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Past "CHRISTMAS" Beacon Publications

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## The Gift of God's Son

World history is divided into parts. The most wonderful time for living on earth took place when everything was perfect in the Garden of Eden. Only two people enjoyed it before they ruined it for everyone else to follow. Then life on earth became much harder. But tougher circumstances didn't stop them from doing wrong things or their children after them.

The people on earth became so bad that God decided to end all the wickedness by a worldwide flood. He saved only one man in right standing with Him, Noah and his family. But people just couldn't stop doing wrong things.

God instituted a system of law and sacrifices to cover people's sin. He chose one small nation to be His representatives on earth but they failed to do their part.

History was divided again, this time by the gift of God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Such a huge impact has He had on the world that the system of history dating was divided into BC meaning Before Christ and AD, standing for the Latin meaning *In the Year of our Lord*.

The richest man in the world cannot give God sufficient payment to cover his own sin. God says it is not enough to pay for his soul - that invisible part of his life which will live on for ever and ever.

The Lord Jesus, being both God and sinless, paid for the sin of the world with His own blood at His death! But not everyone has their sin forgiven. Only those who place their trust in Jesus and dedicate their entire life to Him, receive an eternal pardon.

Is Christmas just a time of feasting and giving gifts for you? Let us give God thanks for the gift of His own dear Son and His sacrifice for the people of the world!

## The LORD'S Blessings

At Christmas time we celebrate the great goodness of God.

In the beginning of time in the Garden of Eden, the fallen angel Satan couldn't cast doubt in Eve's mind that God didn't exist. She and Adam talked to God every day. So Satan cast doubt on the goodness of God. He planted the idea in her mind that if God really loved her, He'd let her eat the fruit of all the trees in the Garden. And to our regret, she believed him and there have been damaging consequences ever since.

But before we go blaming Eve, we need to ask ourselves how often do we doubt God's goodness too? When something bad happens, like a horrific accident or a plane falls from the sky, what do we think? If God is good why doesn't everything go smoothly all the time? Unfortunately, we live in a fallen world. Not only Adam and Eve were punished for their wrongdoing but planet earth suffered too and is still suffering.

In His mercy God didn't leave people in their miserable condition. By His great goodness and at a shocking cost, God provided a permanent way to deal with our sin if we're willing to ask Him to do so. At the right time God sent His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to teach us how to live.

When His earthly life was over Jesus paid the penalty for all the sins of the world. But not everyone has their sins forgiven because God's forgiveness is strictly limited to those people who believe Jesus to be the only bridge back to God and turn away from all their wrongdoing.

If your faith is in God and His goodness, no matter what bad thing happens, your faith will remain firm in Him. We are called to take God on trust. God's power is able to prevent tragedies but His sovereign purpose is at work in ways we can't understand.

The believer in Christ can work through life's troubles knowing that God loves us too much to let anything happen to us that will not work out for good. Our trials and problems cause us to be more diligent in our Bible reading and prayers.

**God is good - all the time!**

## The Lord Jesus is Pre-eminent

At Christmas time we love to share in the festivities and celebration of the Lord Jesus Christ coming to earth as a little baby. Why celebrate? After all, that happened two thousand years ago. Although there are many different reasons for remembering Christ's birth, the main one is that Jesus is Preeminent! For the first and only time the Almighty Creator through His own freewill, entered through the door of humanity and involved Himself with us in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is first in rank and authority. Throughout the ages of civilization there has never lived any person on this earth more important than Jesus Christ. Why? Jesus wasn't born with an inherited sinful human nature in the way that the rest of us have been.

He was conceived by God's own Holy Spirit and remained free from sin all His earthly life until He was nailed to a cross. He willingly took on the sin of the world so that He might redeem for Himself a "bride" of committed disciples to live with Him forever.

Can we be sure He is God's rightful substitute to pay our sin debt that we owe to God? Of all the gods people have worshipped throughout history, Jesus is the only one who has the scars in His hands, feet and side to prove His love and care for us. He alone rose from death, never to die again.

In the Old Testament Scriptures there are many prophecies of a coming Messiah (or Christ) who would deal with human sin. God Himself promised Adam and Eve first in Genesis 3:15 about a coming Messiah. The word 'Messiah' means anointed one, chosen one, deliverer and saviour.

