

# EVANGEL

*The Good News of Jesus Christ*



# Christmas Light

**Each night before my daughter goes to sleep she says to her mother, “Don’t forget to turn on my night light.” Like many children, she is afraid of the dark. The presence of the light makes sure that while there may be darkness all around her, she has light.**

During this Christmas season you will no doubt once again see many lights. As you drive around in the dark night you can see many different homes lit up with lights. The colors vary, as do the styles. Now, I don’t know much about the origin of Christmas lights (given that electricity did not appear until the late 19th Century one need not worry about “pagan” origins). However, their prominence in our land during the Christmas season does give opportunity to reflect on the *biblical* connection between Christmas and light.

Christmas Day is the day on which the Christian church remembers the birth of Jesus Christ. If you have read the biblical account of Jesus’ birth in the gospel of Matthew you know that after his birth a star, with its light, led the Magi through many a dark night to the place where the Christ child was (Matthew 2:1-12). The gospel of Luke records how the shepherds were out in the fields near Bethlehem watching their flocks at night. All of a sudden the darkness was gone and the sky was filled with light as an angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them (Luke 2:8-12). The Christmas story is told in such a way that light shines into the darkness.

## The darkness

Why is that? One is reminded of how the Bible begins. Genesis 1:2-3, *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”*

At this time of year one is often drawn to the gospel accounts of Jesus’ birth as found in Matthew and Luke. However, I would like to draw your attention to the gospel of John. John’s gospel does not give an account of his birth, but it does give an account of Jesus’ coming into this world. It is an account that clearly has in mind Genesis 1. For, John begins his gospel, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

The Word is the second person of the Trinity. The Word is the Son of God. He has always existed. He is God. In fact, according to John 1:3, He was involved in creation, *“Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”* I believe one can readily see the parallel between John 1 and Genesis 1. With that parallel in mind it is no surprise that John continues by writing about light and darkness. *“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it.”*

One must pause here and see what it is that God’s word is saying. The first part is clear. In the eternal Son of God was life. The next part of the verse defines what this life was – *the light of men*. What does this mean? The point of reference is still to creation. The Son of God created man. He gave him life. In so doing He gave him light. This light, called

*the image of God* in Genesis 1, refers to the fact that in creation man was perfect. He was like God.

But then, man fell into sin (Genesis 3). This is darkness. As one reads the gospel of John as well as his first epistle it becomes apparent that darkness is not merely the absence of light, but it is what is positively evil. When man fell into sin he no longer understood the light. He no longer was perfect like God. He knew good but could not do it. He knew evil and could not help but do evil deeds. John 1:5, *“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”* Fallen man is confused. There is still some light in him. He has some idea about God, about natural things, and about the difference between what is honorable and shameful. He shows some regard for virtue and outward order. It is this light that leaves him without excuse according to Paul in Romans 1:19, 20. But whatever is left of that original light it cannot save him from his sins. In fact he is inclined to the darkness although, thanks be to God, the darkness cannot overcome the light.

## The Light

So then how can sinful man be saved? The answer is *Christmas Light*. John 1:9, *“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.”* The eternal Son of God came into the world. The Word became flesh (John 1:14). His name was Jesus and He was born of the virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem. He came into the world not as he had created it, but into a world fallen into sin. He came into a world not filled with light, but covered in darkness. He is the only Light in a dark world. He is the true Light. He Himself said in John 8:12, *“I am the light of the world.”*

# (not lights)



But what does John mean when he says, *“that gives light to every man?”* He is repeating what he said in verse 4. With emphasis he is saying that the very same Light of creation who gave light in creation to all men now comes to the world. The expectation created by this emphatic statement is that all men should receive Him. After all does not light recognize Light? But one must not forget that all men are now in darkness. And so John says in verse 10, *“the world did not recognize Him,”* and in verse 11, *“his own did not receive Him.”* Why did they not receive Him? Because they love darkness more than the Light. John 3:19-20, *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”*

Yet, by the grace of God, there are some who come to the Light. John 1:12, *“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* Through God’s power (John 3:21) there are people who are called out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

