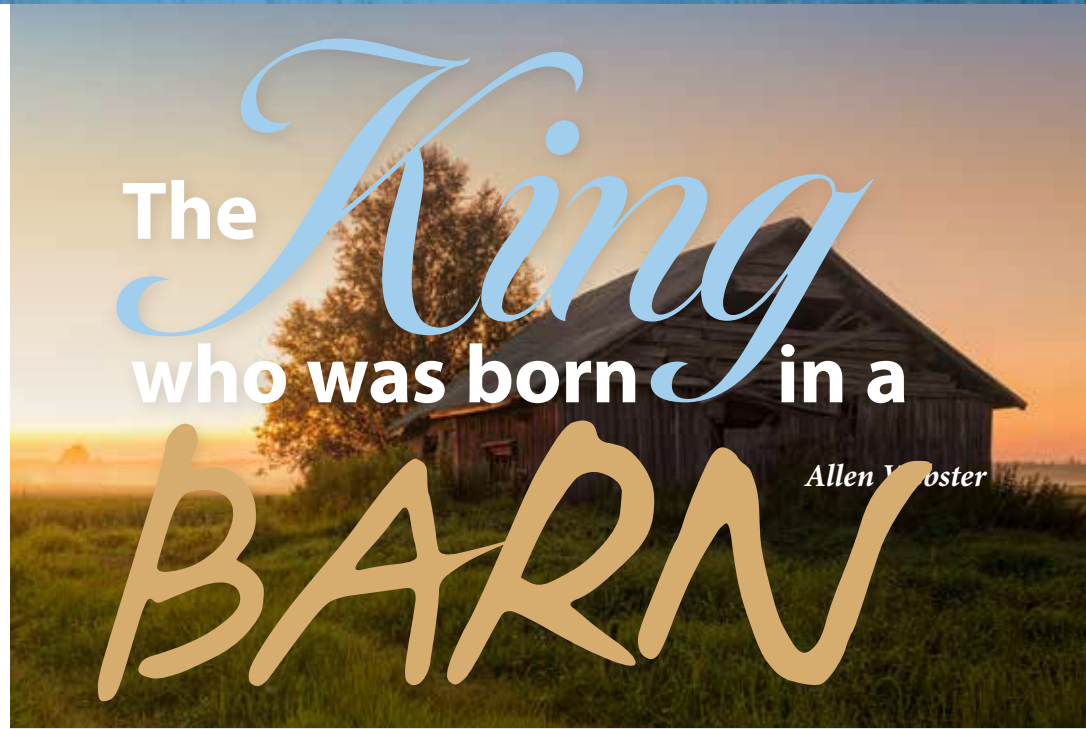


HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 28 NUMBER 3



The King who was born in a

BARN

Allen Webster

Jehovah had four thousand years to plan His Son's entrance into the world. He set the world stage for His arrival (Daniel 2:44; Galatians 4:4). He chose Jesus' race (seed of Abraham), nationality (Israelite), and ancestors (e.g., King David) (Matthew 1:1). He chose the mother (Mary) and birthplace (Bethlehem Ephrathah) (Luke 1:26-27; Micah 5:2). He even planned His first trip (into Egypt) (Matthew 2:13-15).

Yet He chose a humble stable for the birth.

Jesus' Father is not limited by poverty, power, or circumstances. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10-12), even the whole earth and fullness thereof (Psalm 24:1). He is wise and omniscient (1 Timothy 1:17), and thus incapable of forgetting something. He is omnipotent (Genesis 18:13). He could have arranged for Jesus to have the best doctor, medical staff, nurses, and birthing suite the world had to offer.

Yet He did not arrange to have even a midwife present.

Jesus certainly deserved the best (Colossians 1:18). From our perspective, with our salvation at stake, we would have taken no chances of complications, infection, or debilitating disease.

Yet King Jesus was born in a barn.

Who could have predicted that? What words could explain it? While on the surface it may seem that Jesus' birth was a haphazard affair, a closer look shows how meticulously God had thought everything through.

THE LAMB OF GOD WAS BORN IN A BARN

How appropriate that "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) should be born in a barn. Who knows how many ewes had given birth to lambs in the very barn where Jesus was born? This city had been in existence since at least the time of Rachel (Genesis 35:19) and occupied by shepherds for more than a thousand years—since before the time of David (1 Samuel 16). Yet

never had a lamb such as Jesus been seen in this place.

