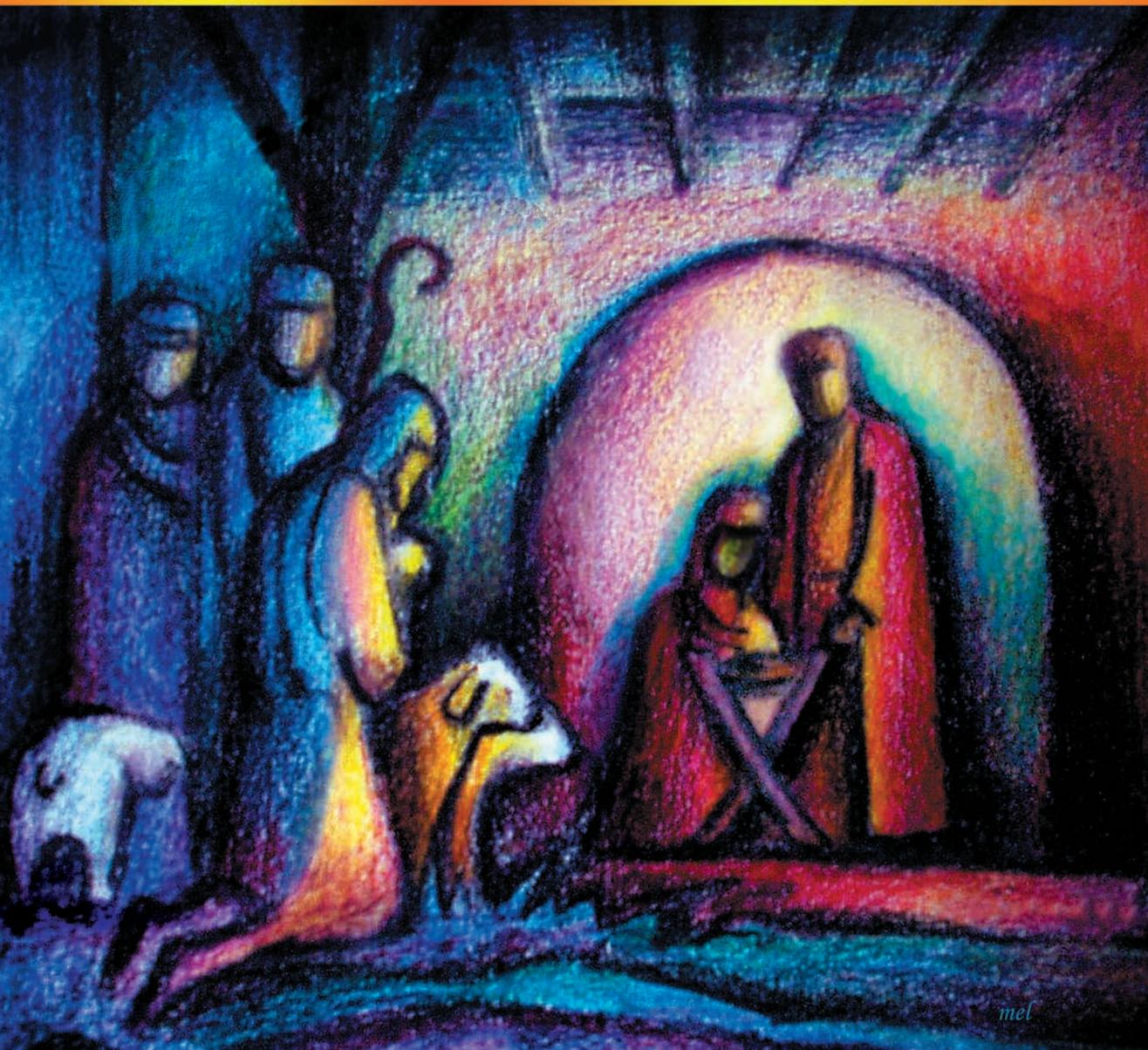
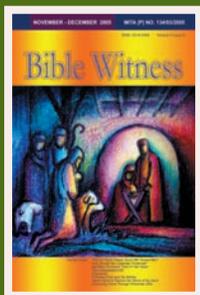


# Bible Witness



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Articles Inside: "And On Earth Peace, Good Will Toward Men"  
How Should We Celebrate Christmas?  
But Mary Pondered Them In Her Heart  
The Unspeakable Gift  
Emmanuel  
A Perfect Child and His Mother  
Jesus Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil  
Honouring Christ Through Christmas Gifts



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# "And On Earth Peace, Good Will Toward Men"

Timothy Tow

The birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, by the virgin Mary in a manger was celebrated by the announcement of an angel and a big choir of heavenly host praising God in the Highest. So we hold special praise services during Christmas to commemorate His first coming.

To further celebrate this event, the angel extended the message of goodwill to the whole world, "And on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Because the Saviour had now come, God the Father was so happy that He proclaimed an amnesty to us, sinners, that if we turn to Him, He would forgive all our sins and receive us back to Himself.

Christmas is "Glory to God." Christmas is "Good will toward men." When Christmas comes round once a year, the whole world rejoices and the amnesty offer is extended once again to those who have never heard of the Saviour. How can we extend the glad message of

salvation to those who have never heard it? One very convenient way is through members of our church; if only you would bring a new friend, yea, even a member of your extended family, to our Christmas Service.

