

Hebron Messenger

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December 14, 2003

NO.25

WHY DID CHRIST COME INTO THIS WORLD? -2

The next statement we shall consider is found in Matt.20: 28, where our Lord says -so beautifully, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister", -in other words, He is here, not to be served, but TO SERVE. That is His explanation to us that is why He came.

We notice, in the passage (v.20 onwards), the Lord had been drawn into a discussion concerning His coming Kingdom, and He points out that in His Kingdom there will be a big difference from all other kingdoms, -where the "top ones" are the ones who hold the authority. In His Kingdom it will be the "low ones", or lowly ones, who will be chief. It is at that point that He makes His statement that He Himself did not come to be served, but TO SERVE.

Most of us will agree that this was something quite revolutionary. Amongst us, it is quite normal for any king to have, around him, a whole, retinue of courtiers who are dedicated to the meeting of his needs, -providing him with every possible comfort. Not so with the Great Son of Man. He is here to serve, -not to be served. He is here to take the basin and the towel (See John 13:3-5) and wash the feet of His ever-aspiring disciples. His Kingdom is, and will be, an entirely different Kingdom. It will be "heavenly" -not "earthly". How slow we all are to learn that servanthood is the essence of real kingliness!

If we ask, -to what extent would He be prepared to serve us, -what will be the limits? -the answer is supplied in the closing words of the same sentence, -to serve, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY" (Matt.20:28). In other words, there are no limits! This Son of Man (Messiah) will pay the price for our sins; -He will die for us ON CALVARY! O, what a servanthood is that, -Messiah dying for His rebel creatures. What a revelation! And then will come the resurrection! Hallelujah!

Are we not right in saying that all this puts to shame our own mean thoughts about "serving"? In the case of Christ it was to be a case of vicarious sacrifice, -the Holy Lamb of God taking upon Himself, and "carrying away" the sins of the world (John 1: 29). He was God's "Second Man" dying for the first man, -Adam and all Adam's offspring. It was a great over- payment, but a payment just the same, -willingly paid on our behalf. That, He says, is why He came, -that is the "service" He will render. Bethlehem will lead on to Calvary, -Christ will die, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring US to God" (1 Pet.3: 18). That, He says, is why He came. We say, surely, surely, there is no message like the Christian Gospel!

The question still remains, however, -"How can people like ourselves actually receive the benefits of what Christ has done?" What will be THE WAY IN to all these blessings? How are we to respond? Thank God, our Lord has made that plain also, and, -in Luke 5:32, He shows us THE APPOINTED WAY. Again speaking of His coming to Bethlehem, He says: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to REPENTANCE". That, we may say, is WHY He came; -He is here to issue His call to sinners.

As to the so-called "righteous", He has nothing to say to them. If, in spite of all they have heard, they still persist with their delusions that they have some "righteousness" of their own, they must continue in their folly, -and to their doom. They will hear no call from the Saviour. If, on the other hand, they will face up to the truth, -sweet music will reach them, -the "music" of His voice, and the Gospel call.

It is interesting to note that, at the very commencement of His public ministry, our Lord said, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel (Mark 1: 15). As for the word "repent", the original (METANEUO) signifies "a change of mind", or, "an amendment in the seat of moral reflection" (W.E. Vine; - Gk. Dictionary). In our own simple terms it just means a change in the direction in which we have been going; -a genuine "about turn". For long, we have had our faces toward sin, and our backs toward God; -now that whole attitude must go into reverse. As with those Thessalonians believers of old, we must "turn to God from 'idols' to serve the Living and True God" (1 Thess.1: 9). Or, as with that Prodigal Son, it must be "Backs to the pigs, and faces toward HOME, - and to awaiting and patient father" (See Luke 15:14-24). And how wonderful it is that God graciously HELPS us in that also! He "gives us repentance" (Acts 11: 18), -and He "draws us to Himself" (John 6:44).

Let us all respond to those pleadings, and let us "believe" God's own glorious Gospel. Christ has given His Life a Ransom for us; He is RISEN FROM THE DEAD, -"alive for evermore" (Rev.1: 18). Let us make HIM our All. Christ came into the world that we might do just that. May He, indeed, help us!

