

The Chosen People

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The Cult of Santa Claus

From the President



DECEMBER 1982

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The message of the angels on that first Christmas Day still brings peace to the hearts of men: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10).

The message was good news for Jew and Gentile, a universal message of peace to all peoples. The Messiah had come. In fulfillment of the prophetic message, He was born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). He would be the Savior. He would be the Lord (Luke 2:11).

In response to this wondrous message of peace, the shepherds came to worship the Savior. The wise men came, bearing gifts for the One who was born King of the Jews.

Today, however, the wonder of that first Christmas, its reverence and worship, have become lost in the clamor and commercialism of the world. The ringing of cash registers and the monotonous clicking of the credit card machines have replaced the angelic voices of the heavenly host as they praised God saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

To our own shame and regret, times and peoples have not changed. Jesus was born in a stable because there was no room in the Inn. Today, in many homes, Christmas will be celebrated but there will be no room for Jesus in that celebration. The festivities will include wonderful meals, beautiful decorations and the giving and receiving of beautifully wrapped gifts. The Christmas tree, with the star or angel on top, has replaced the wonder of that first Christmas night, as the shepherds watched, keeping their flocks by night. The beautifully wrapped packages have replaced the gifts brought by the magi (wise men). The cradle has been replaced by stockings carefully hung by the chimney. The Christ Child, the Savior of the world, the Babe in the manger, has been replaced by the false legend of Santa Claus. The world still has no room for Jesus.

And, sadly, many professing Christians have been so caught up in the worldly celebration of Christmas that they, too, have forgotten its real significance.


In this issue of The Chosen People we will be exposing the "cult" of Santa Claus. We will see how man-made tradition has blinded the hearts of men and women to the truth of God's Word. In keeping with biblical tradition, Dr. Fuchs, in his article, will be examining the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

We have a wonderful message of peace to proclaim to all people, Jew and Gentile alike. Your missionaries have been faithfully carrying that message of truth to the Jewish people. It is your faithful prayers and support that enable us to send these servants of God into Jewish communities around the world.

It is the message of the Gospel that shatters tradition. It opens blinded eyes to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. This year, let us make room together for Jesus in the celebration of His birthday. Let us give out the message to all peoples that the Savior, Jesus, our Messiah and our Lord, has come. And that He will give peace, life and forgiveness of sins to all who will accept Him.

Shalom, Shalom!

Harold A. Sevener



"Doctor, . . . please stand here and see me die,
trusting Jesus to the last moment of my life."

The Dying Drummer Boy

Two or three times in my life God in His mercy touched my heart, and twice before my conversion I was under deep conviction. During the American war I was a surgeon in the United States Army, and after the battle of Gettysburg there were many hundreds of wounded soldiers in my

continued on following page



hospital, among whom were twenty-eight who had been wounded so severely that they required my services at once—some whose legs had to be amputated, some lost an arm, and others both an arm and a leg. One of the latter was a boy who had been but three months in the service, and being too young for a soldier had enlisted as a drummer. When my assistant surgeon and a steward wished to administer chloroform previous to the amputation, he turned his head aside and positively refused to take it. When the steward told him that it was the doctor's orders, he said, "Send the doctor to me."

When I came to his bedside I said, "Young man, why do you refuse chloroform? When I found you on the battlefield you were so far gone that I thought it hardly worthwhile to pick you up; but when you opened those large blue eyes I thought you had a mother somewhere who might at that moment be thinking of her boy. I did not want you to die on the field, so I ordered you to be brought here; but you have now lost so much blood that you are too weak to endure an operation without chloroform, therefore you had better let me give you some."

He laid his hand on mine, and looking me in the face, said, "Doctor, one Sunday afternoon, in the Sabbath-school, when I was nine and a half years old, I gave my heart to Christ. I learned to trust Him then; I have been trusting Him ever since, and I know I can trust Him now. He is my strength; He will support me while you amputate my arm and leg."

I then asked him if he would allow me to give him a little brandy. Again he looked me in the face, saying, "Doctor, when I was about five years old my mother knelt by my side, with her arm around my neck, and said 'Charlie, I am now praying to Jesus that you may never know the taste of strong drink. Your papa died a drunkard and went down to a drunkard's grave, and I promised God, if it was His will that you should grow up, that you would warn young men against the bitter cup.' I am seventeen years old but I have never tasted anything stronger than tea or coffee; and as I am in all probability about to go into the presence of God, would you send me there with brandy in my stomach?"

The look that the boy gave me I shall never forget. At that time I hated Jesus, but I respected that boy's loyalty to his Saviour; and when I saw how he loved and trusted Him to the last, there was something that touched my

heart, and I did for that boy what I had never done for any other soldier—I asked him if he wanted to see his chaplain. "Oh yes, sir," came the answer.

When Chaplain R_____ came, he at once knew the boy from having often met him at the tent prayer-meetings, and taking his hand said, "Well, Charlie, I am sorry to see you in this sad condition."

"Oh, I am all right, sir," he answered.

"The doctor offered me chloroform, but I declined it; then he wished to give me brandy, which I also declined; and now, if my Saviour calls me, I can go to Him in my right mind."

"You may not die, Charlie," said the chaplain, "but if the Lord should call you away, is there anything I can do for you after you are gone?"

"Chaplain, please put your hand under my pillow and take my little Bible; in it you will find my mother's address. Please send it to her, and write a letter and tell her that since the day I left home I have never let a day pass without reading a portion of God's Word and daily praying that God would bless my dear mother—no matter whether on the march, on the battlefield, or in the hospital."

"Is there anything else that I can do for you, my lad?" asked the chaplain.

"Yes; please write a letter to the superintendent of the Sands Street Sunday-school, Brooklyn, N.Y., and tell him that the kind words, many prayers and good advice he gave me I have never forgotten; they have followed me through all the dangers of battle, and now, in my dying hour, I ask my dear Saviour to bless my dear old superintendent; that is all."

Turning towards me, he said, "Now, doctor, I am ready, and I promise you that I will not even groan while you take off my arm and leg, if you will not offer me chloroform." I promised, but I had not the courage to take the knife in my hand to perform the operation without first going into the next room and taking a little

stimulant to nerve myself to perform my duty.

While cutting through the flesh Charlie Coulson never groaned, but when I took the saw to separate the bone, the lad took the corner of the pillow in his mouth, and all that I could hear him utter was "O Jesus, blessed Jesus, stand by me now!" He kept his promise, and never groaned.

That night I could not sleep, for whichever way I turned I saw those soft blue eyes, and when I closed mine, the words, "Blessed Jesus, stand by me now!" kept



ringing in my ears. Between twelve and one o'clock I left my bed and visited the hospital, a thing I had never done before unless specially called; but such was my desire to see that boy. Upon my arrival there I was informed by the night steward that sixteen of the hopeless cases had died and been carried down to the deadhouse. "How is Charlie Coulson, is he among the dead?" I asked.

"No sir," answered the steward, "he is sleeping as sweetly as a babe." When I came up to the bed where he lay, one of the nurses informed me that about nine o'clock two members of the U.S. Christian Commission came through the hospital to read and sing a hymn. They were accompanied by Chaplain R_____ who knelt by Charlie Coulson's bed and offered up a fervent and soul-stirring prayer, after which they sang, while still upon their knees, the sweetest of all hymns, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," in which Charlie joined. I could not understand how that boy, who had undergone such excruciating pain, could sing. Five days after I had amputated that

dear boy's arm and leg, he sent for me, and it was from him on that day I heard the first gospel sermon.

"Doctor," he said, "my time has come. I do not expect to see another sunrise, but thank God, I am ready to go and before I die I desire to thank you with all my heart for your kindness to me. Doctor, you are a Jew; you do not believe in Jesus; will you please stand here and see me die, trusting my Saviour to the last moment of my life?" I tried to stay but I could not, for I had not the courage to stand by and see a Christian boy die rejoicing in the love of that Jesus whom I had been taught to hate, so I hurriedly left the room. About twenty minutes later a steward, who found me sitting in my private office covering my face with my hand, said, "Doctor, Charlie Coulson wishes to see you." "I have just seen him," I answered, "and I cannot see him again." But doctor, he says he must see you once more before he dies." I now made up my mind to see him, say an endearing word,

and let him die, but I was determined that no word of his should influence me in the least so far as his Jesus was concerned. When I entered the hospital I saw he was sinking fast, so I sat down by his bed. Asking me to take his hand, he said, "Doctor, I love you because you are a Jew; the best friend I have found in this world was a Jew."

