

Hebron Messenger

Published Fortnightly

VOI. XLIII

January 9, 2005

NO 1

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE (PSALM 122)

This is a festive season - Christmas for Christians and New Year for the whole world, irrespective of religious backgrounds. This is a time of beautiful decorations in public places, schools, places of worship and particularly in Christian homes. It is an expression of gladness and joy that we have entered into a New Year. And why should not we as believers decorate God's Dwelling place? David in his love for God and His Sanctuary gave a command for the building of His tabernacle saying, "...and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries" (1 Chro. 22:5). Every true child of God should determine and endeavour to beautify, not his or her house but the House of the Lord during the New Year. The disciples pointed to the temple in Jerusalem and said, "Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" (Mark 13: 1). But we who are the living stones of God's Spiritual House should show forth a greater and lasting beauty. There are five beautiful and attractive spiritual characteristics of God's Dwelling place mentioned in Psalm 122, which make us glad to go to God's House, and with which we can decorate His House.

Firstly, it is a place of Praise "Whither the tribes go up, ...unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks..." (v.4). Yes, that is the kind of habitation God desires -an habitation of praise. "O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Psa. 22:3). Moses said, "He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen" (Deut. 10:21). Israel's first reason of praise was their miraculous and marvellous SALVATION from the bondage and sorrow of Egypt through the BLOOD OF THE SLAIN LAMB. That day became the beginning of the year. "It shall be the first month of the year"(Exo. 12:2). So Moses and the children of Israel sang, "He is become my salvation" (Exo. 15:2). Let us in the New Year bring into God's House the decoration of grateful praises for His great love that made Him to give His Son as the Lamb of God for our salvation.

Secondly, it is a place of Priestly Ministry. "For there are set thrones of judgement..." (v.5). Amidst God's people, there are always bound to be controversies which if not attended to, will take away the beauty of God's House. The Lord, through Moses told the children of Israel, "If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgement, between blood and blood... thou shalt come unto the priest the Levites...and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgement... thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee " (Deut.17.8-11). They zealously preserved the beauty of God's House by the priestly ministry of Levites. And. what beauty there will be in God's House today, if only we could discern and decide righteously in the FEAR of God, controversies that come up in our midst! The last words of David were, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3). O that the House of God may be so decorated with the beauty of true, humble, sincere Levitical Priestly ministry and services!

Thirdly, it is a place of Peace: "Peace be within thy walls" (v.7). Yes, let us never forget that it is the Dwelling place of the Man of Peace (Micah 5:5), the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6), the King of Peace (Heb.7:2), the God of Peace (Heb. 13:20), and the Lord of Peace (2 Thess. 3: 16). Dear Reader, what is your contribution to this peace with in God's House? In Isaiah 2:3,4 we read, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up... to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: and they shall beat their swords irtlo, plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Then, surely the carnal weapons will be laid down and we will accept His ways and paths of peace.

Fourthly, it is a place of Prosperity: "Prosperity be within thy walls" (v.7). These are days of

much material prosperity. Indeed, we believers are in the last days in the Laodicean church age who said, "I am rich... and have need of nothing..." (Rev.3:17), We must not be envious of and long for the prosperity of this world (Psa.73:3). If God blesses us with material blessings, let us accept them with humility. But that will not beautify God's House. It is the spiritual prosperity of love, compassion, forgiving one another, forbearance, patience and God's Word that is needed. Look at Joseph; God made all that he did to prosper, but his spiritual prosperity was greater: " Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well..." (Gen. 49:22).

Finally, it is a place of Precious Ointment a fragrant perfume. " Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together" (v.3). In Psalm 133, a Psalm of degrees, David longs for unity: "Behold, I how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to I dwell together in UNITY. It is like the precious ointment" (vs. 1,2). As we enter the New Year, how much then should we endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). Should we not remind ourselves, "There is one body, and one Spirit, ...One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). Let us draw near the cross, where alone we will not pull ourselves apart but draw towards one another as one New man. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify he might present it to himself a glorious church..." (Eph. 5:25-27).

