

From the Inkhorn

This Latter Rain is focussed on issues relating to the birth, life and mission of Jesus. It has been prepared to coincide with Christmas, but the thoughts and messages are applicable all the year around.

Through his humanity (Jesus in John) He is able to be our example, but as Jesus Christ He represents both humanity and divinity (Jesus and Christ).

He had been long awaited (Who Are You?) as indeed we again are awaiting His Second Coming.

Then there is the Children's Story about the Three Wise Men, and a look at how some Christmas Traditions have developed with reference to sources outside the Bible.

Debug your Bible focusses on the Feasts which Israel were commanded to keep by God and also looks at those feasts instituted by Judaism to memorialise God's special interaction with them.

The Reason For The Season challenges us to think about the real meaning of Christmas as well as enjoying the festive activities and holidays!

The issue is topped up with the usual fillers and the Vegetarian Recipes.

We trust you will enjoy reading the articles, in this issue of Latter Rain, and that you accept the challenge to think more seriously about the return of "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11), seeking for your mortal body to be prepared to enter into life eternal at His coming.

We wish all our readers a very Happy Christmas and Safe New Year.

Index

Jesus in John	2
Jesus and Christ	4
Why He Came	9
Who Are You?	10
Hymn No. 142	12
Statement of Belief	13
Debug Your Bible: Feasts	14
Christmas Traditions	20
Children's Story: The Three Kings	22
Puzzle Page: Bread Maze	25
Expand Your Bible: The Reason for the Season	26
Vegetarian Recipes: Split Pea Soup Potato Latkes	28

*"For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given:
and the government shall
be upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The
everlasting Father, The
Prince of Peace"*

Isaiah 9:6.

Jesus in John

by Kerion FELLOWES

Advocate

Χριστός

High Priest

Messiah

IMMANUEL

MASTER

TEACHER

Jesus Christ has become one of the central figures of the human race. Almost everyone knows of Jesus Christ even if it is as an oath. Christ had a specific role in creation and Jesus Christ a specific role in the salvation of mankind. The Gospel of John explains both the nature of Jesus Christ and His purpose.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" John 1:1-4

If these verses are closely examined they illustrate the relationship between God and Christ. The identity of each aspect of the Godhead is clearly defined through the use of the word 'Word'. Firstly the eternal nature that is the presence of God Jehovah through all of creation, and even before creation, is clearly delineated: *"In the beginning was the Word."*

The enduring and sacred aspects of Christ are then explained: *"...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Through this we know that Christ was with God before creation and is an integral part of God; separate and yet another aspect of the Godhead. It is the Spirit Christ which gives Jesus His divinity as the Son of God.

The birth, life and death of Jesus is an illustration of God's inestimable love for His creation, especially for humanity. People are limited in their experience of the spiritual realm due to the physical bonds of flesh and therefore cannot fully comprehend the greatness of God. We can only understand aspects of the nature of God through the medium which has been chosen to impart the knowledge such as the Prophets and Jesus Christ.

Through the existence of Jesus Christ, the spiritual reality of God is made manifest

in a form which can be understood by humanity. Jesus Christ is the instrument through which the plan of God for the salvation of mankind is achieved. Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, as human as you and I, but clothed with the power of Christ. Jesus Christ came to reveal God's Will for mankind and through the sacrifice of Jesus, to redeem all who believe in Him from sin. The amnesty of God which has been offered to all who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, will not last forever. Judgment will come. Everyone will be answerable for their transgressions in life.

The Son of God became flesh and therefore suffered through the trials of life as all humanity does. *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth"* John 1:14 This had to occur in order for Jesus to die a 'human' death. Christ had to depart from the person of Jesus in order for the death to be an acceptable sacrifice because Christ,

being the Spirit of God could not die.

It was vital that Jesus Christ was tempted like us (Hebrews 4:15), so that through His perfect overcoming of these temptations He could gain forgiveness for us. The immoral desires, which are the basis of our temptations, come from within us (Mark 7:15-23) as a result of our human nature (James 1:13-15). It was necessary, therefore, that Jesus should be of human nature so that He could experience and overcome these temptations.

It is our own imperfections, through sin and our physical nature, which means that we cannot face the Lord. Through the great bridge of the Cross, we can stand perfect through the willing sacrifice of Jesus, in the presence of God our Father. We cannot do this on our own understanding. It can only be achieved through the Word of God.

At Christmas we can take the opportunity to remember what God has done for us and follow the example that Jesus left us on how to live our lives.📖



"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" John 1:4,5.

Jesus and Christ

by Paul GRAY

Have you ever thought upon the questions that Jesus asked of the Pharisees, recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke. One of the questions asked by Jesus is recorded in Matthew 22:42-46, *“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. He (Jesus) saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he (Christ) his son? And no man was able to answer him a word...”*

Even today, because of our earthly limitations, we find it difficult to be hard and fast about the character of Christ, God, the Godhead, Jesus, etc., but there are some facts that we can establish, and that we need to build upon to increase our knowledge of these heavenly things.

Let us consider Jesus as an individual, and how God influenced His life, so that we can consider how God wants to be a greater influence in our lives.

Jesus' Conception and Birth

The man Jesus' earthly physical body (just like our bodies) was born into this world through a special set of circumstances which God allowed to develop in a natural human way, but [the circumstances regarding the birth of Jesus] were completely different to the circumstances in which we are conceived and born.

In Luke 1:31-49 we read that:

- an angel came to Mary, His mother, and spoke with her;
- Mary was betrothed (or perhaps we would say today that she was engaged) to be married. She was a believer in God Almighty, and a virgin, being upright in character and

not having had a physical relationship with any man;

- the angel greeted her with joy and told her that *“...the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women”*;

- having such a heavenly visitor, Mary was troubled to know what the angel meant.;

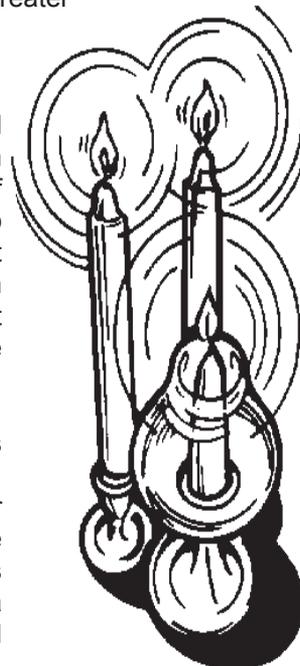
- the angel reassured her: *“Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God”*;

- *“Thou (Mary) shalt conceive in thy womb (material physical birth), and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS”*;

- *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...”*;

- Mary asked how this would happen, *“...seeing I know not a man?”*;

- *“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.”* This is the part



*“..the true
Light, which
lighteth
every man
that cometh
into the
world”*

John 1:9

that can be difficult to understand by us mortal beings. Through a power God possesses, Mary became pregnant without having relationship with a human man. This conception would have been in accordance with the Levitical instructions found in Leviticus. 15:25 and 28, so that her seed was strong and pure. The child conceived in the pure seed of Mary, and by the power from God, did not have the inherent evil which is passed on to each of us by our male parent - this was part of the result of the Fall of man in the garden of Eden, bringing the activity of evil into the world; and that

- Mary, through faith, accepted the angel's news, and despite knowing how many difficulties she would experience in the social conditions of that time, said, "... Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

We try to measure what we accept according to knowledge and facts that we have learnt or seen, but just as Mary accepted the angel's message in faith, we need to recognise that **God is Almighty and can do anything**. It is interesting that often God does things in a practical logical manner, which we are inclined to balk at because of its simplicity, but remember, God has said we do not need to be 'learned men' according to the manner of mankind but to have acceptance through faith.

Jesus the Baby

According to 1st Thessalonians 5:23, mankind is made of three parts: a spirit, a soul and a body. Jesus' body and soul, which developed within Mary, were given a spirit to motivate them. We believe that the name of this spirit was Michael, because

- Michael was the one who stood against Satan/the devil when contending about the body of Moses, but notice, Michael did not bring a "railing accusation" but left it to God to withstand the devil in His own way (Jude 9) showing that Michael was of rank to communicate with God, and had a perfect understanding of God's will;

- Jude 9 speaks of Michael - the devil was contending about the body of Moses, but Michael did not rail against the devil, but

said, "...The Lord rebuke thee." We believe it follows that Michael, the archangel for good and right, then proceeded to come to earth and was given the body of Jesus to dwell in, so that he could fight the devil here, as a human being, but he had to still look to God for spiritual help and guidance to conquer the devil here;

- John in Revelations 12:7-13, refers to the stand Michael made in Heaven against the devil. We quote, "*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was there place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world... and his angels were cast out with him.*" Michael, as always, is the leader of the good forces standing against the devil in Heaven, and Michael prevailed over the devil, casting the devil out into the Earth;

- Daniel, when he had been talking of the last days and of Israel's final deliverance, was told in Daniel 12:1, "*And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people...*" This shows us that the spirit Michael is the leader of those who, in the latter days, will follow the Old and New Testament instructions given from God Almighty; and

- in Revelations 14:1, these words are recorded, "*And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*" Who is the Lamb? Jesus, the son of God. We believe that this Jesus is the same as Michael who stood in Heaven (Revelation 12), and also who contended for the body of Moses.

This and other supporting references is why Christian Israelites accept that Michael was the name of the spirit given to Jesus - they undertake the same role in the stand against Satan at the end of the World.

