and may you continue to grow in the knowledge and likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ as we wait in hope of His coming back again..

-Mr. Dev Daniel
Editor-in-Chief

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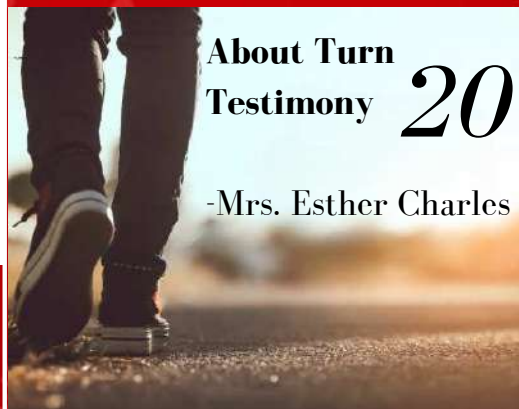
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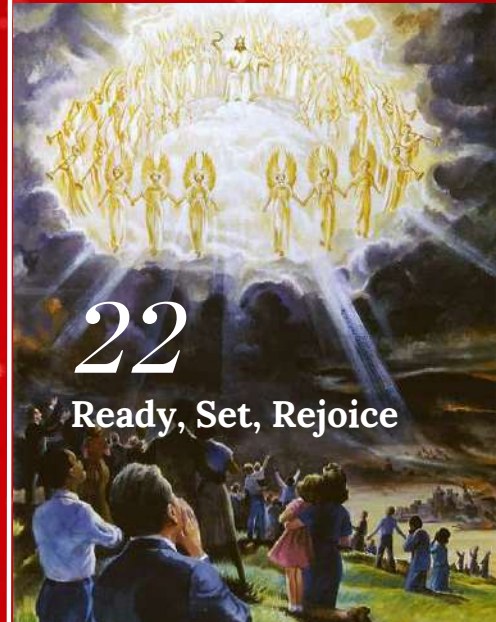
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The God Who Calls

-Mr. Isaac Newton

TEST YOUR BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE



- 1) When exactly did the Jews celebrate Passover?
- 2) How many chapters are there in the Old Testament?
- 3) Who warned Paul about the plot to kill him?
- 4) Which New Testament book gives the most accounts of Jesus' miracles?
- 5) Which book of the Bible contains Jesus' final words?
- 6) What did Zacchaeus promise to give to the poor in reparation for his sins?
- 7) In a deserted place in which city did the feeding of the 5,000 take place?
- 8) How many Baal prophets came across Elijah at his Mount Carmel victory?
- 9) How many divisions and sections does the bible have?
- 10) What name was given to the Jewish ruling council that plotted Jesus' death?

Answers in Pg. 25

Bible Puzzle



Find Out these Bible Characters

Find Out these New Testament Stories



Send your answers to lighthousebi@gmail.com (or) hbiemagazine@gmail.com





People's Group Dewar



Affirmations..... For Courageous Faith

I AM STRONG AND COURAGEOUS	I have hope and a future in the Lord
He will order His angels to protect me wherever I go	I AM MORE THAN A CONQUEROR THROUGH HIM WHO LOVES ME.
I am not alone, for the Lord is always with me	The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall lack nothing
I LAY DOWN TO SLEEP IN PEACE, CAUSE THE LORD SUSTAINS ME	I am confident in my identity as a child of God

The eastern Indian states of Orissa and Chhattisgarh are home to the majority of the Dewar population. They can also be found in Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, and Maharashtra.

Around 1,200,000 people live there in India. The languages that are most often spoken include Santhali, Mundari, Desiya, Hindi, Bengali, Kuvi, and Kui.

Raising livestock and entertaining people by singing and performing stunts with monkeys is their primary source of income. They are a fishing community as well, and they sell fish and fishing goods in the marketplaces. Some people do tattoos. The Dewar people prefer that their children have access to better education, but they are unable to afford it because of their poverty. They worship the goddess Andhimata and have huge families that they are unable to provide for because they think the goddess would become displeased if they stopped having children.

While they are no longer unreached and have access to the bible and gospel, let's pray that God will raise up workers to help them in improving their economic condition and communal life and that they will grow in their devotion to the real, living God.



The Mystery, Might and Majesty of the Good News of Hope

-Mrs. Shalini Manohar



Hal Lindsey, an author, says *“Human beings can live without food for 40 days, without water for 3 days, and without air for 8 minutes, but not a minute without hope”.*



Recently, I read the sad story of a young girl who quit her life. In fact, she wrote a blog about hope and asked people not to give up on life but to have a positive approach to life. But why then, at the spur of a moment, did she take her life?

That reminds us that hope is not found in a philosophy, in an ideology, in a formula, or in a motivational speech. We are living in a war-torn world filled with uncertainties. I understand the most feared word is fear, and the most sought-after word is hope, but hope is found in a person—yes, in a personal God who created us with a purpose and has given us new life through His death and resurrection. He has also promised that he will be with us forever. Till we find Him, the fears and uncertainty of life will take over and can lead us to adverse decisions.