Dear reader, I have outlined for you the truth about the Christmas Light. The eternal Son of God who created this world and who created you was sent by the Father into this world. He is the Light shining in the darkness. Apart from Him you are in darkness. You may have noticed that once John says that of Jesus that He is the *true light* (1:9). This means there is *false light*. Christmas can be a time of *false light*. There can be false happiness. But when the shine of the Christmas gifts wears off, and the lights are taken down are you still in the light or are you in the darkness? Christmas can be a time of *false light*. But there are other false lights. Maybe you are pursuing a system of belief that does not teach that Jesus is the *true Light*. Ours is a time in which increasingly the message of tolerance and political correctness translates into a religion where there are many (indeed limitless) ways to “God.” Yet, this is not the message of Jesus. He says in John 8:12, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* In another great *I am* statement He says in John 14:6, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

## Come to the Light

The answer to the darkness of a life dominated by sin is not found in fleeting moments of joy whether of the Christmas spirit or spirits. The answer to the darkness of a life dominated by sin is not found in a system of beliefs made up by man. The answer to the darkness of man in his sin is found in the true light that *has* come into the world. By his suffering, death and resurrection Jesus Christ has restored the light in sinful man. Will you walk in the Light or will you flee from it so that the darkness of your sin is not exposed? If you follow the Light you will never walk in darkness, but you will have the light of life.

God’s children need not fear the darkness around them. They don’t need to ask the Father to turn on a light for them. He promises continuous light through Jesus Christ by the power of his Holy Spirit. For this reason Christmas is a season of joy and happiness. Let the Christian church in season and out of season heed the command of the Lord to share the message of joy for the church is the light of the world. Jesus said, *“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:16) Christmas is also a season of hope, for one day there will be no more darkness. The sure promise of God’s word is that one day, *“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 22:5). Merry Christmas to you as you walk in the Light!

Doug Vandeburgt

# Christ is All

I once bought a little clay tile for my wife with the following poem. The title of the poem was “You.” The poem went like this.

*You are my now,  
my then,  
you are my life*

*You are my thoughts  
my actions,  
and my song.*

*I know for sure  
the Lord gave you to me,  
because someone so lovely  
as you  
is something people do  
not give.*

Perhaps, some of you can relate to this. You have fallen in love. Your boy or girlfriend has become your now, your then, your life. He or she is your life, your thoughts, your actions and your song. And also you – if you believe in God – know for sure that God gave you to each other, because someone as gracious and lovely as your beloved is something we humans don’t give to each other.

What we can experience in a relationship with a boy or girl, a husband or wife, we can also experience in other areas. I really enjoy being a pastor. I enjoy this so much, I could easily write a poem with the title “Being a Pastor.” And the poem would go like this:

*You are my now,  
my then,  
you are my life*

*You are my thoughts  
my actions,  
and my song.*

*I know for sure  
the Lord gave me the  
pastorate,  
because something so  
wonderful and rewarding  
as being called to be a pastor  
is something people do  
not give.*

Perhaps, also you experience this. Your work has become your all. Maybe, your possession have become your all. Perhaps, your car or your hobbies have become your all or your children or grandchildren. Maybe even your handicap, your aches and pains, your illness have become your all.

## Christ is all

The Bible reminds us that someone else should be our all. In a short letter called *Colossians*, a man by the name of Paul writes that “Christ is all” (Colossians 3:11).

There was a time when Christ was not all for Paul. In another small letter called *Philippians*, he tells his readers about the things that were once really important for him. Paraphrasing his words, Paul says: “You know my family background: a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day, an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin, a strict and devout

adherent to God’s law, a fiery defender of the purity of my religion even to the point of persecuting Christians, a meticulous observer of everything set down in God’s law Book” (Philippians 3:4-6).

But now listen to this same Paul once he has become a Christian. Again I paraphrase: “All these credentials I thought were so important, I’m tearing up and throwing out with the trash along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ! Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant. I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by Him” (Philippians 3:7-9). Why, if Paul were to write a poem about his new found love, he would undoubtedly give it the title “Christ is all.” And he would write:

*You are my now,  
my then,  
you are my life*

*You are my thoughts  
my actions,  
and my song.*

*I know for sure  
the Lord gave Jesus Christ  
to me,  
because someone so loving  
and forgiving as He  
is something people do  
not give.*

## The church of Jesus Christ

Because Christ is all in his life, Paul knows he should be a member of the church of Jesus Christ. Paul knows that the Lord Jesus Christ who is his all is the Head of his church. He knows that the Lord Jesus is also the Good Shepherd of the sheep – the One who laid down his life for his sheep and now gathers them through his Word and Spirit, leading and guiding them on their journey through life. Paul is familiar with the voice of Jesus just as sheep are familiar with the voice of their shepherd. And so, he desires to do nothing more than to obey this voice and do what this voice tells him to do.