When you bring your friends to church for the Christmas praise service, tell them that Christmas is the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was born of the

virgin Mary in a manger in the Holy Land; God's Son becoming man that He might suffer for our sins. He was crucified and buried. On the third day, He rose again that we believing in Him would not die but live forever and ever. This is the everlasting life we, Christians, have found, and so we celebrate His miraculous birth. If you believe in Him, you will receive that everlasting life. Don't you feel that heavenly touch by the singing of the carols?



Many years ago, the towkay of Yick Woh Watch Company in North Bridge Road came to join our church. How he became a Christian was through the singing of carols one Christmas Eve. A group of carol singers sang so sweetly outside his shophouse that he felt the angels were singing to him. He received Jesus into his heart and was saved.

The world celebrates Christmas, not worshipfully for the birth of Jesus Christ, but by making merry and getting drunk for their own enjoyment. In their hearts, however, there is sorrow and sadness, fear and frustration. Christians, in many parts of the world, are praying in fear of terrorists' attacks. The world situation is getting from bad to worse, not to talk of international relations. There is no peace in this world outside Jesus Christ, even between two most intimate persons, husband and wife, mother and son.

A Singapore couple migrated to Perth, but a new country did not hold them together. The marriage of the couple almost went on the rocks. Fortunately, husband and wife repented and returned to the Lord Jesus Christ and so their marriage was saved. The husband said to me, "Today, you see couples going in and out. They appear happy outwardly, but most of them are on the point of breaking down." Is that the situation with you? Especially when familiarity breeds contempt. You need to hear Paul's triple admonition, "Husbands, love your wives" to revive your marriage. The love and peace of Jesus Christ can heal your virtually broken down

marriage. Will you make peace with each other and for Jesus' sake? There is no peace between husband and wife; there is no peace between mother and son! An old lady complained to me of the lack of filial piety towards her after her son got married. He used to support her with \$300 a month, but after marriage he reduced it to \$200 though his combined salary with his wife was about \$7,000. Here is a lesson to sons. Giving support to your aged parent or parents is part of Jesus' teaching. Giving support to our aged parents must be done willingly and lovingly. Otherwise, Confucius observed, it is no better than taking care of dogs and horses. This Christmas, let unfilial sons and daughters search their hearts and return as loving children to gladden their parents' hearts. Let the peace and goodwill of your Saviour reign in your hearts.

"On earth peace, good will toward men," is offered to the church. How many churches are split? If we submit to the Lordship of our Saviour and realise how many times seventy-seven He has forgiven us, we will have no recourse but to forgive one another.

"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men." This timely Christmas offer to a warring world will not be heeded. If a nuclear war breaks out, nobody has the power to restrain it from spreading. But Christians are for peace and we must not cease from praying for God's peace and goodwill offer to all mankind. ■

# How should We Celebrate Christmas?

Timothy Tow

"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" (John 3:16).

Walk down Orchard Road today and ask ten passers-by: what is Christmas? Not one in five would be able to give you the right answer.

## First of All, Christmas is Not Santa Claus

This is what I heard on the Rediffusion many years ago. Two Teochew businessmen, in their discussion, concluded Christmas was the birthday of Santa Claus, founder of departmental stores. Why? Because every departmental store displayed a figure of Santa Claus at the doorway.

Christmas is not the birth of Santa nor any human sage or saviour. It is the birthday of Jesus Christ; the Son of God, came down to earth, to be born of the virgin Mary. That is God's plan of salvation, good tidings of great joy, offered to a lost mankind. Whosoever believes in Him, his sins are forgiven and he shall have life everlasting. Only Jesus can do this because He is the virgin born, God who became man. The heads of all other religions are mere men; so when they die, they are gone. None ever claimed to be the Saviour. But

Jesus, being the God-Man, lives forever. So only He can save us.

My readers, have you received the Lord Jesus Christ into your heart? May you do so today, if you have not, and may God bless you with the peace and joy of salvation.

## Secondly, Christmas is Not Commercialism

Why are business houses so charmingly decorated even weeks before Christmas? It is for your pocket! Taking advantage of the season, they go all out to lure you to buy their goods. So, some Christians take a negative attitude against Christmas and ban any Christmas celebration in their church. But we must take a positive attitude. We counter commercialism with evangelism. Evangelism is the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Let every pastor preach the word of salvation and let every church member do his or her part to bring in their unsaved loved ones and friends to hear the Word. May you bring your unsaved father and mother, uncles and aunts, and your best friend to your church Christmas Service.

Let members of the church make every effort to go out to speak at homes or mission stations, even to those in neighbouring countries. Let

us take advantage of every open door of opportunity to make Christ known.

### **Thirdly, Christmas is Not Merrymaking and Getting Drunk**

Merrymaking, however, is mentioned in Luke 15 when the father said concerning the prodigal son, "And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry" (Luke 15:23). Our merrymaking is rather a joyous celebration. It is the true Christmas spirit with the angel announcing the Saviour's birth, "I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10).

In such celebration, we eat a good meal with our family and friends, but we must not lack one thing. Jesus says, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:12-14). For Christmas, we therefore give a portion of our offerings to the sick and needy members of the church and even to brothers and sisters beyond our church who deserve our help.

### **Last But Not Least, Christmas is Not Giving Gifts to Loved Ones and Friends Only, But Rather Giving Ourselves Anew to God**

This leads us to worship. Worship is the mother of all virtues, says

Augustine. What is Christmas without worship?