God promised Abraham that because he had obeyed God, through his descendants all the nations of the earth would be blessed. (Genesis 22:18) History moves along through the Children of Israel becoming a nation in the promised land of Canaan. In time the Israelite leader became a king under God and God sent many prophets to warn the Israelites about their sinful ways not pleasing Him.

First the northern kingdom was conquered and later the people of Judah in the south were taken away in exile to Babylon; among them was a young man named Daniel.

The last chapters of Daniel's book in the Bible describe some visions he had. The angel Gabriel was sent to explain them to him. There would be seventy weeks of weeks (or 490 Biblical years of 360 days) divided into seven weeks by seven (or 49 Biblical years) to rebuild Jerusalem, followed by sixty-two weeks by seven (or 434 Biblical years) when the Messiah Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem through the Eastern Gate on Palm Sunday and presented Himself to Israel as their promised Messiah King; within days He was killed.

Historians tell us that on 14th March 445BC King Artaxerxes of Persia made a decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The number of days between then and 6th April 32 AD, are 173,880 days ( $69 \times 7 \times 360$ ). This was the only occasion Jesus presented Himself as king. When mathematicians worked out by the number of days, Jesus' appearance coincided with the prophesied time of the Messiah's arrival to the very day!

Anyone hoping to claim messiahship had to arrive at that time. No one showing up years before or years after that time can claim to be the Messiah; certainly no one today can or anyone in the future. Have you noticed that there are still 7 years outstanding to complete the 490 Biblical years?

The first time Jesus came to earth He came as a suffering Servant but He promised He will return, next time as a conquering king. He also promised in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5:9 that He would protect all those trusting and relying on Him to escape from God's wrath poured out on the earth during those final 7 years.

Every day we live our lives to please Him because His promised return to call out His own in the Rapture may come before we meet Him in our death. One way or the other, are you ready?

**Jesus loves you more than anyone.**

## Jesus is the Reason for the Season

Each year we spend so much time, effort and money in celebrating the Lord Jesus' coming to earth as a baby. But Jesus was no ordinary baby! Jesus was perfect and has always been part of the Godhead. In eternity past there was only God the Father, God the Son – Jesus, and God's Holy Spirit.

Before God created the world and everything in it out of nothing, God existed. We know this because Moses in a prayer in Psalm 90 said: "(Lord), before You created the hills or brought the world into being, You were eternally God, and You will be God forever."

In Genesis, Chapter 1, on the sixth day of creation, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." The use of the plural "Us" and "Our" for God, reflects the communication being engaged by the three members of the Godhead.

God is one person yet more than one. And this hints at the doctrine of the Trinity, even though this word isn't used in the Scriptures. In the same way, human beings are made up of a trinity of body, soul (the immortal part living forever) and spirit (character or personality, mind and will).

In Isaiah, Chapter 44, the Lord God gives His own words about being the only God: 'I am the first, the last, the only God; there is no other god but me. Could anyone else have done what I did? Who could have predicted all that would happen from the very beginning to the end of time?' God chose to prove His credentials in this way.

Some of the Old Testament prophecies were given from hundreds to thousands of years before people on earth saw that prophecy being fulfilled. No one but the true God could predict accurately all that would happen in the future. There are many detailed prophecies about the Lord Jesus' coming to earth.

The Old Testament prophet Micah predicted where Jesus the Messiah would be born – in a small village of less than 1000 inhabitants in Judea. However, Mary wasn't living close by during her pregnancy.

The Messiah had been predicted to arrive 483 years after the command had been given to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. This information had been given by an angel to Daniel 580 years before it was fulfilled. (Daniel 9:25) The year AD 27 began the ministry of Jesus the Messiah.

Caesar Augustus ordered a second great tax collection four years before Jesus was born. The proud Jewish people resented anything Roman and especially more taxes. They sent a delegation to Rome to protest. Communications were slow but eventually the delegation failed and finally the Jewish people had to enrol and pay the tax.

The official tax collectors worked their way through province after province and town by town, until it was time for the Lord Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. Neither Mary, nor Augustus, nor the tax collectors had control over the timing. God Himself brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy spoken by Micah.

We need to accept by faith that God's prophecies given to His faithful servants throughout the centuries will all come true, because God is perfect and He cannot tell a lie. Though dead, the prophets still continue to speak through the Scriptures.