Isaac's question, "Where is the lamb?" (Genesis 22:7-8) had been echoing through the centuries as humanity looked for its Savior. Isaiah had prophesied of the Lamb, further heightening expectations. In His mind, God knew He would have to slay this precious Lamb since before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20), but now the fulfillment was beginning.

How did Jesus come to be born in a barn? It was no more common for a mother to give birth in a barn then than it is now. It happened, no doubt, because God wanted it that way. Throughout the Roman Empire at that time, people were commanded to register for taxation. Among the Jews, this meant a return to their ancestral lands and original tribes (Luke 2:1-3). So thousands of Jews were traveling, and those of David's family were all heading to Bethlehem.

It is likely that Joseph walked, while Mary, being nine months pregnant, rode sidesaddle on a donkey. Since Mary was "great with child" (Luke 2:5) she and Joseph traveled slowly. She must have felt every jolt, rut, and rock. Under normal circumstances, this would have been a fairly difficult three-day journey of about eighty-five miles, but under these circumstances, it may have taken five or six days.

So it makes sense that by the time they arrived, the small hamlet of Bethlehem was overrun and all rooms taken. We can hear Joseph being told, "All we have left is a space where the animals stay." Perhaps

Joseph looked over at Mary, who grimaced as she fought a contraction. "We will take it," he said without hesitation.

No kind gentleman intervened and said, "You can have my space. You certainly need it more than I do." Imagine if one of David's daughters had been about to give birth. Would she have been sent out to the barn? Yet this daughter of David had no friend to help her in distress. Nonetheless, it must have been a relief for Mary to rest, finally, after her journey.

The gospel accounts do not say if there were animals there, although in that society animals were never far away. While we generally say that Jesus was born in a barn, the Bible does not specify if the manger was in a stable, barn, or cave. At any rate, it seems that Jesus was born in a cattle stall. Imagine it:

- How did it smell?
- What sounds were filling Mary's ears as she had Jesus?
- How comfortable was it with no bed, couch, table, or chair?
- How private was it with all those visitors milling about?
- How sanitary was it with all the refuse and flies that normally are found in such a place? (Adapted from Ken Gire *Moments with the Savior*.)

To say the least, it was a disquieting place for a woman in childbirth. But Mary and Joseph made it work. Perhaps they hung a curtain over the doorway and tethered their animal outside to block passage, thus gaining some privacy.

Why would God orchestrate such a plan as this? Jesus' birth in a stable shows His humiliation (cf. Acts 8:33). He laid aside His glory and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7-8). Isaiah prophesied that He would be "as a root out of dry ground" without "form or comeliness" (Isaiah 53:2-3).

The manger and the cross are matching bookends to Jesus' earthly life. Would it have been fitting that the Man who was to die naked on the cross be born in a palace? Would it have been appropriate that the One to be buried in a borrowed tomb should begin anywhere but a borrowed barn?

This illustrated that He was not the kind of King who would exclude the humble, poor, and outcasts (Matthew 11:5; 19:21; 26:9, 11). Great commanders have won their soldiers' allegiance by sleeping in the field with them and eating the same food. Jesus did this. Common people sensed that He would not be a tyrant like Herod or Caesar.

Jesus was born in a barn so He would remember the poor. He shunned worldly glory in His teaching as well. His humble birth in a barn shows the humility of the Lamb of God.

THE ETERNAL WORD HAD A BIRTHDAY

How does the One "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2) have a beginning? The birth of an eternal God is unfathomable . . . the incarnation, indescribable (John 1:14). From one perspective, Jesus' birth was like that of other babies. Yet from the larger perspective, God stepped into the world He made.

His presence causes us to ponder deeper questions:

- How can One who fills earth be an infant not a span long?
- How can the Maker of humans be made inside a human—the Creator created in the womb of a young Jewish woman?
- How can God become man?
- How can the Omnipotent One be umbilically tied to a Jewish girl?
- How can the sustainer of life nurse at a maiden's breast?
- How can eyes that once moved to and fro throughout the whole earth now struggle to see across the room?
- How can hands that sculpted the Hi-



malayas, the Alps, and the Appalachians cling to Mary's finger? (Gire.)

Jesus' humble birth makes us feel grateful (2 Corinthians 9:15).

