

For This Cause

(Inside Cover) "For This Cause" is the title of a unique audio-visual production which tells the story of Christ's Life and Teachings with stunning impact and yet with sensitive insight. Thousands of appreciative viewers have enjoyed this advanced three-screen presentation.

The text of this booklet is adapted from the sound track of "For This Cause." Illustrations used in this booklet are a small sampling of the nearly 2000 full-color photographs, which comprise the audio-visual production. If you are interested in having "For This Cause" shown in your area, please write to the Publishers.

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In the very beginning, God was alone!

In due time He brought forth His Son – the “firstborn of every creature” – through whom the design of all creation was carried out.

“For by him were all things created,
that are in heaven,
and that are in earth,
visible and invisible.
(Colossians 1:16)

(next page)

“In the beginning...”

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.
When there were no depths I was brought forth:
When there were no fountains abounding with water,
Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:
While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields,
Nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
When He established the clouds above:
When He strengthened the fountains of the deep:
When He gave to the seas His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment:
When He appointed the foundations of the earth:
When He prepared the heavens, I was there:
When He set a compass upon the face of the depth:
Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and
I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth.”
(Proverbs 8: 22-31)

(next page)

And it was in the tranquil beauty of a garden planted eastward in Eden MAN was brought into being. God said to His Son: *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* (Genesis 1:26)

God in His eternal plan for man provided a test of perfect obedience:

“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Genesis 2:16,17)

The Fall of Man

God in his infinite wisdom foresaw that man would fall. But He permitted it for his ultimate good. He allowed man to follow his own downward course, so that through experience man will forever realize the result of disobedience to the Creator's Law.

It has been a heart-rending experience...but one that will enable man to appreciate more fully the blessings God has in store for him in the future.

And it was for THIS CAUSE – the redemption of man and his ultimate blessing – that Jesus came into the world.

The Birth of the Master

“It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea unto the city of David which is called Bethlehem. And there Mary brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:1,4,7)

It was on these tranquil hills of Bethlehem that angelic voices proclaimed to the shepherds the birth of the Messiah some 2,000 years ago.

“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL People, for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10,11)

There are many causes that man has pursued through the ages – many selfish...some noble...but none can compare with the cause for which our Lord came...a cause that involves each one of us. It is a cause that, as the angel said, will bring joy to all people. A cause that will result in blessing every man, woman and child that has ever lived.

But why did God's Son have to leave the splendor of the heavenly courts and be born a babe in Bethlehem? Couldn't he have accomplished his purpose as a spirit being?

God's Law of Justice is absolute. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. A perfect life for a perfect life. The Redeemer of men would have to be an exact equivalent for father Adam who sinned, not an angel.

And so as the Apostle Paul tells us, "*when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son made of woman, made under the Law.*" (Galatians 4:4)

At the time Jesus was born, all men were in expectation of Messiah. You can just imagine each parent wondering if it would be their son.

Even King Herod knew of the promise – but he would be fearful of such a Messiah, - as it could cost him his throne.

And so it was that here, overlooking the hills of Judah, in what still remains of the Herodian Palace – Herod issued his infamous decree – all the children in Bethlehem two years old and under would be killed.

We get an insight into the evil heart of Herod when we realize the town of Bethlehem was within eyesight of this palace...he could almost hear the crying of the mothers of Bethlehem as their children were slain. It was a crushing experience that was prophesied in Jeremiah 31:15 and quoted by Matthew in this account: "*lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted, because they are not.*" (Matthew 2:18)

Fleeing to Egypt

Joseph and Mary were previously warned by an angel of the Lord to flee into Egypt.

Following the route to Egypt, we find a little distance from Bethlehem, the pools of Solomon. Perhaps Joseph and Mary stopped here to be refreshed from their journey. We read of these pools in Ecclesiastes 2, where we are told Solomon made great works. He made gardens and orchards, and pools of water, a truly beautiful and refreshing sight in a land where water is scarce.

As Joseph and Mary with Jesus continued south, they would have passed through the town of Hebron. It is a most sacred city, being the burial place of Father Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives.

One of the earliest hopes of a deliverer, or Messiah, was given to Father Abraham in the promise – "*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*" (Genesis 12:3)

Yes, Messiah would, first of all, come from the seed of Abraham; and second, he would bless not only Israel, but ALL the families of the earth. Again notice the promise was to bless ALL even as the angel mentioned at Jesus' birth – good tidings of great joy to ALL people.

The promised seed had now come – but had to flee for his life to Egypt.

Wilderness Wanderings

The journey to Egypt through the Sinai Peninsula would have been a difficult one...for the Sinai is hot, rocky, sandy, and barren. Centuries earlier Israel had wandered 40 years in the same desolate country.

