



പ്രതീക്ഷകളുമായി പുതുവർഷത്തിലേക്ക്

“... നീ എനിക്കു തന്ന പ്രവൃത്തി ഞാൻ തികച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു”.
യോഹ. 17:4

ഇതാ ഞാൻ വേഗം വരുന്നു എന്നരുളി ചെയ്ത ക്രിസ്തുയേശുവിന്റെ ധന്യനാമത്തിൽ സുവാർത്തയുടെ മാന്യവായനക്കാർക്ക് പുതുവത്സരാശംസകൾ

പുത്തൻ പ്രതീക്ഷകളും സ്വപ്നങ്ങളുമായി നാം പുതിയ വർഷത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രവേശിച്ചുവല്ലോ. പിന്നിട്ടുപോയ ഒരു സംവത്സരത്തിന്റെ നിഷ്പക്ഷവും ആത്മാർത്ഥവുമായ ഒരു വിലയിരുത്തൽ നമുക്ക് എല്ലാവർക്കും ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട് എന്ന് വിശ്വസിക്കുന്നു. സംഭവബഹുലമായ രാഷ്ട്രീയ - സാമൂഹിക - മത രംഗങ്ങളിലെല്ലാം അനവധി ഉയർച്ച താഴ്ചകൾ നാം കണ്ടു കഴിഞ്ഞു. സാമ്പത്തിക രംഗത്ത് അപ്രതീക്ഷിതമായി കൊണ്ടുവന്ന പരിഷ്കാരങ്ങൾ ഭാരതജനതയെ തെല്ലൊന്നുമല്ല അമ്പരപ്പിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്. ആഗോളവ്യാപകമായി സംഭവിച്ചുകൊണ്ടിരിക്കുന്ന ഭീകര - വിധ്വംസന പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങൾ, യുദ്ധങ്ങൾ, അണുവായുധ പരീക്ഷണങ്ങൾ എന്നിവ മനുഷ്യജീവന്റെ നിലനിൽപ്പിനു തന്നെ ഭീഷണിയായിട്ടുണ്ട്. അമേരിക്ക, ക്യൂബ തുടങ്ങിയ രാജ്യങ്ങളിൽ ഉണ്ടായ രാഷ്ട്രീയ മാറ്റങ്ങൾ എന്തായിരിക്കും ഫലം കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നത് എന്ന് കാത്തിരുന്ന് കണ്ടേണ്ടതുണ്ട്. മാറ്റങ്ങൾക്കു വിധേയമായ ലോകത്തിൽ, മാറ്റമില്ലാത്ത രക്ഷകൻ മാത്രമാണ് ഇനി ആശാകേന്ദ്രം.



Pastor P. Joy

ആത്മീയലോകത്തിലും ധാരാളം മാറ്റങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടായിട്ടുണ്ട്. വ്യത്യസ്ത ഗൈലികളും വേദവിപരീത ചിന്താഗതികളും, രാഷ്ട്രീയ അതിപ്രസരവും വിശ്വാസ സമൂഹത്തെ സ്വാധീനിക്കുകയും ഭിന്നിപ്പിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. മറുവശത്ത്, ഒരു ആത്മീക ഉണർവ്വിനും ഉദ്ധാരണത്തിനുമായി ഹൃദയപൂർവ്വം ആഗ്രഹിച്ച് പ്രാർത്ഥന നിരതരായിരിക്കുന്ന ഒരു ന്യൂനപക്ഷത്തെയും കാണാം. ഇത്തരൂണത്തിൽ നമ്മുടെ കർത്താവും രക്ഷിതാവുമായ ക്രിസ്തുയേശു, സംഭവബഹുലമായ ക്രൂശീകരണത്തിന് തൊട്ടുമുമ്പ് നടത്തിയ മഹാമധ്യസ്ഥ (പൗരോഹിത്യ) പ്രാർത്ഥനയിൽ പിതാവ് തന്നെ ഭരമേൽപിച്ച പ്രവൃത്തി തികയ്ക്കുവാൻ സാധിച്ചു എന്ന ബോധ്യത്തോടും ചാരിതാർത്ഥ്യത്തോടും അരുളി ചെയ്ത വാചകമാണ് മുകളിൽ ഉദ്ധരിച്ചിരിക്കുന്നത്.