Jesus is Baptised

Jesus grew up in the household of Joseph

and Mary and from supplementary sources He had a good nature and always looked to the influence of God's Spirit in whatever He did. We have the incident recorded when He stayed behind in the Temple after His parents were visiting Jerusalem (Luke 2:42-52). His answer to them when He was found was, "... wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke 2:49. It would appear He knew He had a special heritage and mission and even at 12 years old He was able to confound the 'doctors' in the Temple. Jesus listened to the influence of God's Spirit.

Matthew records in chapter 3:13-17, that Jesus came "from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him". John knew, through the Spirit revealing it to him, that Jesus was a very special person, so when Jesus presented himself to be baptized, "John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus replied, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him." (Notice John's acceptance in faith to obey what Jesus said.) "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Heavenly Power from God, part of which had been with Jesus from His conception, now rested upon Him, overshadowing Him, and strengthening Him to fulfill His mission here on earth. It was after this that Jesus went into the

desert and was tempted by Satan for forty days (Matthew 4:1-11).

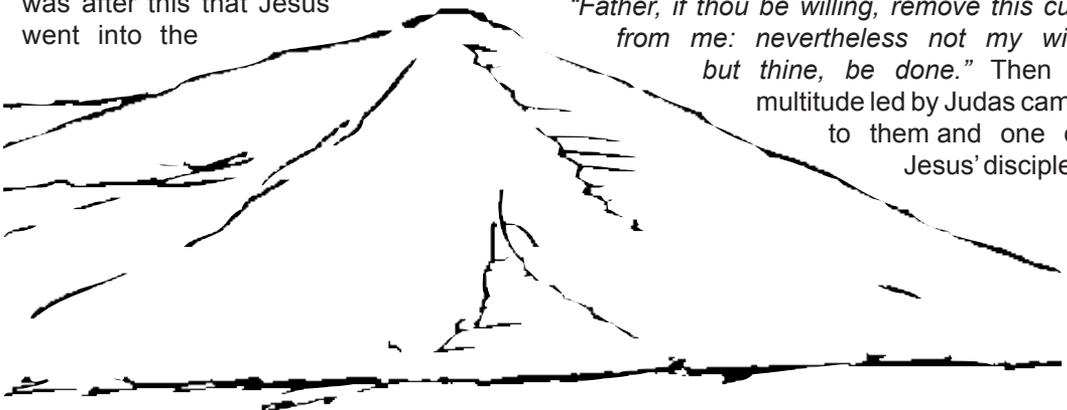
We understand that as we were created male and female in the image of God (prior to the Fall) (Genesis 1:27), so God is both Father and Mother of us all, and that the Father's influence, which we often refer to as Christ, had been overshadowing Him since his conception. Who then descended upon Him as a dove and enabled Him to perform miracles, which even involved the raising of the dead? Wouldn't it have to be the female part of God, the spirit often referred to as The Holy Ghost?

The Lamb of God

When these Spirits (Christ and the Holy Ghost) from God had completed the mission in the man Jesus here on earth, it was time for Jesus the man to fulfill and complete the Old Testament sacrifice of a perfect Lamb, in its prime of life. Christ and the Holy Ghost had to withdraw. It was the recognition of the loss of these two Spirits that caused Jesus to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark 15:34; Matt. 27:46.

Jesus (the physical body and soul) with the breath of life from the archangel Michael, was still living as a normal person, but the overshadowing of the Power of God was not there. Jesus then, with His own spirit Michael, suffered as a normal person giving Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.

When did these two Spirits withdraw? In Luke 22:39-54 we find that Jesus and His disciples had gone to the Mount of Olives, where He had been praying earnestly, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Then a multitude led by Judas came to them and one of Jesus' disciples



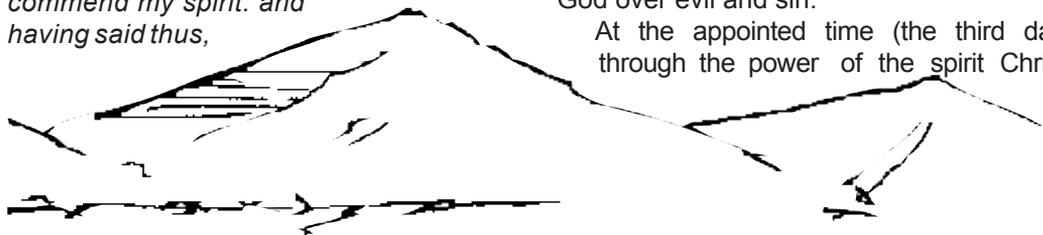
drew a sword and cut the ear off a servant of the High Priest. Jesus said *"Suffer ye thus far"*, and He touched his ear and healed him - this was the last miracle that Jesus performed.

"Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness. Then took they him..." While the power of the two Spirits overshadowed Jesus He could not be touched, but now the power of the two Spirits was withdrawn from Him, it was *"your hour"* and He was led captive. The other Gospels also record this event emphasizing different aspects, but this was the beginning of the *"cup"* that Jesus spoke of, *"the Lamb"* being offered as the perfect sacrifice for sins of the world (see also Matthew 26:47-57; Mark 14:3-52; John 18:2-14.)

Note though, this *"Lamb"*, which was righteous and without fault, could not be held by the evil powers in the grave, and rose on the third day and His body saw not corruption (Acts. 2:27).

The Conflict

Jesus, the Son of God from His conception, proved Himself the Son of God through His works and fulfilled the sacrifice of Himself, suffering humiliation and all the hatred mankind could inflict upon Him - eventually being nailed to the cross. Even on the cross He was conscious of what was happening, but when the time came, He commended His own spirit (the archangel Michael) back to God, allowing His body and soul to go to the grave - He gave His life, it was not taken from Him. *"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus,*



he gave up the ghost" Luke 23:46. Many amazing things happened at this time but space does not allow us to speak of them now. This was the 'clash' between good and evil; it was the showing of the enmity spoken of in the prophecy in Genesis 3:15, *"...and thou (Satan) shalt bruise his (Jesus) heel."* Satan was allowed to have Jesus crucified, and to take His body and soul to the grave. Acts 2:31 says *"...that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."*

Jesus throughout His exemplary life followed only good, and now here He was on earth facing the devil again and preparing the way for the devil and evil to be cast out of the bodies of those who will seek sincerely in heart and mind to serve God, *"...it (the seed of the woman - those to whom this promise is made) shalt bruise thy (Satan's) head"* Genesis 3:15, a fatal blow when the devil and evil will be conquered.

This was similar to the war in heaven when the archangel Michael stood against Satan and had Satan cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:7; Isaiah 14:12-16) - Satan be cast out of the earth - the earth being the bodies of true believers (God's Israel).

The Effect of the Power from God

So we see that the man Jesus (which was the soul and physical body, with the Spirit of the archangel Michael), were overshadowed by the fullness of Christ and the Holy Ghost (the Male and Female powers from God), which enabled Him to perform miracles and to do God's work here on earth.

When these two Spirits withdrew, Jesus allowed His body and soul to be separated, by death, from His spirit (the archangel Michael) so that He could be the perfect sacrifice and show the power of good and God over evil and sin.

At the appointed time (the third day) through the power of the spirit Christ,

the spirit of the archangel Michael returned and raised the soul of Jesus showing it a spiritual or celestial body. This was the form that He showed to His disciples when He said, *“Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and to my God and your God”* John 20:17. This is the corruptible becoming incorruptible; it is similar to the state that will be attained by those who have died after living on this earth, when the trumpet is sounded and the dead are called forth at our Lord’s return.

Then the power of Christ and the Holy Ghost raised the physical body of Jesus from the grave, and when Jesus returned to heaven His spiritual (celestial or heavenly) body was united with His physical (terrestrial or earthly) body, so that He was both celestial and terrestrial.

Then when He visited the disciples again, and Thomas was there, He was able to say, *“Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing”* John 20:27. This makes Jesus the firstborn of both the resurrection and of those who will not lose their physical bodies.

Through the power of God working in them they are transformed from being mortal to put on immortality at the last trump (1st Corinthians 15:51-54). Jesus did not lose His physical body to corruption - He laid it down through death, but the evil power could not corrupt it, and on the third day He rose again. He was the first person whose mortal body had died and not gone to corruption - He had put on immortality. We have the early examples of Enoch and Elijah being taken up to dwell with God, but these men did not experience physical death as Jesus did.

Christ

We now have a glimpse of the man Jesus and His relationship with Christ. There are some parts of Scripture where Christ is used when referring to Jesus, and vice versa; the terms, sometimes not clearly understood, seem to be used interchangeably. Christ the

name has many applications, depending upon the circumstances that are being described and the relationship being described. In relation to Christ we note that:

1. in relationship to Mary, “the Power of the Highest” being Christ, is the actual father of the physical body of Jesus (Luke 1:35);

2. Christ rested on, and did the work in, the man Jesus, and Jesus is often referred to as Christ Jesus;

3. Christ is sometimes used to refer to Jesus;

4. Christ is the Power of God that did the work in Jesus;

5. as God’s Power directly, because Christ is a manifestation of the Godhead; and

6. Christ is sometimes used as a family name for those who have, or look to having, Christ working in them.

Paul the apostle in Romans 8:11 explained the resurrection of Jesus thus, *“But if the spirit of him (Christ) that raised up Jesus (the soul of Jesus to form a spiritual or celestial body with Jesus individual spirit Michael) from the dead dwell in you, he (the combined power of Christ and the Holy Ghost) that raised up Christ (the body of Jesus) from the dead shall also quicken (change from mortal to immortal) your mortal bodies by his spirit (spiritual power) that dwelleth in you.”*

Our Promise

What a wonderful hope and promise is made here. Christian Israelites seek, through God’s grace to gain the spiritual overshadowing of Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Father and Mother of this world, to bring this creation as we know it, back to the dominion of God Almighty, as written in 1st Corinthians 15:28, *“... that God may be all in all.”*

What a wonderful statement is implied by Paul when he said that Jesus is to be the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29).