It was in the southern part of Sinai that Moses was given the Ten Commandments. At the same time, he was given very detailed instructions for building of the Tabernacle. In this simple structure, through the priests and animal sacrifices, Israel worshipped their God.

However, the significance of the Tabernacle arrangement was not limited to Israel. The Apostle Paul assures us in Hebrews 10:1 that the Tabernacle with its sacrifices was a shadow (or picture) of things to come.

God, being the architect of this Tabernacle, was very specific as to size, colors, material, location, furniture, etc. Israel had to follow these instructions in minute detail. Why? What was so important about all this?

Because God used this Tabernacle arrangement to again point to the “promised seed of Abraham” – the Messiah, the Ransom. Each detailed element was part of a beautiful picture of the sacrifice of Jesus, and showing the path of a Christian.

Briefly, the Tabernacle was a rectangular building placed within a large fenced courtyard. The building was separated into two compartments: The Holy and Most Holy.

Within the Holy, or larger compartment, were three pieces of furniture: Candlestick, Table of Shewbread, and Golden Incense Alter. The Most Holy contained one piece of furniture, a Golden Ark, with a lid or cover called the “mercy seat.”

In the courtyard was a laver, or container, for water and a large altar. It was on this altar that the vital parts of the animal sacrifices were burned.

Each year Israel, who pictured all mankind, had a Day of Atonement. One of the sacrifices on this day was an unblemished bullock, which typically cleansed them from sin. The unblemished bullock represents Jesus the perfect man, who would suffer and die to provide a ransom for Adam.

To cancel the death sentence, God’s law of Justice required a ransom, or corresponding price – an exact equivalent for the one perfect man Adam, who sinned.

The High Priest sprinkling the blood of the bullock on the mercy seat in the form of a cross pictured the satisfaction of God’s justice through the shed blood of Jesus.

This same lesson was taught by Paul, when he said, *“For in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Jesus became a ransom for Adam to satisfy Justice and thus cancel the death sentence that passed down through Adam to all mankind.

And so Joseph, Mary and Jesus found their way through the bleak wilderness of Sinai, they passed the scene where our Lord’s sacrifice had been portrayed many centuries before.

Return to Jerusalem

After Herod’s death, an angel of the Lord told Joseph to return to Israel. *“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth (some 70 miles north of Bethlehem) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”* (Matthew 2:23) The town has not changed much since Jesus’ day. It was here on these hills that Jesus spent his early years.

At the age of twelve, Jesus went with his parents to Jerusalem. The first sight of Jerusalem after coming over a ridge must have sent shivers down his spine, as he beheld the walls of this sacred, ancient city. Even to this day, it is a thrilling sight!

As Jesus walked the streets, he would have passed scenes like these. He would walk these streets many times and one day weep over the city.

Jerusalem means “city of peace,” however, its history has been anything but peaceful. It has been besieged more than 50 times, conquered 26 times and destroyed 10 times. Though for centuries lacking peace, Bible prophecies assure us Jerusalem will yet be a city of peace.

Isaiah, speaking of God’s kingdom, tells us, (Isaiah 2:3) *“out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”* (Notice the capital of the earthly kingdom will be Jerusalem.) Isaiah continues, *“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”*

What a prospect – a world without war!

Inquiry at the Temple

After the Passover Feast, Joseph and Mary started their journey home, leaving behind the rolling hills of Jerusalem. They went a day's journey and realized Jesus was missing. Frantically they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days, they found him in the temple, talking with the Rabbis.

Even at this early age, the perfect mind of the boy Jesus knew much about his Heavenly Father's plans. This is evident in his answer to his parents, "*Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?*" (Luke 2:49) Jesus then returned to Nazareth with his parents, where he "*increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.*" (Luke 2:52)

Jesus' Baptism

When Jesus was 30 years old, he knew from the Law that it was time to start his ministry. His cousin John, being six months older, had already started preaching and was baptizing in the area of Bethany beyond Jordan. John knew that he was sent to prepare the way for Messiah. He proclaimed that he was not even worthy to unloose the shoes of the one he heralded.

Jesus came to be baptized by John. As he approached, John knew through God's direction that he was The Christ (Messiah). He proclaimed to the people, "*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.*" (John 1:29)

John then reluctantly baptized our Lord, feeling rather that he needed to be baptized of Jesus. Following Jesus' baptism the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove upon him. He heard a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

Why was Jesus baptized? He had committed no sin. The Lord used the symbol of baptism in water as an example for his believers to follow. Being lowered backward beneath the water pictured the going into death of self-will. Being raised out of the water pictured the raising to walk in newness of life.