JESUS, VISITING FROM HEAVEN, ARRIVED WHEN HIS PARENTS WERE AWAY FROM HOME

Jesus' parents were away from home when the time came for Him to be born. They had family members living in Bethlehem—in fact, everyone there at the time was somehow related to them—yet no kinsman was willing to take them in. Jesus, recently arrived from heaven, had to stay in a barn (Philippians 2:5–11; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

This inn was not necessarily like our hotels. "Inn" here simply implies a stopping place for travelers. A typical Eastern "caravansary" was a walled-in area with a well where travelers could camp. A larger Palestinian inn, which this seems to have been, had small rooms surrounding the court or a two-story structure overlooking it. In those, people could rent a room (cf. Luke 10:34; 22:11) and put their animals underneath or nearby.

Being born away from home, Jesus showed He came into the world as a pilgrim. During His personal ministry, Jesus said that "the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:58). Jesus taught that we are only sojourners. This world is not our home; we are just passing through (Hebrews 13:14). We are on a lifelong journey. Each night we pitch our tents one day's journey closer to home.

As the caravansary was free for travelers, so Jesus welcomes without price those who come (Isaiah 55:1). Salvation is free—a gift (Romans 6:23).

Jesus gives us Someone to follow.

THE ETERNAL WORD WAS SPEECHLESS

The divine Word was reduced to a few unintelligible sounds. How did the One who knew all words and languages not speak any of them?

Omnipotence became vulnerable. He was at the mercy of mortals to feed Him, to protect Him, to raise Him.

Jesus being willing to pay such a price gives us something for which to be grateful (2 Corinthians 9:15).

THE BREAD OF LIFE WAS PLACED IN A FEEDING TROUGH

Moses was placed in an ark of bulrushes; Jesus was placed in a cow's manger (a feeding trough made of wood or stone).

This would have been the safest place to put a baby in a barn. It would prevent an animal from stepping on Him; it was perhaps the cleanest place; it would have prevented Him from falling.

How appropriate that the bread of life (John 6:35) would be laid in a feeding trough. All of humanity is invited to eat from this manger (John 6:33–58). Jesus fills man's hunger for truth, salvation, meaning, and hope. Also, as the water of life (John 7:37), Jesus satisfies both our hunger and thirst (John 4:13–14). He gives both sustenance and refreshment.

To find satisfaction, we must "eat" and "drink." There are two appetites competing for our attention. John 6:27 indicates that there are two kinds of "food," one that perishes and another that endures. The food we eat quickly perishes, even with the benefit of preservatives. It fails to satisfy for long; soon we are hungry and thirsty again (cf. John 4:13).

DESTINED TO BE WOUND IN GRAVE CLOTHES AT DEATH, JESUS WAS WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHS AT BIRTH

The phrase "wrapped in swaddling cloths" comes from a base word that means to rend or tear, and points to the practice of wrapping newborns in bandages to keep them warm, to protect them, and to hold their legs and arms still (cf. Ezekiel 16:4; Job 38:9).

At the beginning of His life, as at the end (John 19:40), His body was wrapped in rags. He wore neither for very long. He came out of the tomb early on Sunday morning, leaving those strips as evidence of the resurrection (John 20:5–7).

Jesus was born to die. The shadow of the cross stretched all the way back to that manger.

There was no room for Him at the inn; He had to be born in a stable and cradled in a manger, yet angels proclaimed His birth from the sky. The King who was born in a barn went on to rule the world.



Think First

Perhaps some of us often speak before we think. Once we do, we may be sorry for what we said, but it is too late. We may say we are sorry, and the person to whom we spoke may be receptive to our apology. Still, it was said, and it could cause hurt feelings and damage. There are five things to consider when and before we speak.

1. Be careful to whom you speak.
2. Be careful of whom you speak.
3. Be careful how you speak.
4. Be careful when you speak.
5. Be careful where you speak.

—North Macon (GA) Messenger

"He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit."