At the same time, Paul knows that when he gathers with other believers in the church of Jesus Christ and becomes a member of this church, he becomes a member of a community of believers who also desire to have Christ as all in their lives and who very practically want to show what this means to one another. He wants to use the gifts and talents God has given him for the well-being of the other members of this community of believers. He wants to share in their joys and sorrows, while at the same time he wants to share in the sorrows of this world by doing what he can to alleviate some of suffering he sees in the lives of those around him. You see, Paul knows that the church of Jesus Christ is called to be an oasis of life and refreshment in the midst of a dry and barren desert by demonstrating to others how a person's life changes when Christ become all in one's life.

## A community of forgiven sinners

Perhaps, you once were a member of a local church and your experience was not a very good one. Maybe, you are of the opinion that the church is full of hypocrites and so you have no desire to become a member of such an insincere, two-faced, phony group of people. And I don't blame you either, for I wouldn't want to be a member of such a deceitful and dishonest community either.

The good news is, however, that the church of Jesus Christ is not full of hypocrites. There may be some, but most of them are not. What you will find in the church is a community of people who struggle with sinful inclinations and who seek forgiveness in Jesus Christ for these inclinations as well as the sins that flow from them. You see, the church was never meant to be a community of perfect people, but always a community of forgiven sinners. And so, if you want to struggle against your bad habits and sins, be sure you become a member of the church of Jesus Christ. You need the help and support of fellow-believers, because you are a sinner just like they.

In addition, in the church of Jesus Christ, you will learn what it means to have Christ as all in your life. Here you will learn that when you illness has become your all, you can go to Jesus Christ and ask Him for forgiveness. When your car or hobbies have become your all, you can do the same. Even when your wife or husband has become your all, you can go to the Lord Jesus Christ. For the blood of Jesus Christ



cleanses a believer from all sin. The perfection of Jesus makes a believer perfect in the sight of God. And the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ enables you to begin to make Christ all in your life.

When you read this magazine, Christmas will be approaching. That's a time when the church remembers the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why don't you take some time to think about what you just read. God is calling you to make the Christ of Christmas the Christ of your life. If you would like to talk about this, contact the ones who gave you this magazine. If you received this magazine without any personal contact, please contact the address on the last page. We will try to answer any question you may have. Have a blessed Christmas.

*Dick Moes*

# Jesus is the Bread of Life

## Bible Story

Based on John 6:22-40

The news that Jesus had provided dinner for the crowd traveled fast. Everyone in the area around the lake heard about it. It was a wonderful miracle of God's greatness. It happened on the day that Jesus' speech about his heavenly Father lasted till after dinner time. There was little food available – only five loaves of bread and two fish. But Jesus made all the people sit down orderly and said grace. Then He kept breaking the bread and fish into pieces, till all the people were fed – thousands of them. Everyone who had seen the miracle agreed, "Indeed, this Jesus is the prophet who was to come into the world!"

After this great sign Jesus and his twelve special helpers went to the other side of the lake. Their trip across was another miracle, though only the special helpers witnessed it. These helpers, called disciples, had left after dark. Jesus stayed behind to pray to the Father. Shortly after the disciples left the shore, the wind picked up. The sea rose into high waves. The disciples were very scared. They started to panic when they saw someone walk right on top of the high waves. This ghostly figure was heading straight for their boat. All of a sudden they realized it was Jesus, their own teacher. Peter, one of the disciples, made up his mind right away. "Jesus, can I come to you?" he shouted. "Yes, come," Jesus called back. Without fear Peter stepped out of the boat and walked over the water to Jesus. Suddenly a very high wave made him doubt. He felt himself sink. That very moment Jesus was there, reaching out his hand to save Peter. As soon as teacher and disciple entered the boat, Jesus commanded the storm to calm down. Immediately the wind stopped, and the boat was at the place where they wanted to go.

The next morning the crowd at the far side of lake noticed that Jesus had left the area. Several people had seen the disciples leave, but no-one knew where Jesus was. Because they did not

know yet about the miracle of the lake-crossing, they started to look for their teacher. He was nowhere to be found. After a while the crowd assumed that somehow Jesus must have joined his disciples. Once they had concluded that Jesus was at the other side, they wanted to go there too. With boats they crossed the lake and reached the place where Jesus and the disciples had landed. It was not long till they found Jesus.