May the Lord help us all to beautify the House of God in this New Year.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

All glory and honour, praise and power be unto Him, even our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who is the same yesterday and today and forever, Whose years shall not fail. He hath set His Throne in the heavens and His Kingdom ruleth over all (Psa. 103.19).

We are all aware of the grievous calamity that has befallen us -the tsunami deluge-in the closing days of 2004. It has rendered thousands homeless and helpless and plunged thousands more into a watery grave, the majority of them eternally lost. Even so, let us affirm that our Lord, .the upholder and sustainer of this universe has all things under His control. He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will and also worketh them together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose and who have set their love upon Him (Heb.1 :11,12; 1 :3; Rom.8:28; Eph.1 :11).

We began the New Year, I am sure, with a new resolve and rejoicing of hope in our Saviour, Who is able to save us to the uttermost, inspite of the many failures and shortcomings that marked our course in 2004. Hence there should be a review of the past in the fear of the Lord in honesty and sincerity, and humble confession of one's sin and disobedience. Cleansing through the precious blood of Christ is a foundational and essential pre requisite, for the blessings the Lord hath in store for us. Thus only can the Holy Spirit do a new thing in us according to Isa. 43:19-21, and form us as a people to show forth His praise.

We are reminded in 2 Pet. 1 :4, that we are given exceeding great and precious promises by which we are made partakers of divine nature. Seven facets of this divine nature are mentioned in verses 5-7, to be added to our faith, -virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity. Let us be diligent and determined that these things be formed in us by His Holy Spirit. Let us be willing to give it priority, no matter how great be our opportunity in the Gospel activity,

coupled with spiritual responsibility during the year ahead.

Apart from the individual promises we have received in the Watch night or New Year services, or personal meditation, we may focus attention on the Motto Texts for the year. They "are to be guidelines for our personal edification, and going beyond it, touching our family life, fellowship life, church life and its oversight.

The first Motto Text is taken from Leviticus 26:11. "I will set my tabernacle among you". The next verse reads, "I will walk among you and will be your God and ye shall be my people". The word tabernacle means dwelling place, residence or habitation. It would be helpful and profitable for our faith to look into the background and context of that particular text taken from that particular book for our stay or support or service. This will give us the necessary insight as to the conditions we on our part should meet, for the fulfillment of the promises of God. Thus we will be attaining to the divine goal He hath in mercy predetermined for us for the year. It will therefore be fitting for us to consider the structure of the book of Leviticus, highlighting some of its salient truths, and statutes which hold good for our faith and obedience, in this dispensation of the grace of God.

The name of the book means, "Pertaining to the Levites". Exodus and Leviticus were guidebooks for the priests primarily, and the Levites, in their ministry in the Tabernacle which God asked them to make that He may dwell among them (Exo.25:8). Israel today has neither priesthood nor temple, so that the nation cannot obey these laws. But Leviticus has great value to the Christian. It illustrates the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, and stresses the importance of a life of separation and obedience. The book emphasises sacrifice (chapters 1-10), for man must deal with his sins, if he expects to have fellowship with a holy God and what is more, to be His dwelling place. These five sacrifices are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. They are, Burnt offering, Meal offering, Peace offering, Sin offering and Trespass offering. They picture His perfect life and atoning work on the cross (Heb. 10:1.14).

Leviticus also emphasises separation (chapters 11-24), for a redeemed people should walk in God's holy will. These various laws touch many aspects of everyday life, and illustrate principles of holy living that God's children should follow today. Finally, since God anticipated the nation's entrance into the promised land, He gave them some laws and statutes for their safety, security, sustenance, satisfaction and strength against the enemies (chapters 25-27). The land was theirs because of God's covenant, but they could enjoy it only if they obeyed God's will and walked in His statutes, and not contrary to Him. Obedience by faith always brings God's blessing. God helping, we will continue our meditation in our next issue.