As the song writer says, *“All our fears and hopes are met in thee, Jesus Christ.”* This also answers the most important question, *“Why did God have to be born as a human being?”*

It’s interesting to note that the God of Hope was the promise in Genesis, then experienced and encountered in Judges, Kings, and Prophets, and finally arrived as a person of hope in the Gospels. Now He dwells in you and me as the Eternal Hope.

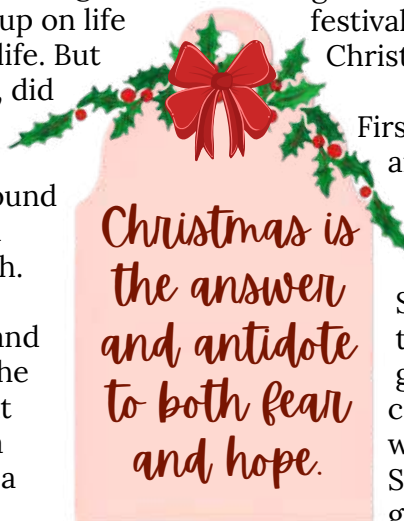
Romans 15:13 says,

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

According to this verse, there are two important things we need to note when celebrating this festival of hope: the birth of the Savior, Jesus Christ.

First, it is good news of hope for all who are hopeless. A savior is born to forgive, to deliver, and to give new life. The God of Hope is the hope-giver.

Secondly, it’s a call to those who have this God of Hope to become hope-givers to the world. This verse beautifully conveys this truth: *“You may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* So much so, we are called to be hope-givers.



THE GOD OF HOPE IS THE HOPE GIVER, AND HE MAKES EACH ONE OF US, IN TURN, A HOPE GIVER.

Let me quickly highlight three people from the first Christmas who received the God of hope and became hope-givers to the rest of humanity.

- **The Mystery of the Good News of Hope is “God with Us” - Divinity becoming Humanity**

In Matthew 1:18–25, we come across the angel Gabriel speaking in a dream to a desperate Joseph, who was confused, not knowing how to handle this complex situation, yet did not want to shame Mary because He was a righteous man. He was standing at a dead end, but God revealed the mystery through two names: Jesus, who saves us from sin, and Emmanuel, God with us.

How often do we ask this question when we go through pain and suffering? Where is God? Why is he absent or silent? Take courage; the good news is that God is with us—God has become like one of us. He understands us and our situations perfectly. There is no struggle, no pain, and no betrayal that He is not aware of. God is with us.

God with us—the Holy and Divine God dwelling among us and with us. No other worldview has this profound truth. The unapproachable Holy God has become approachable and reachable to anyone because of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

Emmanuel – God’s presence is always present with us. That’s the mystery of this good news, Hope. God is not far away from you but with you, whether it’s night or day, mountain or valley, or good or bad times.

Dear Friends, look around and see and hear the questions, the longings, the hurts, and the fears of people among you. Desperate for hope and longing for God to be with them. Take this opportunity to share this treasured truth with your friends and colleagues who are in frantic need of this hope. Be a hope-giver.

- **The Might of the Good News of Hope is God for Us.**

When you read Luke 1:26–38, during the visit of Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, he reveals about this child: the child who is to be born will be great; the Son of the Highest, David’s throne will be given to him; he will reign over Jacob’s descendants; and his kingdom will never end. Wow, a power-packed announcement about the Mighty God. Verse 37 says, **“Nothing is impossible with God.”** The antidote to fear, doubts, anxiety, and uncertainty that Mary was going through was the almighty power of God. That’s why she was able to say in verse 38, **“I am the Lord’s servant,”** **“Let it be according to your word”.**

The might of the good news of hope is God for us. In a lonely world where we often think there is no one for us, God reminds us that God is for us. Mary was virtually holding power, authority, and majesty as she cradled the baby in her arms. The small lips were the lips that had spoken words, and the world came into existence. Songwriter Mark Lowry penned the song,

“**Mary, did you know that your baby boy will someday walk on waters, will save our sons and daughters, this child that you’ve delivered will soon deliver you, and will one day rule the nations.**”

What Kind of Mystery?

- The maker of human beings became a human being.
- The image-giver became the image-bearer.
- The owner of heaven and earth became homeless.
- The bread of heaven and living water experienced hunger and thirst.
- The love eternal hated by all
- The Holy One was known as a friend of sinners.
- The judge of the living and dead was brought to trial by a mortal judge.
- The just were condemned by the unjust as guilty.
- The way, the truth, and the life were accused by false witnesses.
- The healer was wounded, bearing the scars for eternity.
- The author and everlasting life were born to die.

Just like Mary, we can boldly say that if the almighty God is for us, there is no situation too difficult to overcome with His guidance; there is no trial too hard to go through as His grace is sufficient; there is no battle too intense to be won because the battle belongs to Him; and there is no mountain too difficult to climb because the mountains quake at His voice.

Just like Mary, we can boldly say that if the almighty God is for us, there is no situation too difficult to overcome with His guidance; there is no trial too hard to go through as His grace is sufficient; there is no battle too intense to be won because the battle belongs to Him; and there is no mountain too difficult to climb because the mountains quake at His voice.