Worship includes praise and thanksgiving. All the carols we sing to praise His Name are part of our worship. Now when we praise the Lord, He blesses our hearts with peace. He takes away our sins and our many burdens. We have not a merry Christmas which is of the world but rather a joyous Christmas that is of the heavenlies.

Without thanksgiving, worship is not complete. Exodus 23:15 says, "And none shall appear before me empty." The offering of gold, frankincense and myrrh by the wise men is patterned for our thanksgiving at Christmas. In Chinese terms, it is presenting a big *ang pow*, shark's fin and bird's nest, very costly items of food which only the rich can afford. These costly gifts become provision for the holy family to use on their long journey to Egypt. In Jesus' name, let us not give haphazardly, but rather worshipfully to our Saviour. These gifts are then used where the need is greatest in the extension of His Kingdom.

Christmas, the coming of the newborn Saviour, is above all the annual amnesty offer of the Father Almighty to a lost mankind. "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" (John 3:16). The most important celebration of all is that if you have accepted the newborn Saviour, you are on the way to heaven. Amen. ■

# But Mary Pondered Them In Her Heart

Timothy Tow

When I was a boy, I sometimes wondered at the thrill that came upon the shepherds when the angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced to them the birth of the Saviour. My boyish wish seemed to come true when Ivy, little Jemima and I spent six months in the Holy Land, staying in Bethlehem, 1969-70.

Now as it neared Christmas, the Holy Land Mission of The Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions planned a Christmas Eve Service to be held at the Shepherd's Field. As I was a short-term missionary of The Independent Board, they invited me to speak on this most precious occasion. Since I came from the Far East, I qualified myself as the fourth wise man!

To get the feel of the venue, I visited a portion of the ancient Shepherd's Field at the approximate spot where the angel appeared to the shepherds. It was a cold wintry night with an almost full moon in a blue sky, but the wind brought me shudders. That led me to think of the sufferings the baby Jesus went through, for He was born in an open stable, exposed to the wintry blast. And as I thought

of the virgin mother caressing her Precious One as He cried in the cold, the Lord gave me these words, titled "Winter Moon" (sung to the tune of White Christmas).

*Now as the winter moon sinks low,  
And the poor shepherds all are gone,  
There remains in the manger stable  
The virgin mother seated all alone.  
Now as she caresses her child  
Under the flickering candle light,  
O the thought that God's Son is born!  
Sweeps o'er her soul this  
first Christmas night.*

*Thus Mary ponders in her heart,  
While the winds howl over the sky,  
And the cows low and asses bray,*



*And baby Jesus wakes  
and starts to cry.*

*Again she caresses her child  
Under the flickering candle light,  
O the thought that He's born to die!  
Sweeps o'er her soul this  
first Christmas night.*

These lines reflect Luke 2:19, "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." While the shepherds found their Child-Saviour as told by the angel and praised God exuberantly to the people they met, Mary pondered alone in the stable over the deep thoughts that flooded her soul.

First is the virgin birth of our Lord. This was announced to her by the angel Gabriel, and now it has come to pass. The Son of God has become the Son of Man. Jesus, who is the immaculate Son of God, must live a perfectly sinless life in active obedience to the Father – to save us by His life. For, none of us can do one bit of it. He is able because He is born of the virgin.

But, the highest of the Anglican clergy, almost all of them, deny our Lord's virgin birth. The Bishop of Durham denied this very thing over the BBC. But he was not alone in this. At a congress of the fifty English bishops, forty-five of them supported the apostate bishop. If you reject Christ's virgin birth, you will die in your sins. But we, who are saved and bow our knees to the newborn King, receive the mystery of the virgin birth in awe and in joy. We sing the age-old Gospel-saturated carols, and how they bless our hearts at this

sacred season. We bring to church our gifts, just as the wise men had done, as a practical expression of our devotion that they may be used mightily for the extension of the Gospel in His name. O how we rejoice in the joy of salvation that blesses this happy season!

"O the thought that God's Son is born" leads Mary to the second, which is, "O the thought that He's born to die!" Christmas is joy unspeakable of His birth, but it must lead us finally to His death. For that is the very purpose of God becoming man, in order that He may pay the penalty of our sins by His death. Did the Holy Spirit reveal this to Mary?

Thirty-three days after His birth, Joseph and Mary brought the babe along to Jerusalem for Mary's purification ceremony. There came Simeon, a devout worshipper to whom the Holy Spirit revealed this was the Christ. And when he prophesied that this child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, he said to the virgin mother, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35). This confirmed the thought that her child was born to die.

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ, leading to His death, began when He was born. The first was facing the cold wintry wind that night while He laid in the crude manger cradle. (We had a taste of the manger when we travelled in China after the Lord called me into the ministry. We came to an inn. For our comfort, the innkeeper gave us straw as mattress. For bedsheet, old newspapers.)

When Jesus was hounded by Herod, He had to escape in Mary's arms with Joseph's help to Egypt. From Egypt they went to Nazareth. Jesus grew up as a carpenter learning hard, honest work. It was not a bed of roses, but He submitted to the dictates of God His Father. Finally, the Jews who could not stomach the truth He had preached against them nailed Him to the cross. But in so doing, they fulfilled God's redemption plan. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 2:23).

Do you believe that He was born to die - for you and for me? Do you humbly and gratefully come to

the Saviour and receive Him into your heart? Receive Him who died to save you from sin and death while there is yet day. He saves us not only by His sinless life of active obedience but also by His passive obedience, in death. O the thought that He's born to die!