In the Wilderness of Judea

Immediately after his baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness of Judea. Here for 40 days and nights he meditated and was instructed of God as to the full scope of his ministry. After 40 days, worn and weary, he hungered. Then Satan came to him to tempt him. He suggested that Jesus command these stones to become bread. In reply, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, "**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.**" (Matthew 4:4)

Next, Jesus was transported in vision to the Temple area in Jerusalem. Satan caused him to look from the highest point of the Temple mount, called the pinnacle, into the Kidron

Valley below. He urged Jesus to cast himself down, for surely the angels who had charge over him would save him. Jesus refused Satan's proposal... **"It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."** (Matthew 4:7)

In his cunning, Satan then took Jesus to an exceeding high mountain. He showed Jesus all the kingdoms of this world and their glory. He offered them to Jesus right then, if he would bow down and worship him. But Jesus again wielded the sword of the Spirit...**"Get thee behind me Satan...for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."** (Matthew 4:10)

So Satan departed having found Jesus unmovable. Jesus left the wilderness and came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom.

Jesus Begins his Ministry

Along the way, Jesus called his disciples to come and follow him. **"If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."** (Matthew 16:24)

Follow me...deny himself...take up his cross daily. What did this mean? What does it mean for you and me? Jesus here introduced the meaning of being a true Christian.

It is a consecrated life of doing God's will instead of our own in everything...a life of sacrifice, a denying of self in the interest of others. It is not an easy task, but nevertheless it is filled with blessings! This is the task to which Jesus called his disciples, when he said, "follow me."

Sermon on the Mount

As Jesus went forth to fulfill his mission, he often taught the people on the hillside along the beautiful Sea of Galilee. It was here on this tranquil hill that Jesus preached his touching sermon on the mount. **"Blessed are the humble minded: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God"** (Matthew 5:3-9)

Shortly after the Sermon on the Mount, one of Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray. He answered, **"When ye pray, say, 'Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'"** (Matthew 6:9,10)

An Earthly Promise

Thy kingdom come, upon earth as it is in heaven...UPON EARTH. Here Jesus speaks of an earthly kingdom, as well as one in heaven. Where did the promise of a kingdom on earth, as well as in heaven come from?

We can trace this promise all the way back to Abraham. God had told him *“in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed...In blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven...and as the sand upon the seashore.”* (Genesis 12:3; 22:17) The Gospel, which God preached to Abraham (Galatians 3:8) was about a kingdom which has two parts: one likened to the sand, that is, a kingdom on earth, and one likened to the stars, a kingdom in heaven.

Jesus had come to begin the fulfillment of that promise, for he was the promised “seed” of Abraham. Jesus invited his disciples to become part of the seed of Abraham – the Kingdom in heaven. And so Paul also tells us that, *“if ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* (Galatians 3:29) It is this heavenly seed that will bless all the families of the earth.

Parables

When speaking of the promised Kingdom, Jesus often spoke to the multitudes in symbolic stories, or parables. The disciples questioned him one day, *“Why do you speak unto them in parables?”* Jesus’ reply was full of meaning, **“That seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted”** (Matthew 13:10; Mark 4:12)

“Lest at any time they should be converted.” Quite an unexpected reply! Why wouldn’t Jesus want them to be converted? Wasn’t that the very object of his ministry? From Jesus’ answer we see he must have had another purpose in mind.

Everyone heard the same message, but only those who were willing to become dedicated followers – to study and search diligently for the meaning – would be able to understand. Jesus was first seeking and inviting a special class to share with him in his heavenly kingdom – the spiritual seed of Abraham!

Our Lord is still seeking and inviting this special class. They would be the instrumentality to share with him in blessing all the families of the earth. Notice how this is brought out in Acts 15:14-17.

First there would be the selection of his Church: *“God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.”* But now notice in addition to God selecting the Church, note the following verses that show what the purpose was of God’s selecting this Church Class, and what will follow after: *“After this, (that is, after first selecting the Church) I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down...that the residue of men might seek after the Lord.”*

In the earthly phase of God's kingdom, all the remainder of men, that is, everyone other than the Church Class, will be raised from the dead and given an opportunity to know of God in all his fullness. And so his main purpose now is NOT to convert the whole world. That will take place in his future kingdom.

Now we see why Jesus spoke in difficult to understand parables. They were not meant to be understood easily by everyone, only by those willing to dedicate their lives to know and serve him supremely.

In order to become a member of this heavenly Church Class, we must be willing to give up completely our own aims, hopes and ambitions. Paul tells us to "*set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*" (Colossians 3:2)

We must also develop certain qualities of character; to be Christ-like. Jesus said, "*Unless you humble yourselves and become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 18:3, 4)

It was in the children that Jesus saw the beauty of humility, trust and the ability to be taught. How Jesus loved the little children. They eagerly came to listen to his stories. As we grow older, we tend to become hardened and self-reliant. Children manifest a humility and trust, which is essential in following Jesus. Trust – a small word – but trust and faith are so necessary in a Christian's character.