The author of Hebrews says in 13:5 and 6 that God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” 6 So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

Are you going through tough times and challenges all alone? Remember, you have a mighty God who can make the impossible possible. God for us. This season, God calls you and me to be hope-givers because of the God of Hope, who is for us. Pass on this good news that Jesus has come to give life and life in abundance.

- **The Majesty of the Good News of Hope is God in Us.**

When you read Luke 2:8–15, the visit of a host of angels to the shepherds, this is the message that was proclaimed: “Good news of great joy to all people—glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

Why it’s Majesty: The overwhelming spectacle was given to a few lowly shepherds on a Judean hillside. They were suddenly confronted with an army—and not just an army, but an army of thousands of angels in the sky.

FOR THESE FEW MOMENTS IN TIME, THESE SHEPHERDS WERE ALLOWED TO SEE A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN’S OWN RESPONSE TO WHAT HAS JUST HAPPENED—THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

They were announcing that glory was being given to God right now. One commentator noted: “This phrase, Glory to God in the highest,” means the heavens are glorifying God right now because of the sending of the Christ child. Also, it’s an announcement that peace has come among men because God is pleased to extend it to them. It is freely given.

The child—this baby who was born—is none other than the Prince of Peace, as prophesied many centuries ago. Because the Prince of Peace rules, we can live in perfect peace.

The world we live in longs for peace amidst all conflicts and wars. The promised Prince of Peace is the one who brings peace into the world and into our lives — God’s “shalom.” It means not simply psychological ease but a holistic sense of fulfilment, well-being, and flourishing.

Jesus said in John 16:33, “In the world you will have tribulation. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace” (v. 33). Peace is not in the absence of pain and problems, but during them.

“May the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way.”

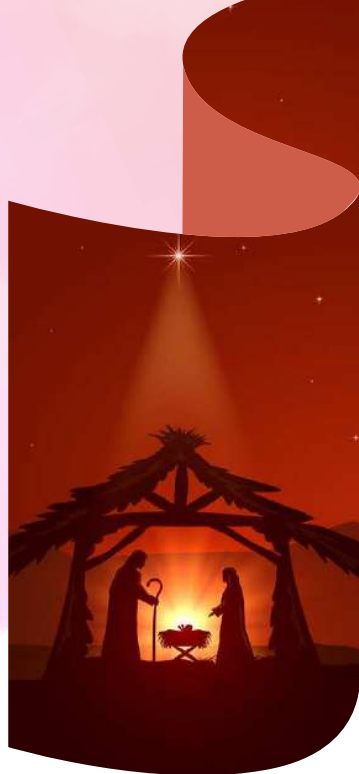
–2 Thessalonians 3:16

“At all times” means “in all circumstances.” May God give you peace, whatever you face!

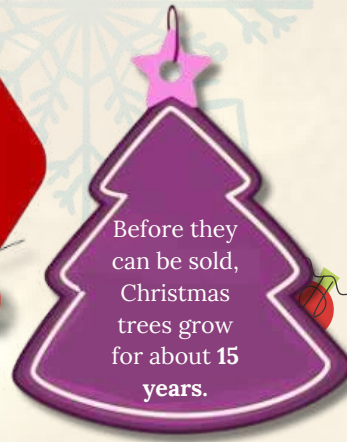
Be a hope-giver to people who are going through trials—loss of job, enduring chronic illness, loss of a loved one, financial bankruptcy, or a relationship gone sour. The Lord of Peace Himself is in us. The one who calms the storm is in us. The one who feeds the sparrows is in us. The Lord, who overcame the world and death, is in us. **God in us is the majesty of the good news.**

May the mystery of hope — God with us,
May the might of hope be God for us.
May the majesty of hope — God in us
Grant us hope and make us hope-givers to the world.

*I wish you a peace-filled Christmas and a
hope-filled New Year!*



Did You Know?



The **Christmas wreath** represents Christ's crown of thorns and **scarlet berries** reflecting his blood shed.



The "Twelve Days of Christmas" is not before Christmas. It starts on Christmas Day and finishes with the Epiphany on January 6th when the 'Three Kings from the East' came bearing gifts.

The song "12 Days of Christmas" features **364 presents, with Christmas being the only one, with each gift being given every day of the year.**

The time frame from **December 25 to January 5** is known as 'Christmastide' or 'Twelve Holy Days'.

The term Noel derives from the Latin word natalis, which means "day of birth."

Conservationists discovered a nearly edible **106-year-old fruitcake in Antarctica**. However, the **oldest fruitcake is 137 years old** and was discovered in **Michigan**.



Christmas symbolizes the "spirit of giving," resulting in numerous gifts being given, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and supporting those less fortunate.



Jingle Bells, a popular Christmas song, was not originally intended to be a Christmas song. Instead, it was written in 1850 for the **American Thanksgiving** celebration, not Christmas. **The song does not include the terms "Christmas" or "Jesus" or Santa Claus.**

Did you know that not all Christians celebrate Christmas on the same day?