1 PETER 3:10

God's Plan **for Saving Man**

Divine Love: John 3:16

God's Grace: Ephesians 2:8

Christ's Blood: Romans 5:9

Holy Spirit's Word: 1 Corinthians 2:12–13

Sinner's Faith: Acts 16:31

Sinner's Repentance: Luke 13:3

Sinner's Confession: Romans 10:10

Sinner's Baptism: Acts 22:16

Christian's Love: Matthew 22:37

Christian's Work: James 2:24

Christian's Hope: Romans 8:24

Christian's Endurance: Revelation 2:10

He Knew It

A little boy had learned the verse, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me.” He stood on a platform and began. “Suffer”—it was his first attempt at speaking in public. He was frightened and stopped for a moment. Then he began again. “Suffer little”—again his fear overcame him. But being determined, he made a third attempt, and said, “Suffer little children.” With a last grand effort, he said, not exactly the verse, but these words, “Jesus wants us all to come to Him; and don’t anybody try to stop us.” —*Author Unknown*

“Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 19:14



Most Important

“For a parent to require a child to wash his face and keep his body clean, and not require him to learn and obey the Bible, is to teach him that the body is worth more than the soul. . . . For a parent to require a child to learn spelling and reading and not require him to study the Bible is to teach him that it is much more important to be qualified to live in this world than to be fitted to live in Heaven.”—*David Lipscomb*

“Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

EPHESIANS 6:4



To watch videos, read articles, answer Bible questions and more, go to housetohouse.com



Where Is Happiness?

Not in unbelief: Voltaire was a representative infidel. He wrote, “I wish I had never been born.”

Not in pleasure: Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote, “The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone.”

Not in money: Jay Gould, American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying he said, “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.”

Not in position or fame: Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote, “Youth is a mistake, manhood, a struggle, old age, a regret.”

Not in military glory: Alexander the Great conquered the known world. Having done so, he wept in his tent, because, he said, “There are no more worlds to conquer.”

Where is happiness found? The answer is simple: In Christ alone. He said, “I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:22).

A Week of Good Thoughts

Monday: Look for a smile today and return it with one of your own. Give someone faith and hope; it is a beautiful loan.

Tuesday: Gather a thought that is kind, one that is sincere and deep. Be sure to pass it along, for such are too precious to keep.

Wednesday: Forget yesterday’s sorrows, mistakes, sadness, and pain. Lift your heart with hope as flowers to sun and rain.

Thursday: Offer a word of comfort and prayer to help someone in need. A thoughtful little gift, some flowers, or a smile make us all rich indeed.

Friday: You shall not pass this way again, so do any good you can do. Do not put it off till tomorrow, or the chance may be lost for you.

Saturday: Today will soon be a memory, so do not let it come to an end without a smile, a song, or just a word to a friend.

Sunday: Do not let worry and care depress you or brush your joy away, but arise and give thanks to God above for His love and another “Blest Day.” —*Anonymous*

Just for Fun 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

WORD SEARCH

Find the blue words.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Z M E G W E V E R Y T H I N G L Y
 G F W E G O D O U A A B S U Y S C
 V W I T H O U T C E A S I N G O Z
 P T M T H A N K S H F W Z S X Q U
 L R R T H E S S A L O N I A N S P
 A O A E Q F M D F A N X T L Q T C
 L T G Y J H H E C J R J B H L R H
 W W E V V O V U W V E G H W T H R
 A A P N P I I Z D C K S Q T S R I
 Y I U D G N A C T T K Y U W P Y S
 S N N M N D Z D E J L D N S Q S T

How Well Do You Know the Judge?

Over the years I have heard individuals who were in legal trouble make a statement such as “I hope I get Judge _____. I understand he/she is a lenient judge.” If we were in legal trouble, we would want the best defense lawyer that we could get. We would also want to know as much about the judge as possible to perhaps get a more favorable ruling.

We all face a certain and real judgment (Hebrews 9:27). This will be the most important of all trials, for it involves our eternal souls (2 Corinthians 5:10). There are some things that we know about the Judge, and this should help us to prepare to stand before Him.

1. He is just and all-knowing (Revelation 15:3; Proverbs 15:3). There will be no hiding the truth from Him.

2. He will judge by an absolute standard (John 12:48). The standard is His Word.
3. Each one will be judged by his deeds (2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:12).
4. Extenuating circumstances will not be allowed as a defense (Matthew 7:21–23).
5. His judgment will be final. There will be no appeal (Luke 16:19–26).