*Now, Lord, as I think of Thy birth,  
How I thank Thee that  
Thou hast come!  
Thou dost not spurn the  
manger stable,  
Nor David's daughter,  
virgin Mary's womb.  
Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation  
As one born blind now sees the light.  
O the joy that Messiah has come!  
Sweeps o'er my soul this  
first Christmas night. ■*

# AN EVENING OF CHRISTMAS PRAISE

December 17, 2005  
Saturday, 8:00 pm

Bible Witness Media Ministry  
invites you to share an evening of Christmas joy.  
Come and hear Christmas hymns and the preaching of the Gospel.

## Featuring:

Boaz Boon  
Chinese Dialect Carols  
The Gethsemane Care Ministry  
Gethsemane B-P Church Choir  
Korean Carols  
Cheng Hye Young  
Deborah Mae &  
Judith D'Silva  
Piano rendition  
Janice Lai  
Violin rendition  
Fabian Christopher  
Flora Ng &  
Gethsemane Junior Choir

# The Unspeakable Gift

Tan Kian Sing

This Christmas season, advertisements everywhere are screaming for our attention. One advertisement that tries to entice us to purchase a product says, "The best gift for your loved ones this season."

But the true Christmas Gift that God gave to mankind is the greatest gift of all. Yet, this wonderful Gift from God was treated most contemptuously and unreasonably by man. It was a Gift that infinitely outweighs all the rest of the gifts we have ever received. So Paul calls the Gift, the "unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15).

The Apostle Paul counted all that he had gained and received in life as loss in order that he might win this one great Gift. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). Paul regarded this precious Gift from God so highly that he counted all other gifts in life with contempt.

Let us all, who have the gifts of home, food, family, health, protection and love, not forget to thank God for them all. But the "unspeakable gift" transcends them all and deserves to be treated as the most valuable treasure in our hearts. The Greek word for "unspeakable" used here means, a thing that cannot

be related by any language. It is something that cannot be wholly described by any man. The idea is that no words can properly express the greatness of the Gift thus bestowed on man. It is higher than any human mind can conceive. It is beyond description in any human language. And so the "unspeakable gift" has no comparison to illustrate it. No words, that we can ever use, can paint a full picture of it. Even when we offer praise to God for this Gift, there are no words of praise that can be used to sufficiently express the praise due unto Him.

## What is this "unspeakable gift"?

It is nothing less than the only begotten and beloved Son of God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Saviour is the "unspeakable gift" offered to sinful men. God's plan of giving His Son as our Saviour is a Gift that we do not deserve.

## What caused the Almighty to offer us the Gift that is beyond all expression, measure, or bounds?

It is a Gift of His infinite love towards a world lost in sin. John 3:16 tells about it most plainly, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The word "so" is a little word, but the meaning it carries is stupendous.

**The "unspeakable gift" is indeed a generous Gift**, for it has no substitute in the entire universe. The whole universe gathered together cannot provide another. It is indeed

a munificent donation from the great Donor. There is no other gift that He can ever give again for the Gift is His only begotten.

The "unspeakable gift" is given out of His great mercy towards us who deserve only condemnation and punishment. But in His bountiful mercy He spares us. We have no claim and cannot compel the Almighty God whom we have sinned against to grant us a Saviour. The Gift might have been withheld by His own good pleasure and we cannot fault Him. There is no greater mercy demonstrated than for God's giving of the "unspeakable gift."

This "unspeakable gift" is free to us just like all gifts are, but it truly costs the Giver all, for the Son of God had to be made flesh in order to suffer and die a cruel death. What a great sacrifice on the part of God this is! Which of us as parents can bear the heartrending pain to allow our child to be tortured and made to bleed to death by cruel murderers? But as for the Father, He "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). We may never understand fully the measure of God's generosity, nor the extent of His mercy that brought His "unspeakable gift" to us.

**We must receive the "unspeakable gift."** God has given us distinct directions in His Word concerning how we are to receive the "unspeakable gift" so that we can call it our own. We should not be satisfied just to know that there is an "unspeakable

gift" for us and that it has already been extended to us. We need to come to Christ and receive Him as our personal Saviour. Yes, we must embrace the offer of this Gift by believing in Christ for ourselves, as the Gospel assures us "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:9-11).

If you have not yet received this "unspeakable gift," would you receive Him this Christmas as your perfect Gift? Waste no time to wait for another gift, for there is no other, but Christ. Time is short and another opportunity may never come. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

For those of us who have already received this "unspeakable gift," which God has freely given by His grace and unmerited love to us, undeserving sinners, should we not freely and bountifully give even of whatever few perishing gifts we have for His sake? What gifts would we offer to Him this Christmas? How about sharing the "unspeakable gift" with our loved ones this season? This is definitely the Best Gift for them. And what a sure delight it will be to God the Father to see His children receiving and benefiting from His "unspeakable gift"? ■

# Emmanuel

Paul Cheng

What does Christmas mean to us? Almost 2,000 years ago, the Gospel writer, Matthew, recorded the angelic declaration of the purpose and implication of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

In Bible times, the names of people usually make a statement. Names were usually a combination of words that created an intended picture, and Emmanuel was no different. The name, Emmanuel, means "God with us." A reflection on these terms reveals several wonderful divine intentions of Christ's birth, which are discussed below.