If we consider ourselves with our spirit, soul and physical body that is able to be overshadowed by the spiritual Power from the two Spirits, Christ and the Holy Ghost, we can get a glimpse of

how we can become His brethren and how the promise of Revelations chapter 14:1,4,5,12 can be fulfilled in the 144,000, those who through humility recognise the promise of God, and seek God for this dual power of Christ and the Holy Ghost to do His work in them.

“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” 1st Corinthians 15:57-58. 

Why He Came

by O.L. Morrow

Why the baby of angels' song?
Why do the Wise Men journey long?
Why the sudden plan for Egypt's flight?
Why hastily travel in the night?

Why baptized 'neath the Jordan's flow?
Why forty days of tempting know?
Why preach the kingdom "close at hand"?
Why call out a disciple band?

Why the long lonely way He trod?
Why the long nights alone with God?
Why the Garden's blood, sweat and tears?
Why the rude skeptics mocking jeers?

Why the demand of "Crucify"?
Why the decision, "He must die"?
Why on the cross the anguished cry?
Who hangs thus 'twixt earth and sky?

Why did He come all this to meet?
To live a lie? To live a cheat?
To make the sinner's doom complete?
To make long prayers man might repeat?

Or did He come with sin to deal?
To crush the Tempter 'neath His heel?
To stand alone, and death defy?
To say to men, "Ye need not die"?

Can this One stop the sting of sin?
Can this One cleanse and heal within?
Is this the Master of the race?
Is He the One we all must face?

Who is He then, why did He come?
God's answer is, "This is my Son."
Hear Him now and redemption claim;
Trust Him, each soul, and heaven gain.

Who Are You?

by Rodney GRAY



We read in the Gospel of John, in Chapter 1, about John the Baptist preaching about the coming of Jesus, and people were sent to ask him who he was.

“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?” John 1:19:25.

In this passage reference is made to three distinct entities which apparently ‘Bible’ students of that time had an expectation would come. These were:

- The Christ,
- Elias, and
- that prophet.

This article will look at some passages from the

Scriptures relating to each of these entities in an endeavour to understand more fully who each might be, whether the expectations have been fulfilled, and what hope might be relevant for us today.

The Christ

When the angel came to Joseph and told of the imminent birth of Jesus, the angel said: *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; ... and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us”* Matthew 1:21,23. Verse 16 of the same chapter records, *“And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ”*.

Luke records the event in chapter 2 verse 11, *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”*

On one occasion when Jesus had been with His disciples, He asked them the question who did they think He was. It is recorded in Mark 8:27-30:

“And Jesus went out, and his disciples, into the towns of Caesarea Philippi: and by the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.”

An expectation of The Christ coming as a Saviour and Redeemer had been long held by Israel. Even Herod and his Court had an understanding of where Christ should be born (see Matthew chapter 2). It is interesting to note that even today prayerful Jews are still looking for the coming of the Messiah or The Christ.

After the events in the Garden of

Gethsemanie, Jesus appeared before Pilate, "...and the governor asked him, saying, *Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest*" Matthew 27:11. Then in verse 17, "*Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?*"

It is of interest to note the references to the baby named Jesus and the fact that He was called Christ. Was he really the Christ – why the reference to being 'called Christ'?

Another Bible reference is to Christ (Jesus Christ from the context) being a priest after the order of Melchisedec. Melchisedec was "...without beginning of days, or end of life" (Hebrews chapter 5).

It was the Christ, as High Priest, who was to offer of Himself as the sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of all mankind.

Jesus, the baby born to Mary, with the abiding Power of God's Spirit referred to as Christ, was clearly The Christ who was to come. He came and fulfilled the role of Saviour, Messiah and High Priest. Truly John the Baptist was not the Christ.

Elias (Elijah)

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah and foretold the birth of John The Baptist it was said, "*And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*" Luke 1:17.

But John the Baptist clearly said he was not Elias (Elijah) in John 1:21. However in Matthew chapter 11, Jesus was speaking about John the Baptist and he said; "*And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.*" So was John the Baptist Elijah or not? From the reference of Jesus to John it would appear that in John had been fulfilled the promise of the coming of Elijah, although John himself was not Elijah. With John the Baptist the anointing of the Spirit stayed with him and gave him strength as he faced his execution by Herod.

Elijah, then, it would appear, referred to the coming of the Spirit and Power from God that did the work in John the Baptist. This was and is the same Spirit that has done and

will do a great work in many others, but the reference to Elias preparing the way of the Lord clearly referred to the mission of John the Baptist (Malachi 4:5,6). The difference was that in the case of Elijah the Spirit came and went – Elijah offered the sacrifice to God, then suddenly was overcome by the fear of man.

It would also appear from Malachi 4:5-6 that this same Power from God will also come in its fullness in preparing the way for the second coming of Jesus Christ when he returns to bind the power of Satan and restore goodness to God's Kingdom. This Elijah will turn the hearts of the children (of Israel) to their Father (God), and He will imbue them with Power from on High, through the fullness of Christ and the Holy Ghost to do God's work in them.

That Prophet

In Deuteronomy 18:15 Moses said; "*The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto him you shall hearken,*" Whilst this is often taken in a general sense to cover the many 'prophets' who have risen up, and in deed who still arise up, there was an expectation that this was referring to someone very major, who would again lead the Israelites out of slavery. Indeed not just the Israelites and not just out of Egypt, but all of mankind from the slavery to sin. When read in prophetic context there is little doubt that the 'greater Prophet than Moses' is referring to Jesus -



Jesus the man, the High Priest, whose sinless life allowed to him to become the Lamb of God and who gave his life as a sacrifice for all people for all times. Indeed Jesus was that Prophets who Moses said would come, and he was greater than Moses and undertook a task, of which the work of Moses was only a type.

Jesus – the Christ, the Power of Elijah and that Prophet

So we see that in Jesus Christ is fulfilled all of these entities. He was The Christ, the Messiah who came to save and redeem mankind from the power of Satan; he received Power in his earthly life from God through the Spirit Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Elijah, and the man Jesus who came to this earthly life through the birth of the baby we celebrate at Christmas, was the Prophet.

Conclusion

So in summary, we see that the Christ was Jesus the Messiah, the Priest after the order of Melchisedec. He is the one and only fulfillment of this prophecy. Elias or

Elijah refers to God's Spirit which dwelt on Jesus, and which had rested on John the Baptist in its fullness to prepare for the first coming of Jesus, and which will again rest on those seeking to prepare for the second coming as the Latter Rain spoken of by the Old Testament prophet (Joel 2:28-32). And the Great Prophet was Jesus the man whose birth we remember at Christmas. But as the first born of many brethren he also extends to those who believe and do the work the opportunity to become priests (or prophets) to God with Him, and to share with him, as prophets, in this Heavenly calling.

Are you seeking to follow the example of Jesus, and be a prophet through following in His footsteps, and are you looking for the coming of Elijah to prepare the way for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? For in those people will be fulfilled the great hope of the ages – to be preserved alive until the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to be preserved in spirit and soul and body and changed from mortal to immortal at His return without going through physical death.📖

Hymn No. 142

(Matthew 1:21; Philippians 2:10)

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ears;
It calms his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fears.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
It soothes the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.

Blest Name - the rock on which we build,
Our shield and hiding-place,
A never failing treasury fill'd
With boundless stores of grace.

Thou art our Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,
Our Prophet, Priest, and King -
Our Lord, our life, our way and end,
To Thee our thanks we bring.

Statement of Belief

The Christian Israelite Church beliefs can be fully supported by the Scriptures.

Here is an outline:

We believe...

- In God Almighty creator of all things (Genesis 1:1).
- In the existence of Satan, the Devil, in whom God allowed iniquity to be placed (James 2:19; Ezekiel 28:14,15).
- That God created a spirit-existence in which the devil manifested evil and caused some of the spirits to rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Jude 6).
- That God created our physical world, to which each person comes with a body and a soul made alive by a spirit from the spiritual creation (Luke 9:55; Genesis 2:7).
- That God gave His people instructions on the way they should live, which instructions were "for their good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).
- That all have sinned and come "short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; 2nd Corinthians 5:19).
- That God has reconciled the (whole) world to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus (John 3:16,17).
- That through belief in the sacrifice of Jesus believers are counted as righteous before God, and can be assured of the resurrection of their souls (a Spiritual body) at Jesus' return (1st Timothy 4:10; 1st Corinthians 15:44).
- That there will be a small number who will fully prove their faith by a work of true obedience to God's instructions and will thereby receive the prize of the highest calling of God, the redemption of spirit and soul and body - this living mortal Body made Immortal without seeing death (1st Thessalonians 5:23; Revelation 14:1-5; Hebrews 11:39,40).
- That Jesus Christ will return to this earth again, subdue the power of Satan and reign forever and ever (Revelation chapters 19 and 20).
- That the return of Jesus Christ is near and we are living in the period described in Scripture as the latter days (Matthew chapter 24; Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21).
- That there are promises in the Scriptures especially to Israel - God's chosen people (1st Peter 2:9).
- That although Israel of old did not accept the challenge of spiritually being God's peculiar people, a remnant of their descendants will come forward in the latter days to fulfill the obligations and receive the promises (Revelation 7:1-8).
- That the Mission of the Christian Israelite Church is to awaken the lost ten tribes of Israel to this special inheritance to be the physical Immortal "Bride of the Lamb" and to be the vehicle for the task of bringing them all together at God's appointed time (Matthew 10:5,6; Revelation 19).