A Storm at Sea

This lesson was made clear to the Apostles on the beautiful Sea of Galilee. Exhausted from the day's activities, Jesus entered into a ship with his disciples, as he often did for rest and quiet.

After he fell asleep in the back of the boat, there suddenly arose a great storm. The crashing waves and violence of the storm were so intense that even the experienced fishermen were filled with fear. They woke Jesus, crying to him, "*Master carest thou not that we perish?*" (Mark 4:38)

Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "**Peace, be still.**" And there was a great calm. Jesus then rebuked his Apostles saying, "**Why are ye so fearful, oh ye of little faith.**"

Even as the Apostles needed to learn to exercise trust and faith in the Lord, so do his footstep followers now. Our lives are subject to the raging storms of life. Be confident that the same Master of ocean, earth and sea "*will give strength unto his people. The Lord will bless his people with peace.*" (Psalms 29:11)

Those who thus develop this Christ-like character will be as the “stars of heaven,” blessing the remainder of the world – those likened to the “sand of the sea,” the earthly phase of Christ’s kingdom.

But how will this kingdom on earth come to be? Jesus forcefully illustrated this to us in one of his miracles.

The Raising of Lazarus

We recall that a favorite stopping-off place of our Lord was in the town of Bethany, about two miles east of Jerusalem, just beyond the Mount of Olives.

Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. As he walked the road to Bethany, we could imagine it would be with keen anticipation, for the home of his friends was an oasis of warmth and hospitality. It was here that Jesus often came for rest and fellowship.

On one occasion, as Jesus was ministering in the north, he received word that his friend Lazarus was ill. Lazarus was a very good friend of his, but Jesus did not go immediately to see him, as we might think he would. After two days, he said to his disciples, **“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awaken him out of sleep.”** (John 11:11)

The disciples were puzzled, even as we would have been. They answered, *“Lord, if he sleeps, he doth well.”* In other words, if he was ill, it was good that he was sleeping. It would be better not to disturb him. Our Lord then replied, this time very plainly, **“Lazarus is dead.”**

Jesus had likened death to a sleep. When we sleep, we do not know anything, even as we are told in Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10. *“The dead know not anything...for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.”* This helps us to understand why Jesus could say that Lazarus was sleeping.

The disciples and Jesus proceed to Bethany. When they arrived, Lazarus had already been dead four days. Mary and Martha were glad to see Jesus, but Martha expressed disappointment, *“Lord, if you had been here, our brother would not have died.”*

“Martha, thy brother shall rise again.”

Martha’s reply was very meaningful and significant to us, *“Yes, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection in the last day.”*

He shall rise again in the resurrection...we recognize in Martha’s answer the reflection of Jesus’ teachings to them, that of a resurrection. By faith, Martha knew that Lazarus would live again in Christ’s kingdom.

Jesus asked to be taken to Lazarus’ tomb. He was so touched by the sorrow of death that we are told, *“Jesus wept.”* He instructed the stone to be rolled away, and lifted his eyes to heaven and prayed. He then cried with a loud voice, **“Lazarus, Come forth!”**

“And he that was dead came forth.” (John 11:43, 44) Can you imagine the joy of family and friends, as they saw Lazarus brought back to life?

It is this same joy that will be experienced by all the world, as they are reunited with their loved ones, when they are brought back from the grave to a kingdom to be established here on earth. Every human being who has ever lived will be awakened from the sleep of death. Jesus told us this in John 5:28, 29: *“The hour is coming in which all (notice ALL) that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.”* All these families of the earth will be raised from the dead by Jesus and His Church.

As they are resurrected, they will be given an opportunity to know the Lord, for at that time Isaiah tells us, *“the earth (notice EARTH) shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:9)

Jeremiah confirms this, *“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall ALL know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.”* (Jeremiah 31:34) This will be the earthly seed of Abraham, resurrected from the dead to a kingdom here on earth, and given an opportunity for life.

The blessing of ALL the families of earth...good tidings of great joy to ALL people...this is THE CAUSE for which our Lord came!

The joys and blessings of that kingdom will be endless. Jesus gave us a glimpse of what it will be like, as he healed the sick, made dumb men speak and crippled men walk, and restored sight to the blind.

Pool of Siloam

People were astonished, as they witnessed these miracles. Even today, as you stand next to the waters of the Pool of Siloam, you can feel the excitement of the healing of the man who was blind from birth.

Jesus spat upon the ground, made clay and put it on the eyes of the blind man. He told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. And because of his faith his eyes were opened, *“Once I was blind, but now I can see.”* (John 7:25)

The Pool of Siloam now lies outside the walls of Jerusalem, but back in the Old Testament days of King Hezekiah, it was within the city walls. Anticipating a siege by the Assyrians, King Hezekiah constructed a tunnel connecting the Pool of Siloam with the underground spring of Gihon, which was outside the walls. This guaranteed Jerusalem a water supply.

Hezekiah’s tunnel, 1,750 feet long, can be traversed by foot today. It is a remarkable engineering feat, dating from about the year 725 B.C. We say remarkable because it was dug by two crews of workmen starting at opposite ends – taking the winding course illustrated on the map in the back of this booklet – and yet the workmen managed to meet in the middle within four feet of each other. By listening to their voices, they were able to complete the tunnel.

To commemorate this occasion, an inscription was carved into the rock wall. Written in classical Hebrew, it remains one of the oldest Hebrew writings yet found, dating back to the period prior to 700 B.C.

This tablet of Hezekiah, together with countless other artifacts discovered by archeologists, provide us with confirmation of the accuracy of biblical history. Ancient ruins silent for thousands of years speak volumes, as they authenticate the inspired word of God. As archeologists continue to confirm biblical history, our faith is strengthened, and we therefore anticipate the certain fulfillment of *all* that God has promised.

Miracles of Jesus

Returning to the miracles of Jesus, we think of the city of Capernaum, a little east of the Mount of Beatitudes on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. Some of these stones that are still standing once echoed the voice of Jesus and witnessed his miracles. Jesus often taught in the synagogue of Capernaum, and in this city were more of Christ’s miracles performed than in any other.

Capernaum was also the home of Peter. Excavations have found an ancient inscription noting this as Peter’s house.

Peter’s mother-in-law was healed in Capernaum, as well as the Centurion’s servant, the boy with unclean spirits, and the nobleman’s son. Jairus’ daughter was raised from the

dead, two blind men were made to see, and great multitudes were brought to be healed of their diseases.

And so Jesus used his miraculous power to picture the work he and his Church – the Heavenly seed – would do in his kingdom.

Promises Shown in Geography of Israel

The blessings awaiting mankind in God's kingdom are pictured for us in yet another unusual way. The Jordan River together with its lakes were carved out of the promised land of Israel by God in a peculiar way that illustrates the death and resurrection of mankind.

The Jordan is the most unique river in all the world in that it is almost entirely beneath sea level. Its winding crooked path is eventually swallowed up by the Dead Sea – the lowest and deadest spot on the face of the earth – a sea from which there is no outlet.

The source of water for the beginning of the River Jordan is the majestic Mount Hermon. Its name means “prominent,” a fitting name, since it is the highest spot in Israel, silently keeping watch over all the land of Israel from its northern border.

Mount Herman pictures God, for He is above all, omnipotent, the source of all creation and life. The fact that Mount Herman is a scriptural symbol of God is shown in Psalms 133. There it speaks of the Holy Spirit of God as, *“the dew of Hermon that descends upon Zion from God.”*

The melting snows and springs of Mount Hermon form four small streams: Hasbani, Leddan, Bannias and Bareighit. When they unite, they become a very tranquil and beautiful site, the beginning of the River Jordan. The name “Jordan” is significant. It means “descender,” describing its downward course, as it descends from Mount Herman to 1,300 feet below sea level at the Dead Sea. In addition, we will see how the name Descender aptly describes mankind's sinful downward descent that ends in death, pictured by the Dead Sea. As the River starts its path, we find it forms its first lake, called Lake Huleh, at sea level. The lake now for the most part has been drained. Only small fishpond hatcheries remain, as the water is being used to irrigate a very productive valley.

In Old Testament times, Lake Huleh was called Merom, meaning elevated. How well this pictures Adam. He was elevated by being given dominion over all things on earth. He was created perfect, pictured by sea level.

After leaving Lake Huleh, the Jordan plunges rapidly below sea level, picturing the fact that when Adam fell, man started his downward course of sin towards death. Its rapid downward course from Huleh is stopped briefly at the Sea of Galilee. The waters of Jordan enter Galilee very muddy, but they are clear and clean when they exit Galilee.

As Galilee slowed the descent of Jordan, so we find the great flood of Noah slowed man's downward course. By destroying the violent condition of society and removing the influence of the angelic "giants" (see Genesis 6) it had a purifying effect upon the human race. But even this purification was temporary. Soon the human race was swiftly degenerating again. This is clearly pictured by the fact that as the Jordan leaves Galilee, it again rapidly plunges downward. It follows a crooked and winding course for 65 miles until it ends in the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is a sea with no outlet. It is the lowest spot on the face of the earth – 1,300 feet below sea level – you cannot go any lower on earth! The Dead Sea pictures Adamic death, the death into which all mankind is descending.

It is the only sea on earth that is completely dead. No living substance – fish, animal, or vegetation – can survive its 25% salt content, five times more salt than the oceans. Thus man traveling the crooked path of sin and depravity cannot survive, but ends up in death, pictured by the Dead Sea.