മാനവകുലത്തിന്റെ പാപപരിഹാരത്തിനായി ദൈവത്തിന്റെ കുഞ്ഞാടായി തിരു അവതാരം ചെയ്ത ലോകരക്ഷകന് പൂർത്തീകരിക്കുവാൻ കഴിയാത്ത ദൗത്യത്തിന്റെ പരാജയ ചിന്തയോടെയോ ഇച്ഛാഭംഗത്തോടെയോ അല്ല ശിഷ്യഗണങ്ങളുടെ നടുവിൽ നിന്ന് തിരുവായ് മൊഴിഞ്ഞത്. യേശുക്രിസ്തുവിന്റെ ഐഹിക ജീവിതത്തിലെ ധന്യമായ നിമിഷമാണിത്. പിതാവ് തന്നെ ഭരമേൽപിച്ച പ്രവർത്തി. ലക്ഷ്യം തെറ്റാതെ, യാതൊരു മറുനിബന്ധനകളും വെയ്ക്കാതെ, വിട്ടുവീഴ്ചകൾക്ക് തയ്യാറാകാതെ താൻ ചെയ്തുതീർത്തിരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന ഉൾബോധ്യം വാമൊഴിയായി പുറത്തുവന്നത് അക്ഷരങ്ങളിലൂടെ നാം ഇന്ന് വായിക്കുമ്പോൾ, ഒരു തിരിഞ്ഞുനോട്ടം നമുക്കും ആവശ്യമില്ലേ?

കർത്താവ് നമ്മെ ഭരമേൽപിച്ച ദൈവരാജ്യ സംബന്ധവും സുവിശേഷ സംബന്ധവുമായ പ്രവർത്തികൾ, ശുശ്രൂഷകൾ, ദൗത്യങ്ങൾ നാം എത്ര ഗൗരവമായും ശുഷ്കാന്തിയോടും ആത്മാർത്ഥമായും പൂർത്തീകരിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്? ചിലർ തുടങ്ങിയെങ്കിലും അധികം മുന്നോട്ടു പോയില്ല. മറ്റുചിലർ പാതിവഴിയിൽ നിർത്തി. വേറെ ചിലർ അതിനെ നിസ്സാരമാക്കിക്കളഞ്ഞു. ഒരു ചെറിയ സമൂഹം ഒരു പക്ഷേ മുഴുവൻ ചെയ്തുതീർത്തു കാണും. സുവിശേഷത്തിന്റെ അഭിവൃദ്ധിക്കായി, ദൈവസഭയുടെ ആത്മീക ഉന്നതിയ്ക്കായി, കൃത്യതയോടെ നമ്മെ ഏൽപ്പിച്ചത് വലുതോ ചെറുതോ ആകട്ടെ, കഴിഞ്ഞ വർഷം ചെയ്തു തീർക്കുന്നതിൽ നാം പരാജയപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ ഒരു സംവത്സരം കൂടെ നമുക്ക് ലഭിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. നാം പറഞ്ഞു പഴകിയ സാക്ഷ്യങ്ങളെ പിന്നോട്ട് തള്ളിക്കളഞ്ഞ് പുതുക്കപ്പെട്ട ഹൃദയങ്ങളുമായി, പുത്തൻ സമർപ്പണത്തോടും നിർവ്യാജ വിശ്വാസത്തിലും, മറ്റുള്ളവരുടെ ക്ഷേമത്തിനുമായി സർവ്വേശ്വരൻ തന്ന കൃപയ്ക്കൊത്തവണ്ണം ചെയ്തു തീർത്ത് നല്ല ദാസനെ, ദാസിയെ എന്ന വിളിക്ക് യോഗ്യരാകുവാൻ ഈ പുതുവത്സരം നമുക്ക് ഇടയാക്കട്ടെ. പ്രതിഫലം തന്നിടുവാൻ യേശുരാജൻ വരാനായി. കർത്താവിന്റെ വാക്കുകൾ നമുക്ക് ശിരസ്സാവഹിക്കാം. ദൈവം എല്ലാവായനക്കാരെയും അതിനായി സഹായിക്കട്ടെ.

"New Year Message"

Be a 'Hope-Bearer' in 2017!

The last days of the year 2016 are witnessing major turmoil all around the world. Syria is on fire. Super-powers are in conflict. Terrorism is on the increase in many parts of the world. International tensions are increasing, especially in Asia and Europe.

There is trouble in the South China Sea waters. Turkey is under severe tension. Trade wars are predicted as globalization is under serious scrutiny. Nationalism is on the increase in Europe and America. Political alignments are unraveling across the globe.

Populations in many nations are proving that they have lost faith in their own leaders and national institutions. Brexit, Great Britain's exit from the European Union, surprised the pundits and the elites. The election of Mr. Donald Trump as president of the United States is seen as a surprise and watched with concern and curiosity around the world even as the US stock market is booming since his election.

Intra-national problems also abound. The currency problem in India and the immigration issues in America are examples of this with potentially far reaching consequences.

There are people whose parallels between 2017 and the beginning decades of the 20th century, particularly prior to the First World War. They point out that the previous century began with major problems and ended up with the big war and call for prayer for things to calm down soon.

Five causes of

World War I have been identified: 1) issues related to mutual defense alliances, 2) imperialism, 3) military buildup, 4) nationalism, and 5) assassinations. These look frighteningly familiar in today's world. How should Spirit-filled Christians conduct themselves in this context? How should we welcome 2017?