I asked him who that was. He answered, "Jesus Christ, to whom I want to introduce you before I die, and will you promise me, doctor, that what I am about to say to you, you will never forget?" I promised; and he said,

"Five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to convert your soul."

These words went deep into my heart. I could not understand how, when I was causing the most intense pain, he could forget all about himself and think of nothing but his Saviour and my unconverted soul. All I could say to him was, "Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right." With these words I left him, and twelve minutes later he fell asleep, "safe in the arms of Jesus."

Hundreds of soldiers died in my hospital during the war, but I only followed one to the grave, and that one was Charlie Coulson, the drummer boy, and I rode three miles to see him buried. I had him dressed in a new uniform and placed in an officer's coffin with a United States flag over it. That dear boy's dying words made a deep impression on me. I was rich at that time so far as money is concerned, but I would have given every penny I possessed if I could have felt towards Christ as Charlie did; but that feeling cannot be bought with money.

Alas! I soon forgot all about my Christian soldier's little sermon, but I could not forget the boy himself. I now know that at that time I was under deep conviction of sin, but I fought against Christ with all the hatred of an orthodox Jew for nearly ten years, until, finally, the boy's prayer was answered and God converted my soul.

About eighteen months after my conversion I attended a prayer-meeting one evening in the city of Brooklyn. It was one of those meetings when Christians testify to the loving kindness of their dear Saviour. After several of them had spoken, an elderly lady arose and said, "Dear friends, this may be the last time that it is my privilege to testify for Christ. My family physician told me yesterday that my right lung is very nearly gone, and my left lung is very much affected, so at the best I have but a short time to be with you; but what is left of me belongs to Jesus. Oh! it is a great joy to know that I shall meet my boy with Jesus in

Heaven. My son was not only a soldier for his country, but also a soldier for Christ. He was wounded at the battle of Gettysburg, and fell into the hands of a Jewish doctor, who amputated his arm and leg, but he died five days after the operation." When I heard this lady's testimony I could sit still no longer. I left my seat, crossed the room, and taking her by the hand said, "God bless you, my dear sister, your boy's prayer has been heard and answered. I am the Jewish doctor for whom your Charlie prayed, and his Saviour is now my Saviour." □

Hundreds of soldiers died in my hospital during the war, but I only followed one to the grave and that one was Charlie Coulson, the drummer boy. I rode three miles to see him buried. I had him dressed in a new uniform and placed in an officer's coffin with a United States flag over it.

TWO KINGS

By DR. DANIEL FUCHS

When you receive this issue of *The Chosen People*, your local shops will probably be advertising “only 20 days until Christmas,” give or take a few days. But, as I am writing this article, there are precisely 134 days till Christmas. That’s right, it’s August! You, see I expect to be in Jerusalem on the day this article is due. So, here I am in the middle of August writing a Christmas message.

However, there is a valid, historical reason for writing about the birth of our Lord in August. Don’t misunderstand! I am not claiming that Jesus was born in August, since we don’t know the exact date of His birth; but August is historically related to the birth of Christ.

Only a competent historian would begin a biography of the Lord Jesus Christ as Luke does: And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (Lk. 2:1).

This phrase “a decree from Caesar Augustus” literally flings us into the heart of Roman history. Every high school student knows that Caesar Augustus had waded to the throne of the Roman Empire through a sea of blood. After the brutal assassination of Julius Caesar, a struggle for power broke out between three claimants to power—Lepidus, Mark Antony, and Octavianus. Finally, they settled their quarrel by forming a triumvirate and divided the Empire into three parts, each one of them ruling a section. The three conspirators then perpetrated one of the most ghastly crimes in history. In their greedy desire for wealth, they drew up by common agreement a list of three hundred senators and two thousand Roman knights. These proscribed persons were all assassinated and their property was confiscated. Later Octavianus eliminated one of his rivals, Lepidus. Five years thereafter, he

defeated the combined forces of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, 31 B.C. Thus by the year 30 B.C., Octavianus had become master of the whole Roman world.