The elders, servants and saints of the church at El-Shaddai, Kalimpong, would have us to praise and thank the Lord for answered prayers for the ministry of the Holy Convocation held in their midst from 18th to 26th December. More than 4000 were registered as participants, besides others who daily attended from the town. The Lord granted liberty to His servants -Bros. Eddy Williams, J.C Rao and Paul Sudhakar in the daily ministry of the Word. Bros. John Hawes and Kenneth Timothy from Sydney, Australia, besides Bro. D.S. Christopher and some of us also contributed profitably to the ministry based on the theme, "Who is on the Lord's side?" (Exo. 32:26). New songs in Nepali and Hindi released a new stimulus to the ministry in which many gave their hearts to the Lord, for salvation, restoration and fresh consecration. About 55 brothers and sisters were baptised, followed by the testimony of the laying on of hands. The procession on the previous day with songs and proclamation of the Gospel brought a new impact of the love of God and the Name of our exalted Lord Jesus, in the town. Elders at El-Shaddai, Bros. P.N. Namchyo, Pema Tamang, Manikumar and Ting Kong covet our prayers for the follow-up work. Pray for the year ending ministry fulfilled through our brethren in various assemblies in the country, especially in Andhra Pradesh. The three days' special meetings ending with 1 st January, held at Hebron, Hyderabad, drew several thousands, with Bro Theodore Reginald ministering the Word. Pray for those who have been spoken to by the Lord. In Jehovah- Shammah, Chennai, we had nearly two thousand for the Watch night service, with many newcomers, especially the younger generation. Their presence and response was encouraging inspite of the tsunami deluge, with its ravages in the city and the Tamilnadu coast.

Pray for the ministry fulfilled for about two weeks in Bahrain by Bro. B. Timothy (Khammam). Also pray for the two weeks ministry and fellowship Bro. Pradeep could render at Hong Kong with a

two days entrance and fellowship with believers in the Mainland China. Bro. John Victor from Hyderabad went to Botswana for the year -ending ministry. Also Bro. D.S. Christopher was enabled to minister at Berachah, Dubai, for the year -ending ministry for a week.

Let us pray for those at the helm of affairs in our land for wisdom and sufficiency of all things in implementing the gigantic programme of relief work and rehabilitation, for the victim areas in southern states, devastated through the tsunami disaster. Pray that the Gospel may reach the bereaved and wailing unto salvation, hope and life for evermore through the crucified One. The Lord burden us also as companies of His people who have been spared from such disaster, to take some small share in the nation's relief effort -good works acceptable to God.

Pray for Bro. Emmanuel, (the youngest son of Bro. Paul Thangavelu, elder in Bethany church, New York), as he will be united in marriage with Sis. Susan, God willing on 7th January in the church at Jehovah-Shammah, Chennai.

Pray also for the marriage of Bro. Samson Barnabas (son of Bro. Rajamanickam, elder in the church at Jehovah-Shammah) with Sis. W.Rebecca, God willing to be solemnised on 10th January in Jehovah-Shammah, Chennai.

Praying that our Lord Jesus, our exalted High priest may help us all to walk worthy of Him, and of the vocation wherewith He hath called us, from the very beginning of the New Year. Lev. 26:3- 6, 12, Psa.46:1-7, John 16:33

I remain,

Yours in his grace,

K. Philip

YE ARE MY FRIENDS

We read in the Word of God that God took His chosen saints and servants at different times to mountain tops to reveal His plan for them. It is good to study each of such cases individually. Now we want to see how God took Abraham to Mount Moriah.

God first appeared to Abraham in Genesis 12. But He took him to Mount Moriah about forty-six years later. God had to take Abraham through many different experiences during those forty-six years, before he was ready to come to Mount Moriah. Whenever we desire to get a mountain-top experience of the power and grace of God, we must be prepared to go through the many experiences by which God in His perfect wisdom prepares us His children. It may not be necessary for everyone to go through such experiences for forty-six years, but you will find that certain periods of such experiences from God are necessary. Even though we may read the Bible prayerfully and carefully every day, even though we may have the privileges of attending Bible Studies by the best teachers available, having fellowship with the saints of God in a living assembly, and having spiritual parents, yet for our spiritual education and maturity there is a time factor. God has a plan which may extend over a period of less or more years. Whatever it may be, it is very necessary to pass through these painful and trying experiences, in order to be prepared for the Mountain of God.