We believe that God is the absolute Judge and Arbiter and that we as His servants have an obligation to respond to what He puts in each heart, and that whilst we seek to proclaim and discuss our beliefs, we have no right to contend with other people about them.

Debug Your Bible: Feasts of Israel

by Lynne GRAY

As part of Israel's worship practice, festivals were a major component, for festivals were a means whereby Israel could come together regularly in public assembly (thus showing solidarity to the world) and perform certain freighted acts which were communal, public and material. The accent in Old Testament times was much more upon the thing done than upon the meaning of the thing done. It must be remembered as well, that these feasts were appointed by God and therefore are owned by God – He calls them 'my feasts' (Leviticus 23:2). Feasts may be a time of celebration, but they can also be a sign of reflection – some feasts do not involve food at all but are rather appointments with God.

The festivals were originally constructed within an agricultural environment, geared to the agricultural seasons that ran from seed time to harvest (which alternatively could be viewed as from birth to death). Festivals are a means of acknowledging God's blessings in the created order, the gift of harvest and therefore food for the coming year. Over a period of time the festivals changed slightly, and rather than being based upon an agricultural, seasonal thank you for God's bounty, they became more of a memorial whereby God's acts of deliverance were remembered and required to be handed down verbally from generation to generation so Israel would remember God's redemptive acts.

Liturgical calendars are given in Exodus 23:14-17 (the oldest festal calendar); Exodus 34:18-26; Deuteronomy 16:1-17; Leviticus 23:4-44; and Numbers 28-29. Although details for each of the quoted liturgical calendars differ slightly, there are many similarities such as all of them require that Israel show up in public for the festival and most include an offering in response to

God's gifts to Israel. Israel had to involve itself in regular freighted acts whereby their relationship with God was given substance, through symbolization, and through regular public assembly which activities saved Israel as a community from disappearing into the wood work – not showing up at these feasts was tantamount to ceasing to be Israel.

The important feasts based upon Leviticus chapter 23, were:

- a. the **Feast of the Passover** which is held on Nisan 14 and is a Spring festival;
- b. the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Mazzoth) on Nisan 15-21 and is a Spring festival;
- c. the **Feast of Firstfruits** on Nisan 16 and is a Spring festival;
- d. the **Feast of Weeks** which is held 50 days after Firstfruits and is a late Spring festival;
- e. the **Feast of Trumpets** is held on Tishri 1 and is an Autumn festival;
- f. the **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur) is held on Tishri 10 and is an Autumn festival; and
- g. the **Feast of Tabernacles** (also known as Booths and Ingathering) is celebrated from Tishri 15-21 and is an Autumn festival.

Add to this list the most important of all sacred days (except for the Day of Atonement), the Sabbath which had been mandated for Israel by God from the very beginning.

The Sabbath - Genesis 2:2 tells us that God Himself observed the Sabbath. Regulations for keeping the Sabbath were more rigorous than the regulations attached to festivals and feasts, eg. a Jew could cook during the festivals but not on the Sabbath. The Jewish Sabbath commenced at sundown on Friday, thus Friday during the day hours was usually spent preparing food for the Sabbath. Jewish days reckon from sunset to sunrise, as in Genesis chapter 1, "And the

evening and the morning were the first day” (1:5) repeated as the final statement for each of the six days of the creation sequence, for creation has to come from darkness to light, and not the other way around – God’s actions do not move from light to darkness, but rather from darkness to light. To welcome in the Sabbath, the woman of the house lights candles, the Sabbath meal begins with a sanctification (*kiddush*). This sanctification involves the ritual in which wine is drunk, and bread, broken and dipped in salt, was eaten. There is also observance of Sabbath end known as ‘separation’ (*havdala*) when wine is drunk, spices are smelled and a lamp/candle is lit. There was an expectation that all Jews would attend the Temple at Jerusalem for the observance of the Sabbath, which could be costly or difficult to achieve especially for Jews of the dispersion – this is where local synagogues came to the fore as a major part of Jewish worship practice. The requirement for Temple attendance ceased after the age of seventy, where the Sabbath could be observed at home or in the local synagogue.

Passover (Pesah) (Nisan 14) is a one day holiday. Leviticus 23:5-6 echoes a distinction between the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which had once prevailed but in time became indistinct, and now the 2 festivals are celebrated as a single festival week. The Passover festival is kept to commemorate the ‘passing over’ of the angel of death over the households of the Israelites when the firstborn of Egypt were slain by the last plague prior to the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (Exodus chapter 12). The Passover begins on the full moon following the spring equinox, or in the case of a Jewish leap year, the full moon approximately one month later. This was regarded as a pilgrim feast, just as Tabernacles and Pentecost are, which entailed the faithful attending the Temple at Jerusalem.

In commemoration of the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, on the first night and sometimes the first two nights, the *Seder* meal takes place. In commemoration of the release from enslavement in Egypt, a lamb is sacrificed and there is also the injunction laid down for the Israelites to tell their children in the days to come what God has done for them (Exodus

13:8) and this recitation is called *The Haggada* (‘greatest narrative’). The traditional symbols used in the seder service are: the matzot (three cakes prepared in a napkin for ceremonial use); parsley; bowl of salt water; bitter herb, horseradish or bitter watercress represent the bitterness inflicted by the Egyptians; chopped nuts and apple (*haroset*) represented the clay the Israelites used to make bricks; roasted bone represented the paschal lamb; and a roasted egg represented the voluntary animal sacrifice which one might have wished to offer during Passover.

On the second day of Passover, traditional Jews count the seven full weeks that follow and each night they number the day, reciting the appropriate blessing for the act of counting. Amongst orthodox and conservative Jews, during this time of ‘counting’ there are no marriages performed, nor should the hair be cut.

An ancient feast, Passover is said to span some thirty five centuries. The Christian equivalent to Passover is the festival of **Easter**. In the Christian understanding the paschal lamb was Jesus Christ, offered by God for the sins of everyone. Through the festival of Easter we remember this sacrifice, and what God has done for us, but also, as reflected in the giving of eggs to each other, we acknowledge that through Jesus Christ we all can be reborn. The unleavened bread aspect of the feast is still maintained in some church communities with the wafer of communion being a flatbread with no leaven.

Interestingly in traditional Jewish observance of Passover there are four cups of wine, and because wine is often a symbol of joy of harvest, the four cups reflect the fourfold joy of the Lord’s redemption:

1. For the first cup of wine the father lifts his cup toward heaven and recites the prayer of sanctification (*Kiddush*) to set the day apart for God – in Luke 22:17 we have Jesus Christ as the leader of this service (known as the Seder service) in the Upper Room when He said the Kiddush, “*And he took the cup, and gave thanks*” Luke 22:17.
2. The second cup of wine is poured and then four questions are asked, in

response to which the Passover story is recounted. The story of Abraham in Ur is told, through the patriarchs, to Joseph and finally to the deliverance of Israel at the hand of Moses and the giving of the Law at Sinai. Before the wine is taken the first half of the praise psalms are sung (known as the *Hallel* – Psalm 113-118). *Hallel* means praise in Hebrew and from this word we get the word *halleluyah* which means ‘praise Jehovah’. These Psalms were said to have been chanted by the Levites whilst the Passover lambs for each family were being sacrificed.

3. The third cup of wine is called the *Cup of Redemption*. Jesus Christ performed this part of the Seder which has traditionally become known as the Lord’s table or sacrament (Luke 22:20). This is the cup that Jesus Christ chose to be the reminder of His work on the cross. The festival of Passover was associated with the hope of the coming Messiah – after the third cup is taken a Jewish child is sent to the front door to hopefully welcome in the prophet Elijah. Jews hope that Elijah will step into their home and reveal to them the coming of the Messiah – “*I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord*” Malachi 4:5. It is widely believed that Elijah will be one of the two messianic witnesses mentioned in Revelation chapter 11, although this is open to interpretation.

4. The fourth cup of wine is called the *Cup of Acceptance/Praise* – it was the cup that the Messiah said He would not drink until He drank it with the disciples in the Kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Jesus Christ knew that His acceptance by the Jewish nation was yet to come and therefore His joy would not be full until then.

The Passover, in Christian understanding, focuses on Jesus (the Messiah) as the Passover Lamb.

Feast of Unleavened Bread (*Mazzoth*) is held in early Spring (our equivalent would be March-April) and begins on Nisan 15 and lasts for 7 days but it has become common over a period of time to blur the festival of

Passover and Unleavened Bread together with the 8 days feast being known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1,7). It begins the day after Passover. The commandment for this feast was given by God to Israel prior to the Israelites departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:14-20). The feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were the first feasts to be instituted.