We know about the judge, and we had better be prepared. —Harry Goff, Macon, Georgia



Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

COMING
SOON

Bible Quiz

VOLUME 28:3

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark. We will grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark “[Coming Soon]” as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
Address: _____
City/State: _____
Phone: _____

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 28:1 Questions from Jesus’ Next-to-Last Sermon (Matthew 23): 1. 8, 7, 5, 2, 2; 2. Scribes, Pharisees (23:2); 3. They say and do not (23:3); 4. Do as they do (23:3); 5. Too hard (23:4); 6. Rabbi (23:7); 7. Rabbi, Father, teachers (23:8–10); 8. Servant (23:11); 9. One who exalts himself (23:12); 10. One who humbles himself (23:12); 11. Widows (23:14); 12. Justice, mercy, faith (23:23); 13. No. He says, “these you ought to have done” (23:23); 14. Hypocrisy and lawlessness (23:28); 15. Abel, Zechariah (23:35); 16. Between the altar and the temple (23:35); 17. Hen, wings (23:37); 18. Jerusalem (23:37).

V. 28:2 Starts with the Letter “U”: 1. Upharsin (Daniel 5:25); 2. Ur (Genesis 11:31); 3. Uriah (2 Samuel 11:3); 4. Urijah (2 Kings 16:10–16); 5. Urim (Exodus 28:30).

Starts with the Letter “V”: 1. Vashti (Esther 1:9–22); 2. Veil (Luke 23:45); 3. Vengeance (Romans 12:19); 4. Victory (1 John 5:4); 5. Vine (John 15:1); 6. Viper (Acts 28:3); 7. Virgin (Matthew 1:23); 8. Virtue (2 Peter 1:5); 9. Vagabond (Genesis 4:14); 10. Valley (Psalm 23:4); 11. Vapor (James 4:14); 12. Visit (James 1:27).

Spies, Lies, and a River Crossing

Directions: Find answers in Joshua 1–3. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

1. How many men were sent to spy on Jericho? (2:1) _____
2. Where did they lodge in Jericho? (2:1) _____
3. Was their purpose discovered by those in Jericho? (2:2) _____
4. How did the men escape detection? (2:4–6) _____
5. What sin did Rahab commit in this chapter? (2:4–5) (Hint: not harlotry) _____
6. What request did Rahab make of the spies? (2:12–13) _____
7. How did Rahab come to believe in God? (2:9–10) _____
8. Whom did Rahab request be saved with her? (2:13) _____
9. The spies agreed based on what stipulation? (2:14) _____
10. How did the spies escape the city? (2:15) _____
11. How would Rahab’s house be identified in the attack? (2:17–18) _____
12. How long did the spies hide in the mountains? (2:22) _____
13. Where did Israel camp east of the Jordan? (3:1) _____
14. Who led Israel’s procession across the Jordan? (3:3) _____
15. What did they carry? (3:3) _____
16. How much space was between these leaders and the people? (3:4) _____
17. What two things were the people to do in preparation for crossing the Jordan? (1:11; 3:5) _____
18. What time of year did the Jordan overflow its banks? (3:15) _____
19. What cities/places are mentioned as associated with the crossing? (3:16) _____
20. Who were the last ones to come up out of the Jordan? (3:17) _____



The Bible's Measurements: 3 x 15 x 4 x 4

The Bible covers three major epochs (large time frames, sometimes referred to as dispensations) of God's dealings with mankind.

- A. The Patriarchal Age, in which the fathers (patriarchs) of families ruled (from Adam to Moses).
- B. The Jewish Age, in which the Law of Moses governed the Hebrew/Israelite/Jewish people (from Moses to the death of Christ).
- C. The Christian Age, in which the New Testament sets forth the will of God for all mankind (from the day of Pentecost [Acts 2] until the end of the world). Thus, the Christian Age is spoken of as "these last days" (see Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Bible covers fifteen periods (smaller time frames) of God's dealings with mankind: from the Antediluvian (Pre-Flood) period (from the creation to the worldwide flood) all the way to the Early Church period (from the establishment of the church in Acts 2 to the close of the New Testament).

In reading the Bible, it is important to know in which of the above epochs (dispensations) and time periods one is reading.