## The Assurance of God's Faithfulness

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, God gave a prophetic glimpse of the birth to His prophet Isaiah. The prophet recorded it in Isaiah 7:14. The prophecy declared that the Messiah would be a son, born to a virgin, and His name would be Emmanuel. The later record of Matthew 1:23 is a fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy. This fulfilment of the prophecy seven hundred years later points us to God's faithfulness to His promises. So we can assuredly say that Christmas is a time to celebrate God's faithfulness.

Just as He promised, God came to be with us. Jesus, the second person of the blessed Trinity, who is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, willingly descended into our world, dwelt amongst us, felt our pain and sorrows, ultimately dying on the cross and shedding His precious blood for the remission of our sins. The holy child of Bethlehem is none other than Emmanuel, "God with us." "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Man because of his sins is condemned to eternal damnation. If Jesus did not come, we would still be dead in our sins. If Jesus did not come, we would still be fighting this battle with sin alone; and worst still, there would be no victory for us. He came into this world in order that we may have hope. He then died on the cross in order that we may live again and dwell with Him forever. He redeemed us that we may have His presence now and forever. He is our Emmanuel.

When Jesus ascended unto heaven, He did not desert us. Instead, He gave us His Spirit to live within us, to guide us, to comfort and assure us of His presence in our lives (John 14:26). So today in our pilgrim journey, we have the faithful assurance that God is with us. We can also look forward with the hope of being with our Lord Jesus Christ

for all eternity, because He who is faithful has promised us "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . . Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Revelation 21:2-3). The Emmanuel, who was born in a poor carpenter's family, will come as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He will come triumphantly, in all His glory and honour, to grant us the full and eternal reality of His presence.

## The Abolition of Fear from Our Lives

Life is filled with trials and tribulations. They are the common experiences of every human being. As we face disappointments and pain in life, we start to slide down the path of grief. We need someone who will share our sorrows and pain and be with us to strengthen and guide us out of our anxieties. In Christ, we have an Eternal Friend, for He is Emmanuel. What better comfort can we have than the assurance that the Almighty God is with us.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). As the saying goes, "Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God, in the midst of trouble."

Everyone of us goes through struggles in life. Some of us may be out of job, while others may be having difficulties in family life. There may still be some others who have health problems or financial problems. In such situations, we can be overwhelmed by the problems affecting us. We tend to allow fear to creep into our lives. So it is important for us to remember and acknowledge that our God is with



us that we may not be too severely affected by our afflictions. Our God

is always faithful and will make us to triumph in Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

With God's presence in our lives, God's people can and should always be strong and of good courage. We rest in our thoughts that God is with us for the Emmanuel has already come to us. Let us remember, no evil is so great that the presence of God in our lives is not able to overcome.

### The Accountability to Live Godly Lives

When the presence of God is in our midst, it is our urgent responsibility to conduct our lives in a manner that is worthy and acceptable to Him. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14). This biblical principle that commands us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers applies to all aspects of our lives: relationship with others, partnership in business, etc. As God's people, we must always conduct our lives in a manner that will not compromise the godliness and holiness required by His presence.

If God is with us, it is our highest duty to hallow His presence with holiness. We must adore the things God adores, and hate the things God hates. The Lord commanded us, "Sanctify yourselves therefore,

and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 20:7). God loves righteousness and hates sin, thus we also ought to love righteousness and hate sin.

Sometimes, it is difficult for us to live a godly life in a hostile world. We may face certain difficulties, inconveniences, or even persecutions, but no matter how difficult it may be, it is still worth all the effort we put in. When we strive for the Lord, we remind ourselves of how the Lord Jesus Christ has so sacrificially given Himself for us; and when we face difficulties in our endeavours, we remind ourselves of His promise such as "lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

### Conclusion

Christmas is the day we commemorate the birth of "Emmanuel." It is the day when the truth that "God with us" became an embodiment. It is the fulfilment of God's promise to be with His people. Christmas is a time for us to celebrate the wonderful truth, Emmanuel - *God with us*. With the presence of God in our lives, may our lives always be living testimonies that will glorify His name. ■

**"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"**

**Matthew 1:23**

# A Perfect Child and His Mother

One day, in the tiny village of Bethlehem, a young woman named Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. Mary knew that her son was different from all other children born into this world. How did she know it? It was told to her by an angel from heaven, namely, Gabriel. He told Mary about her child that "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). The angel also told her that "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Every young mother thinks of her baby as beautiful and special. Mary must have thought so too. She was right! But more than that, her baby was the only perfect child ever born; and the most unusual baby—the only begotten Son of the Most High God! Earlier on, Mary had "pondered in her heart" the words of the angel Gabriel when he had announced the forthcoming birth of Jesus, saying that her son would be called "the Son of the Highest, the Son of God."

Mary must have found it daunting as she contemplates the nurture of a sinless, perfect child. A normal

woman, who has been affected by sin, like every other woman, is now faced with the unusual task of bringing up a child with no sin. It is a pleasurable task to fulfil, when the nature of the child is in view. On the other hand, it is an awesome task, when her imperfections are weighed against the perfection of the child. Nonetheless, she yielded to the will of God, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

Sometimes, the Lord calls us to bear burdens or perform tasks, which appear to be too big for us. But we must not shun His calling. Mary is a fine example of the fact that yielding to God is the best response to the challenges He brings to us. For in doing so, we open our lives to extraordinary experiences of His wonderful grace, wisdom and strength in fulfilling the task He has given us.