The Jordan River pours 6 million tons of water into the Dead Sea daily, yet it does not overflow even though there is no outlet. How well this depicts the tomb of death into which millions flow, no one escapes the "grim reaper," death.

It was God who carved out this oddity of nature. But how thankful we are the picture doesn't end with all mankind just going into death and remaining there. There is a silver lining to our story! God promises us in Ezekiel 47 that the Dead Sea will be brought back to life, a picture of man receiving life again through the resurrection taught by Jesus.

Briefly, Ezekiel in this 47th chapter prophesied of a river of water of life that will come out of the "temple." (Temple here being a picture of the Heavenly seed, Jesus and his Church. See John 2:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Revelation 3:12) This river would go out of the East gate, then flow to the Jordan and the Dead Sea.

Everything the river touched would receive life, and the Dead Sea would come alive, as even its bitter waters are sweetened. *"...At last it will reach that sea whose waters are foul, and they will be sweetened. When anyone of the living creatures that swarm upon the earth comes where the torrent flows, it shall draw life from it. The fish shall be innumerable."* (Ezekiel 47:8, 9 New English Translation)

Yes, the waters that were once foul shall be sweetened. There shall be abundance of life to all mankind. *"The prison house of death shall be opened..." "He will swallow up death in victory..." "The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness..." "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely..."* (Isaiah 42:7; 25:8; 26:9; Revelation 22:17)

But now notice verse 11 of Ezekiel 47 – not *all* waters will be healed. *"But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt."* (Ezekiel 47:12)

Marshes refer to stagnant waters and would so aptly apply to those few of mankind, who after being resurrected from the dead will consistently refuse to make any progress toward perfection even after every possible assistance is given to them by Jesus and the Church. (See Acts 3:19-23)

So this Bible picture in Ezekiel shows us that the vast majority of mankind, after being resurrected, will gradually have their characters developed – uplifted – until bit by bit they reach perfection, they will be healed. But those who will not respond to the influences of God’s kingdom will be “given over to salt” again, picturing second death – total extinction – a death from which there will be no resurrection.

When the last of mankind reaches perfection, God’s promise through Isaiah will be fulfilled, *“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth (notice the EARTH, the earthly “seed of Abraham”) “shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.”*

This is the great cause for which Jesus came – that through the ransom sacrifice of his life, man could be brought back into harmony with their Creator, to enjoy the blessings God originally intended for every man, woman and child who has ever lived.

The Return of Jesus

But Jesus died so long ago. When will this promised resurrection take place and the Kingdom be established? The disciples asked Jesus this very same question in the 24th chapter of Matthew: *“Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy presence and the end of the age?”** (Matthew 24:3)

(Footnote) *The Greek words translated “coming” and “world” in this verse of the King James translation are here correctly translated “presence” and “age.” See *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* and *Young’s Analytical Concordance*.

Notice that the disciples associated the kingdom with Christ’s second presence and the end of the age. Jesus proceeded to outline evidences that would enable those who were watching to recognize when this time would be.

Great Tribulation

As one of the tell-tale signs, Jesus predicted: **“For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be. And except those days be shortened, there should be no flesh saved.”**

Sounds like our day, doesn't it? We have witnessed two World Wars, the Korean outbreak, the cold war, Vietnam and many other wars, with the ever-present fear of another world war.

There are riots, man clamoring for his rights, revolutions, famine, earthquakes, drug abuse, pollution, the energy crisis, and the list goes on and on.

Luke's record of this account describes this time as *“Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.”* (Luke 21:26) But someone could say that there has always been trouble. What makes the trouble that would mark Jesus' presence and the end of the age so differently from the rest? The key lies in the words of Jesus, **“And except those days be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.”**

Never before did we have the tools to annihilate our entire civilization – atomic and hydrogen bombs, nuclear radiation, intercontinental ballistic missiles, neutron bombs, germ warfare.

In fact, man's capability of destruction has reached such proportions that there is enough weaponry to destroy the earth 13 times over.

To help us know where we are in the stream of time, God gave us additional signs through the prophet Daniel. Speaking of this same period in Daniel 12:1, he mentions this great time of trouble “such as never was” and adds two other signs: “Knowledge shall be increased,” and “Many shall run to and fro.”

Increase of Knowledge

In our day we have witnessed both of these added signs. The printing press, especially with the invention of the Linotype machine in 1884, marked the beginning of what is known as the Brain Age. Modern printing has made it possible to accumulate and circulate the studies of other people rapidly, and more recently the computer has skyrocketed man's quest for knowledge.

The increase of knowledge has covered every avenue of life, including farming, medicine, industry, labor-saving devices in the home, research and communication.