"Teacher, we could not find you. When did you come here?" they asked. With compassion Jesus looked at the crowd. This was not the time to retreat to a quiet place for prayer. He had to teach these people about his heavenly Father. He had to explain to them that it was his Father's will that he had been born to save his people. He was to pay with his life for the salvation of those who would come to the Father. There was so much to say about these tidings of Good News.

"You did not follow me just because of the signs I did," Jesus replied. "But, really, you followed me all the way here because I filled your stomachs with food. You do not understand that these miracles are not merely meant to make you feel good, but foremost to show my Father's power and glory. You are used to working very hard for the food you eat. Now the time has come for you to think about the food for which you do not have to work. That food will last forever. I, the Son of Man will give you this food. For it is on me, the Son of Man, that the Father has set his seal. He has ordained me to be the Saviour. In me there is eternal life."

Many people were baffled by the words of Jesus. Not only did they find it hard to understand that Jesus would give them food that would last eternally, but they also did not accept that Jesus

was the Son of Man, the Saviour. "Give us a sign that you are what you say. Our prophet of old, Moses, gave his people a sign about his greatness. He gave them the manna, the bread that came down from heaven. You must give us a sign too."

"For sure, it was not Moses who gave them manna," Jesus exclaimed with authority. "It was my Father who did that. And He is the one who now again gives you bread from heaven. Also this bread will bring life to those who accept it in faith."

"Lord, give us this bread!" the people demanded.

"I am the bread of life," Jesus spoke. "Those who come to me, shall not hunger. Those who believe in me, shall not thirst. I have come into this world to do the will of my Father. It is my Father's will that all who come to me shall be saved from the burden of sin. I will gather all those whom the Father has given to me and I will give them life. They do not have to fear Judgment Day. The Lord has send me from heaven to give eternal life to all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God."

Not all the people in the crowd believed the words of Jesus. But many did. They believed that Jesus was the Son of God, who was sent by the Father as the bread of life.

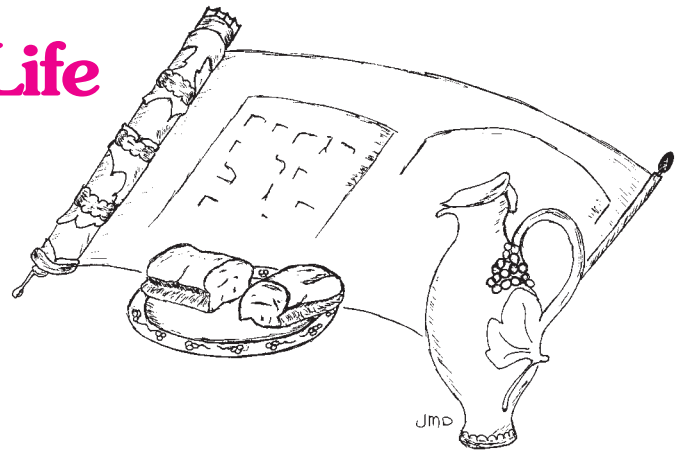
When we today accept the words of Jesus and receive him as the bread of life, our hunger for righteousness shall be stilled. We will live in peace with the Father, forever.

Let us give glory to the Father for sending us the bread of life.

Let us give glory to the Son for coming to earth to do the will of his Father.

Let us give glory to the Spirit for guiding God's children to know this truth.

Jane



# Activity Page

## Jesus is the Bread of Life

### JESUS IS BORN!

Jesus, the Son of God, is the Saviour of the world. Everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

Jesus was born in the City of Bethlehem. Angels came to the fields outside Bethlehem to tell shepherds the good news of Jesus' birth.

In the Bible, in Luke 2 from verse 8 to 12, we read:

That night some shepherds were in the field outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep.

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them.

They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them.

"Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the City of David! And this is how you will recognize Him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!"



### Angels from the Realm of Glory

*Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
ye who sang creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
Come and worship, come and worship.  
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

*Shepherds in the fields abiding,  
watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing;  
yonder shines the infant Light:  
Come and worship, come and worship.  
Worship Christ, the newborn King!*

The answer to the following questions are found in this part of the Bible.