Disregarding his crimes, the Roman senate gave to Octavianus the honorable title of Augustus, that is, “venerable,” “majestic.” The senate also decreed that the sixth month of the Roman calendar should be known as Augustus, hence the month of August in our present-day reckoning.

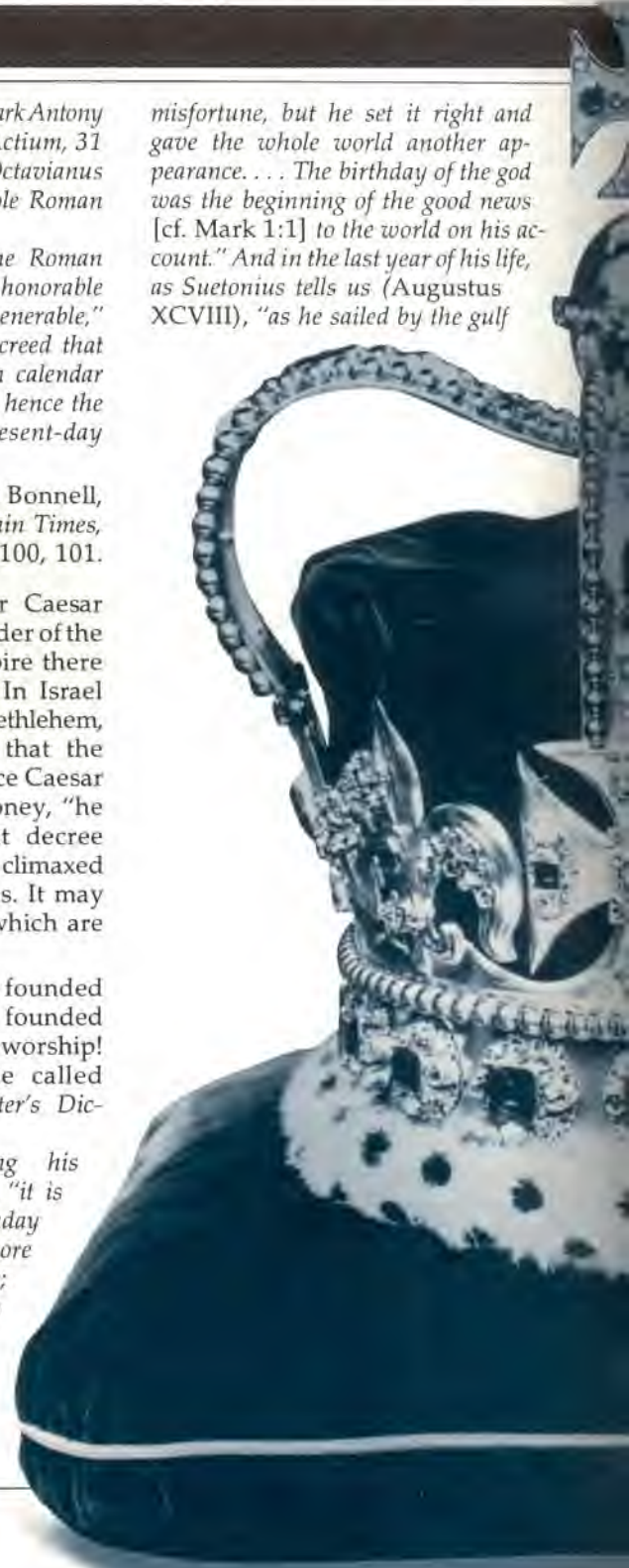
John Sutherland Bonnell,
Certainties for Uncertain Times,
pp. 100, 101.

August was named after Caesar Augustus, who was the founder of the Roman Empire. In this empire there was a nation called Israel. In Israel there was a little town called Bethlehem, where it was prophesied that the Messiah would be born. Since Caesar Augustus needed some money, “he issued a decree,” and that decree activated the momentum that climaxed in the message of Christmas. It may remind us of some truths which are very easily forgotten.

Augustus Caesar not only founded the Roman Empire, he also founded the cult of Roman Emperor worship! R. M. Grant in an article called “Augustus” in the *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* says,

An inscription celebrating his birthday in 7 B.C. states that “it is hard to say whether the birthday of the most divine Caesar is more joyful or more advantageous; we may rightly regard it as like the beginning of all things, if not in the world of nature, yet in advantage; everything was deteriorating and changing into

misfortune, but he set it right and gave the whole world another appearance. . . . The birthday of the god was the beginning of the good news [cf. Mark 1:1] to the world on his account.” And in the last year of his life, as Suetonius tells us (Augustus XCVIII), “as he sailed by the gulf



...ONE CROWN

of Puteoli it happened that from an Alexandrian ship which had just arrived there the passengers and crew, clad in white, crowned with garlands, and burning incense, lavished upon him good wishes and the highest praises, saying that it was

through him they lived, through him they sailed the seas, and through him they enjoyed their liberty and their fortunes." There is no reason not to regard this offering of divine honors as spontaneous.

Vol. 1, p. 319.

In the same book from which we quoted above, Dr. Bonnell continues, "Caesar Augustus ruled with absolute power an empire that stretched from the Euphrates River in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and from the British Isles in the north to the cataracts of the Nile River in the south."

He had the whole world in his hand, or at least he thought so. What a boast—"all the world should be taxed"—the *orbis terrarum*, the "circle of the earth." Augustus issued a decree that sent Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Perhaps it wasn't Augustus Caesar who had the whole world in his hands after all!

"... there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus." All Augustus did was to validate a higher decree. Before world history began, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit held a council and issued a decree that God the Son, in the fullness of time would enter human history and become the Redeemer.

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Pet. 1:19, 20). Later, at the dawn of human history, when man first sinned, God gave a promise of the One who would redeem from sin. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and

between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

From that time on, there was war. It was God who declared the war. The struggle issued in battles, battles between Cain and Abel, Abraham and the King of Sodom, Jacob and Esau, Pharaoh and Moses. Sometimes it seemed as though the battles were lost. Each of these battles was, however, part of the strategy of our Captain. We must remember that the struggle was not between Cain and Abel or between Jacob and Esau. It was, and is, between Christ and the seed of the serpent, who is Satan.

It was "a decree from Caesar Augustus" versus God's decree. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