Christmas Day is observed on **January 7** in nations such as **Russia, Romania, and the Ukraine.**



Historical Facts

Christmas Facts



The 12th century carols were simple tunes performed for joyous occasions. The Church later verified their meanings. By the 16th century, carols were sung in almost every European language. However, Puritanism and the Reformation decimated the tradition, except for Roman Catholic ones. Reviving in the 19th century, carols became popular Christmas hymns, performed by carol-singers.

There is enough wrapping paper used for Christmas gifts to circle the earth nine times.

TINY GERMAN VILLAGE

A glass blower in Lauscha, Germany invented Christmas ornaments using a new process called "Silvering" around 1600. By the mid-1870s Lauscha ornaments gained popularity in Europe. F.W. Woolworth stocked a few in 1880 and sold out in two days. By 1890, Woolworth was traveling to Lauscha annually and selling \$25 million of them in his stores.

Germany

87%

GLOBAL CHRISTMAS DECORATION IS MADE IN CHINA

China

Although Christmas is not an official holiday in China, but in 2020, it was

during the middle of the summer that production of Santa hats, tinsel and LED-lit Christmas trees reached their peak in the Yiwu city that has come to be known as China's "Christmas Village."

CHRISTMAS IN JULY

July, the coldest month, is celebrated as Yulefest or Yuletide in Australia and other Southern Hemisphere nations. However, Christmas Day falls on December 25, the hottest summer day in Australia, causing many to miss the festive spirit.



The Christmas present France gave to America in 1886 was the Statue of Liberty, which is the biggest ever.

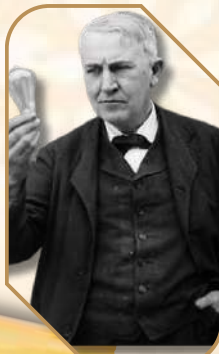


HANGING STOCKINGS

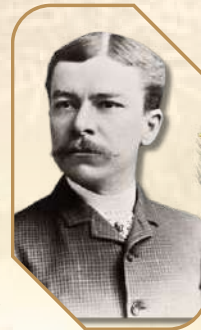
The Dutch practice of leaving shoes filled with food for St. Nicolas's donkeys is where this tradition originated. In exchange, he would leave little gifts.

FIRST CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

The first string of electric lights was made by Thomas Edison, the man who invented the first widely used lightbulb. These threads were hung about the exterior of his Menlo Park Laboratory during the 1880 Christmas season.



In 1882, Edward H. Johnson connected the first electric Christmas tree string of lights. Eighty red, white, and blue lightbulbs were hand-wired by Johnson, Edison's friend, and business partner at Edison's Illumination Company, and they were wrapped around his Christmas tree. The tree only had electricity shining on it, but it also turned.



FAITH MAKES THINGS POSSIBLE

- Rev. A. Ravi N. Jones
SFPC Director, HBI



In the modern world, an uncertain future is looming, characterized by social, political, moral, and economic challenges. However, significant indicators, such as the Advent season, serve as a testament to the faith that makes things possible. Faith alone enables individuals to overcome obstacles, highlighting the importance of faith in the modern world.

Faith is a combination of a force and a feeling that moves us into action and gives us a deep sense of assurance. It is the confirmation of things we hope for through our action and confidence in Jesus Christ who is the source of our faith and its finisher (Hebrew 12:2, AMPC).

Let us look into the three important signs related to the birth of Jesus Christ and the actions of those who received them enable them to be active in demonstrating their faith, confirming the Word of God.

The Sign of the Virgin's Birth

The first sign is “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Ahaz, King of Judah, faced a powerful union of Pekah, King of Israel, and Rezin, King of Syria. Instead of seeking God, Ahaz sought the help of Assyria and gave him treasure and silver from the temple of Jerusalem. Isaiah warned that within 65 years, Syria and Israel would have gone. Ahaz did not believe, despite the prophet's warning. The Lord gave Ahaz a sign, revealing a virgin with a child, giving birth to a son named Immanuel.



“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

- Isaiah 7:14

In Hebrew, the virgin is sometimes translated as a young woman, someone who is a virgin, someone who has never had relations with a man, or someone of marriageable age. In any Jewish family, the mother won't name the son. Hence, it may be possible that in the royal palace in Jerusalem, one of the concubines of King Ahaz might have borne a son, and she named him 'Immanuel'. The Prophet further said that before the child reached the age of knowing evil and well, both the kings would be deserted. It so happened that by 722 BC, both of those cities had been ruined. The prophet Isaiah had faith in the sign given by the Lord, and the great kingdoms fell. This was the immediate fulfillment that Ahaz did not have faith in.

But in the second prediction, the birth was supernatural and fulfilled in Bethlehem.

Joseph, being a Jew, would have been familiar with the prophetic books and accepted the prediction when the angel appeared to him in a dream. He did not name him Immanuel, but he named him Jesus, for he would save his people from their sins. Despite Joseph undergoing a situation to secretly get rid of the risk, he accepted the words of the angel with great faith. His faith in deeds made it possible for the Savior of the World to grow under his parental care. What a great privilege!