There are 3 instructions given in the Bible for the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

1. special sacrifices were to be offered in the Temple each day of the feast (Leviticus 23:8; Number 28:19-24);

2. the first and seventh days of the feast were Sabbaths with prohibitions on all work (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:7,8; Numbers 28:25; Deuteronomy 16:8); and

3. leaven was strictly forbidden (Exodus 12:14-20; 13:6-8; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:3,8), not only was leaven banned in food but also the presence of leaven was forbidden within a Jewish house – “*And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days:*” Deuteronomy 16:4.

Sin is often likened to leaven in the Bible (Matthew 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; Galatians 15:9), because leaven permeates the dough, contaminating the dough and making it sour – fermenting the dough – this is the first stage of decay. That is why only unleavened bread is used in the Temple (Leviticus 2:11; 6:16,17; 10:12). Offerings must be pure and anything containing leaven was seen as impure and therefore unfit for offerings.

This feast serves as a reminder to Israel of God’s miraculous deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians, for when Israel fled they had no time to prepare the bread dough to rise and as a result God commanded that “*Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life*” Deuteronomy 16:3.

It was the Feast of Unleavened Bread that Jesus was attending when He

journeyed to Jerusalem at the age of 12, “*And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem*” Luke 2:42-43. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, in Christian understanding, focuses on the burial of the Messiah.

The Feast of Firstfruits was a feast devoted to eschatological events. The feast was held on Nisan 16 in the first Jewish month (equivalent to our March or April) and held 2 days after the beginning of the Passover season. This feast marked the beginning of the cereal grain harvests in Israel and in the case of barley (for example) the first sheaf of barley was harvested and taken to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering to God for the harvest. Until the first fruits had been offered the people were not allowed to use any of the harvest in any way (Leviticus 23:14) – to neglect these offerings was considered to be stealing from God.

The Bible is unclear with regards a specific date for the feast of Firstfruits, but merely stated that it was to be observed “*on the morrow after a Sabbath*” (Leviticus 23:11) with no reference as to which Sabbath was in view. It was eventually established by majority opinion amongst the Pharisees that the Sabbath in question was Nisan 15 and therefore Firstfruits would follow this Sabbath.

The chronology of the Jewish Passover season would go as follows:

1. Passover (Nisan 14);
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread (7 days from Nisan 15 to Nisan 21); and
3. Feast of Firstfruits (Nisan 16)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread’s second day was also the Feast of Firstfruits thereby making Firstfruits a day shared by both holidays.

The Feast of Firstfruits served as a time marker to the Jewish people because not only did it mark the beginning of Israel’s grain harvest, but more importantly it marked the countdown to the Feast of Weeks. Starting at the Feast of Firstfruits, 49 days (seven sevens) was counted down until the 50th day which would be when the Feast of Weeks

was celebrated. This time is traditionally known as *Sefirat Ha-Omer* ‘the counting of the Omer’ because of the ritual of the counting of the days.

The firstfruits of all the agricultural crops belonged to God, whether it was grain, wine, oil, fleece, etc (Exodus 22:29; 23:19; 34:26) as well as the firstborn of all males (whether human or animal). Paul described Jesus Christ as being the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep 1 Corinthians 15:20. Jesus rose on the 3rd day of the Passover season – the day of the Firstfruits. The resurrection of Jesus is the beginning (the firstfruits) of God’s final harvest of all mankind. Jesus fulfilled the prophetic meaning of Firstfruits when He rose from the dead and became the firstfruit of the promise of resurrection – amazingly this occurred on the very day of Firstfruits.

Feast of Weeks (*Shavuot*) is always celebrated 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits – so it is observed in late Spring and generally late May or early June. On the modern Jewish calendar *Shavuot* falls on Sivan 6. *Shavuot* marked the beginning of the summer wheat harvest the same as the earlier Feast of Firstfruits marked the beginning of the spring barley harvest. *Shavuot* is celebrated for one day (Orthodox and Conservative Jews celebrate for two days). *Shavuot* is a harvest festival and is associated with the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. Greeks, Jews and Christians call this feast **Pentecost**, meaning fifty. There is no special or notable observance attached to the Feast of Weeks. *Shavuot* has also been viewed as the conclusion of the Passover season with no other major Jewish holidays occurring again until Autumn. *Shavuot* in the Greek language became known as *Pentecost* (Acts 2:1; 2 Maccabees 12:32) which means fiftieth. *Shavuot* is an important feast in Israel’s history, it is the second in the triad of solemn feasts, ordained by God for Israel, and Sabbath observance is dealt with the same way, there was no work permitted on *Shavuot*.

The Feast of Trumpets/New Year (*Rosh ha Shana*) is celebrated on the first two days of Tishri and coming at the new moon near the

fall equinox. The holy days start at sunset and conclude at sunset as do the other holy days in the Jewish calendar. The Jewish people regard Rosh ha Shana and Yom Kippur as 'High Holy Days' and these two holy days open and close a ten-day period called the 'Ten Days of Penitence'. On these holy days work is prohibited by halaka and tradition. On Rosh ha Shana certain activities may be performed that are not allowed on the Sabbath.

Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is recorded in the Priestly legislation of the Pentateuch in Leviticus chapter 16. The Day of Atonement is also known as Yom Kippur and occurs on Tishri 10. It is enjoined in Scripture (Leviticus 16:16, 19; 23:26-32) as a day of penitence, but not necessarily as a fast day. Yom Kippur tends to have stricter prohibitions than the Sabbath. The ritual is an annual sanctuary purgation ritual occurring on the tenth day of the seventh month. The Day of Atonement involves two expiatory or purgative rites, firstly the purification of the sanctuary and some of the surrounding areas with blood from priestly sacrifices; and secondly, the dispatch of the scapegoat bearing the sins of the people.

Yom Kippur is a feast that does not involve the pilgrimage to the Temple that the other festivals expected. Yom Kippur is referred to in Leviticus as "*Sabbath of solemn rest*" (23:32 Haftorah). Yom Kippur provided reconciliation to God for a community (Israel) that found itself completely alienated from God and without resources of its own to correct or mend this alienation. In the book of Hebrews (chapters 7-10) the work of Jesus Christ is detailed according to the festival procedure which culminates in Hebrews 9:23-28 with Jesus Christ bearing the sins of many.

The Feast of Booths/Tabernacles (Sukkot) – commences on the fifteenth of Tishri and lasts for seven days. Sukkot is a feast of thanksgiving for the harvest. The name is derived from the *sukka* meaning 'booth' that the Israelites built in their fields during the harvest and the Torah places a connection with the temporary shelters the Israelites had to erect during their journey through the desert after the Egyptian Exodus. Jews build a *sukka* attached to their houses

where the family eats during the festival. The festival is prescribed to last for seven days (Leviticus 23:33-36) with the injunction for an eighth day in Leviticus 23:39.

The festivals of Hanukkah and Purim are seen as minor Festivals in the Jewish calendar. During these festivals the ordinary restrictions, such as the prohibition of labor, do not apply. To these can also be added two newer observances that have been introduced into the Jewish calendar: Yom haShoa (Holocaust Memorial Day) and Yom ha Asmua'ut (Israel's Independence Day).

The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) celebrates and commemorates the re-consecration of the Jerusalem temple and its altar to the traditional service of God in 165 or 164 BCE after the profanation of it by the Syrians. Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev and lasts for eight days. The word *hanukkah* is usually translated 'dedication, consecration' but can also be translated 'renewal, restoration' suggested by the Greek word *egkainismos* in 1st Maccabees 4:56, 59. This festival arose as a response to a particular communal crises, rather than an agricultural base, and serves to reaffirm Israel's gratitude and obedience to God. Hanukkah may be loosely aligned with the Christian festival of **Christmas** which celebrates and commemorates the birth of Jesus. Similarly it is a time that Christians dedicate themselves to God in remembrance of, and gratitude for, God's gift to us of Jesus Christ. Similarly Jewish homes are lit with special candles each evening, the Jewish people give gifts to each other and to charities, it is a time of games, it is a time for the sharing of food with family and friends and a time of singing: for Jews they sing praise to God as Israel's deliverer – Christians sing praise to God for the gift of Jesus Christ who delivered all believers.

The Feast of Lots (Purim) also known as the Feast of Esther, is kept on the fourteenth day of Adar, which feast celebrates the victory of the Jews of Persia over Haman as recorded in the Book of Esther and is rooted textually in Esther 9:18-32. The day emerged to celebrate and commemorate the days in which the Jews gained relief from their enemies (9:22). The day was to be marked

by 'feasting and joy and the exchange of gifts' (Esther 9:22-23). Jewish people celebrate this festival by dressing in costume and mimicking authority. Ritual observation involves the reading of the *megilla* (the scroll of the book of Esther) that tells of Haman's casting lots (*purim*) to find an auspicious time to send his troops against the Jews – the lot fell on the month of Adar, and the day selected for the invasion was the thirteenth. From the book of Esther we know that Haman's plans were frustrated thanks to the efforts of Esther, and the Jewish people were able to 'turn the tables' on Haman, and therefore on the fourteenth the Jews celebrated a victory, and they commemorate this victory annually. Purim is very much enjoyed by children and is an occasion when people give gifts to their neighbours and to the poor (Esther 9:22).