The Lord Jesus, though part of the Godhead and active from Day 1 of Creation, became a human being because we people needed a perfect sacrifice to pay for our sins. If we trust Jesus to be our Saviour, He will forgive all our confessed sin. Through God's Holy Spirit He will be with us each minute of the day, in our joys and sorrows until we are ready for our home call to heaven. May His Name be eternally praised, for He is indeed the greatest gift we can ever receive! May God's blessings be with each one during this Season of Thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus!

## Preparation for Jesus

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with the background to the birth of the Lord Jesus, but there's no great introduction to Mary, the woman chosen by God to be the mother of the baby Jesus. When the angel Gabriel visited her to tell her the good news, Mary accepted what the angel said. Afterwards she travelled to the hill country of Judea to visit her much older cousin Elisabeth who was by then 6 months pregnant. Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and greeted Mary as the mother of her Lord. Mary responded with a song of praise that showed how well Mary knew the Old Testament Scriptures. She quoted from the Psalms seven times and from the books of Genesis, Samuel, Isaiah, and Habakkuk.

In the quiet and unrecorded years of girlhood she had prayed and studied God's Word. At the meeting with Elisabeth the witness of her hidden years was shown for all to see. Later Mary taught the Scriptures to the Lord Jesus from early childhood.

In our so called 'enlightened' age many people reject Jesus Christ and won't even read about His self-sacrifice for those who would put their trust in Him. Every person needs a Saviour to save them from the penalty of sin they owe to our Creator God but cannot pay with enough money or good works.

They may not understand that God made each of us with a spiritual part (our soul) and each person belongs to Satan's camp until they turn to a definite decision to be a follower of Jesus.

A child doesn't need to be taught how to tell lies. It comes easily. But if the child is taught from the Bible and knows it is wrong to tell lies, the truth grows in that child's conscience.

Those proud rejecters who think they have superior knowledge and skills degenerate in practice back to the old pagan rituals revived by Satan from the time of the Tower of Babel after Noah's Flood. Evil Nimrod and his wife introduced many ungodly practices. After he died his wife had a baby boy which she told everyone was a reincarnation of Nimrod. She was then worshipped as the Queen of Heaven and Mother of God.

This happened over 3,000 years before Mary became the mother of the Lord Jesus and these titles were gradually transferred to Mary by the church from 300AD onwards. In the Scriptures we never read that the real mother of Jesus received an appearance from the risen Christ. She isn't mentioned in the Book of Revelation either so she couldn't be the queen of heaven reigning in authority on any heavenly throne.

The last Scripture mention of Mary is in an upper room in Jerusalem with a small group of disciples praying like any other sinner transformed by the work done by Jesus on Calvary's cross. How thankful we should be for faithful praying people like Mary!

The true meaning of Christmas is love. John 3:16-17 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

The real Christmas story is the story of God's becoming a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. Why did God do such a thing? Because He loves us and we humans need a Saviour from sin. As Christians we need to continually look at our life to see what we need to change in order to become more Christ-like. Jesus is coming back again for those who love, trust and serve Him. Are you prepared and waiting for Jesus to call your name?

## Jesus' Coming to Earth Transforms our Future

What does Christmas mean to you? Is Jesus the reason for the Season to you personally? Each year on the 25th December we remember and celebrate the Son of God being born as a human being in humble circumstances. Of course Christmas Day isn't the actual day Jesus was born. In Israel in December winter snow is often falling and the shepherds certainly wouldn't have had their sheep out on the hillsides.

When Jesus left His throne in heaven to come to earth, He laid aside His divine privileges but not His divine attributes. He had glory with God His Father from before the world was created. He set aside His honour, fame and glory to come to earth to humbly and willingly serve others like a slave. He did this because He loves us with an everlasting love and as a consequence He came to earth to save us from hell. Jesus remained both Lord and Son during His earthly ministry but voluntarily set aside His own rights. He didn't impose His authority on others to have them do whatever He wanted.

What other event throughout all history has been more significant than the birth of Jesus Christ? It marked the arrival of *Immanuel* (God With Us), the Saviour of the World and the Word Became Flesh. His birth was the most significant birth ever! From then on, history divided events happening *Before Christ or In the Year of Our Lord*. How can we fail to remember this day with great joy and reverence?

At Christmas the focus should be on Jesus Christ and the great victory He won over death to give eternal life to all who would believe in Him and turn away from their sins. Our grateful praise and thanks for His redeeming work done on our behalf should be central in our worship services.