The letters between the brackets, from top to bottom, form another name for Bethlehem, which is also found in these verses from Luke.

1. What were the shepherds guarding?
2. What time of the day did the angel come?
3. What did Jesus wear when He was a newborn baby?
4. What would the good news of Jesus' birth bring to everyone?
5. Jesus was \_\_\_\_ in Bethlehem.
6. The shepherds were terribly \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Who were in the field outside the village that night?
8. Who appeared to the shepherds?
9. The shepherds were outside the \_\_\_\_\_.
10. The angel said, "Don't be \_\_\_\_\_."
11. The \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord's glory surrounded the angel.

1.     \_\_\_ ( \_ ) \_\_
2.     \_ ( \_ ) \_\_\_
3.     \_ ( \_ ) \_\_\_\_\_
4.     \_\_ ( \_ )
5.     \_ ( \_ ) \_\_
6.     ( \_ ) \_\_\_\_\_
7.     \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_ )
8.     ( \_ ) \_\_\_\_
9.     ( \_ ) \_\_\_\_\_
10.    \_\_\_\_\_ ( \_ ) -
11.    \_\_ ( \_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Answers  
1. Flocks; 2. Night; 3. Strips of cloth; 4. Joy; 5. Born;  
6. Frightened; 7. Shepherds; 8. Angel; 9. Village; 10. Afraid;  
11. Radiance. The other name for Bethlehem is "City of David."

Dawn

# The Christmas Attitude

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 2:5*

**The Christmas season draws near slowly until, by degrees, we are caught up in a whirlwind celebration of giving and forgiving, joy and peace, hope and fellowship. And then it is over. Though it draws near by slow degrees, it is suddenly done, and we feel regret, sadness and melancholy.**

Imagine carrying the love we attempt to express in the giving of gifts at Christmas into January and on through the rest of the winter. Imagine that Christmas is not just a phase we go through each year, but a renewal of what we are, a celebration of something deeply planted in our character that endures and powerfully expresses itself in our lives all year round.

That will happen when we put on the mind of Christ.

According to the Bible, Christmas is not a celebration of the birth of a sweet little baby, something that makes us smile for a moment. It is something far more profound. It is so enormous an event that it is almost frightening. The eternal Son of God, through whom all things were made, became a man and was born in Bethlehem. Yes, He was a sweet little baby, but what we celebrate is the fact that this baby was God Himself!

Why did God appear as a baby?

Well, because we didn't behave as we should have, and God decided that the only way to get us to behave properly was to come to us Himself

and showed us how. Because of sin, we always try to act like gods, serving ourselves, being boastful and conceited. So God became a man to show us how to really act like men and women, boys and girls.

Christ's attitude was this: He considered others better than Himself. Even though He was God, He decided to lay aside the glory of his divinity to serve us. He became a man. And as a man, He decided He could best serve us by becoming our slave, by losing all his freedom, by becoming totally enslaved for us. His ministry in Palestine is a striking story of how He tirelessly preached to and healed the people. He hardly found time to sleep. And in the end, He lost all his freedom in hell so that He might suffer the punishment our sins deserved. He became a slave that we might be free.

That is the attitude of Christ Jesus.

But see what came of it. Because He held nothing back to serve us, God the Father has exalted Him very highly, giving Him the name above all names. One day every

human being will bow at his throne to worship and adore Him. The Bible message is always the same: Glory comes through humility. We will be exalted if we humble ourselves to serve our God and our fellow man.

So let the Christmas season draw near by slow degrees. Start giving of yourself to others, start forgiving people who have hurt you, start serving others with the mind of Christ, considering them better than yourself.

The Christmas attitude is supposed to be an enduring one, a pattern of acting and thinking that is deeply imprinted on our hearts. But it is Christ that will do so through the Holy Spirit. Worship Him for the love He has shown for you, and He will share with you the attitude He had, so that the Christmas attitude might endure all year long.

Have a great Christmas celebration. May you be renewed to be what you really are.

*Paul Aasman*

## EVANGEL

**Volume 20, No. 2** Editor — Dick Moes; Layout and Printing — Premier Printing Ltd. Illustrations — p.6 by Jane deGlint; p.7 by Dawn. *Evangel* is published four times per year by **Reformed Evangelism Taskforce**. All correspondence and subscriptions to: **R.E.T., 21804-52 Avenue, Langley, BC V3A 4R1.**

Compliments of: