

## MISPLACED CHRISTMAS GIFTS

By H. S. Dow

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15).

"Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

The Christmas season is here again. How quickly the years pass. With the Christmas season comes the thought and practice of giving, which is a very good habit indeed. The greatest gift that was ever given was the gift of God, called by the apostle, "His unspeakable gift," which is Jesus. He is the greatest gift, because He filled a need which no other could supply. Our greatest need is salvation from sin, and Peter, speaking of Jesus, said, "Neither is there salvation in any other."

To find the Son of God, the King of glory, born in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, looks to us like a misplacement. We would expect such a one as He to be born in the finest home and clothed in the richest apparel, but we, mere humans, are always putting the emphasis upon things that are seen, decorating and beautifying the outside, trying to make a good appearance before people, often with the use of worldly means, and apparel, while God's word says, "He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Ps. 149:4). Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees they were "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." The Psalmist said, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."

Many years ago we read an article on Christmas wrappings. The writer spoke of Jesus wrapped in swaddling, plain clothes, and contrasted that with the way we sometimes wrap our Christmas gifts. He said that in trying to make the gift look pretty, the wrapping, perhaps, is worth more than the gift. But not so with God's Christmas Gift; the beauty and worth were on the inside.

People sometimes misplace their Christmas gifts by giving where they are not needed. More than once I have heard people say: "This year I have to give Mrs. Blank a Christmas present and I don't know at all what to give her; she doesn't need a thing, for she has everything she needs and more." Then someone said: "Well, why give her anything?" The reply was, "Well, she gave me a present last year."

God has not promised us any reward if we give to the rich, but He has said, "He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." Those who have need appreciate their gifts and with a happy smile will say, "That is just what I needed." Then the giver realizes what the apostle meant when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Christmas giving should not be a selfish act, giving hoping for something better in return. God's way is to give to him that needeth, hoping for nothing in return. Spending money for useless things that help nobody is sinful waste. We would do better to buy some warm clothes for poor children who need them, than to spend money on toys and trinkets for children to break up and throw away.

## THE SONG AND THE STAR

By B. C. Cochrane

"There's a song in the air,  
There's a star in the sky."

Once more the magic spell of the Christmas season is upon the Christian world. "The tumult of joy," the spirit of goodwill, the thrilling music of Christmas, are with us again.

The song and the star of Christmas are sacred symbols of the season. They were present on that first Christmas eve and they are still inseparably linked with the commemoration of the Saviour's birth. The symbols are two, but their message is one. The song and the star blend in perfect accord to emphasize the glorious truths of the Christmas story. Both announce to the world that "the day-spring from on high hath visited us."

**The song and the star are symbols of worship.**

"Glory to God in the highest," sang the angels. We have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him," said the wise men. And at Christmas time the spirit of worship should be predominant with those who have found Christ. Not Santa Claus, not the gifts given and received, not the festivities, but the Christ of God should be the centre of interest at Christmas time. "Oh come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" Oh come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"

**The song and the star are symbols of grace.**

"Good tidings of great joy . . . unto you is born a Saviour." This is the Gospel message in the original Christmas setting. The star "stood over where the young child was," a sign that "the fulness of time was come," and the Sun of righteousness had risen to bring light and life to all. The prophetic declaration, "The people which sat in darkness have seen a great light," the promise of redemption to a sin-darkened world, was fulfilled that holy night when He who was "full of grace and truth" came to the earth via the little town of Bethlehem. And He is still the source of grace, redeeming grace, to all who are in bondage to sin.

**The song and the star are symbols of hope.**

"Peace on earth, good will toward men" was a welcome message for a world disturbed and dominated by strife and discord. The gleaming star announced the advent of "the desire of all nations." The thought of universal peace was but a fanciful dream until Jesus came, and two thousand years after His

We should especially remember in our Christmas giving the great multitudes of heathen, who have not heard of Jesus, the unspeakable Gift, Who was born in poverty and is fully able to sympathize with the poor; Who died on the cross to pay their debt and satisfy the demands of God's justice, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He rose again and ever liveth to make intercession for them. Money spent to save the lost and perishing is not misplaced and will yield the largest dividends. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom" (Luke 6:38).

Bethlehem birth, world-wide peace and good will still seem elusive ideals. And without Him, they are. But the song and the star of Christmas renew a wondrous hope in the hearts of believers, the hope of the Day of the Lord and the universal reign of peace and righteousness. With another celebration of the first advent of our Lord to this earth, we are inspired with the hope of His second advent, and the prospect of deliverance from all that would hurt and destroy.

Listen to the Christmas song, look to the Christmas star. Their message will bring a blessed sense of the presence, peace, and power of the Saviour. Rejoicing in the joy and light we now possess, we look toward a brighter day when in a fuller sense we shall "obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"For lo, the days are hastening on,  
By prophet bards foretold,  
When with the ever-circling years  
Comes round the age of gold;  
When peace shall over all the earth  
Its ancient splendors fling,  
And the whole world gives back the song  
Which now the angels sing."

## WHITHER?

The innkeepers looked and shook their heads. "No room—pass on."

Pass on? Whither?

Once more Joseph knocked on the door of an inn. This was the last in the village. Fear and hope mingled in his breast. To have Mary again ask, "whither?" would be more than he could bear. They must find rest here.

The abrupt opening of the door and the rough voice jolted his tired mind. Before he asked, "Is there room in the inn?" he knew deep within his heart the answer would be "No!"

But wait—

The innkeeper's voice softened, "The stable—yonder. Sleep there for the night if you like."

Joseph thanked him. Gently, with a caress in his voice, he told Mary that their journey was at an end. Shelter had been found—at least for this night.

Thus did Christmas dawn. No room for Him, save a stable—and that given as an afterthought.

In 1954, almost 2000 years after the first Christmas, has the meaning of this day been burned so deep that now the world has only a stable to offer Him? Can it not offer its best?

If He turned away and told, "Pass on," will the world not soon plead, "Whither?"—Selected.

## HIS PLACE OF BIRTH

By Charles Henry Mackintosh

They went from Galilee to Bethlehem,  
For Joseph was of David's royal race;  
And, though the inn could find no place for them,

The oxen and the asses found a place.

The meek, who labor as the oxen did;  
The wise, the world deems foolish as the ass,

Will always find a place to keep Him hid,  
While all the centuries of Caesar pass.

All those who will not conquer with the sword,  
But with the Cross of sacrifice alone,  
Shall celebrate this birthday of Our Lord  
And know He is already on His throne.

"Thanks Be Unto God For His Unspeakable Gift"