Truly we have an “information explosion.” All the knowledge acquired by man from the beginning of history to the year 1750 doubled by 1900. Notice it took 150 years for this

knowledge to double then...it is staggering to find that we have now reached the point where the total accumulated knowledge of the world is doubling every six years!

Running To and Fro

The increase of knowledge made possible the next sign Daniel gave us, the time when many would “run to and fro.”

This is graphically portrayed and impressed on our minds, when we realize that less than 100 years ago man’s common transportation was a horse and buggy. Sir Isaac Newton was scorned by his colleagues, when he predicated man would someday travel at speeds of up to *50 miles per hour*! Little did they realize that man would fly across the ocean at 1,300 miles per hour and travel through space at 25,000 miles per hour.

Who would have ever believed that within the first 30 years of space technology, man would be walking on the moon and communicating with the other side of the world via satellite.

“Many shall run to and fro” is certainly describing our day! It is another evidence that we are on the very brink of the establishment of God’s Kingdom.

The Fig Tree

Returning to Matthew 24, Jesus goes on to give another very important sign.

“Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” (Matthew 24:32-34)

In scriptural usage the fig tree always represents the nation of Israel. Leaves sprouting on a tree are a sign that the tree has sprung to life after a dormant winter. So Jesus was actually telling us that when you see the nation of Israel come alive, then you know that God’s Kingdom is right at the door.

Has Israel put forth leaves?

As we recall the past, we see how Israel, as a people, was dispersed among all nations...persecuted bitterly; forced to live in ghettos; hunted and exterminated as undesirables. As a forceful reminder of this, there is a memorial in Israel to the 6 million Jews who perished under Nazi Germany.

An eternal flame burns in the Memorial Chapel, whose floor is made of 6 million pieces of tile; each representing a life snuffed out in those never-to-be forgotten gas chambers – Auschwitz, Dachau and others. Most people leave with tears, as they see man’s inhumanity to man!

Yet Israel's hope was strong in God's promises of a return to their homeland. We recall the words uttered so often by Jewish people, "Next year in Jerusalem."

A symbol of this hope is found in the Wailing Wall. It is sobering to stand beside it, to touch it, and realize how much of the history of Israel has unfolded here. It was here on what is now called the Temple Mount that the glorious temple of King Solomon stood. Some of the base stones of this temple still stand as part of the wailing wall.

The wall became a sacred place, and remains so to this day. It is a reminder to Israel of the past, when evidence of God's favor was upon them, and with the reminder of the hope of again being a nation chosen of God!

This hope was fulfilled in one of the most astounding miracles of our day...ISRAEL, the fig tree Jesus told us to watch, put forth leaves when in May 1948 she became a nation. Not only could all the world see it, they helped create it!

By all military standards, Israel should not be in existence. In war after war, outnumbered 100 to one, the tiny Israeli forces could not be overpowered. And so it has continued to this day because God's time clock had struck to for Israel to return to their land! The fig tree blossomed!

Remember, this was a sign Jesus gave to show the nearness of the kingdom. In fact, he said when this happened, his kingdom was so close that the generation that witnessed these things would not pass away until all be fulfilled.

Can we grasp the impact of this?

The fig tree blossomed in 1948. The generation that saw this actually happen *would not pass away* until that promised kingdom was set up in *full power and glory*. What a thrill to our hearts to realize that we are on the brink of the greatest event in all human history, the establishment of God's Kingdom!

All the Trees Blossom

Luke adds something in his account that makes our faith even stronger. He says, "*Behold the fig tree and all the trees. When they shoot forth, know we that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*" (Luke 21:29-31) Notice he adds, "and ALL the trees...when THEY shoot forth." If the fig tree pictures Israel, "all the trees" would refer to other nations. So Luke is telling us that together with Israel putting forth leaves (springing into life) many other nations would be putting forth leaves – sprouting into existence.

What does history tell us? It ties in exactly with Israel becoming a nation. Up until 1945 the number of independent nations in the world had remained relatively constant. At that time a total of 70 were in existence. But since the ending of the Second World War in 1945, more than 80 new independent nations have emerged. On the continent of Africa

alone there were only 4 independent nations in 1945. Today there are over 50 and this number is constantly increasing.

Yes, Israel simultaneously with other nations has put forth leaves! And we are the generation that has witnessed this striking fulfillment of prophecy. What an encouragement to us, as we again consider the words of Jesus, **“Behold the fig tree and ALL the trees. When they shoot forth, know ye that the KINGDOM OF GOD IS NIGH AT HAND.”**

Why Does the Trouble Continue

But if the kingdom of God is so near, why all the continued trouble? This, too, is in fulfillment of prophecy, for just as a contractor must remove an old structure from a building site before he can build a new skyscraper, so with God.