C.R.G.

(To be contd.)

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

Hebron,
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Telephone No.27613066
December 3, 2003

Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

All praise and honour, glory and power be unto Him, even our Lord Jesus Christ, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, Who has brought us to the closing weeks of the year. Before we enter the New Year, there should be a look within, and learn of the Lord that there is yet ample room for much spiritual improvement and impetus in our lives and not be satisfied with the same kind of hearing, reading, praying and serving which might have satisfied us hitherto. This is possible only by a healing of our own spiritual ailments first, as we discover them while waiting in the presence of the Lord. Our healing will surely contribute to the HEALING of the LAND, as it is written in 2 Chron.7: 14 -the land meaning our family, and the fellowship or the local church as a whole.

Solomon's prayer referred to above, we know, is as follows. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will Forgive their SIN, and will HEAL their land". Thus we learn that FORGIVENESS precedes true HEALING as the Lord would have it, and that of course is preceded by turning and true confession on our part.

This doctrine of FORGIVENESS may sound rather too elementary to all who are born again, having had the assurance of forgiveness through faith in the precious blood of Christ, as well as justification by faith (Rom.5: 1, 9, 10). However, we do not want some unconfessed sin hitherto not discerned as such, to

continue in our lives and remain as a spiritual ailment to hinder our growth and usefulness unto the Lord, spreading into another year. Hence the Lord grant us all grace for an honest and earnest examination of our lives, and a desire to put things right with God and man, as much as it lies with us. Henceforth we may walk in the fear and fellowship of the Lord as never before.

We read in Psalm 130:4, "But there is FORGIVENESS with thee, that thou mayest be FEARED". Forgiveness will kindle in the forgiven one, fear for the Lord and faith to wait for the Lord (v S), as energized by the Holy Spirit, which is bound to make him different from then on. Too many people presume that they are forgiven, since it is a free and unconditional promise to all who believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross. However, there are some leading evidences in the life of a forgiven soul, walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

Firstly, forgiven souls hate sin, and they do not want to continue in sin. If sin and we are friends, others would doubt whether God and we are really reconciled. Secondly, forgiven souls love Christ. His Person, His work, His Name, His cross, His blood, His example, His words, His ordinances, His day, all are precious to forgiven souls. Thirdly, forgiven souls are humble. They owe all that they have, and hope for, to free grace. I am less than the least of all saints -the chief of sinners (Eph.3: 8; 1Tim.1: 15), says Apostle Paul. Fourthly, forgiven souls are holy. Their chief desire is to please the Lord, to do His will and glorify Him in body and in spirit. Believers who are in a carnal, slothful state of soul should take heed to the word of Peter, "...he hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet.1: 9). Fifthly, forgiven souls are forgiving. They remember how God for Christ's sake has forgiven them and endeavor to do the same towards their fellow -creatures. A spiteful, quarrelsome Christian is a scandal to his profession. Though saving faith in Christ is co -existent with many imperfections, the above five marks should be found more or less in all FORGIVEN SOULS. Let us pray, " Search me, O God, and know my heart..." (Psa.139: 23), and being FORGIVEN and FREED, may we be His tools to bring health and healing to the "LAND" as the year closes.

With a sense of sorrow and loss we mention the Home call of Bro. S. Martin, who was promoted to Glory at 4 A.M. on Sunday the 23rd November at Vishakhapatanam, after a period of illness, specially suffering from Diabetes, at the age of 80. The Lord raised him from a poor and humble Hindu family and at the age of 14 he came to know the Lord, through the Bible League Gospel ministry. He was further stirred and awakened in the revival that broke out in Madras in 1938, by the burning and shining ministry of late Bro. Bakht Singh, and later became an inmate of Jehovah-Shammah, to be trained for full time ministry. He has written in his testimony that Jeremiah 1: 5,7 were the promises that assured him and equipped him for his call and ministry .He was the first amongst the pioneer workers trained under the strict discipline and direction of Bro. Bakht Singh. to live a life of faith and true devotion to the Lord. He was known later for his discipline and strictness in the work of the Lord. which was not appreciated by some. The Lord granted him the gift of composing songs, of which he has written, "In songs ministry also, the Lord used me as a vessel unto honour". From the inception of the Lord's work at Hyderabad, he was with us as early as 1949, and accompanied Bro. Bakht Singh several times to U.S.A and other countries. He was confined to Vishakhapatanam and surroundings, based at Salem in the latter years. The attendance of several thousands from allover Andhra Pradesh and other parts of the country at his funeral, clearly spoke of the impact of his life and ministry, and the esteem he won amongst the people of God, remaining "obedient to the heavenly vision, in spite of many trials". "...Man of God, flee these things: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (1 Tim.6: 11, 12), can be said true of him, as he now rests from his labours. Pray for his family members and the churches who do miss him.