Now God had planned from eternity to make Abraham His friend. In Isaiah 41 :8 He calls him "Abraham my friend", but to become the friend of God, Abraham had to be prepared that he might be able to enjoy the friendship of God. Mount Moriah might also be called the Mount of God's friendship. For forty-six years God had been preparing Abraham step by step to make him His friend. In every human heart there is a longing to have a friend. Even small children show their desire to have a companion or friend, because of that inward longing. In our school days each one of us had our own special friend. Again in college there were special friends, and in later life it is a peculiar joy to meet old

school and college friends.

Several years ago I passed through Calcutta and there I met a very old friend of mine whom I had not seen for thirty-one years. We had been thick friends in college days, but when I went to England, we lost touch. Then after several years he saw my name in the newspaper and wrote to me. So we began to correspond. When I went to Calcutta I visited him, and what a joy it was to see him and the whole family. He called his wife and children to meet me, his old friend, and I had the great joy of giving them the Gospel for two hours. This illustrates my point that in the heart of every man there is a longing to have a friend. But it is not very easy to have good friends, and that is why many are disappointed. Some have been friends for two or three years and then have separated. I am sure there are many who have been sadly disappointed because of broken friendship. But here God was speaking to Abraham as His true friend. (To be continued.)

Crossroads, Hyderabad -500 020. Edited by Bro. K. Phillip, Printed and Published by Bro. G. T.
Benjamin for Hebron, Golconda
Crossroads, Hyderabad -500020

Hebron Messenger

Published Fortnightly

VOI. XLIII

January 23, 2005

NO 2

GOD'S WORD OR MEN'S OPINIONS

A group of tourists bound for a certain ancient city, were in conversation with some men in their compartment, also going there, and who appeared to be citizens of that place. Many questions were asked. As they approached their destination, they saw a great castle, in an extensive park surrounded by the waters of a beautiful river. "Who lives there?" asked the visitors. With a wide sweep of his hands, one citizen answered, "The Lord who owns all this country." "Can we visit the castle?" "O yes," replied the same man. "It is open to every one." "Not at all," contradicted another citizen, and went on, "At the entrance to the bridge is a warning, 'Trespassers will be prosecuted', and at the entrance to the castle, another, 'Beware of Dogs'." The first citizen asked mockingly, "Have you seen these warning boards yourself?" "No, but the king's servants say so, and the guide book tells the same." The first citizen spoke laughingly, "I don't believe the servants, and I don't believe the guide book either Reason tells me that all people should be free to see the castle and walk in the park." The second citizen retorted, "In case the servants and the guide book tell the truth, it will go bad with us." The first citizen answered, "Who has seen the king? Who knows that those servants are really his? Does the guidebook truly show his instructions? Anyway, we believe the king is kind. Will such a ruler really punish so terribly those who break his rules?" A third citizen spoke, "I feel the servants are either knaves or idiots. Our ideals are equality, and possessing all things in common. In accordance with human rights we need no permission to see the castle or its grounds." The second citizen said again, "What's there in applying for permission to the king's son, his only son and heir, who is managing everything for his father? We need not run any risk!" The first citizen said in a bantering tone, "Yes. And, it seems, if we keep close to the prince he will protect us from the fangs of those bloodhounds. Is it not sheer nonsense? Nobody speaks about a queen, the lady of the castle. Whence comes this prince then? Whoever that young man may be, he can be no more son to the king than you or I." They talked on in that strain.