JOSEPH BELIEVED IN THE SIGN OF VIRGIN BIRTH AND ACTED POSITIVELY ON IT.



The Sign of the Guiding Star

The sign of the guiding star was shown to the wise men, a group of scholars who studied the stars. Their title connects them with magic, but they were probably more like astrologers. However, their presence in the biblical record is not a divine endorsement of astrology.

God gave them a special sign—a miraculous star—that announced the birth of the King of Kings. We do not know how many magi there were. From the three gifts listed in

Matthew 2:11, some people have assumed there were three kings from the Orient, though this is not certain. These scholars were Gentiles, and they followed the guiding star without knowing the great threat in the city and reached the palace of King Herod after asking about the place of birth of the King of Kings. The King and all the Jewish leaders underwent disturbances, and they could not respond to the message of the birth of Jesus. The Jewish leaders who knew the Scriptures even could not take any initiative to identify the place of birthplace that was prophesied in Micha 5:2. But rather, they tried to get the information from the Magi and kill the newborn baby.

After leaving the palace, they came to know the plot of Herod, and they acknowledged the great threat and had faith in following the star. They saw the child Jesus and worshipped him with gifts. Once they were warned in a dream, they denied the deal with the king. They did not fear future threats, hoping that the Lord would take care of them. In their faith journey, they took great risks, and nothing about their life challenges is written in Scripture.

THE WISE MEN HAD FAITH IN THE SIGN OF THE GUIDING STAR AND ACTED UPON IT WISELY.

The Sign of the Swaddling Clothes

The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to anonymous shepherds in Judea, who were humble and simple. The angel encouraged them with the greatest news the world had ever heard, and they were part of the most famous carol service. They responded to the sign that they would find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, demonstrating their strength and firmness in proclaiming the message.



The shepherds' trust in the angel's word led them to leave their flocks and visit Bethlehem to see Jesus. They did not keep the good news within themselves but did not let negativity about the Messiah's birth affect them. They were ready to face difficulties and take risks, having great faith in what the Lord had to say.

THE SHEPHERDS HAD FAITH IN THE SIGN OF THE SWADDLING CLOTHES AND ACTED UPON IT SWIFTLY.

Friends, what we learn from all these people who responded to different signs and the messages they shared or demonstrated to the world is remarkable and still relevant in our faith walk. We can even learn from these incidents about how our faith makes things possible.

1) They Were Interested in Who Holds the Future

For all these recipients of signs, their first reaction was not what would happen in the future if they followed the sign. They knew the risks and challenges if they would obey what the Lord intended to communicate through the sign. But for those who gave them the sign, they focused on the word given to them by God.

To inculcate habits in faith life, we need to focus on God, who holds our future in this uncertain world, and His word. The more we prioritize our focus on Him, the more our faith grows in Him. After learning the victories of faith in the Champion biography summarized in Heb 11, we have a great promise that, amid whatever situation we undergo, “Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:1–2a).

2) They Dealt with What They Feared

They were in fear or anxiety when they received a message from the sign, but their simple faith in the sign made them deal with such issues. They did not run away like King Ahaz, but they were ready to face any challenges behind the message of the sign. That might be a reputation issue for Joseph, foreseeing religious or socio-political issues for wise men or issues connected with presenting the gospel to the shepherds. They had the courage and aptitude for optimism to deal with any kind of issue.

To deal with any kind of issue, we need to have the attitude of facing it boldly with confidence and without negativity. Since our focus is on the one who holds our future, our fear is for Him alone, not for men who have breath in their nostrils and change according to situations. “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

3) They Showed How to Act Aptly

They were very active in moving forward according to the message and circumstances. We need to know that how we act is more important than what we perceive in doing anything in faith. The parents of Jesus acted positively; wise men acted wisely; and shepherds acted swiftly.

To act appropriately amid challenges in life, we need to have faith in God, which makes things possible. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and gave her the message that she would conceive a son and call him Jesus, despite her questions, she declared, “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Lk1:37, KJV. If we have mustard seed faith, we can move mountains in the way God wants us to move: aptly, wisely, and swiftly. Jesus said, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there”, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

As we are in the season of Advent and meditating on the coming of Jesus Christ, let us put our hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, and our faith makes anything possible in the way He wants to make things.





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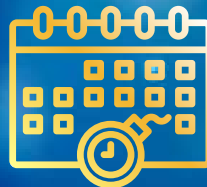


Princy Kumbha

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December 27, 2023



THE CHRISTMAS SHOES

Story
Time



Tommy takes his small savings he had and went out to buy a gift for his sick mom.



He enters a Fashion Boutique.



It was Christmas time but Tommy's mom was sick and bed ridden.



Mom always made Christmas special at home, but this year she is terribly ill. I love her and want to give her something special.



Tommy did not have enough money to pay for the shoes and he was desperate to buy the shoes for his dying mother.



Son there is not enough money for these pair of shoes.

Sir, my mom does not have much time to live. She made Christmas special for us each year. I want her to look beautiful with these shoes if she meets Jesus tonight!

I don't have any more money with me. What will I do?

Mom's going to look so great! Thank you Sir. I will never forget your kindness. Merry Christmas!



The man felt that God reminded him through this little boy what Christmas is all about!

The man waiting in line was in a hurry and he hears the little boy's need and offers to help by paying the rest of the amount so that he can pay for his purchase and leave sooner.



Let me pay the rest of the money for him. Please pack the shoes and give it to this little boy.

Christmas is all about,

- **Love and goodwill:** Acts of love, kindness, and goodwill toward others.
- **Family and togetherness:** A time to gather with family and loved ones, fostering a sense of togetherness and unity.
- **Giving and generosity:** Sharing and being generous to the needy.

* Story inspired from the song "The Christmas Shoes" by NewSong

Jesus Is the Reason for the Season!

Your Choice Determines Your Destiny

- Ps. Victor Kumar



The name Judas Iscariot is synonymous with betrayal in Christian tradition. He is known as the disciple who, according to the New Testament, betrayed Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. While Judas' actions are universally condemned, it's worth delving into the complexities of his faith and his role in the grand narrative of Christianity.

Judas Iscariot: The Chosen Disciple

Judas was one of the twelve disciples chosen by Jesus to be his closest followers and confidants. He shared in the miracles, teachings, and experiences of the Messiah. From an outsider's perspective, Judas appeared to be a devout follower of Christ. He witnessed the healings, heard the parables, and was present at the Last Supper. Like the other disciples, he must have had some level of faith in Jesus to have followed him so closely.

The Betrayal

However, the pivotal moment in Judas' life came during the events leading up to the crucifixion. According to the Bible, Judas betrayed Jesus to the chief priests and elders, leading to Jesus' arrest and subsequent crucifixion. His actions are often seen as the ultimate act of treachery, as he identified Jesus to the authorities with a kiss, leading to his arrest.



The Role of Predestination

Christian theologians have debated the idea of predestination concerning Judas. Did God preordain Judas' betrayal to fulfill a greater purpose, the salvation of humanity through Jesus' crucifixion? If so, it raises questions about Judas' role as a pawn in a divine plan. It also brings into focus the complexity of faith, as Judas might have been an unwitting instrument in God's grand design.

Judas' Remorse

After the betrayal, Judas reportedly felt deep remorse for his actions. He returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and, overcome with guilt, committed suicide. His tragic end raises questions about the nature of faith, forgiveness, and redemption.

Judas' Motives

The question of Judas' motives has puzzled theologians and scholars for centuries. Was it purely for the thirty pieces of silver? Did he have a personal vendetta against Jesus? Or was it part of a larger divine plan? Some argue that Judas might have believed he was forcing Jesus to reveal his messianic identity and establish his kingdom. Others suggest that Judas might have been disillusioned with Jesus' teachings and saw betrayal as a way to distance himself from the movement.

Redemption through Faith

Judas' story doesn't end with his betrayal and suicide. In some Christian traditions, there is room for the idea of redemption for Judas. Some theologians argue that, despite his grave error, Judas could have repented and sought forgiveness. The concept of divine mercy suggests that even the most heinous sins can be forgiven through genuine repentance and faith.

The faith of Judas Iscariot is a complex and enigmatic aspect of Christian theology. He started as a chosen disciple, witnessed the miracles and teachings of Jesus, and ultimately betrayed his teacher. His motives and the role of predestination in his actions remain subjects of debate. Yet Judas' story also raises questions about the possibility of redemption and forgiveness, emphasizing the profound themes of faith, grace, and divine mercy that are central to Christianity. In contemplating Judas' faith, we are reminded of the intricate tapestry of human choices and divine providence that shape the Christian narrative.

ABOUT-TURN

The First Step of **FAITH**
is Daring in God's Mission

-Mrs. Esther Charles



Faith in God is not just a part of our Christian life; it is central to all that we do. And this faith journey for me has been amazing, adventurous, and at times terrifying, filled with obstacles. In all that, God has been faithful and good.

I had an extensive mission-field experience, learning multiple languages and traveling extensively as my father was the first missionary in the Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB). Then I got married to Rev. Stanie Charles and served as cross-cultural missionaries in India for 13 years. I later sought ministry opportunities, and in 2004-05, Dr. Lamech Inbaraj, the Director of CONS, offered a women's ministry position at Hindustan Bible Institute & College. I questioned the suitability of the position as I had no experience in office work.

My father informed me about a ministry opportunity at HBI, advising me to seek clarity from God and obey His guidance. I replied, "Dad, I don't have any idea what kind of ministry HBI is doing! I think it would be good if I gathered some more information from other sources before I made my decision." Then he immediately said, "This is God's work. Instead of asking people's opinions, you should ask God for clarity and then simply obey as He guides you. Who knows! My husband said, "I don't want to be a hindrance between God's call and your commitment. But the moment you feel you can't go on, you may resign." On August 16, 2005, I joined the HBI CONS training department as a women's coordinator.