The Old Testament consists of four major sections:

- A. Law (5 books: Genesis–Deuteronomy)
- B. History (12 books: Joshua–Esther)
- C. Wisdom Literature/Poetry (5 books: Job–Song of Solomon)
- D. Prophecy (17 books: Isaiah–Malachi)

The New Testament consists of four major sections:

- A. Life of Christ (4 books: Matthew–John)
- B. History of the Early Church (1 book: Acts of the Apostles)
- C. Letters to Christians (21 books: Romans–Jude)
- D. Prophecy/The Ultimate Victory of God's People (1 book: Revelation)

The Bible is not a self-help book designed to make its readers healthy, wealthy, happy, or successful (though

within its overarching purpose there are broad principles that contribute to these matters). It is not a book of "codes" and "prophecies" as to when the second coming of Christ will occur and the world will end. Neither is the Bible a disjointed book of disconnected and unrelated documents.

Rather, it is a book that gradually and systematically, from beginning to end, sets forth God's grand scheme of human redemption from the time of its conception in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (Titus 1:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:8-11; Romans 16:25-27), through its being made known by Christ, the gospel, the church, and the New Testament (Ephesians 3:1-12; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13), to its ultimate fruition as the redeemed of heaven receive "the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:9). —Hugh Fulford

"Blessed is he who reads."

REVELATION 1:3

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.

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Phone: _____ Email: _____

Prayer requests or comments: _____

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New Tracts!

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2nd Time-Around Dating



The Positive Power of Negative Preaching



Why Should I Study a Book of Jewish Mythology?



Don't Give Up... Don't Ever Give Up



How to Be a Leader in the Church



That Was a Great Sermon on Patience



Who Was Jesus' Grandfather?

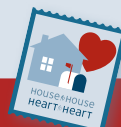


Boot Camp For Christian Soldiers



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VOLUME 28:3





GENESIS 1:3

Then God said, "Let there be light";
and there was light.

PSALM 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

MATTHEW 5:14-16

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

JOHN 8:12

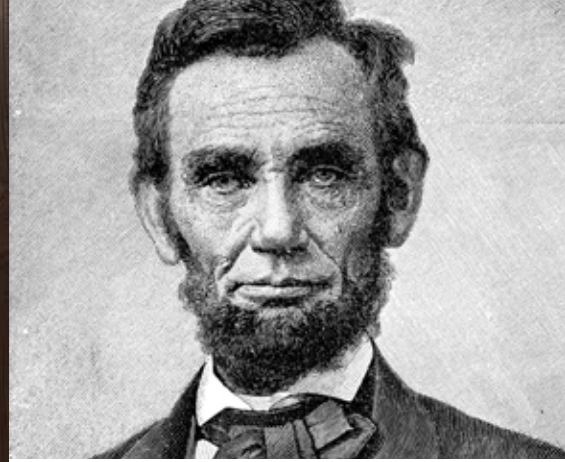
"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

EPHESIANS 5:8

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

1 JOHN 1:5-7

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."



Precious Blood

There is a little piece of silk in the museum of Springfield, Illinois, which could not be bought for any amount of money.

That little bit of silk is covered with blood. It was once a part of a dress worn by a beautiful girl who sat by Abraham Lincoln when he was shot. It was that beautiful girl who took his head in her lap, as a mother would receive the head of a baby, as she held him while he bled his life out.

The State of Illinois purchased the dress and cut out this piece of silk covered with the blood of the great statesman, emancipator of an enslaved race, and inspirer of his nation.

If a state would do that for the blood of a man, what should the world do for the blood of Jesus with all its emancipating power and all its cohesiveness for a scattered race? For, if the race of man, without regard to nationality or color or condition of life, is ever to be united and held, it will be by the cohesiveness of that blood. —F. E. Marsh

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

EPHESIANS 1:7





What Then?

A young boy and an old man talked one day.

Said the boy, "I think I'll go away. I don't know just when."

The man listened, asked, "What then?"

"I guess I'll have some fun in town The first few years . . . then settle down And get a job and earn a lot."

The man smiled and asked, "Then what?"

"Then I'll meet the girl of my dreams, Whose folks have money; then it seems I'll buy a home with everything new." The man said, "Then what will you do?"

"I guess I'll invest in bonds and stocks; That's where opportunity knocks. Maybe by that time I'll be governor." The old man asked, "And, what more?"

"I guess I'll retire, if I please, And travel and live a life of ease." The old man scratched his head; "Then what will you do?" he said.

For a moment the lad made no reply. He answered slowly, "I guess I'll die." A deep silence followed as they thought. Then the old man asked softly, "My boy, then what?" —Bulletin Digest

"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this. . ."

HEBREWS 9:27



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Is Being a
**Good
Person**
Enough?

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