When they arrived at the city, the tourists went aside to discuss what they had heard. Each bought a guidebook. "This is a mystery," said they. "This guide book clearly confirms what the second citizen said." One tourist spoke: "But the fact remains, that not one of those fellows has been anywhere near the bridge, to be sure of what he says. Those who warn us seem to take for granted, whatever the servants or this guide book says." A second tourist answered, "What need for personal experience? Does not reason say, that in this 20 th century, no king or prince can claim an exclusive right to his property? This is the age of democracy. The people's voice is the voice of God. The subjects should be consulted for making rules." The citizens had not really dispersed. These came up, and offered to conduct the visitors to the castle. The tourists were extremely pleased. "Throwaway those books. They are not a guide really. Trust us," they said. The first tourist clutched his guidebook to his bosom, and refused to follow the citizens. One or two more of them did the same. "Poor fools," thought their companions, and told them before they set out, that they would soon rejoin them at the hotel where they had booked their rooms. A few of the citizens also refused to make the venture saying, that they were not so sure that the guidebooks were wrong, after all.

The party which had so rashly set out, decided to do the castle first, and then to saunter in the park, and lunch in the restaurant -if there was one there. Then, as if doing the visitors an honour, the citizens asked the tourists to enter the gate first. But as soon as the unfortunate men stepped in, with hellish howls a pack of bloodhounds fell on them. Seeing this the citizens took to their heels. The guards who had been shadowing them all the way, 'arrested those and hand-cuffed them immediately. The sentinels at the gate drew back the dogs before they tore the intruders into pieces, and handed over the bleeding tourists also to be handcuffed. They were all hauled up before the prince who sat on his judgment seat. The wounded strangers were asked whether they had not read their guidebooks. "But our friends who are very learned and respectable citizens and experts, were of the opinion that all

people were free to visit here," they answered. "But what does the guide book issued under my seal, in my father's name, say? Don't you know that this is my father's property and he can make what rules he likes about it; and that I go by my own published word, and not according to the opinions of your learned men? The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge; and not those who reject me and receive not my words. Had you contacted me, I would have done all the needful, and you would have been my father's guests. Now you have to pay the utmost penalty for ignoring my commandments." The guard took the whole party and threw them into a dark and deep dungeon from which they could never, never escape.

This is only a parable. But it illustrates the truth about the Kingdom of God. It is God's own domain, and we can enter it only on His own terms and conditions. Our own ideas, imaginations and plans will not work there. God has declared and proclaimed in His Word, the Holy Bible, the conditions for admission into His Kingdom, and has put up clear warnings of the doom of those who reject or ignore His commandments. He will go by His Word on the Judgment Day, and the Bible will be the witness against unbelievers who will with crooked teachings keep people from recognizing their sins, from repenting for their sins, and from going to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

Paul says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). The Son of God, our Saviour the Lord Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Now, DEATH is going to carry you off some day, sure and certain. Then you will find yourself in ETERNITY. Is it safer for you to trust your Creator, Who knows what He says, and is anxious to save you from everlasting damnation, or to put your trust in the miserable theories and opinions of men like yourself, who can neither save you, nor themselves from the just wrath of God? "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh...If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"(2John7,10). H.K.

LETTER FOR PRAISE AND PRAYER

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Dear Fellow -Believers in Christ,

Greetings in the Name of our exalted Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec," Who is able to save us to the uttermost. Let us hold fast our resolve to do the things that are pleasing in His sight from the beginning of this year, and may He be pleased to do a new thing in us and through us as we read in Isaiah 43:19-21. Let us wholly trust Him, acknowledging Him in all our ways, so that He may direct us in His paths, paths which drop fatness, crowning the year with His goodness. (Heb. 7: 17, 24, 25; Prov. 3:5,6; Psalm 65:3,4, 11).

This being the second issue of this small publication, we would take the opportunity to thank all our subscribers and readers for their prayers for matters mentioned in it, both personal and those related to the work of the Lord, for the furtherance of the Testimony of the Lord. We are exhorted in Heb. 13:7, "Remember them... who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow...". As you would remember, His honoured servant, late Bro. Bakht Singh was instrumental in the raising of this Testimony in Hyderabad more than five decades ago. We would also remember with gratitude and thanks unto the Lord, all fellow servants and elders who laboured with him, establishing the church at Hebron. He himself had the insight to have a printed organ like this, to encourage the fellowship of prayer and the ministry of the Word amongst believers and assemblies scattered over the length and breadth of our land and regions beyond. He himself was the Editor for very many years. His messages are reprinted for our benefit and for this new generation.