Two other feasts that have been introduced into the Jewish festal calendar are **Yom haShoa (Holocaust Memorial Day)** which falls on the twenty seventh of Nisan and memorializes the heroism of the fighters in the Warsaw Ghetto who rose in revolt against the Nazis in 1943, as well as others slain in the Jewish Holocaust that occurred during World War II and **Yom ha Asmua'ut (Israel's Independence Day)** which is celebrated on Iyyar 5. It is kept to mark the emergence of the new state of Israel in 1948. This day is a cause of major celebration in Israel.

The **Year of Jubilee** is mentioned in Leviticus chapter 25 wherein a schedule of seven times seven years wherein land shall be returned to its rightful heir. Israel's form of worship in the case of Jubilees takes its shape publicly in political economy. Leviticus 25:10 states that the Jubilee is 'for you', it is a provision for a major Sabbath (seven times seven) and time of restitution – the festival serves as an antidote to an acquisitive political economy that does not have at its root the covenantal symbolization necessary, and very

much a part of, Israel's worship of God.

In conclusion the four festivals that developed in the Judaic calendar: Yom Kippur; Jubilee; Purim; and Hanukkah, cover a lot of territory, from holiness recovered (Yom Kippur) to neighbourhood reconstituted (Jubilee). The three basic festivals of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths provided the spine and structure to Israel's festal calendar, but within this structure there was room to add more festivals as the need arose (as can be seen with the addition of Purim, Hanukkah, etc.). Israel's calendar of feasts covered ALL of life and Israel recognized through their festivals that their world was governed by God – theirs was a special relationship with God.

The threefold structure of Unleavened Bread, Weeks and Booths can also loosely be applied to the three great Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Although, in the Christian calendar these festivals have a Christological base, they still serve similar functions in the requirement that believers 'show up' and gladly re-situate, re-describe and re-constitute their lives in a world which God presides over.

In Christian understanding Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of many of these sacrificial requirements:

1. the Feast of Passover depicts the Messiahs' death for the sins of the world;
2. the Feast of Unleavened Bread depicts the non-corruptible aspect of Jesus Christ's death and that his body would not decay in the grave;
3. the Feast of Firstfruits depicts Jesus' triumph at resurrection – because He lives we will live also; and
4. the Feast of Weeks also known as Pentecost, depicts the birth of the Church and the continuing assurance that God is with us. 📖

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Christmas Traditions

by Kerion FELLOWES

The image of the 3 wise men travelling to see the baby Jesus in the manger is a classic image for the religious celebration of Christmas. This image is as traditional as Santa Claus, snow and gifts beneath the Christmas tree. Even most non-Christian people would recognize the symbolism of the nativity scene. It depicts the generally accepted account of three wise men from the east who rode atop camels and followed a star to Bethlehem, bearing gifts for the newborn Christ child who lay in a manger surrounded by animals and shepherds. Actually many of these details are not found directly in the Biblical account of the birth of Jesus but extra details have been added over the years from sources outside the Bible. Luke 2:7-16 has the most detailed coverage in the New Testament of the birth of Jesus.

Three Wise Men

The Bible clearly shows that it was the shepherds who attended the baby Jesus while the family was in the manger. The wise men are not mentioned in relation to the stable or manger. *Mathew 2:1 tells us: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem".*

It has generally been assumed that the wise men (or magi) were three in number because Matthew 2:11 makes mentions of three gifts "...they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh." The number of wise men is not specified in the Bible and in the Orient, tradition mentions that twelve wise men made the journey to Bethlehem.

Despite the familiar lyrics of the Christmas carol "We Three Kings", no biblical source depicts the three wise men as kings. They were most likely learned men, perhaps astrologers/astronomers or mathematicians. The names of the wise men, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, do

not come from the Bible and did not appear in Christian literature until over five hundred years after the birth of Jesus.

The actual term Magi is first recorded in historical evidence through Herodotus. According to Herodotus (i.101), the "Magi" were the sixth tribe of the Medians (the name for the people of Ancient Iran), who appear to have been the priestly caste of the Mesopotamian-influenced branch of Zoroastrianism (a religion that followed the teachings of the prophet Zoroaster with a heavy influence on Mathematics, science, astrology/astronomy), and who wielded considerable influence at the courts of the Median emperors.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the wise men rode camels (or any other animal); they may have made their journey from the east on foot for all we know. From Persia, where the Magi are assumed to have originated, to Jerusalem was a journey of around 1900km. Such a distance may have taken any time between three and twelve months by camel. Besides the time of travel, there were probably many weeks of preparation. The Magi could scarcely have reached Jerusalem till a year or more had elapsed from the time of the appearance of the star. There is some historical evidence that also supports the fact that the wise men could not have arrived until the child was approximately a year old. Then the Magi came. It was in the days of King Herod (Matthew 2:1), i.e. before the year 4 B.C. (A.U.C. 750), the probable date of Herod's death at Jericho. There is historical evidence that Archelaus, Herod's son, succeeded as ethnarch to a part of his father's realm, and was deposed either in his ninth (Josephus, Bel. Jud., II, vii, 3) or tenth (Josephus, Antiq., XVII, xviii, 2) year of office during the consulship of Lepidus and Arruntius approximately A.D. 6. The Magi came while King Herod was holding his court in Jerusalem not in Jericho and the

historical record puts this around either the beginning of 4 B.C. or the end of 5 B.C.

Matthew 2:11 "And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him."

The wise men came "into the house", not the stable, and they saw a "young child", not a newborn. This passage indicates that the wise men didn't arrive until quite some time after Jesus' birth. When the Wise Men found Jesus and Mary, they would have been living in a normal house in Bethlehem, because by this time Jesus would have been aged between one and two. Then they gave their gifts to him.

The gifts seem quite strange to give to a young child but Christians today have interpreted the gifts with the following meanings:

- **Gold:** is associated with Kings, and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings;
- **Frankincense:** is sometimes used in worship in Churches and denotes Jesus' priestly office; and
- **Myrrh:** is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and showed that Jesus would suffer and die.

The gifts are all trade items that came the east of Israel in Arabia/Persia.

The facts that we do know from the Bible are that wise men came from the east, that they followed a star to Bethlehem to find the Christ child, and that they brought Him gold, and frankincense and myrrh. We must look to sources external to the Bible to find the origins of any of the other familiar details.

Star of Bethlehem

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him'" Matthew 2:1 (NRSV).

In Luke 21:25 Jesus tells us that there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. No one really knows what the new star in the sky was, but one of the most likely explanations is a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn.

- The word *aster* may mean a comet; the star of the Magi was a comet. But we have no record of any such comet;
- the star may have been a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn (7 B.C.), or of Jupiter and Venus (6 B.C.); or
- the Magi may have seen a *stella nova*, a star which suddenly increases in magnitude and brilliancy and then fades away.

Pisces had a special meaning in ancient astronomy and astrology (during Biblical times they were almost the same thing). It was the sign of Israel and of Kings. So a new star, or what looked like one appearing in that constellation, would mean a great deal to the scientists of that time. One such event that is often cited occurred on the evening of February 25, 6 BC involving Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, and happened in the constellation of Pisces, the Fishes. Astrology was not widely practiced by Jews during those times, but it was practiced by a few Jews and many Arabs such as those around the area of the Yemen.

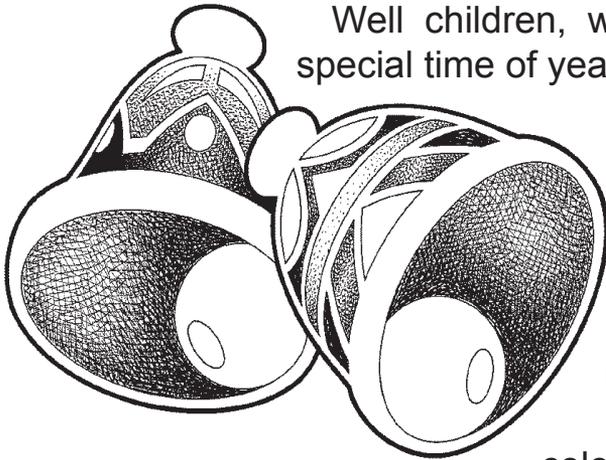
Another possible explanation for the Star of Bethlehem is the three-times passing of Jupiter and Saturn between May and December in 7 BC; a rare triple or 'great conjunction'.

There is no doubt about the visibility of these events, mostly opposite to the Sun in night time skies. As for their astrological impact, the Magi would have certainly noticed that both planets did not appear to separate widely between their conjunctions. In fact, for eight consecutive months the time it might have taken to travel the great distance from Babylonia to Judea Jupiter and Saturn remained within three degrees of each other, from late April of 7 BC until early January of 6 BC. But whether anyone actually observed them, and if any of these sent the Magi on their historic journey, are all matters for conjecture.

So, finally, was the Star of Bethlehem truly a *miracle star*? Indeed, a star of stars appearing just once in the history of man? Reaching a conclusion on this subject is not easy, for any natural theory for the Star of Bethlehem can only be at best, just an educated guess. 📖

Children's Story: The Three Kings

by Lynne GRAY



Well children, we are approaching a very special time of year aren't we?