Now, after the holy child was born, she received further confirmation of her child's uniqueness through the testimony of the shepherds, who were told by the angel that the child is "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). The implications of all these facts about her child must have been too much for her human mind to grasp. So, according to Luke 2:19, she "kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart."

Every heart that truly cherishes the meaning and purpose of the birth of Jesus can be filled with a joy similar to that which Mary had experienced when she cradled the baby Jesus in her arms and thought about His greatness and His mercy. Let us fill our hearts with



the thoughts of His greatness, love, mercy, power, promises, etc. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psalm 27:4). ■

# Jesus Came to Destroy the Works of the Devil

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

short of the glory of God." This total depravity of mankind proves that every man is under Satan's enslavement. Every man who lives in his sin is just like the devil who also lives in sin and rebellion against God.

We have every reason to be jubilant during the Christmas season, for it commemorates the arrival of our Deliverer, the King of Heaven, Jesus Christ. He was born to defeat the enemy of our souls. He came to crush our adversary's head. He came to break the chain of bondage that the devil has laid on us!

The devil urges man to sin against God through his temptations. He also darkens the mind of man against the light of God. He tries to choke the Gospel seed that is sown in the hearts of men. His wicked tyranny has made man powerless to break free from sin.

## Devil's Bondage and Our Sins

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." These words of the Apostle John express the sad and defeated spiritual condition of mankind. As the Bible says in Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come

The Apostle Paul describes man's spiritual bondage in Ephesians 2:2 as, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Every unregenerate man is under the sway of the prince of the power of the air, which is the devil.

## Christ's Birth and Devil's Defeat

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." It is to destroy the power and work of the devil over our souls that the Son of God took on human flesh and was born in Bethlehem. All of mankind, without exception, could not break the tyranny of the devil. But to accomplish that which is impossible with man, even his salvation, Jesus came to this world.

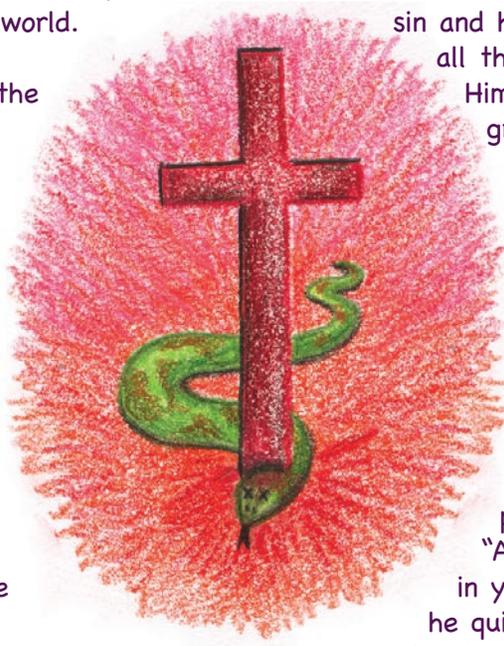
The destruction of the work of the devil can only be done by God. Jesus was no mere man. He is God incarnated to deliver us from the wicked tyranny of the devil. The only begotten Son of God, who was conceived and born of a virgin, has come to destroy the prince of darkness.

The devil, who began his tyranny over mankind by deceiving Eve in the garden as a serpent, was told by the Lord immediately after the fall of the first parents that his destruction is sure. The Lord Himself declared the war that would spell the end of Satan's cruel domination in Genesis 3:15 - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head,

and thou shalt bruise his heel." Her seed, who would ultimately defeat the devil, is the virgin born Christ.

On the cross, the devil and his company bruised our Lord. But by His resurrection, our Lord rendered a deadly blow to the devil. By His death and resurrection, our Lord broke the power of sin and death. The devil can never again threaten His people with sin and death, for Christ has redeemed them forever.

While the devil leads people to sin and hell, Christ delivers all those who trust in Him from the devil's grip of sin and hell to salvation and heaven.



In Colossians 2:13-15, the Apostle Paul magnificently illustrates Christ's triumphant victory over sin and the power of the devil -

"And you, being dead in your sins . . . hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The "principalities and powers" that Christ spoiled in death and resurrection are Satan and his demons. Sin and Satan are utterly defeated and this is fully

demonstrated by Christ's triumphant resurrection from the grave. Satan and his allies could not keep Jesus in the grave. He broke the power of death and lives evermore to save sinners who come to Him by faith.

In Hebrews 2:14, we read this truth of Christ defeating Satan's deadly power - "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Christ has utterly crushed Satan's ploy to enslave us forever. Let all praise and glory be unto our Lord Jesus, the Victorious One!

## Faith in Christ and Our Victory

Are you terrorised by sin and its guilt? Why linger anymore in your misery under the devil's torturous dominion? Jesus, the Son of God, has come to deliver sinners from the devil's evil domination. He is able to deliver every sinner who comes to Him by faith, for He is God and Saviour. He was born in Bethlehem in order that one day He might suffer and die to deliver all those who believe on Him from the power of sin, hell and the devil. So repent from all your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and He will save you. Pray to Him, saying, "Lord Jesus, please forgive me for I am a sinner. I believe that you came to this world to save sinners like me. I also believe that you died and was resurrected to deliver us from sin and hell. I humbly pray

that you will forgive and cleanse me from all my sins. Thank you for the promise that you will save all those who come to you by faith. I trust in Thee, Lord. Amen." If you have sincerely prayed to Jesus Christ, there is no reason to doubt your salvation, for the Bible assures us that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The Bible teaches that all who believe on Jesus Christ can rejoice and give thanks to the Lord for He has defeated the devil and his works. In 1 Corinthians 15:57, we read, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This Christmas, may you remember that Christ came to defeat our chief adversary, the devil, and to grant us victory over sin and death. Behold, the newborn Conqueror of the devil! He came to bring utter desolation of the works of the devil over our souls! He breaks the devil's bow, and cuts his spear asunder. By His omnipotence, He draws us away from the devil's grip.