We would covet your prayers for all who are engaged in the work of editing, proofreading and dispatching etc.; mainly sisters, handmaidens of the Lord residing at Hebron. Also pray that the Lord may grant us the needed messages through prayerful inspired writers, who are labourers together with us in the same vision of the Lord. We are sorry the copies are dispatched late, however the messages are on the website w.w.w.brobakhtsingh.org. (& brotherbakhtsingh.org). Kindly renew your subscription, if there has been a lapse. Write to us if it has been a mistake from our side.

In our last issue we dwelt upon the Motto Text from Lev.26: 11, "I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you." The word 'abhor' means, 'spurn', 'loathe', 'despise'. We read from the history of Israel, that as a result of His abhorrence for them -His covenanted people (Psalm 78:59,60), His own inheritance (Psalm 106:40), He "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men" (78:60). This is a warning to us who have become beneficiaries of the new covenant, to possess spiritual riches and an inheritance that fadeth not away. We can come short of it if we become lukewarm like the Laodiceans. They gloried in what they called riches and increased goods, while the Lord said they were wretched and poor, blind and naked. The Lord was outside, forsaken by His own, until they were willing to repent, open the door and give Him His rightful place. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3: 19), so that they be zealous to repent, first and foremost, and not be zealous to speak of their possessions, which are to fade and vanish away.

In Leviticus 26, God used the word "covenant" nearly eight times and "walking, walking contrary" seven times. The covenant reminded the redeemed people of their special relationship with God, and the special responsibility belonging to that relationship of walking according to His statutes, hearkening diligently to Him. Thus they should be reverent and obedient to Him. Only then they could remain and continue in the land of promise and enjoy the blessings He would bestow. God does not promise material blessings and success to us who are under the new covenant and people of this dispensation. But He does promise to be with us, and meet every need of ours (Phil. 4: 19; Heb. 13:5,6; 1Tim. 6.6-8).

The blessings for obedience and walking in His statutes are mentioned in Lev. 26:2-13, the crowning blessing being, "I will set my tabernacle (dwelling place, residence) among you... ye shall be my people". From verses 14-39 of the same chapter, the Lord warned Israel of the curses that would befall them as a result of their willful disobedience to His statutes and clear commands. These verses highlighted the chastening they would be subject to. God's covenant included both blessing and chastening. God will not share His blessings with rebellious children. Enjoying the gifts while insulting the Giver is both selfish and idolatrous. We should obey in love and show our desire to please Him.

Verses 40-46 of this chapter state the truth of confession by which we can be restored to His goodness and favour. A gracious God leaves the door open for restoration. That is the one loving purpose of His chastening hand (Heb. 12:1-13). People may break their promises to God, (Lev.26: 15), but God will never break His promises to His people (v. 44). He forgets our sin, but remembers His covenant. This is not an excuse for sin, but encouragement for the sinner to repent and return, before it is late. We may continue some more thoughts from this chapter, God willing, in our next issue.

The elders and brethren of the different assemblies in Mumbai would have us to thank and praise the Lord with them, for the ministry fulfilled in the city and its suburbs, by the sixteen brethren sent from Hebron, with others locally joining them, from 18th to 25th December 2004. There was very good response to the open air preaching. Many purchased New Testaments and Gospels, and accepted tracts. The final day's ministry at the Gateway of India was a crowning joyful completion. Brothers and sisters from the assemblies too joined the team, singing songs and proclaiming the birth of the Saviour. People from many nations stood respectfully and heard the message. Their joyful acclamation, clapping their hands in song, was a unique sight, to glorify the Lord. We are thankful for the elders and leaders of the assemblies who came forward to host this campaign in that Metro city given to pleasure and pomp. Let us pray for the salvation of many from among the hearers.