Unfortunately, the Spirit-filled division of the Christian family has a history of histrionics when it comes to world events. It has been noticed that some among us get hyperactive in predicting the worst possible scenarios during times like this. I have seen wild interpretations of Bible passages used by some to justify their dreadful predictions of doom and gloom.

I believe there is a better way to welcome 2017. I also believe that frightening is not the best way to get people

into the kingdom of God or to help believers live holy lives. Love works much better.

At the root of a lot of problems in the world today is hopelessness. Hopeless people do terrible things. Bullets alone will not stop them or change them. Hope will. The good news of Jesus Christ will.

Christians are people of hope. Spirit-filled Christians must be the best specimen of hope-filled Christians. While biblical prophecies will definitely come to pass, we should not use them

to frighten people or routinely predict doom. All biblical prophecies are not about doom and gloom.

Our God is a God of hope. We must demonstrate

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The Beatitudes:

A Challenge to Christian Life!



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'Sermon on the Mount' is a divinely designated pattern that a born again Christian has to follow while on the earth

Introduction:

Matthew, the Evangelist had compiled the renowned teachings of Christ in his book in chapters 5-7, which generally is known as the 'Sermon on the Mount'. In this lengthy discourse, the beatitudes are the primary and integral part. Though it is known and widely discussed in the whole world, Christians, especially the Pentecostal churches, do not give it much of interest and an important place in their teachings. This is really a grave mistake. However we need to realize that the Sermon on the Mount is intimately related to what Jesus had to talk about the Kingdom of heaven. In other words, it is a divinely designated pattern that a born again Christian has to follow while on the earth.



It is the pattern of Kingdom living. Larry Richards, a writer, remarkably noted: "In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus sets out to establish the true meaning of the commandments imbedded in the earlier revelation, the Old Testament. He warns that even those who are most

righteous according to the present understanding of the commandments will by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven". This is absolutely true. Sermon on the Mount is not just a new law, but a new revelation setting a higher standard of Christian living. Larry continues, "Jesus' teachings have universal application for those of any era who seek to live in harmony with the will of God". This is why we need to diligently look into it. Here in this

"Be a 'Hope-Bearer' in 2017!" *Continuation from previous page*

real hope in this hopeless world. This is not a call to denial. Yes, there are serious problems in the world. Christ is the only answer to these problems. The followers of Jesus will find real peace and experience God's care and protection, even during the worst of times. And Jesus will definitely come again and receive His own.

Until then, we must bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are people who know that weeping may last through the night, but joy will come in the morning (Psalm 30:5).

There are serious problems in the world. Christ is the only answer to these problems. The followers of Jesus will find real peace and experience God's care and protection, even during the worst of times.

We know that God can change our sorrow to joy, our darkness to light, and our weeping to laughter. We know that He will wipe away all our tears one day.

Until then, let us bear witness to the hope we have in Jesus. Let us show the world how to live as followers of the Prince of Peace. Let us demonstrate hope-filled lives and love people into the Kingdom of God. Let us be hope-bearers.

We should be able to enter 2017 with hope as we trust the presence, power and promises of our God. This is definitely possible. Listen to the apostle Paul: "**Christ in you the hope of glory,**" (Col. 1:27). ■

article, we are not doing a theological exposition of each verse, but rather attempting a general and practical approach, which will be more beneficial and a challenge to us today. The deliberate negligence to these valuable teachings is the failure of the church now and the reason for all kinds of deceptive life, corruptions, favoritism, disparity, disputes, etc. Therefore the sermon on the mount should have a great impact in the church life. The church has to come back to the core of the teachings of Christ, so that the world may see the noble character and greatness of the church of Jesus Christ.

A General Perspective:

Here we focus mainly on the Beatitudes, which is considered as the primary substance of living in the Kingdom. Interestingly both the first and last Beatitudes state, "for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven". Probably this may be a literary device, but it shows that the life in the Kingdom is a prominent matter in all the teachings of Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount delivered by Jesus was not like the law delivered on the Mount Sinai with flaming fire, smoke, sound of trumpet, cloud and a frightening atmosphere. On the contrary our Saviour by His gracious lips gently uttered the promises and blessings with a strict concept. The Beatitudes are not just the solution of the crisis but a solace in difficult situations. They are the solemn declarations of the Son of Man in the disquieted conditions of men.

