

THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

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Coronation

Friday, December 25, is set aside for the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for the year, 1970. This day, that we recognize as Christmas, is a day of coronation which had its beginning at the inn where there was no room and during a very busy season in which no one was aware of the coming of the Christ Child. Mary was taken to the stable where the Christ Child was born.

All of the saints and Biblical characters had arranged themselves around the Christ Child because they were told of His coming by the prophet Isaiah some 400 years previously, and only the saints were aware that He was the Christ Child, since the scene of His birth was such a poor, crude setting.

The Gospel of Luke gives a better picture of most of the Christ Child's activities during the 33 years He remained in the flesh on earth because Luke was always classified as the "Great Doctor," which he emphasized in most of his writings, internal, external and spiritual. The spiritual side of the Christ Child is where we get the name "Santa Claus" which means "giving".

Many of the children of today deny that there is a Santa Claus, but still they desire to accept the gift in the spirit which we say His birth lies upon. Yes, we have many coronation festivities with symbols reigning as the Christ Child in our churches and schools. We exchange gifts with one another and with many who still do not believe that the Christ Child reigns in the souls of human beings today.

Because of the life they live, there are still many, many Christians who are serving Christ "over yonder" and can't see the Christ here within themselves and their surroundings. That is to say, "after my death, I will wear the golden slippers and walk in the streets of pearl in my long white robe where I will be with the Christ Child who was in the flesh on earth for 33 years."

The Christ Child stated at his death that he would reign again in the living flesh for all those who believe in him and for those who have served Him, have a gift of sacrifice to the poor and needy friends and loved ones from their heart, because those who believe in Him, dwell with Him and He dwells with them.

"Yea, to him that hath shall be given. Yea, to him that hath not, even that which he seemeth to have, shall be taken away and given to him that hath."

Christmas, December 25, is celebrated on the day of the week when we all come together and render praise of thanksgiving in spirit in our sanctuaries. And all of our churches should be overrun this Christmas Day, especially by those who believe in the birth of the Christ Child.

How are you going to spend this day? Where are you going to spend this day? In what name should this day be glorified to you? Will it be just another day? What seems to be so pathetic to us when we speak about the exchange of gifts in the family is that so many mothers and fathers don't know where their child is and seem to care less. Mothers often make a sacrifice of a little token of some type and saying to the child, "I do this because I know your bones, flesh and blood come from me."

I have heard many mothers say that no mother ever gave birth to a child and forgot it, regardless of her actions. In as much as Mary brought the Christ Child her son, a God in the stature of Man, therefore, I believe every parent, regardless of how poor or how sophisticated they may be, they should think enough of their own child to remind him that his blood, bones and flesh came from them and that is not enough.

Think of those whose parents have passed away and they know not where a Christmas cheer is coming from. We are sorry that we do not have the space to remind our readers of the many golden opportunities that they have in glorifying this occasional date and sharing with others in a Christ-like manner.

THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

ALL OF LIFE FOR CHRIST Beginning Where You Are

In this lesson we will be considering what it means to know and serve Christ. Here is how Rufus Jones, the great Quaker humanitarian, describes it:

"Mystical experience, we may say, is the discovery of man's own nature in its relations with the Eternal. It is not unlike what happens to us in our greatest experiences of beauty. You are in Dresden and you visit the Art Gallery. You drift into a room and find yourself standing in front of Raphael's Sistine Madonna. There comes a kind of sudden inward 'click.' You feel an electric flash. You say: 'That is the most beautiful thing I ever saw,' or, better still, you are thrown into a speechless hush, while your whole being palpitates and overbrims with joy and wonder. What has happened? Have you been so deeply moved, because you are looking at a picture worth twenty million dollars? Are you so deeply impressed because you are in front of a famous work of art about which everybody talks, and because you can write a newspaper article about it and half pay for your trip? No, that does not explain the spell. You have discovered something which fits the deepest nature in you and calls forth the right response for which you were made.

"Somewhat so in these highest mystical moments of contact with the real presence of God, there is a sense of having arrived at the goal of life. There is a flash of the invisible world breaking in which illuminates the whole meaning of life. You are aware of being visited at home by the long sought Guest rather than of having gone to some foreign region. The empty frame of life has been filled with the picture that fits it. This humble human life of ours has come upon the shore of its own true mother sea. We come back to the same world, the old-time tasks, the same scenery and circumstance. Nothing in the landscape has changed, and yet everything is different. The new acquisition is not an accumulated stock of ideas, not a logical proof which can be transmitted in words. It is rather an intensified conviction of the reality of God, a deepened faith which underlies all one's activities, a peace and serenity in the midst of the difficulties and even the frustrations that beset us, and a radiant spirit of adventure."

Searching The Scriptures

The Scripture for this lesson is Philippians 3. Selected verses are printed below.

Philippians 3:7-18

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of

Christ. 8 Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith; 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Memory Selection: God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and selfcontrol. —2 Timothy 1:7

Exploring The Questions

Our task in this lesson is to examine some very closely reasoned material written by Paul. Paul covers a lot of ground in the few verses under consideration, so we could spend all our time examining the meaning behind each phrase. Space does not permit this, so let me recommend The Interpreter's Bible, Volume 11, pages 77-92, for further study. Many of you will find this book already available in your church library or your pastor's study.

We need to see this passage from Philippians in its context. These few verses are not a theological treatise; they are part of a spiritual diary or testimony. Read the whole letter as you study this lesson. Paul is sharing the meaning of Christ as it has come about through his life experiences. Think back on what you remember of Paul's life as a Jew so that you can understand the passion with which he writes about his new beliefs and his new way of life.

To interpret much of Paul's writing, we must learn what he means when he uses certain words and imagery. In this lesson we will need to explore what he means by knowing Christ (verse 8) and what he intends when he uses the word righteousness (verse 9). We will also

explore possible influences of the mystery religions on Paul's thinking in this chapter. We are influenced by the ideas current in our day; we can assume that Paul, too, was alive to the thinking and the happenings of his times.

Perhaps most important, however, is Paul's unique interpretation of the life and death and, especially, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He only mentions it in this passage, but we must remember that the Resurrection is the cornerstone of Paul's faith. Therefore, you will need to study additional source material on verses 10 and 11.

The modern understanding of this passage will lead us to explore what it means for us to know Christ in our lives in our times. This is a highly individual matter, so what we shall hope to do is explore what this has meant in some individual lives. We have already heard from Rufus Jones, the great Quaker. His life is explored in Chapter 3 of In Faith and Love, a unit in the series called Foundation Studies in Christian Faith. Someone in your church should have a copy you can borrow. Other chapters will also be useful.

Finding Help

With Your Questions

Paul's Letter to the Philippians is one of the letters he wrote from prison. Though there is some disagreement, most scholars believe that these prison letters were written from Rome during Paul's two-year imprisonment mentioned in Acts 28:30-31.

Paul was writing this letter because Epaphroditus, who had come from the church at Philippi with a gift for Paul, was returning home. So this is Paul's thank-you note. But Paul also took this opportunity to explain his joy and thankfulness in Christ, even though he was in prison and in danger of death.

A New Starting Point

The Scripture for this lesson drops in on the middle of a thought, so let us go back to the beginning of the chapter. Paul was once again reviewing his blameless life as a Jew in order to make a resounding contrast. As a Christian he had come to see that all the accomplishments on which he had once prided himself were worthless.

Let us think for a moment how radical a statement Paul was making. Have you ever given yourself to a cause, heart and soul, only to see it turn to ashes? Paul was a religious fanatic; his aim was to fulfill the letter of the law. Then suddenly he realized it was all for nothing.

What happened to Paul? We

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