The Youth Camps held at Gibeon, Jettivaripalem, and Jehovah -Shammah, Chennai, from 13th to 16th January were indeed times of blessing for the youth. There were many decisions for salvation as well as restoration. Bros. Purna Chandra Rao, Dyva Prasad, Jayraj and B. Timothy helped us in the ministry at Chennai. Let us pray for the youth to be established, to continue steadfastly in His House.

Praying that we all be found as holy, obedient people, that the Lord may set His tabernacle amongst us and bless us out of Zion, His Holy Hill,

Eph. 1 :3,4, 1 Pet. 1 :3-6, 15, Acts 26:17-19

I remain,
Yours in his grace,
K. Philip

YE ARE MY FRIENDS--2 Bakht Singh

If you want to have a true friend in your life, or to be a true friend to someone, first learn to cultivate real friendship with the living Saviour. As you begin to grow in the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ, He will give you many many loving friends everywhere. Before that, you may have shown much affection to certain friends, and spent your money on them. In order to show your friendship, you may have written very long letters. You may have even sat up at night and exhausted all your vocabulary to show your affection. When the reply came after three or four weeks, and when you opened it with trembling hands, and found nothing but a few formal lines thanking you for your letter, and apologizing for the delay in replying, your face fell and you had no desire to eat or drink. That is human nature. When however, you have learned by experience to be the friend of God, you will see that He Himself will give you many loving friends who will give you love unspeakable.

The disciples were feeling very very sad because the Lord Jesus had told them in a very plain way how He was going to be betrayed and crucified. They were all feeling downcast, and did not even know what to say. But as they walked in the dark night in the small path leading to Gethsemane, our Lord said, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15: 15). They thought they were being left alone and forsaken, but He called them His friends. Servants cannot understand anything about the master, but a friend can, and that is why the Lord made known to His disciples all what He heard of His Father. That is divine friendship.

God was leading Abraham to the very same friendship. "And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do" (Gen. 18: 17). What a wonder this is! God had every right to do what He wished. His time had come to judge the inhabitants of those wicked cities called Sodom and Gomorrah and He was about to do so. But He said: "How can I hide it from Abraham?" Abraham was not saying: "Oh God! You must tell me everything," because he had not yet understood the heart of God for him. No doubt, he had been obeying God as far as he could, but he had not yet entered into the heart of God. Now God was saying about him. "How can I hide my counsel from Abraham?" This is God's purpose for you and me also. We are redeemed, purchased, washed and cleansed by His blood, not to live as we like. No, we have been called to be the friends of the most high and living God. God wants you to climb that Mountain of Friendship and then you will know how God, as your friend, reveals and shows you many many truths and mysteries. If you are really a child of God and if you are truly born again there will be a great longing in your heart to know the Bible. This was my longing too. I went on reading the Bible sometimes for 12 to 14 hours a day. But that did not solve my problem. Bible knowledge itself does not satisfy our hunger. Similarly, I thought that by spending many hours in prayer I would be satisfied. I tried that too, and whenever and wherever possible I spent hours in prayer, but even then I could see defeat in my life. Then I began to long for some miracles and through prayer and by God's grace, I saw many miracles also. But even that did not satisfy me. But when I understood God's purpose that He, the holy, just, mighty and great God wanted me to be His friend and enjoy pure friendship with Him, I was satisfied. God Himself began to speak to me and taught me things which I could not learn from any man. In other words, He taught me how to be His co-labourer, partner and friend.

Let us now consider a few points about the friendship of God with Abraham. "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am" (Gen. 22: 1). First of all, God tempted Abraham, i.e. He proved or tested him. Now if you want to climb the mountaintop of friendship with God and if you want to enjoy the friendship of

God, then be prepared to be proved and tried by God's own testings.

(To be cont.)

Crossroads, Hyderabad -500 020. Edited by Bro. K. Phillip, Printed and Published by Bro. G. T.
Benjamin for Hebron, Golconda
Crossroads, Hyderabad -500020