The Hebron calendars besides the Motto Cards for the year 2004 are ready for sale from Hebron. Kindly write your requirements to Bro. K.S. Paul, Book Room, Hebron, at the same time clearing your previous balances.

The following is a write up of the work of the Lord going on in Rumania by brothers T.E. Koshy and D .S. Christopher who were there in October to minister amongst them. May the Lord help us to pray for them intelligently. "I wish to thank you for praying for us for the ministry fulfilled in Germany and

Romania during the month of October. A Youth Camp was held in Metzingen, Germany, October 2-5, sponsored by the Assembly there. Over 350 youth attended. Few accepted the Lord including two Indian young men, one among them a Hindu. Bro. George Krampulz is the founding elder of this assembly. I came into contact with him at the France Holy Convocation in 1985. In 1992 I had the privilege to accompany Bro. George Krampulz to Romania and we had a series of evangelistic meetings in some cities. A few Gypsies, in a place called Marasesti were saved and their lives were wonderfully transformed. The mayor of the city, when he saw the change in them remarked, "I can hardly believe what I see here! I knew you as trouble-makers; you were lazy, dirty, drunkards, immoral and non-cultural. Today I look at you and see your clean and cheerful faces, full of peace and happiness and I am quite impressed. No other school or Society was able to change you, such as your God could accomplish". After this the Mayor offered to contribute some support for construction of a new prayer house for them and gave a piece of land and some building material. Please pray that the Lord may provide for the completion of the building, as the present building is too small for them. We thank the Lord for enabling me along with Bro. Christopher to visit them again.

"In general, we were amazed to see what the Lord has been doing in Romania. The Lord has raised worshipping communities gathering together on the basis of Acts 2:42 and the New Testament principles, even more fervently than we do in India or any other assemblies so far I have visited. Brothers, sisters and young people worship in an orderly Way following the exhortation and they take part in the Lord's Table after a full exhortation is given. The ministry of the Word is given at the end. In most of the assemblies they kneel down for worship, though they sit on the chairs, others stand for worship and prayers. I understand there are over 500 assemblies all across Romania. In spite of communism, poverty and other problems, the Lord has preserved these saints. But they need our prayers, that they may continue to be faithful to the Lord and to His Word".

Please continue to pray for Sis. Elizabeth Kurien, continuing Homeo treatment after surgery. Praying that we may all find time to wait upon the Lord in these closing days of the year, and be healed of our infirmities and ailments in the spiritual realm, and be blessed and be a blessing to others in the year ahead,

I remain,
Yours in His grace,

K.PHILLIP

Psa. 103: 3 -5

Isa. 40: 28 -31

Eph. 1: 3,4

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS BAKHT SINGH

Reading: 2 Kings 6 :1-18; Luke 24: 13-48 The king of Syria sent a very large army, with horses and chariots to capture Elisha, because he revealed his secret plans to the king of Israel. In the morning, Elisha's servant went outside and saw the great army and cried out to his master saying, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?" He was full of fear. Elisha told him that he had no need to be afraid because they had a greater and mightier army than the enemy. The servant thought, "Is my master trying to fool me? Where is this army he is talking about?" Elisha had told the truth but the servant was blind and that is why he could not see the heavenly army. When Elisha prayed, God opened the eyes of the young man. Then he saw the whole mountain full of horses and chariots of fire.

This young man had been serving Elisha, the man of God, and had seen many miracles. Yet he was blind.