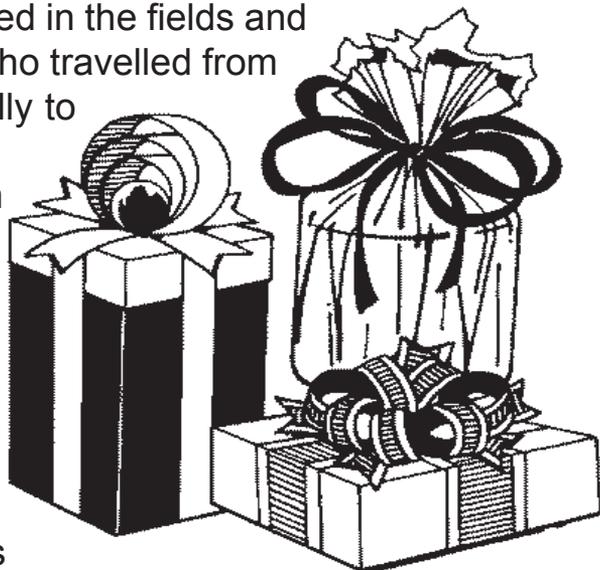
Christmas is coming and everyone will be getting excited about holidays and Christmas presents. It is a special time when families get together and people get lots of visitors.

But why do we really celebrate Christmas? Why do we give presents to each other?

Christmas is the time when we remember the birth of the baby Jesus. Remember Mary and Joseph, Jesus' parents, travelled to Bethlehem where Jesus was born in a stable.

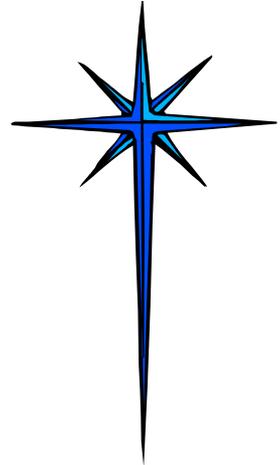
And just as today people visit each other at Christmas time, the baby Jesus had some very special visitors. The baby Jesus had the shepherds from the fields near where He was born, He had the animals that grazed in the fields and He had three wise men who travelled from a long way away especially to see Him.

The three wise men were from countries in the East. They had seen a star in the sky, and with their understanding of reading the stars, they knew that a great King was going to be born. They wanted to see this



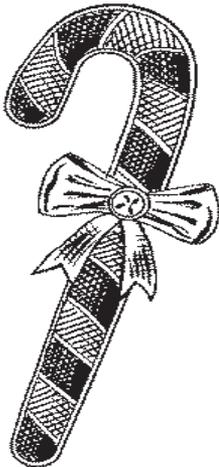
newborn King and give him presents.

Other records tell us that the names of the three wise men were Balthasar, Melchior and Gasper. It is also believed that these three wise men were also kings. Balthasar was the king of Arabia, Melchior was the king of Persia and Gasper was the king of India. These were three very important men. They travelled from their homes a long way to see the baby Jesus. They may even have travelled on camels as part of a large group known as a 'caravan'. Being kings they would have had lots of assistants and helpers who went with them on this trip.



When the three wise men found the baby Jesus at Bethlehem, they presented him with presents: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

These aren't the normal presents you would give a baby are they? Normally you would give a baby a rattle, or a toy, or some clothes.



But these gifts the wise men gave to Jesus were special. They showed what a very special baby He was.

Gold was given to Jesus to show that he was a king, the same as the wise men.

Not only would Jesus be a king, but He would also be a priest and that is why He was given the incense Frankincense.

Frankincense is used for making places smell nice and also for sacrifices.

The present of the herb known as myrrh, though, is a bit sad, because they use myrrh to prepare dead bodies for burial. So the myrrh was a present that was a little bit sad, because it was a reminder of what was going to happen to Jesus when He grew up.

So you see children, this is one of the reasons why we give Christmas presents to each other.



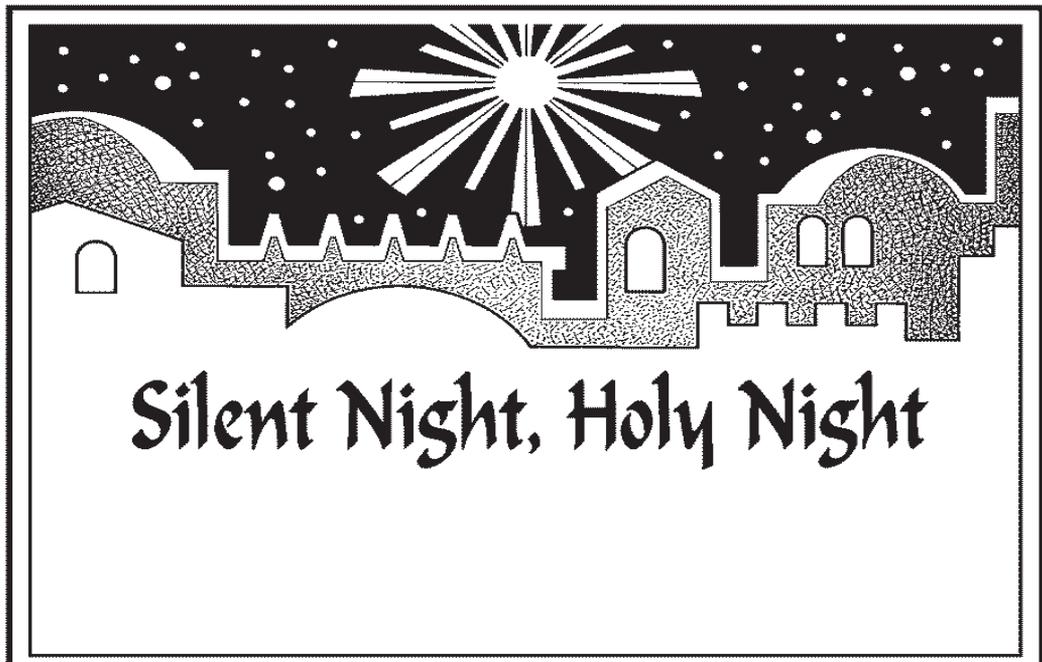
They remind us of the very important presents the three wise men gave Jesus when he was a baby that show how important He was.

They also remind us of what an important person Jesus was for all of us. Jesus was God's gift to us.

In giving to each other we are doing what He did for other people when He was here as a man.

Children, have a very happy Christmas, and safe holidays. Remember the reason we have the holidays and Christmas. Be good for your parents, and remember to thank them for all the things they do for you through the year. Make this a special holiday.

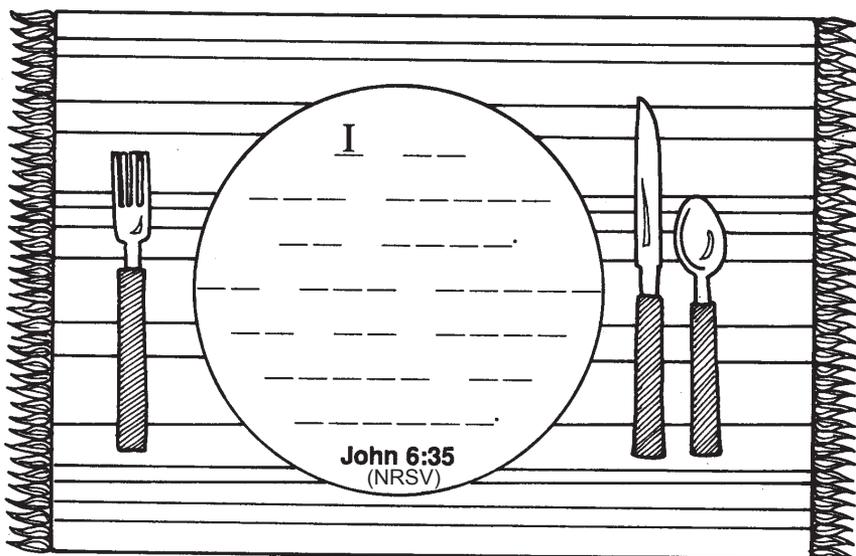
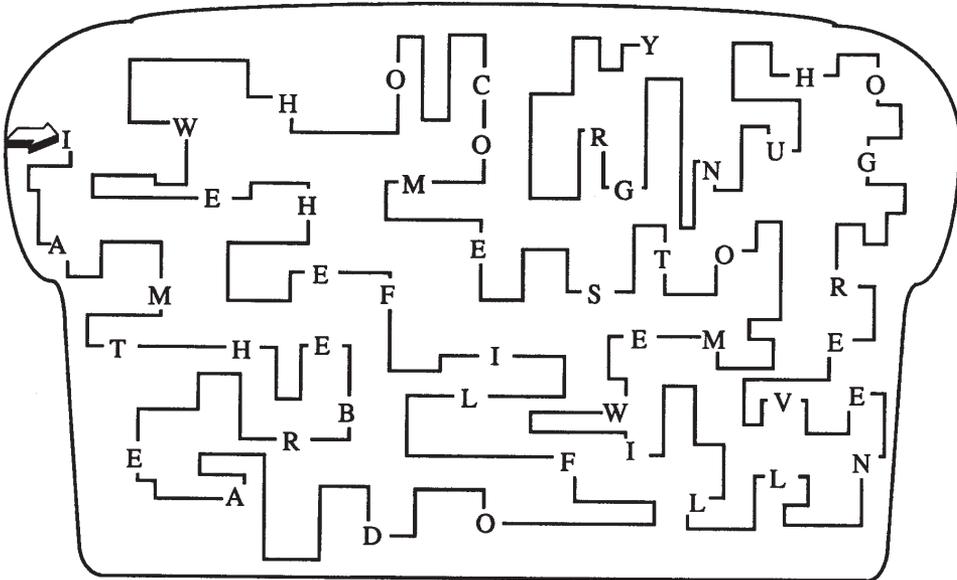
And remember to thank God in your prayers for the greatest gift ever - the gift of the baby Jesus.📖



Puzzle Page

Bread Maze

To find the memory verse, start with the letter "I" and follow the maze through the loaf of bread. Write the letters on the plate as you come to them.