Listen to the words of Daniel 2:44: *“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And that kingdom shall not be left to other people but it (God’s kingdom) shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it will stand forever.”*

Again in Haggai 2:7, *“For thus saith the Lord of hosts: I will shake ALL NATIONS.”* The nations are certainly being shaken, are they not? But Haggai continues, *“and the desire of ALL nations shall come.”* When the nations have been shaken sufficiently that they are willing to learn the ways of righteousness, God will say, “Peace, be still.”

This is the cause for which Jesus was to give his life, that through his sacrifice the desire of ALL nations could be accomplished. Through him, the Abrahamic seed, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Jesus’ Final Days

As Jesus approached the final days of his life here on earth, his activities were centered around Jerusalem. Five days before his crucifixion, Jesus and his disciples approached the city of Bethpage. Jesus sent his disciples to find a colt on which he would ride into Jerusalem, fulfilling Zechariah 9:9: *“Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’ colt.”*

As he rode on the colt and came around the Mount of Olives, the multitudes cried out, “Hosanna to the Son of David” and cast palm branches before him. Jesus beheld the city he loved so much, and we are told, “he wept over it.” He then proceeded to the temple and cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple. **“It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”**

Jesus spent the night in Bethany. On his return the next morning, he looked over the city saying, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen*

gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” (Matthew 23:37, 38)

The Passover Supper

Jesus, knowing that his hour was come, desired to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. It is believed that here in this large upper room on the night he was betrayed, Jesus partook with his twelve apostles the last supper. When they had finished, they sang a hymn and went over the brook Kidron to the Garden of Gethsemane.

The Garden of Gethsemane

It was here in the beauty and quietness of the garden that Jesus came with his disciples to pray and meditate. He went on alone to pray, he knew he would soon die, and his heart was heavy lest he had failed to do perfectly everything required of him under the Law. The burden of this was so great he said, “**My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.**” (Matthew 26:38)

He realized that if he had failed, the cause for which he desired to give his life would be lost.

As he prayed earnestly, he was heard, and God sent an angel to comfort him. Being assured he had obeyed perfectly to that time, he had peace of heart. He returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. As he spoke to them, a multitude came into the Garden led by Judas.

Some of the knarled olive trees in the garden are the very ones that echoed the words of Judas, when he betrayed Jesus with a kiss...betrayed him for 30 pieces of silver!

Jesus’ Trial and Death

They came for Jesus with swords and staves, as if he were a common thief. They laid their hands upon him and led him to the house of Caiphas the High Priest, where false witnesses were brought to speak against him.

Below Caiphas’ house is a dungeon prison. Perhaps Jesus was kept there through the night, being lowered down this small hole, his arms shackled between these two stone pillars.

In the morning, Jesus was marched down these steps to be tried by Pontius Pilate. As Jesus stood before him, Pilate washed his hands saying, I am innocent of this blood.” Then Pilate had Jesus scourged. The soldiers clothed him in a royal robe and laid a crown of thorns on his head. Then they spat upon him and mocked him saying, “Hail, King of the Jews.”

He was again presented to Pilate, where under the arch called “Ecco Homo,” Pilate was to have uttered the words, “Behold the Man.” Yes, Pilate recognized something special in Jesus, for Jesus was a *perfect* man.

But the people cried for his blood, shouting “Crucify him, crucify him,” the most shameful and excruciating death known.

Jesus was led with his cross to the place of the skull, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, “Golgotha.” As you look at it, it does resemble a skull. Here they nailed him to the cross and crucified him between two thieves.

He gave his life as a ransom so that we might live! A perfect life for a perfect life, his life was sacrificed as a corresponding price for Adam, to remove the penalty of sin and death brought about by Adam’s fall.

And thus ended the life of Jesus here on earth.

Victory over Death

He was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, which we are told had been hewn out of the rock. A great stone was rolled against the sepulcher sealing it. But how grateful we are that this was not the end, it was in reality just the beginning. Because of his faithfulness, Jesus was resurrected by God and raised as a spirit being to glory, honor and immortality.

When Mary came on the morning of the third day and found an empty tomb, an angel told her, “He is risen.” Her heart leaped for joy at these words, and so we too rejoice because through his resurrection, we have an assurance that we too shall live again! Not only us, but also everyone who has ever lived!

There will be the heavenly reward for those who are now willing to be faithful followers of Jesus, and there will be bountiful blessings awaiting the willing and obedient in the earthly phase of that kingdom.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah describe what that kingdom will be like, and see if fulfills the desire of all nations and the desire of all our hearts for life, health, peace and happiness:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose...Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the

Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

(next page)

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:4)

(next page is 2 maps, one entitled "The Holy Land" and one entitled, "Jerusalem." The title of the page is called, "The Holy Land During Jesus' Lifetime.")

(last page before back cover)

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