He had seen Naaman being cured of leprosy. Also, in 2 Kings 4:38-44, when Elisha came to Gilgal, there were a hundred sons of the prophets waiting to see him. One man went out to gather some leaves for cooking and unknowingly gathered wild poisonous herbs. When they sat for food they discovered that there was poison in the food. They cried out to Elisha. He asked them to cast some meal in the food. Then they were able to eat it without danger. Again, in vs.42-44, he had seen Elisha performing another miracle of multiplying food. The servant of Elisha had seen all these miracles. But his eyes were not yet opened to see heavenly things. He was spiritually blind.

After Naaman was healed of his leprosy, he brought some gifts for Elisha, because his heart was full of gratitude. But Elisha refused to receive this gift. Gehazi thought to himself that Elisha had made a very big mistake. So he ran behind the chariot, told a lie to Naaman and got for himself some silver and two changes of garments. He came back home, hid the things cleverly and with pretended innocence came and stood before Elisha. For this reason he became leprous. Even though he had been with the man of God for such a long time and had the privilege of learning many things and seeing the great power of God through Elisha, his heart was still full of love and greed for money, gold and silver. His lie and greed for money made him spiritually blind, and he could not see the horses of fire, which the Lord had kept for Elisha. Many people, including servants of God, become blind spiritually because of their love for earthly things, like money and fame; and they increase their sins by telling many lies. Thus their faith becomes weak and they lose spiritual sight.

There are different kinds of physical blindnesses. Spiritually also there are different kinds of blindnesses. First of all, according to 2 Cor.4:4 the god of this world blinds the minds of people that they may not believe, and the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ cannot shine upon them. They cannot understand God's love for them. They will hear man-made stories and believe them; but they will rebel against the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They cannot understand how Christ died and rose again for their sakes. Only the power of God can remove this blindness. Elisha prayed for his servant, and God heard him. He forgave the servant and opened his eyes. So we also must pray for people and God will open their eyes to receive the Gospel of Christ.

We read about the Lord Jesus Christ healing a blind man in Mark 8:22-26. The Lord took that man aside, spat on his eyes, put his hands upon him and asked him if he saw anything. The blind man looked up and said. "I see men as trees, walking". He did see something, but his vision was not clear. That is partial blindness. The Lord gave him another touch and then he got clear vision. There are people who know something about the Lord Jesus that He died on the cross for their sins. But they have little understanding about truths like the cleansing power of the precious blood, or God's eternal purpose for their lives. They do not have clear understanding of God's forgiveness. As a result they live a life of defeat and failure. Such partially blind people need a second or even a third touch from the Lord. Clear understanding does not come through human wisdom; it comes only through the touch of the Lord.

(To be contd.)

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NO.26

WHY DID CHRIST COME INTO THIS WORLD? -3

As we now bring our meditation to a close, there is just one more closely- related verse, which we would like to look into. Our Lord is again speaking about His coming into the world, and giving HIS REASONS for that coming. And, once more, as we shall see, His positive statement is immediately preceded by its corresponding negative. We refer to John 10: 10 where He says, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: -I am come THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE LIFE, AND THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IT MORE ABUNDANTLY".

We suggest that this verse "overspans", or "binds together" those verses we discussed previously, and it is the crown and glory of them all. He does not come to rob or to kill, (we were, in fact, already dead! -see Eph. 2:1) He comes to GIVE US LIFE, -LIFE ABUNDANT! 0, what a purpose was that; -to RAISE men from their spiritual graves. What He did for Lazarus in a physical sense (See John 11, -the next chapter!), He will do for us spiritually. We, too, have long been in our tombs (no true contact with God, -out of touch with heavenly realities), but He will quicken us to Life (Eph.2: 1). We shall live again! We shall be able to say "Abba; -Father", and heavenly things will be to us the REAL things.

We notice that, when Lazarus "came forth", he was still "bound hand and foot with grave - clothes" (v.44). But the great thing was that he was alive. And, very soon, even those grave -clothes were "loosed from him", and he was "free indeed" (John 8:36). Very soon (John 12: 2) he had his place at the feast of thanksgiving, and the whole house was filled with fragrance. Lazarus, and many others, had "seen the Glory of God". All this, we say again, was why Christ came into our world (See also John 11: 40)"

Returning now to our key -verse, (John 10:10), it is important to see that our Lord's statement was made right at the center of His well known discourse on "shepherding", in which He was emphasising the vast difference between false shepherds and true ones. There is no doubt that He had the "religious leaders" at Jerusalem particularly in His view, -especially when we remember the tremendous clash that is outlined in the preceding chapter, -John 9, -and which clearly flows on into chapter ten. Christ is saying that it is those long -gowned "religionists" who were the false shepherds; -they were the ones who were "stealing and killing and destroying". He, on the other hand was here to GIVE life, and to give it more abundantly. The others might be good at "taking",-He was hereto GIVE. He was no thief, -nor would He ever be; -He was the Good Shepherd, -here to lay down His own Life for the sheep (v .15). Indeed, as we now know. He had His plans to impart that Life, -raised and glorified, into His trusting people, -thus forming that mystic but mighty ORGANISM which we now know as His Church. Far be the thought that HE would rob us of anything!

We do not hesitate to say that the mere suggestion that Christ robs His people is an outrageous lie; -one of the most despicable deceptions ever devised in hell. And yet, what multitudes have been duped by it! Right until today, there are countless souls who hesitate to come to Christ for fear that He will rob them of something. They continue to say, -"If I let Christ control my life, I shall lose so much. I shall be stripped of the legitimate joys of life; -I shall lose my friends, and my popularity, -and I shall even be worse off financially, because of those endless 'appeals' for this and for that". All this, of course, is a gross deception; -it is Satan's lie. The true friends of Christ will heartily testify with Paul that "...godliness... is GREAT GAIN" (1 Tim.6: 6).

It has been well said that "Christ only takes from us what He knows will ultimately harm us, - or rob us of His best". From our own considerable experience, we heartily endorse that. It is true!

We will do well to remember that the very lie we are discussing was the great original lie, which Satan used when he first deceived Eve and Adam. Posing as Eve's friend, he suggested that God must be robbing them of something by putting any restrictions on the use of the trees of the garden of Eden (Gen.3: 1). Although our parents were already surrounded by so many evidences of God's loving kindness and gracious provision, Eve chose to believe the lie. She took of the forbidden fruit, - and with what tragic consequences!

Should we not, then, ask God to deliver us from all those totally unfounded fears about losing anything through yielding to Christ? And let us carefully avoid those "false shepherds" to whom we earlier referred, and who, in a very deep sense, are the real "robbers" of God's flock. How much better to place ourselves firmly in the care of the Good Shepherd Himself, and know for ourselves that Life Abundant which He gives, and which is so beautifully described in Psalm twenty -three. O, may the Dear Lord help us. Thank God, He came, -and gave us His reasons. All praise to His Name.

The Saviour Christ has come
 The Saviour Christ has come
 Our Blessed Lord from Heaven
 God's own Beloved Son
 To seek and save the lost
 To pay sin's awful cost -
 The Saviour Christ has come.

O praise the Lord He's come
 O praise the Lord He's come
 Down from the courts above
 To manifest God's love la

To meet my need He came
 All glory to His Name
 The Saviour Christ has come

C.R.

(Concluded)

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

Hebron,
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 December 13, 2003

Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the precious and wonderful Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, made lower than the angels and made of the seed of David according to the flesh, born in Bethlehem, the city of David, "...a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". May the tidings of joy announced at His birth, re-echo in every part of this sin -stricken, sorrowful world, through song and Scripture, to lead seeking souls to salvation in this season, generally known and spoken of as Christmas (Heb.2: 7;Rom.1: 3; Luke 2:10,11).

Though the Scripture is silent as to the date of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem according to prophecy (Micah 5:2), we rejoice that "...when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal.4: 4,5). As the year is closing upon us, may we be found ready and willing to the ways and workings of the Holy Spirit in us, that we may shine as lights in the world, as harmless, sons of God. Holding forth the word of life (Phil.2: 12-16).

As this is the last Letter of Praise and Prayer of this bi-monthly for this year, we take this opportunity to thank one and all of you -not only readers, but also the saints, brethren, servants of God and co-labourers in the assemblies, for your prayers and fellowship with us. We also pray that your service and sacrifices of love, you have been extending hitherto for the furtherance of this Testimony, raised through the instrumentality of His servant. late Bro. Bakht Singh, be abundantly rewarded by our soon -coming Lord and King. The Lord grant that our eyes be fixed and fastened upon Him from Whom cometh our salvation and expectation (Psa.62: 1,5).

We would like you dear ones to note that we shall not be sending this year, separate letters with individual promises to the assemblies as we used to do hitherto. At the same time, we continue to pray that God may "make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor.9:8). As fellow-workers with you in the ministry of the Gospel and the up building of His Church, for the furtherance of the Testimony of the Lord In the land and regions beyond, we stand with you claiming His faithfulness and mercy, to make the year ahead fruitful and profitable for His glory.

This would demand a fresh and firm commitment on our part as His faithful disciples - "to take up the cross daily and denying ourselves, follow the Lord". As we resolve to follow Christ, it would mean: going an inner experience of dying -dying to our own ambitions, our own pathway in life. It means more; that we may be prepared for whatever we will have to face, for His sake. We will do well then, to arm ourselves daily, with willingness to take whatever may come to us because of Him, our Lord.

"Take up your cross" means something similar to, "Take your life in your hands" or "Be prepared to carry your own noose around with you -to run the risk of anything, even death itself. Don't seek death. Avoid it if you can (Matt.10: 23), and get the Gospel message to anyone who will listen. If men threaten you, go to some other place where they will listen".

Living as we do in an age of tolerance and political freedom, we forget the risk many Christians have run in other times and places. It would be foolish for us to assume that our present promising freedom will continue indefinitely. In such a world Christ calls us, as He called the church of the first century, to pick up our noose daily and follow Him. If we are faithful in little things while freedom lasts, chances are that we will be faithful when big tests come. There is valuable training in faithfulness, where we are now. If we are open and honest, true to ourselves and true to Christ -our lives will provoke hostility in some and will powerfully attract others. To some it will be "a savour of life unto life" and to others "of death unto death". If we are faithful to Him it may make us unpopular and unprosperous, or it may have the opposite effect too. The question is, Do you in fact PUT CHRIST FIRST whether it costs you or not? The Lord write this word upon our hearts and may our lives, walk and ministry be marked with COMMITMENT, in its true sense, as we step into 2004.

God's servants and brethren in responsibility, as well as the saints at large at Bethany, Proddatur, and at Jehovah-Rohi, Jammalamadugu, are thankful for your prayers in connection with the dedication and thanksgiving meetings held on 6th and 9th December respectively, in the newly constructed halls for worship. About two thousand saints and fellow servants from various parts, near and far, gathered for the occasion. We enjoyed liberty to share the message on Bethany (John 12), an expression of the true Church -the devotional worship of Mary, the delightful fellowship at the Table as seen in Lazarus, and the dedicated service of Martha. At Jehovah-Rohi, we considered the Good Shepherd, Who meets our wants, refreshes and even restores us from our failures and takes care to LEAD us in the paths of RIGHTEOUSNESS for His Name's sake. Both the meetings closed with love feast.

We thank the Lord for enabling Bro. T. E. Koshy of the International Assembly, Syracuse, to be with us from the 5th December, planning to continue in India, God willing, till the third week of January. He covets our prayers for his ministry during the Convocation at Kalimpong, besides a few days at Trivandrum after the 20th December, and at Jehovah-Shammah, Chennai, from 26th to 28th December and the year -ending ministry at Hebron, Hyderabad. He would be at Bombay .for the marriage of Sis. Sharon, daughter of Bro. Sudhir Das from Bethany Assembly, New York, with Bro. Chinthan, to be solemnized, God willing, on the 3rd January.

In view of the Watch night and New Year services and the special gatherings arranged in many places, let us pray for about 350 brothers sent from Hebron to various assemblies that the Lord may send them under His anointing with His word for the respective places. Pray that there may be newness of life in the assemblies whom we are serving.

Pray for the special meetings in A.G. Colony, Secunderabad, from 13th December onwards as Bro. Paul Sudhakar would be ministering the Word.