The Greek word Jesus used to characterize individuals is MAKARIOS, meaning, BLESSED. This word also means happy. Jesus used it here not in that sense, but as 'the nature of that which is the highest good' (Vines' Complete Expository of the OT and NT words, P. 70). Today the concept of blessedness is misunderstood and misinterpreted by the so-called preachers. Christ Jesus is not emphasizing any kind of external happiness, as we think. In the Beatitudes we have a description of the inner man, not a list of external things. These are values and commitments of

a person who is blessed. Even at the outset, Jesus is challenging listeners to look inwards. These are really the marks of the Kingdom. Mere outward comforts cannot make us blessed, for we may live rich and die cursed. Many of the external blessings are not real and satisfying, but transient. However today people are more interested in the material improvement and focusing on worldly affairs. This kind of view slowly diminish the brightness of the beatitudes in our personal Christian faith.

Value Of Christian Life or Life in the Kingdom:

: The true value of Christian life lies not in the way we present or claim what we have but rather the way we live in the world with the MIND OF CHRIST. If we do not inculcate the character and attitude of Christ we are not worthy to highlight that we are biblical Christians. Biblical Christianity is not just the act of proclamation alone but it is the application of the proclaimed message in daily living. There are some attitudes or values which God approves. Jesus is expounding about these values especially in verses, ch. 5:3-10. We can find out many values in His words, such as, poor in spirit, truly mourning, attitude of meekness, intense desire for righteousness, merciful heart, purity of heart, peacemakers and commitment to be

persecuted. These values that Jesus inscribed in the hearts of men are really a contrast to today's sophisticated society. In the aggressive and competitive world, these are the values a Christian has to follow. In the world's view, the blessed ones are always self-confident, competent, self-righteous, proud, powerful, pleasure-seeking, etc. In this modern society values are being degraded in every avenue of human life, whether in the church or in families, or in educational institutions. People are not much concerned about the values and morals but only focusing in mere comforts and pleasures. This kind of attitude is very evident among members of the church. Most

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If we really begin to implement the "beatitudes" in our churches either we will have to change our attitudes or we may leave the church and get involved in worldly affairs.

of us live and wait for the Kingdom of God but neglect its divine values!

The contemporary problem of churches is that many are spiritually bankrupt. They are well-dressed, wealthy, impressive, outwardly moderate, but spiritually and inwardly lacking the deeper relation with the Lord. Such people lead a kind of spiritually unconscious life, unable to recognize the faulty and apostate state of their life. Jesus said about the sense of spiritual poverty, divine mourning (not worldly), inward meekness - but not silent to immorality, spiritual hunger and thirst to be satisfied - not for the pleasures of the world, divine mercy to the helpless and marginalized, purity of heart - not merely ritualistic, heavenly peacemakers to avoid offence and confusion, ready to be persecuted for righteous acts and finally surrendering to be reproached and blamed by liars. Jesus highly emphasized that these kind of people are truly

blessed and deserve God's Kingdom! This is in fact against the thesis of the world.

The beatitudes are merely not a few informative talks about the Kingdom but rather they are the marks and divine principles to live in the Kingdom reality. No matter who we are, what we are, or our position, influence, affluence, popularity, fame and name, whether high level or low level, rich or poor, black or white we all need to live on these principles if we claim that we are His disciples or spiritual people. Jesus never had presented silly talk just for the sake of conversation, however, He highlighted the very fact of the kingdom values we need to accept and carry on throughout our life. Definitely these are challenging us today to make introspect into our personal and community living. We have plenty of issues to

address today in our churches and in the path of Christian life, such as being involved in politics, worldliness, luxury living, love for positions, sufferings and other moral issues, true spirituality, etc. These all issues can be scanned in the light of the sermon on the mount and be met with biblical remedies. Hence the church must take careful and meaningful steps towards these eminent teachings.

Conclusion:

When we begin to practice and show obedience to these splendid principles we surely will not have any kind of animosity, strife and selfish motives to our fellow beings. We need to definitely discipline ourselves under these magnificent and glorious teachings of our Lord!

The present century Pentecostal churches must take time to meditate over these divinely proclaimed principles. If we sincerely assess our life today in the light of beatitudes, are we able to claim we are true Christians? Our claims would collapse when we really turn our hearts before these values! We are simply empty vessels with big voice, roaming here and there and beating around the bushes. We failed to present true Christianity and honest life

before others. If we really begin to implement the "beatitudes" in our churches either we will have to change our attitudes or we may leave the church and get involved in worldly affairs. What is happening today? We preach about the five stones of David, Goliath's height, Balaam's donkey, etc. in churches rather than challenge people to Christ Jesus and His words! We merely focus on the cheap things of the world and fascinate the hearers with lusty words. When we begin to practice and show obedience to these splendid principles we surely will not have any kind of animosity, strife and selfish motives to our fellow beings. We need to definitely discipline ourselves under these magnificent and glorious teachings of our Lord so that the world will come to know that we are His disciples. ■

"God's Book for mankind" (Continuation from page 8)

concerns, your issues, challenges and difficulties. Throw all your cares upon him, for he cares for you more than anyone else. This kind of prayer is be called, "ACTS" prayer that has these four aspects. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

God the Holy Spirit will show you ways in which

you should apply the scriptures into your life and help you to practice what you meditated. May the Holy Spirit help you to meditate the Word of God daily. It does not have to take long time when you have a tight schedule. When you can invest more time to meditate take more time and do it. It will make a big difference for the better in your life ■

Mature Creation!

There are seven “miraculous signs” mentioned in the gospel of John. Each of them reveals the divinity of Jesus Christ and sets Him apart from any other human being. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, wrote the gospel of John approximately between AD 90-95, about sixty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. The purpose of the writing of the gospel of John is seen in John 20:30-31: “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name”.

Jesus performed at Cana of Galilee the first of His miraculous “signs” (John 2:1-11). At a wedding feast where He and His disciples were invited, the wine ran out and the host must have panicked. Note that His mother Mary only tells the servants there to “do whatever He tells you”. She knew her limits but knew

that if anyone could help in this situation, Jesus could. The servants obeyed the instructions of Jesus. They filled the jars kept for ceremonial washing with water and served it. The water was in an instant turned to the best wine to even the surprise of the host. We know that the best wine is produced from grapes grown under ideal soil, water, and climate conditions and then fermented over time. In this case, Jesus demonstrated that time was not a factor for Him to create something that usually takes time by nature. He thus revealed His glory and His disciples put their faith in Him. Today, as we consider this miracle that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, have we considered that he could also have created by His word a mature and beautiful earth with all its resources, including fossil fuel under the earth for our use? Science suggests that fossil fuel is converted from organic plant and animal matter under pressure and

temperature below the ground over millions of years. If God could create an adult man, Adam and create wine from water without going through the intermediate stages, God could easily have created this mature earth that we live in with its natural resources by His word in an instant. The book of the gospel of John reveals six other “miraculous signs” that prove that Jesus is the Savior, the Son of God. You should read it to identify the other “miraculous signs”.

John wrote this gospel for the Church that existed in the early first century and for the believers like us today and others yet to follow so that we may also believe in Jesus. We can

be misguided due to false beliefs or reliance on bad omens. Humans often follow traditions without questioning and put their trust in people or humanly created things such as idols or divinely created things such as nature. We intuitively know that they will fail us but here is a person who

is God Himself who wants us to put our trust in Him. The benefit of believing in Him is life itself. Even if we die, if we believe in Jesus, we will once again rise from the dead to live forever. Above earth and below heaven there is no other name except the name of Jesus Christ by which we can be saved. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son Jesus that whoever believes in His name will be saved and will have eternal life. Where no sacrifice was sufficient to recompense the sin of mankind, God Himself as Jesus, the triune God, came in human flesh down to the earth to pay the price for us as an eternal sacrifice. When we believe in this person Jesus who died a sinless death and rose up from the dead, He will accept us in heaven just as we are and accept us as His child and grant us eternal life. We cannot attain this eternal life by any of our work but can only receive this by grace and by believing in Jesus. ■



**Mathews
Abraham
Houston**



John wrote this gospel for the Church that existed in the early first century and for the believers like us today and others yet to follow so that we may also believe in Jesus.

Jesus demonstrated that time was not a factor for Him to create something that usually takes time by nature.

God's Book for Mankind:

- Part 19 -

'Meditational or Quiet Time Bible Study' Method

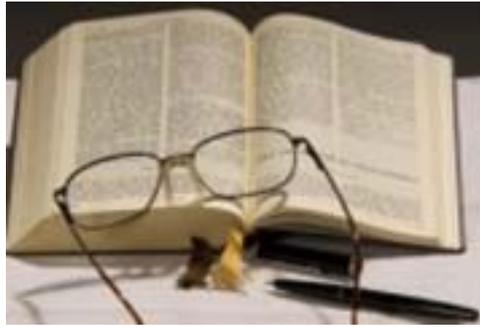


Dr. C.P. Varghese

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Meditational Bible Study not only helps us to observe and interpret the word of God but also to apply it in our lives. We should not only reflect on what we have meditated but also respond in obedience to God's word for God's glory and for our good.

Many Christians know Psalms 1:1 and 2 by heart which says, "*Blessed is the person...in his law does he meditate day and night*". As we continue to read this Psalm we see God has promised many blessings to any one who walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is the law of the LORD, and in God's law does he/she MEDITATE day and night. So we should ask, what is meditation according to the Holy Scriptures.



Meditation, according to dictionary, is uninterrupted concentration of mind and thought on an object, or giving full attention and focus. It means continuing in reflective thinking, pondering, seriously contemplating, giving diligence, and devotional concentration. Meditation involves talking in a low tone and musing or going over the same matter over and over again. Quiet time is a phrase that is used to mean time with the Lord in prayer, studying the word of God and meditation. It is also known as personal time of devotion.

Meditational Bible Study not only helps us to observe and interpret the word of God but also to apply it in our lives. We should not only reflect on what we have meditated but also respond in obedience to God's word for God's glory and for our good.

God Commands us to Meditate on the Word of God. In the book of Joshua 1:8 the Lord commanded that Joshua shall meditate on the word of God day and night and that he should be careful to obey according to what is written. This command is not only for Joshua but also for all God's people of all times and at all places and in all circumstances. Psalms 4:4 asks us to meditate in our hearts upon our bed.

Method of Meditation: Begin your time of meditation with a brief time of adoration, that is worshipping the Lord for who he is. Think of His divinity, majesty, royalty, greatness, loving kindness, and goodness and so on and so forth. Thank him for his holy word that he has given to you in your own language. Request him to speak to you as you get ready to read it. Then read a short passage of few verses or a paragraph that

you chose from the Bible, several times, slowly and carefully. As you read it repeatedly, it will impress in your mind and heart even without you trying to memorize it.

God speaks to us when we meditate on the word of God. Give attention to the kind of literature it is and to each word and phrase. Be very attentive to what you are reading and focus on it. Do

not let your mind wander here and there.

Ask questions Ask observation questions and find the answers from the passage and right down the answers. For example, Who wrote this? Who were the primary readers? What is the context? Are there any teachings or examples here for 21st Century believers to obey and/ or follow? Or the teachings here were only for the Old Testament believers? What does other verses in the Bible say about this matter? Ask interpretation questions and interpret scripture with scripture. Such as what did this passage mean in its context to the original readers? Does it mean the same today in your context.? Ask application questions such as, are there any sin in my life that, this passage deals with? Are there any promises to claim? Are there any examples to follow? Right down the answers. This is like an animal "chewing the cud," after eating. You go over the verses again and again.

God has promised His blessings to those who meditate on His Word. Start praying again with adoration, as you did at the beginning. Second confess your sins and ask the Lord for forgiveness like David prayed in Psalms 139:23 and 24. *Search me, Oh, God, try me and know my thoughts, remove from me that which displeases you.* By your Holy Spirit help me to walk in the path of righteousness. Third step is thanksgiving to the Lord for who he is, what he means to you, and what he does in you and for you. Fourth, supplication to the Lord. That is bringing your requests and petitions to the Lord. Don't worry about anything, tell everything to your Lord. Give him Your pain and sorrows, your needs and

.... Continued on page 6

Accept God's Forgiveness Through The Blood of Jesus Christ

**New Series:
Meditations from
"1 John" - 1**

"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7-10)

Apostle John is clear about one fact – we all have the element of sin in our lives, and we can never deny that we have not sinned before God. Apostle Paul had already declared this matter in his epistle to the Romans: "There is none righteous, no, not one...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10, 23). Sin is all about



'missing the mark' that God has set in His righteousness, and as long as we are housed in our lowly body that bears the elements of sin, we commit sin in some form or another, whether in our thoughts, words, or action.

It is interesting to note that Apostle John makes a distinction between sin (v. 8) and sins (v. 9). Sin refers to our corrupt, evil nature. Sins refer to evils that we have done. There are 'sins of commission' (doing the evils that we are not supposed to do), and there are 'sins of omission' (not doing the good deeds that we are supposed to do). Then there are also sins of thought, sins of act, secret sins, and public sins. Our Lord Jesus Christ has died both for our sin and our sins. We may appear righteous on the outside, but God knows our hearts and the wickedness inside (Jer. 17:9). When we are sensitive to His interactions and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot deny either that we have not sinned or that we do not commit sin.

However, the good news is that we can receive forgiveness from God from our sins when we boldly and unashamedly confess all our sins to Him. This is a crucial element in receiving forgiveness from God. Confession is agreeing with God about our sins and receiving forgiveness from Him. Unless we openly confess our sins, we cannot receive forgiveness from God. There are many among us today who do not feel the need to or, do not feel convicted enough to confess our sins before God. When there are unconfessed sins lurking in our lives, we have set

up a barrier before God, and God cannot hear our prayers as the Psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18). On the other hand, if we cover our sins we will not prosper "but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). To confess our sins is thus a prerequisite to receiving the God's

forgiveness and cleansing.

King David is a prime example of someone who tried to hide his sins initially, but God took note of it and send His prophet Nathan to confront David (see 2 Sam. 12:1-13; Ps. 32:3-5). Upon realizing the extent of his depravity, David pleaded for mercy from God, and his outpouring is detailed in Psalms 51. David realized three truths from this experience: his sin was an affront to God; he deserves judgment from God for his sins; and he need to get forgiven and cleansed of his sins by God. Our Lord Jesus has taken all our sins and our due punishment for our sins upon Himself by dying on our place. So, He can create in us a "clean heart" when we cry out to Him (Ps. 51:10). We have the blessing of confession and forgiveness from God that will lift us up when we are down.

So, we should accept God's forgiveness through the blood of His Son Jesus Christ today. When we do that, God accepts us as righteous because He imputes to us the righteousness of His Son Jesus Christ. Instead of living in the shadows of yesterday, we need to walk in the light of today and the hope of tomorrow. The only way that we can cope from defeat and disappointment is to ask God to forgive us. God's pardon and forgiveness will enable us to start again with a pure heart as we focus on today's opportunities and move forward in our journey of life.

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1-2)



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"Immanuel: God with Us"

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:22&23).

In Christmas season, we all hear a lot of Christmas music and one of my favorite Christmas songs is "O Come, O come Emmanuel". The song is a cry to God to come and save His people. I would like to talk about the topic "Immanuel: the God who is with us" keeping the passage, Matthew 1:22&23 as our text.

Matthew quotes the passage to show that the birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. The name Immanuel comes from two Hebrew words, "Immanu" which means "with us" and "El" which is short for "Elohim" which is a name for God. Christmas is the celebration of God coming to be with us. "And the Word became 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). The real magic of Christmas is that Jesus came to earth to be with us.

Let's try to imagine what it meant for Jesus the Prince of Peace and Son of God to come from his Heavenly throne down to earth. Let's read Phil. 2 5-7: Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond-servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross". The noted writer, Max Lucado explains this in a story: Some squirrels lived in a tree outside his church office. He used to watch those squirrels sometimes. Once he winked at them and it appeared that one squirrel winked back. But he never prayed that he could be a squirrel. He didn't want to give up his burgers for acorns and his nice house for a little hole in a tree. That's what it meant for Jesus to come to earth



Brian Ninan
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and be one of us. To put it in a different way, the painter became a drop of paint in his own painting; the builder became a brick on the house he had built. Lucado also adds: If Jesus decided to give up all of His heavenly comforts and come to our world, then He must have considered us to be really valuable.

God who is with us understands us and is for us. Hebrews 4:14-16 says "Therefore, since we have a great high

The magic of Christmas is Immanuel: God with us. The gift of Christmas is that God came to us to be with us and save us. Jesus loved us so much He gave up everything to come and save us.

priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need". When Jesus came to be with us, He went through things that we go through. He understands our feelings. He felt sadness at Lazarus' grave. He felt betrayed by Judas and also when Peter denied Him. He felt angry when He saw the temple being used as

a market. He felt humiliation as He walked carrying a cross. He felt alone when His disciples ran away and God turned His face away. He felt love and compassion for those He touched. He felt pain on the cross. He was tempted in the desert with Satan. He was hungry and thirsty. Jesus is with us in time of trouble. We can approach His Throne confidently in times of trouble and need knowing that He understands and knows us.

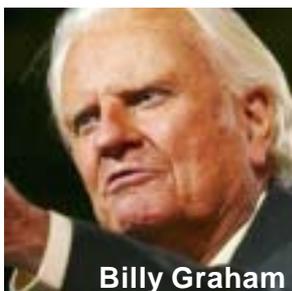
Jesus is with us now also through the Holy Spirit. John 14:16 & 17 says, "And I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you". Jesus is with us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God living in us. He reminds us of Jesus' words and gives us strength and power to fulfill God's plan.

The magic of Christmas is Immanuel: God with us. The gift of Christmas is that God came to us to be with us and save us. Jesus loved us so much He gave up everything to come and save us. God understands us.

Jesus sent His Holy Spirit to be with us. "It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed" (Deuteronomy 31:8). Jesus will not leave us. He will be with us forever and guide us. He has our best interest and a plan for us in His mind. He loves us and is our good Shepherd. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:16-17). God is with us. God is for us. What can stand against us? .



Rev. Billy Graham's test to detect false gospel



Billy Graham

A reader asked Graham in a letter: "A couple came to our door the other day and said they wanted to read the Bible to us. They were very friendly, but later my uncle said we shouldn't have let them in because they belong to a cult. Now they want to come back and talk to us about their beliefs. Should we let them?"

In reply, Graham told the reader that being cautious and discerning of false prophets is important. He added: "Only a few decades after Jesus' ministry, the Bible warned that 'many false prophets have gone out into the world' (1 John 4:1b). Not recognizing the Bible as the Word of God and not recognizing Jesus as the Son of God are red flags".

Excellent tests: Many cults do not recognize Bible as the Word of God and accept Jesus as the Son of God!

Ancient Cross and Menorah Engraving Discovered in Israel



Menorah

Three cave explorers made a significant historical and archaeological discovery while on a hike in Israel. Mickey Barkal, Sefi Givoni and Ido Meroz were exploring caves in Israel when they noticed an engraving of a menorah (*nine-branched candelabrum*) as well as a cross on the wall in one of the caves they were exploring. They reported the discovery to the Israel Antiquities Authority. Historians and archaeologists have since dated the Menora engraving to the Second Temple period, from 530 BCE to 70 CE.

Archologists say: "It substantiates the scientific research regarding the Jewish nature of the settlement during the Second Temple period. The cross was etched later on during the Byzantine period, most likely in the fourth century CE".

These discoveries are convincing proofs of the fact that Jews were the real occupants of these areas at those times as recorded in the Bible!

Korean Canadian pastor held in North Korea

According to a report in "Christian Today", Pastor Hyeon Soo Lim, a Korean Canadian, often took missionary trips to North Korea to do humanitarian work. He was arrested on one of these trips in 2014 and accused of "harming the dignity of the supreme leader and trying to use religion to destroy North Korea". He was given a life sentence of hard labor. Lim's congregation in Canada, Light Presbyterian Church, is petitioning the Canadian government to help secure his release. Lim's family and his church are concerned for his welfare.

North Korean communist leaders are heartless and thoroughly anti-christian. Let us pray for a change of their heart as Canadian diplomats negotiate with North Korean leaders.

Rev. Franklin Graham at the Inauguration

Rev. Franklin Graham is invited to read a scripture passage at the Jan. 20



Franklin Graham

inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump. He is one of six clergy chosen to offer the invocation, benediction and readings at the swearing-in ceremony. He said, he is praying about it before he selects the passage as he wants it to be meaningful not only to the president-elect, but also to be meaningful to the nation.

May the Lord inspire Graham with a suitable passage!

(This piece is being written before the inauguration)

Top of the charts: "Trust in you"



Singer Lauren Daigle is the top Christian artist of 2016. She also had two chart-topping albums in the past two years. The songs, "Trust in You" and "How Can It Be" are soul stirring songs in her debut album. The chorus of the song "Trust in You" goes as follows:

*"When You don't move the mountains
I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters
I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers
as I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You!"
The words are indeed a cry from the heart and very meaningful!*



God's plan for you!

In the city of Toonsville, there lived 12-year old twins Jake and Jackie. Along with being good students in school, they assisted their Uncle Frank, who was the town's Chief of police, in solving many mystery cases. They always held on *Philippians 4:13*, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me".

One day as Jake and Jackie were playing in their backyard, a red signal began to blink on their agent watches. That was the signal to call their Uncle. When they called their Uncle, he said that they were needed immediately to track down Dr. Blop who had recently made a nearby dormant volcano, Mount Tooney, as his headquarters. He said that Dr. Blop is making a machine that if used, could have devastating consequences. The twins rushed to the police headquarters. Their Uncle gave

them special suits to survive volcano's temperatures in case the volcano became active.

Jake and Jackie repeated *Philippians 4:13* and rode their bikes to Mount Tooney. They saw how Dr. Blop had made a huge room in the volcano, way below the ground level, and kept his special machine right in the middle. Since they did not see anyone, they walked cautiously toward the machine. Suddenly Dr. Blop came in and shouted at them to stop and not go near the machine. Both the boys got their agent devices and prepared to defend

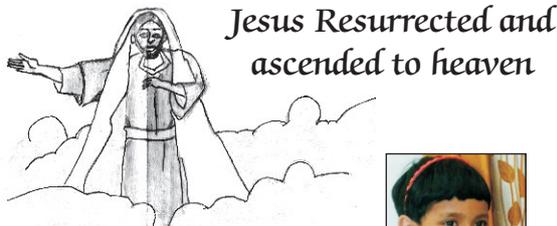
themselves, as they edged towards the machine. Soon Jackie reached the machine and laser-smashed what looked like the controls of the machine. Dr. Blop screamed "OH NO!" and rushed to his hover bike and took off.

Just then they heard rumblings. It sounded as if the dormant volcano was becoming active again. They looked for the fastest way out of the volcano. Suddenly they spotted an elevator and rushed into it. They could hear the volcano rumblings get louder. They began praying and trusting that God would keep them safe and bring them out of the volcano in time. Slowly the elevator reached above the ground level. They rushed out. Their Uncle had reached there by then, after he heard the volcano rumblings. Jack and Jackie described what happened and how God had kept them safe through the whole incident.

They thanked God for His protection and care.



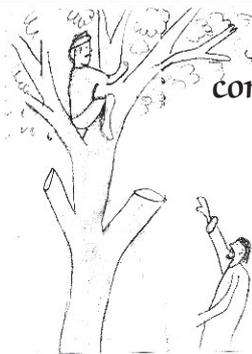
Jeremy Ninan, Houston



Jesus Resurrected and ascended to heaven



Ann Mathew, Chembur.



Jesus said to Zacheaus come down today I am going to stay in your house



Airyn Thomas, Kalamkoli



Savio Alan Mathew Sanpada