After Jesus had died for the sins of the world, God raised Him up, highly praised Him and increased His rank. There is coming a day when every single person who has ever lived, will bow before Him and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Phil. 2:11) Those who have surrendered their wills to do God's will are freely justified and have been given the Holy Spirit to indwell their bodies while on earth. This way they can be doing God's work and in heaven will receive a reward. There are crowns for faithful servants of Christ to be won:

**The Victor's Crown** is for the disciplined life – 1 Corinthians 9:25

**The Soul Winner's Crown** is for service – 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

**The Crown of Life** is for martyrs, those people who have been killed because they refused to deny the Lord Jesus and worship of Him. James 1:12

**The Crown of Righteousness** is for those who love Him and await His return – 2 Timothy 4:8

**The Crown of Glory** is for the faithful pastors, elders and leaders – 1 Peter 5:2-4 (They have to give a much stricter account.)

There's a crown and you can win it, if you'll go in Jesus' name. Or will you be ashamed of much wasted time at our Lord's coming? (1 John 2:28) Our trust in the Lord Jesus produces the right attitude to do good works. However, we must not turn back from exercising that faith in our personal lives or He will not be pleased with us. (Hebrews 10:38)

There is no easy "take it or leave it" attitude on God's part. God the Father in heaven made provision for the sinfulness of human beings at an extreme cost. And He divides the human race into two categories: friends or enemies. The shocking truth is that this division is permanent when a person leaves his apprenticeship here on earth. No one in torment in hell can go back and change their mind. That option is closed forever. Eternity is a very long time and it is essential to give this matter of where you want to spend eternity some thoughtful consideration now.

**Yes, the Lord Jesus giving up His glory to come to earth can transform your eternal future.**

## Sharing Jesus with the World

The Christmas Season is one of the best times to make the effort to share the Gospel with people who've heard about Jesus but know little of His mission to save them from the penalty that their many wrongdoings have accumulated in heaven's books. In Matthew's Gospel Chapter 28 the Lord Jesus invited all who believe in Him to be included in His wonderful plan to redeem mankind.

Does the thought of sharing your faith in Jesus Christ with strangers cause feelings of fear and guilt in your heart? It's comforting to know that God hears our prayers, and that He is faithful to grant us anything according to His will.

Since God desires to see everyone come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Peter 3:9), we can confidently ask Him to provide opportunities to share our faith. Praying for God to guide us allows us to rely on His supernatural power rather than on our own abilities.

We must be friendly before starting a discussion about spiritual topics. Moving from everyday conversation to questions about a person's beliefs is helpful. This gives his background experiences and allows for openings so we can better minister to him, particularly in our prayers. If a person feels that he's being pressured into becoming a Christian, there may be a closed reaction or even anger. If he shows hostility, then it's time to move the conversation on. Never get into an argument, as Jesus isn't glorified in such situations.

Rather than recite a complicated piece with words he may not understand, simply open your Bible and let God's Word speak for itself! A list of verses can be glued in the front of your Bible, so that if you get side-tracked, you can continue. Even if your friend mentions that he doesn't believe in or agree with the Bible, it's best not to argue. You can state that you simply want him to understand what the Bible says about eternity. Isn't it wonderful to know that it's not our responsibility to convict a person? Conviction is God's job. All we can do is share. Once we have shared, we have done God's will. Witnessing for Christ is a no-lose activity.

Ask your friend what he thinks about this: - We have all sinned and deserve God's judgment. God, the Father, sent His only Son to satisfy that judgment for those who believe in Him. Jesus, the creator and eternal Son of God, who lived a sinless life, loves us so much that He died for our sins, taking the punishment that we deserve. He was buried and rose from the dead according to the Bible. If you truly believe and trust this in your heart, receiving Jesus alone as your Saviour, declaring, "Jesus is Lord," you will be saved from judgment and spend eternity with God in heaven.

If the person shows interest then share a few salvation passages and ask if he wants to make Jesus Lord of his own life. Some will want to take time to think it all through, so make arrangements to speak with him again soon.

What are the setbacks that hinder our witnessing for Jesus? Believers in Christ are often afraid that they don't know enough of the Bible to not get caught with questions they cannot answer. But some of us just don't care that much about lost people. Our priorities and lives reveal that we make no time in our busy schedules to interact and talk with those who don't know Christ. We may have even stopped praying for lost people in our neighbourhood and workplace.

But in spite of our weaknesses and our past mistakes, we can be effective and successful witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ. Ask God to give you a passion and unconditional love for people, praying that God gives you a burden or desire to talk to your friends and family about Jesus. Don't pretend that you're perfect or super-spiritual. We are people who have died to ourselves and live for Christ.

There is an urgency to share Jesus because He said in John 4:35: "Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest." It's the responsibility of every Christian to introduce as many people as possible to the Lord Jesus.

## The Truly Amazing Swap

At Christmas time each year people all around the world share the joy of God giving His best, His much loved Son, the Lord Jesus, to be the go-between for His holy Self and sinful humans, us all.

Jesus existed with God from eternity past and will live on for ever. Although fully divine Jesus gave up His heavenly privileges to come to earth as a humble human being to make a way back to fellowship with God for all those who have wanted this peace with God. As Jesus Himself did nothing wrong and had no sin, He alone was qualified, willing and able to reconcile us people back to God through His death.

How you might ask? Through the avenue of faith or trust in Jesus' completed work done on the cross of Calvary, God proved to everyone that Jesus was the promised Saviour people had long been waiting for, by raising Him from death back to life after three days. But this Good News starts with bad news. We are guilty before God and cannot pay for our own sin debt to Him. So Jesus took upon Himself our punishment and extends a pardon to each one of us when we admit our guilt and ask for forgiveness. He became sin for us and we are then given His righteousness. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21) What an amazing swap! How very much Jesus loves us and has proved His love for us! What should be our response to this?

There are different levels of faith. Many people believe that Jesus lived long ago and was a good man who helped many people. But without access to His life story in the Gospel section of the Bible that might be as far as they go in their knowledge and understanding of His mission on earth. In James 2:19 it points out that even the demons believe in God but tremble in terror, as there is no possibility of reconciliation to God for them.

Real faith in the Lord Jesus is more than believing but receiving Him into the individual's life as Lord and Saviour. To every person who surrenders their life, their all, to Jesus, He gives the Holy Spirit to live in that person's life. And for the new Christian to grow that faith in Jesus, a good amount of time must be spent studying the Bible. This grows faith in the faithfulness of God and real faith goes on to prove itself by doing good deeds for others.

Why, you might ask, didn't God destroy Satan when Satan rebelled in heaven before God had even created Adam and Eve? God is sovereign over all His creation, which includes Satan. Certainly, Satan and his demons cause trouble in the world, but they are only allowed a certain amount of freedom. God has planned everything from the beginning of time to the end and nothing takes Him by surprise. (Isaiah 14:24) He allows Satan and his hordes to tempt or test believers in Jesus to help them learn to resist evil and strengthen their faith.

Our responsibility to God is to obey Him, trust Him, and submit to His will, whether we understand it or not. In 2nd Peter Chapter 1 we are given a list of things to aim for after we become a Christian. We are to feed our faith in God by remembering Bible promises. Add to this, moral excellence and growth in spiritual knowledge from God and His Word. Learn self-control and patient endurance to achieve a deep devotion to God. Then aim to make kind and respectful relationships with love for everyone. We are to have a healthy dread of displeasing Him, dishonouring Him or disappointing Him.

Jesus promised that He would return for those who are devoted to Him to take them out of this world before the final assault against Israel and the Jewish people starts.

## Loving Jesus with All Our Mind

Each Christmas when we remember the birth of baby Jesus we think of a helpless little child in need of constant loving care. Was this baby of all the babies ever born really the Son of God? How can we find out for sure?

God never wants anyone to be ignorant of Himself. So He gave us the Holy Bible. There is no other book like it in the world. To prove that He knew the future from before the beginning of the world's creation, God put predictions or prophecies in the Bible. Many of these predictions have already been fulfilled. Even Jesus' birth and death were predicted 700 years ahead of time so that we can be certain that Jesus is the Son of God. Ideas change from generation to generation but the Bible stands firm as the very best source of knowledge about past, present and future events. The better we know the Bible, the better we will know God and His ways.

God wants every person on earth to know that there is no other god who can do the things that He does. (Isaiah 46:9) Soon after God's creation was completed and everything was perfect, great tragedy struck. One of God's created angels rose up in rebellion against God and destroyed the previously good relationship God had with the two people He'd placed on the earth to rule over it. Disobeying God's only command caused a barrier of sin to be raised against them. What could those two people do to get back their good relationship with God? Nothing, but God in His great mercy makes the way available for each person who believes in His dear Son Jesus.

Various verses in the Bible say that Jesus is God, the Father is God and so is the Holy Spirit. The Father ranks more important than Jesus the Son but He ranks more important than God the Holy Spirit. Yet all three are one God but each has distinct work to do. Sinless Jesus had to become a human being to be the perfect sacrifice for human sin or He couldn't die to be our Redeemer. For without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. (Hebrews 9:22) Jesus died once and His empty tomb proves that He is alive and guarantees that we too will live again in the next life for all eternity.

When Jesus had grown to manhood, one day as He was teaching the crowd around Him, He was asked what the greatest commandment was. He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5: *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength."* The Israelites were to love Him with their whole being as they devoted themselves to be totally committed to Him. In Mark 12:30 the Lord Jesus added the words 'all your mind' to the Old Testament verse. How do we love God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit with all our mind?

Satan primarily attacks us with temptations in our minds, often through what we see and hear from worldly technology sources. If we don't reject wrong thinking, we may then fall into some sinful thoughts and actions. Always counter Satanic attacks with Philippians 4:6,7: "Don't worry about anything, instead, **pray about everything**. Tell God what you need and thank him for all He has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." George Muller (a godly man who started orphanages in England in the 1800's) wrote about 'praying in everything' in *Life of Trust*: In the smallest matters of life, bring everything before God, the little things, the very little things. 'Everything' living is in holy communion with our Heavenly Father and with our precious Lord Jesus all day long...Whatever tries us in any way, speak to the Lord about it."

## Gift Giving at Christmas

While the leadup to Christmas may have many of us pondering what to give in the way of presents, our thoughts should turn to the gifts that Jesus Christ brought to us by His life, death, resurrection and ascension back to heaven.

When God gave Moses the Law for the Children of Israel to live by, there were elements of pay-back. If one person harmed another, the injured person was expected to punish the aggressor. This had the warning to be careful how people treated one other.

When the Lord Jesus, the sinless Son of God was sent to earth by His Heavenly Father, He brought a new way of living based on **love**. Jesus showed God's love to people hopelessly lost in sin and by His death and resurrection broke the barrier between God and sinners. "God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him." (John 3:17)

Since the first couple on earth disobeyed God's instruction, all people have been born as sinners. However, Jesus Christ died to pay for the sins of the whole world. But only those who trust Him as the only go-between with God the Father and ask Him for **forgiveness** from all their wrongdoing, are made right with God. (John 14:6) God's forgiveness to us is conditional on our forgiving those who had harmed us in some way. (Matthew 6:12)

Individuals who sincerely do this are given God's gift of the Holy Spirit as evidence that from then on they belong to God as His children. This is a great gift of **mercy** no person deserves, as is **hope** for a promised future in heaven.

The gift of **salvation** should make us rejoice in **heart peace** and thank God for such a precious gift. You may ask: How do I know God loves me? “All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them and they live in God.” (1 John 4:15)

Once made right in God’s sight and our prayers about our troubles and trials flow heavenward, we thank God for Jesus’ **availability** through His Holy Spirit at any hour of the day or night to hear us. It is only as we give our problems to Him and leave them with Him, that we can move forward with learning the Scriptures, another wonderful gift for those living for Jesus.

Another great gift of Jesus’ is the **confidentiality** we have in our personal and private prayers. As we grow in the Christian life we notice idols being part in our daily lives: worldly success to make us proud and self-important; envy of other Christians’ God-given talents; all forms of greed which expect more things from God than we need; unhealthy emotions like anger and fear to control others. Our focus is always to be on God’s plan for our own life.

When we start to mature in living for Jesus, He gives us the gift of **service** for others. We notice that we can often help others along the road of life and doing so brings **joy**. “Faith without works (good deeds) is dead.” (James 2:26)

Along with joy comes a batch of new problems and people to be prayed for. Jesus warned that worldly people would hate Christians: “Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you.” (John 15:20b) “When someone asks about your Christian hope always be ready to explain it. But do this in a gentle and respectful way.” (1 Peter 3:15b)

“When your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.” (James 1:3) “God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

Jesus is the best gift we could ever receive. He has done so very much for us and deserves our continual thanks and praise. The next time God sends Jesus to earth He will appear in the clouds above the earth. He will call up all those who love Him, to be with Him in Heaven. Are you ready to meet Jesus in the air? Confess your sins daily as Bible scholars watching end times prophecies being fulfilled, believe the calling up may be sooner than we expect.

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< END OF "CHRISTMAS" BEACONS >