We have prayerfully selected the following three Scripture fragments as Motto texts for 2004. I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE"(Heb. 13:5); the middle text, "I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH" (Matt. 16:18) and the third text, "I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE" (Rev. 2:10). May the Holy Spirit throw fuller light upon these Scriptures and guide us skillfully for our walk and witness throughout the coming year.

The Telugu version of Bro. Bakht Singh's official biography by Bro. T. E. Koshy is now in the press. Please pray for its release, expected by the second week of January 2004.

Praying that the Lord may find us as His committed, consecrated and Spirit -filled vessels for His ongoing purpose for His Church, as chosen in Christ Jesus our Lord, before the foundation of the world,

I remain,
Yours in His grace,

K.PHILLIP

Rom.12: 1-3
Heb.10: 19-25
2 Pet. 1: 4,9,10

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS -2
BAKHT SINGH

The believers at Corinth remained spiritual! babes for a long time in spite of hearing the preaching of Paul, which was "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor.2:4). They had heard the Gospel, believed on it and had repented of their sins; but they had failed to grow on to maturity. That is why they had strife and contention in their midst (1 Cor, 3:3). The reason for this was their partial spiritual blindness. If we have such blindness in us, we must confess it before the Lord, " and ask Him to touch us and give us clear vision.

Then we find another kind of spiritual blindness among believers, which causes difficulty in understanding the Word of God. They are good and sincere people, but they suffer from such blindness that even though they read the Bible, they do not understand anything and soon feel very sleepy.

The Bible is the Word of God, not the word of man. That is why every time we read the Bible we must pray like the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). When I started to read my Bible for the first time in 1929, I could not understand it, Over and over again I came across phrases like "And God said", "and God saw", "and God appeared". (Such phrases appear about 558 times in the first five books of the Bible). I said to myself, "This is not an ordinary book, it is the Word of God. I must be very humble and reverent when I read it". So I prayed, "Lord, I believe this is Your Word. I cannot understand it by myself. You please open my eyes and give me understanding". After that the Book became very real to me, and I began to enjoy reading it. You also must confess before Him your spiritual blindness and foolishness, and request Him to enlighten you. Then take your time and read the Bible from Genesis to Malachi, and Matthew to Revelation. Read it upon your knees. Read it slowly. Ask the Lord to speak to you through the portion you have read. Then He will help you to understand. Otherwise you will remain blind spiritually.

No one can be a better teacher of the Word than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We read in Luke 24: 13-35 how on the day of resurrection, two disciples were going from Jerusalem to Emmaus. As they were returning home, the Lord Himself walked with them, and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. But neither could they recognize Him nor could they believe what He said. They remained blind. This was because they had no faith. You too may hear a great and well-known preacher, but if you do not have faith, you will not be able to understand his message, and you will remain blind. According to Heb.4:2, the Word of God must be accepted with faith. By faith say in your heart, "Lord, I believe this is Your Word. I believe You will speak to me". Then you will be able to understand what He wants to tell you.

As those two disciples and the Lord Jesus sat for food, the Lord took bread, blessed it, and gave them. In that breaking of bread, their eyes were opened; they recognized the Lord and He vanished out of their sight (Luke 24:30-31). They I remembered how recently on the Passover night, the Lord had done the same thing and had said that His body would be broken for them. Here we find a very deep and important principle. Sunday-by-Sunday, as we remember the Lord's death in the Breaking of Bread, we get more clear heavenly VISION.

The more we worship the Lord and the more we thank Him for dying on our behalf and shedding His blood for the remission of our sins, the more clearly shall we see Him. This heavenly vision does not come by hearing messages. The true understanding came to them only with the breaking of bread. Our loving and mighty Creator gave Himself for us. He allowed wicked people to beat Him, scourge Him, spit upon Him and pierce Him. He died for our sake. He took our place. He rose again for our justification. As we take part in the Lord's Table worthily and gratefully, in appreciation of such wonderful love and sacrifice, we will be given more clear understanding of His Word.

These days, we have many means where by vision can be improved. But for spiritual eyesight, we have to go only to the Lord. In Rev .3: 18 (b), the Lord says, "anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see". The Lord Himself will give us this eye salve to take away our blindness, and then He will reveal Himself to us.

May the Lord grant us all His clear heavenly vision.