Let all who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Victorious Redeemer, say, "Thou art the Lord of hosts! Thy right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy. Our Almighty Champion has come forth with a shout of victory. The arch-enemy is vanquished, and therefore, his works are destroyed, and we are redeemed! Hallelujah! Glory to God in the Highest!" ■

# Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Tan Kian Sing

*Thou didst leave Thy throne and  
Thy kingly crown when Thou  
camest to earth for me;  
but in Bethlehem's home was there  
found no room for Thy holy nativity.*

*Heaven's arches rang when  
the angels sang, proclaiming  
Thy royal degree;  
but of lowly birth didst Thou come  
to earth, and in great humility.*

*The foxes found rest, and  
the birds their nest in the  
shade of the forest tree;  
but Thy couch was the sod, O Thou  
Son of God, in the deserts of Galilee.*

*Thou camest, O Lord, with  
the living word that should  
set Thy people free;  
but with mocking scorn and  
with crown of thorn they  
bore Thee to Calvary.*

*When the heavens shall ring and the  
angels sing at Thy coming to victory,  
let Thy voice call me home, saying,  
"Yet there is room - there is  
room at My side for thee."  
My heart shall rejoice, Lord  
Jesus, when Thou comest  
and callest for me!*

*Refrain (stanzas 1-4): O come  
to my heart, Lord Jesus - there  
is room in my heart for Thee!*

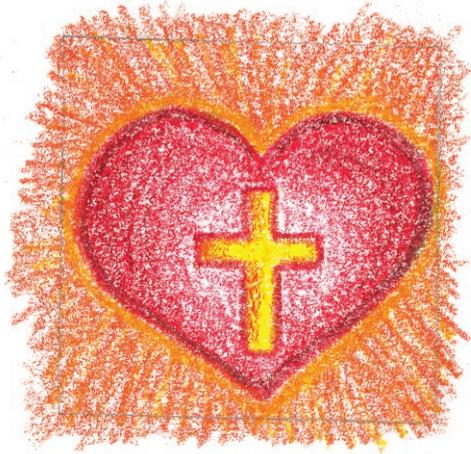
Emily E. S. Elliott, (1836-1897), wrote this hymn for the Sunday School children of her father's church, St. Mark's Anglican Church in Brighton, England. It was to teach the children biblical truths of the first and second advents and the holy nativity of our Lord and Saviour.

The message is vividly presented as it tells very simply of how the Lord Jesus left His kingly glory in heaven to come to this sin-filled world to save sinners from their sins. The title of the song echoes and reminds us of the scriptural passage in Philippians 2:5-11 - "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Note the contrasting sentences in each stanza with the use of the word "but" to show the rejection and humiliation which the Lord humbly and quietly suffered from His own creation although He came to deliver His own people from the damnation of sin.

Although the hymn carries the Christmas story and is sung widely during the Christmas season, it is quite different from those Christmas carols that we normally sing. It speaks not just about the first advent and nativity of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the little town of Bethlehem. It also speaks of the Lord's lowly life on earth and the suffering He went through which led to His death at Calvary. In the final stanza, His triumphant second advent in all His glory to call home all His saints is described.

The refrain reminds us of the Christmas story recorded in Luke 2:1-7: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth



her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

Do you have room in your heart for the Lord Jesus? Invite Him now into your heart. He is standing at the door of your heart and calling, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). It is only when you have opened the door of your heart and invited the Lord Jesus to dwell in you that you can sing the last stanza with true rejoicing: "My heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus, when Thou comest and callest for me!"

As we celebrate the holy nativity of our blessed Redeemer, we must always be watching, praying, waiting and "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13-14). ■

# Honouring Christ Through Christmas Gifts

It irritates all of us who love the Lord Jesus when we see that He is taken out of Christmas. That abject deed is not limited to only non-Christians – even Christians have adjusted to the commercialism of the holiday season.

## The Pressure of the Commercialised Christmas Celebration

We have become terribly unbalanced. We give a myriad of useless gifts at Christmas because it is expected of us and we feel guilty if we do not. The commercialised world now makes hundred-dollar toys seem perfectly acceptable. It is easy to observe the stress that our unbalanced society places on family members. Christian parents who cannot provide the latest indulgences for their children are often depressed and distraught. Obviously, no one purposely makes them feel unworthy or insignificant, but the overwhelming emphasis we place on giving at Christmas certainly does. So great is this social pressure that the closer we get to Christmas Day, the more depressed and unworthy those who cannot afford feel. Unfortunately, the pressures do not end once Christmas is past either. Those who cannot afford to compete in their gift-giving often dread congregating with their friends immediately after the holidays, because at “show and tell” time, they do not have much to show.

## The Pleasure of the Biblical Christmas Celebration

One extreme is not balanced by going to the opposite extreme. The distortion of Christmas would not be corrected by eliminating gift-giving altogether. What we need to do is to follow God’s plan for our families without the pressure from the commercial world. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.... And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:15-17).

In order to do so, I believe that as Christians, we must first believe that God’s plan is different from the world’s, and is *more* – not *less* – fulfilling. It is a deception to think that by adopting a more disciplined lifestyle, we are somehow denied the “good life.” The key is to believe that God’s wisdom is the best.

## What We Need to Do

The correct way is to take some positive steps towards establishing a better balance.

### Step 1: Kick out Santa Claus.

Christian parents should let their children know that Santa is a fraud. “Santa is harmless,” you say? Not so, when parents

knowingly deceive their children about an apparently omnipotent being who travels the world in the wink of an eye and disburses presents on the basis of good or bad.

Step 2: Stamp out credit. As bad as commercialised Christmas is, commercialised Christmas on credit purchase is even worse. Many families literally indenture themselves to creditors for a whole year just to buy some useless junk at Christmas. As Christians, we need to decide if we *really* serve the God of the universe. If so, then He knows our needs and will meet them through His people without indebtedness. I believe Satan has used credit schemes to cheat God's people out of blessings and to keep them in bondage.

I know that some people reading this have desperate needs. Let them pray to God. I also know that others sincerely want to help but do not know who has needs. Approach your church leaders to see how you can channel your money to support the needs of others. Let us free ourselves from unnecessary spending in order to be vessels of blessings to the needy people and ministries.

Step 3: Stretch out to help. Let this Christmas and New Year celebrations be occasions when we practise the biblical principle in 2 Corinthians 8:14-15 - "now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: as it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack."

Husband and wife should pray together and agree on a reasonable amount of gift-giving. Once you have reached a decision that you feel is God's plan for your family, commit an amount to be given as gifts to support the needs of the church or the needy brethren.

In many areas of the world, an amount equal to most of our gift purchases would feed and clothe a family for several months. By giving to a specific family or specific needs of the church, your children can see the purpose and value of your sacrifice and theirs. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

### Why Christmas Gift-Giving is an Issue

Gift-giving is one area of Christmas that has been distorted by Satan. The practice of giving gifts is good, but the misuse of it entangles us and diverts our attention from Jesus Christ to material things. Our problem is that we keep trying to negotiate a compromise with an enemy who is totally dedicated to destroying us. It is time that, as Christians, we decide to draw a battle line again. When it comes to commercialising Christ's birth, we need to fight it, by following the biblical kind of gift-giving.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17) ■

# CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

Sarah Ng

The Lord promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. Many years later, the Lord Jesus Christ was born as a baby. Read Matthew 1:1-17. How many generations were there from Abraham to Christ?

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_ generations

The shepherds and wise men came to worship Christ. We, too, should worship Him and give Him the glory due unto His name. Hidden in the jumble of letters are 17 names referring to Jesus. How many can you find?

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

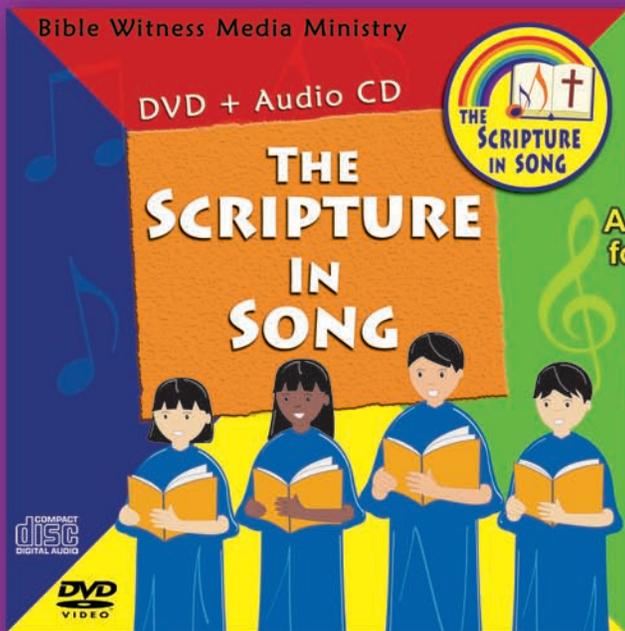
CHRIST  
LAMB  
WAY  
TRUTH  
LIFE

EVERLASTING FATHER  
ALPHA AND OMEGA  
PRINCE OF PEACE  
LORD OF LORDS  
KING OF KINGS  
MIGHTY GOD

WONDERFUL  
COUNSELLOR  
IMMANUEL  
MESSIAH  
SAVIOUR  
JESUS

### Answers to Vol. 5, Issue 5 - Bible Trivia from Genesis 16 & 17.

Pg. 27 - ACROSS 1. children; 2. handmaid; 3. conceived; 4. wilderness; 5. submit; 6. Sarah; 7. child.  
DOWN 1. Lord; 2. exceedingly; 3. made; 4. Abraham; 5. circumcised; 6. eight; 7. Issac.



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Psalm 12:6-7; Psalm 27:4; Psalm 29:1-2  
 Psalm 46:1-2; Psalm 67:1-3; Psalm 90:1-2  
 Psalm 91:1-2; Psalm 93:1; Psalm 103:1-4  
 1 Timothy 6:12

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7. One Day
8. Singing I Go
9. The Lord Is Nigh
10. He Hideth My Soul
11. More Like The Son Of God
12. Now Unto Him

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