Expand Your Bible: The Reason for the Season

by Audrey HARRISON

To the child a time of excitement and anticipation... To the teenager a time to party... To the parent or the one preparing the celebration, a time of business and often frustration... To the older person a time of nostalgia and memories... To many a time described by the proverbial Charles Dickens character, Scrooge, as "Bah...humbug"...

To most, the time to remember God's gift to mankind and to thank Him...

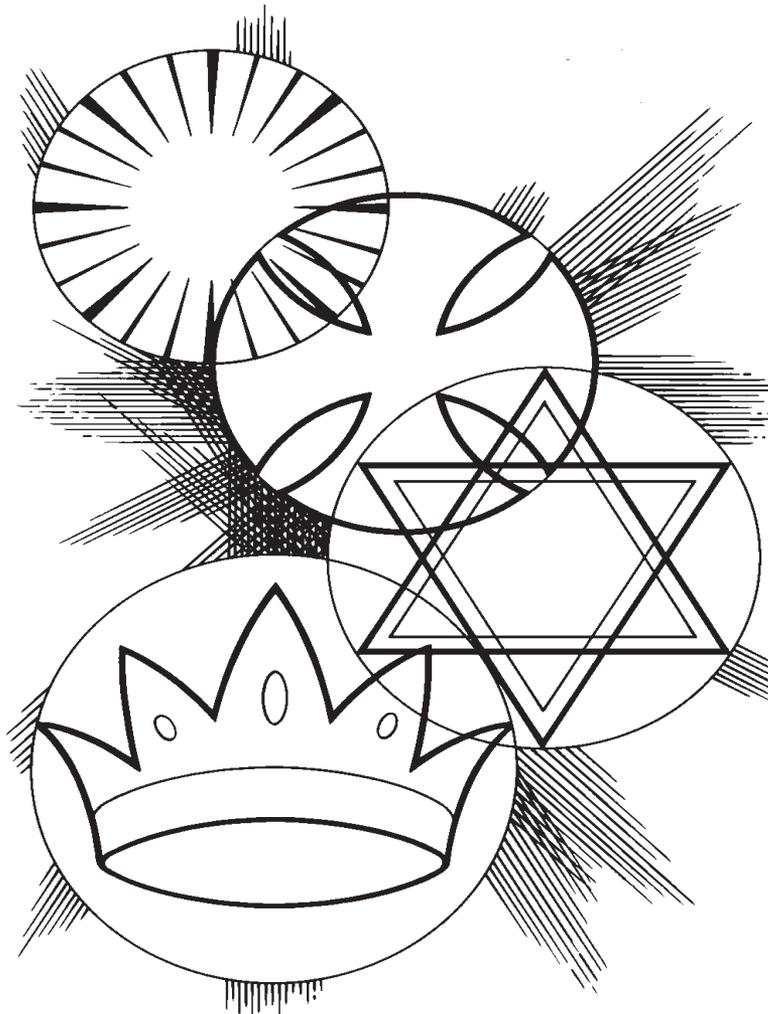
But whatever category you fall into there

is something special about Christmas.

What thoughts fill your mind when you think of Christmas? Do your thoughts go straight to the baby born in a manger, 'the reason for the Season', or do you think of food, decorations, cards, people contacted at Christmas, loved ones who are absent, presents, a long list of things. All aspects of Christmas and all complementing the other, blending to make this a time of happiness and goodwill.

In a recent issue of Latter Rain the article "Who is this Jesus" endeavoured to make us think as did the people of Jesus' day as to who He really was. When we think about this question, though, we should go right back to Jesus' birth.

Who was this baby whose birth was announced by a band of the 'heavenly host', the angels, proclaiming His birth with a wonderful song, 'Glory to God in the Highest and on Earth peace and goodwill to men'? No doubt the shepherds wondered what this was all about...it wasn't every day that a baby's birth was announced in this way. They must surely have thought they were dreaming or imagining things. The angels came and went...no cameras then to take a picture



and say to everyone, "Yes, look there are... angels just like we said". No recorders to be able to reproduce that glorious music and say to everyone, "Yes listen...listen to those voices and those words...just like we told you."

Who did the shepherds tell?

They went to the manger and found the baby as the angels had said they would.

Frankincense

This gift of the Magi was traditionally said to have been presented by Balthasar to Jesus. Frankincense was the purest of incenses - it was frequently used in Old Testament sacrifices. The white smoke produced by burning the frankincense represented the prayers of the faithful ascending to heaven. The gift of frankincense symbolizes sacrifice, the divine nature of Jesus Christ and His priestly role. As with myrrh, frankincense is a sweet smelling gum resin from certain *Boswellia* trees which, at the time of Jesus, grew in Arabia, India and Ethiopia. The resin has at times been as valuable as gems or precious metals. Frankincense was the sacred incense of Israel and used in the anointing oil - the smoke of the frankincense was pleasing and acceptable to God.

So, they thought, the story is true. We can imagine they would really wonder about all that had happened and what it was all about. They only had the present and couldn't see the future fulfillment. Many of them must have thought about this night for years to come and perhaps some would have connected this baby to Jesus the teacher who emerged later on in time. Others of course, would have dismissed it as a dream or imagination.

Mary, Jesus' mother, must have had many times when she wondered just what was happening. First the announcement by the angel Gabriel about the child that she was to give birth to; the trip to Bethlehem to register in the Census and

then the arrival of the shepherds and the Magi. Even the events surrounding the conception and birth of John, her cousin Elizabeth's child were to say the least, unusual, but were connected in some way she knew to her child.

We read in the Bible that 'she pondered these things in her heart'. Could she ever have imagined how Jesus' teachings would spread throughout the world as they have?

And what of the wise men who came from the East to find and worship the Christchild. Did they ever follow up what happened to the child and did they ever know that this baby did fulfill the promises of His birth.

At the time of Christmas let us think of Jesus' birth, not as a story, but as a real happening, and think of 'the reason for the Season'.

The wise men sought Jesus... and wise men still do.📖

Myrrh

This gift of the Magi to Jesus was traditionally said to have been presented by Caspar to Jesus. It was an aromatic gum resin from the dindin tree (*Commifera Myrrha*) that grows in the desert. Myrrh was used for the embalming and anointing of the dead, thus it came to represent mortality, suffering and sorrow. In preparation of the dead it was used as a preservative to postpone decay and destroy odours. Usually less than a pound of myrrh was used in funerary preparations, but in the case of Jesus, Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes which weighed about one hundred pounds (John 19:39). Myrrh also has many medicinal uses and has been used in ancient times to clean sores and wounds and as late as the 19th century in the treatment of worms, coughs, colds, asthma, bad breath, gum disease and gonorrhoea - it is still a common ingredient today in toothpaste and mouthwash. It was also used as an analgesic up and until the discovery of morphein.

Vegetarian Recipes

Split Pea Soup

2 tblspns olive oil	1 litre vegetable stock
1 large onion, chopped	1 tblspn fresh thyme, finely chopped
1 large carrot, diced (1cm cubes)	1/4 cup lemon juice
1 large stick celery, diced (1cm cubes)	1 litre water
2 bay leaves	salt and pepper, for seasoning
2 cups (440g) yellow split peas	olive oil, extra
6 cloves garlic, finely chopped	

Heat olive oil in a large saucepan, add onion, carrot and celery and cook for 5-6 minutes or until starting to brown. Then add bay leaves, garlic and thyme and cook for a further minute. Stir in the split peas, add the vegetable stock plus one litre of water.

Cook for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until the split peas and vegetables are soft. Stir often during cooking to prevent the soup sticking to the bottom of the pan.

Skim any scum from the surface of the soup as it is cooking. If the soup is too thick add a little extra water.

Remove soup from the heat and take out the bay leaves. Stir in the lemon juice and season with salt and pepper. Before serving drizzle the soup with a little olive oil.

Serves 4-6.

Potato Latkes

750g starchy potatoes, grated coarsely
1 onion, grated finely
2 tblspns plain flour
1/3 cup (80ml) olive oil
2 eggs, beaten lightly
1 tspn salt
Pepper to taste

Cover the grated potatoes in a large bowl with cold water for 10 minutes. Drain. Then add the onion to the bowl, mix the potato and onion well, then squeeze out as much moisture as possible. Add the eggs, flour, and salt and pepper.

Heat olive oil in a large frying pan. Spoon into the frying pan 2 tablespoons of the potato mixture for each latke. Cook for 2 minutes or until golden. Drain the latkes on a paper towel.

Traditionally Latkes are served at Hanukkah, the Jewish festival that is celebrated at a similar time to the Christian festival of Christmas. Latkes can be served as an accompaniment to savoury dishes, or as a sweet dish when you dust the latkes with cinnamon and sugar (but don't add the onion). They are often served, both savoury and sweet, with apple sauce.