CONS is a ministry that focuses on program mobilization and women leaders. However, the organization's vision and plan for women's ministry were not clear to the new member. I was anxious about handling the pressure and responsibility, visualizing the office setup, committee meetings, reports, and interactions with women leaders. Despite her family's daughters and health concerns, the new member struggled to navigate the new role.



Soon one morning, when all the staff members went for a short tea break, I was alone in my department office and decided to resign as I thought I was in the wrong place and won't be able to handle this. Then, suddenly, I could hear an inner voice speaking to me, saying, "I have chosen you and brought you to this place." I replied, "You are very aware of all my weaknesses and limitations, and I am afraid of communicating with others. I am so scared of crossing the road by myself. How am I going to travel alone and mobilize and organize women's conferences, training programs, writing reports, etc.? I think I am not best suited to influence and inspire other people in this ministry. So, I have decided to quit my job." And God said clearly, "I know you more than you know yourself."



At the age of 20, I promised you, from Judges 6:14-16, "Go in with this might of yours and save... do not I send you?" And the Lord said to him, "But I will be with you." Then He continued saying,

"If you have faith in Me and in My promises, then don't be reluctant to take this responsibility because I need you here." I said, "Lord, if this is what you want from me, then I have one request. I know for sure that this Esther is not fit to do anything for your mission, so please transform me completely and just 'change my life about-turn' then perhaps that Esther will be able to do something for your glory."

And as soon as I finished my humble, powerful, and life-changing prayer, the staff members returned from their break, and I felt as though I was blessed with new strength, courage, inspiration, and passion to serve God. From that moment on, I never had any negative thoughts or doubts regarding my high calling.

I started a women's envisioning program in Tamil Nadu and launched the MWCG (Mobilizing Women for Church Growth) training program in Chandrapur, Maharashtra in 2006. The program aimed to educate women to start prayer cells and cell groups, training many women believers and leaders. I traveled to different states to conduct women's programs and started the Women's TOT (Trainer of Trainees) leadership training program in different states. This training raised many women leaders to be more involved in their local churches, leading to women leading church services.

One woman trainer, Mrs. Elizabeth, mobilized a conference and invited 1057 women from Chandrapur district. We have conducted envisioning, special seminars, state conferences, women's training, TOT leadership training, and follow-up programs in different districts. **By the grace of God, we have envisioned 18,643 women in our nation, up until Bhutan and Nepal. Through this MWCG training, 3315 women were trained, and 318 women leaders were raised through the TOT leadership program in 8 states. Now we are focusing on 14 states in India.**



One step of faith is crucial but sufficient for His mission. God opened the doors and gave several opportunities to work on missions through HBI. By faith, I took my first step, and God has been faithful till this very moment. It has been a privilege to travel to different states of India and to network with various churches, organizations, denominations, and people groups to accomplish His goal. God is building His church among the people of India.

Finally, I would like to say, "Faith does not make things easy, but makes things possible." Therefore, by faith, when you look up and say, "Here I am, Lord! I am available for your service", You will be surprised to see how God will use you in His service for His glory, just the way He's using me.

Part Two: Ministry The journey was not easy, but it has been adventurous, had difficulties and challenges, and faced many obstacles.

..... **To be Continued**

Ready, Set, Rejoice

Preparing Your Heart for Christ's Arrival

-Ms. Suneera Lincy

According to the Christian liturgical calendar, Advent is the season that encompasses the four weeks leading to Christmas.

Advent is a season of joyful anticipation and spiritual preparation. It serves as a meaningful time of reflection and expectation as we prepare our hearts for the arrival of Christ. It is a unique opportunity to deepen their faith, understanding, and connection with Jesus. As we are awaiting the second coming of Christ, let's explore how we can prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival.

Meaning of Advent

The word "advent" is derived from the Latin word "adventus," which means "coming" or "arrival." It encompasses the four Sundays before the celebration of Jesus' birth. It is a time when Christians around the world reflect on the arrival of Christ in three distinct ways:

While the word "advent" may not be explicitly mentioned in the Bible, the themes and principles associated with it can be traced back to various biblical passages and stories. Let's explore some key elements of Advent rooted in Scripture:

The First Advent:

Celebrating the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, marking His arrival on Earth as a human being.



The Present Advent

Recognizing that Christ is present with us now, in our daily lives, offering guidance, comfort, and hope.

The Future Advent

Anticipating the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as described in the Bible.



- Prophecies of the Messiah - Isaiah 7:14
- Annunciation - Luke 1:26-38
- Birth of Jesus - Luke 2:11
- Proclamation of John the Baptist - Matthew 3:3

Matthew 24 and 25 are often referred to as the Olivet Discourse. In response to the disciple's questions, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age? Jesus gave a detailed explanation in Matthew 24 and 25. Just as people of faith in the past eagerly awaited the arrival of the Messiah, let us prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival in a world that often seems chaotic and uncertain.

How to Prepare for the Advent Season

Reflection and Prayer

This Advent season, let's have a time for self-reflection and increase our time for prayer, Bible reading, and attending church regularly.

Acts of Kindness

Christmas is a time of giving and sharing God's love. Let us engage in acts of kindness and service to others this Advent season. Volunteering, donating, and giving to the needy are part of sharing God's love.

Bible Study

Reading and studying the Bible helps us relate the stories and prophecies to build our lives and spiritual character. The teachings of Christ provide us insights for reflection to build our lives spiritually and be rooted in God's word.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33 (KJV)

THE HOPE

Christ is the only way for us to enter the kingdom of God. He is the hope of our salvation and a brighter future, and He is with us through all tribulations. Christ has overcome the world!

The apostle Paul beautifully encapsulates the essence of hope.

Let us learn to trust God, experience the joy and peace that faith brings, and overflow with hope as we prepare our hearts for Christ's arrival.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”
Romans 15:13 (KJV)

THE SEASON OF ADVENT IS NOT MERELY A COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS BUT A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING, AN OPPORTUNITY TO DRAW CLOSER TO JESUS, AND AN AFFIRMATION OF THE ENDURING MESSAGE THAT, IN CHRIST, THERE IS HOPE FOR THE WORLD AND FOR EVERY HEART.



The God Who Calls

-Mr. Isaac Newton

As you begin:

1) Read **Jeremiah 1:8, Exodus 3:11-12, and Matthew 28:18-20.**

- What is the common phrase in the calling of Jeremiah, Moses, and the eleven disciples?
- How do you know that God is always with you and encourages you in your calling?

Blessing

May you be sustained by the God who nourishes you. May you find new joy and understanding in His Word. May you connect deeply with him in spirit and prayer.

Rooted in the Gospel

When we wander from God and find ourselves dry, Jesus is the one who searches and seeks for the lost. The Father always receives us back with open arms through Christ, and the Spirit is always willing to restore and nourish! **Psalm 23.**

4) **The God Who Calls Us**

God has given us our limitations, our resources, our gifts, and our skills. Read **Psalm 86:10-13.**

- How is God described in these verses?
- How does the knowledge of God affect our ability to persevere in our lives?

We hope this discussion will help you to be affirmed in the ministry God has called you to!

2) **The Grace of Significance**

We have discussed the grace of acceptance and sustenance. From this come our significance and our fruitfulness. Here we will focus on significance. This is also a grace, a gift given to us by God.

- What comes to mind when you think of significance?

3) **Significance is Our Importance**

Significance is what our lives mean. Our lives point to something. Read **1 Peter 2:9.**

- How does God feel about you, according to this verse? How does this give you significance?
- What is our calling and purpose according to this verse? What do we point to?



5) Read Psalm 43:4

- a) How is God described in this verse? Why might God be described this way?
- b) Think of a time you delighted in the Lord. What characteristics of the Lord did you rejoice in? One or two people may want to share.

6) God Calls Us First to Glorify Him, and to Delight in Him

He is a God of joy and invites us to share his joy. Read **Nehemiah 8:10**. God's people had returned to their land after exile and oppression. When they heard the Scriptures, they repented and grieved for the ways they had sinned.

- a) What Does Nehemiah Say to the People?
- b) The feast and holy day reminded the people God had called them. It was God's joy in his people that gave them strength. Our church gatherings can also remind us of this beautiful truth!
- c) How does God's joy in you give you strength and significance?

7) Many leaders are tempted to find significance in other things than God

They might try to find significance in people's approval, a large church, or outward signs of success.

- a) How does God's joy in us help us to avoid these temptations?
- b) How are a leader's delight in God and sharing God's delight in his people the best gifts to those he or she leads?

Source:

This material is a section of the Timothy Leadership Training video and pdf course; if you are interested in studying this material as a group, please contact Mr. Isaac at (+91) 8438534525 or isaacbsf@gmail.com.

8) God is Glorious

This is our calling: to exalt God. So, we find our significance in pointing back to God and enjoying him. This delight in God will be the best gift to those you lead and the best gift to our neighbors who do not know God. When we know God is glorious and care about his glory, the temptations of worldly significance will fade away.

9) Planting Seeds of Practice

Before the next session, find time to be with God.

- a) When will you make time to reflect on this? Where?
- b) Share with someone in the group, and pray for each other. If you are doing this individually, ask someone to pray for you.

During your time with God

Reflect on God's calling in your life. What vision has God given you? What encouragement has he given you? How is that connected to delight?

10) Blessing

May you go in the knowledge that God delights in you. May this be a gift that overflows with joy this week. May you find his delight in your strength.

Rooted in the Gospel

We are significant to God because of his love and delight in us. Christ has completely secured God's delight. The Holy Spirit reminds us of God's delight. Out of his delight for us, we point back to him and his glory. **Isaiah 43:7**



Answers for Test Your Bible Knowledge in Pg. 6

14th-day of the 1st month | 929 chapters | His nephew | Mark | Revelation |
Half of his wealth | Bethsaida | 450 | 2 divisions and 8 sections | The Sanhedrin

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