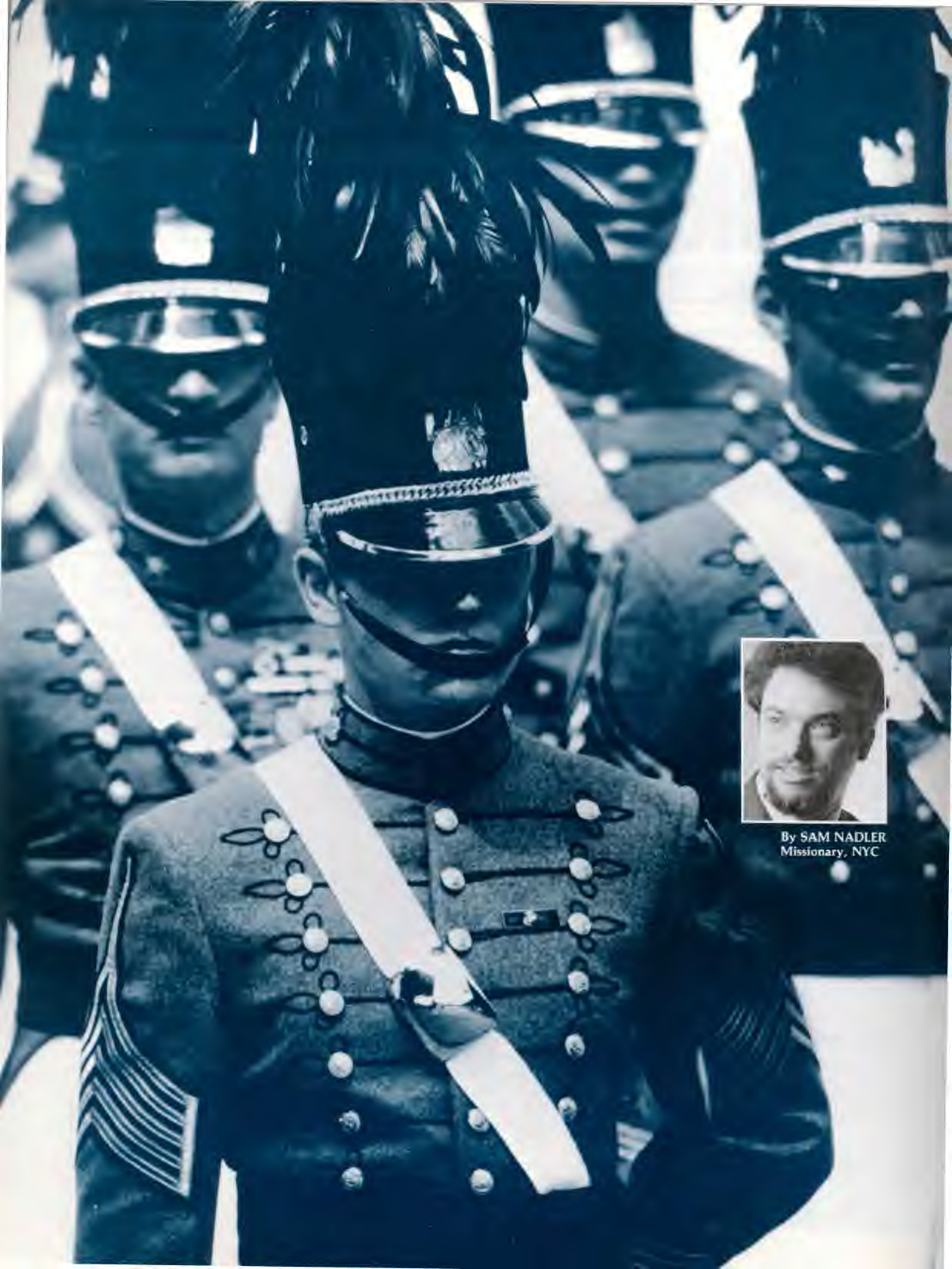
Augustus Caesar issued a decree. Yes, he was emperor of *orbis terrarum*, the "circle of the earth," but it was a usurped realm. As emperor he ruled in Israel, so he issued a decree that brought the mother of Him who came "forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel" to Bethlehem, where the real "ruler in Israel" must be born.

August is a wonderful time to write about the birth of our wonderful Lord. Thank you, Caesar Augustus, for taking time out of your busy schedule to issue a decree. You founded the Roman Empire, yet the most important thing you did was issue the decree that makes it possible for us to sing,

*Joy to the world, the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King.*

And we can sing it in August as well as in December. □





By SAM NADLER
Missionary, NYC

A MIRACLE AT WEST POINT

It's unusual for a Jewish person to accept Christ the first time he talks with a missionary. So when it happens, you know that God has prepared his heart and mind in a very special way.

Dr. Barney Yanklowitz, a young army podiatrist stationed at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, provides a perfect illustration of this truth.

I first met Dr. Yanklowitz at our headquarters office in Orangeburg, New York. A secretary told me that he had come into the office to talk with someone about God.

Almost instantly, she sensed his sincerity. He confessed that he was struggling with a serious problem, but he couldn't tell her what it was. So she sent for me.

The moment I met Dr. Yanklowitz I could see that he was deeply troubled. After exchanging greetings, I invited him into a quiet room where we could talk privately about his problems.

Once we walked into the room, it was easy to turn our conversation to spiritual matters. Like Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus in the night, Barney had come for only one thing—he wanted to find spiritual reality.

When Barney expressed this desire, I asked him, "What have you done to try to know God?" Without a moment's hesitation, he responded, "I've read books, I've gone to Bible studies and I even have friends praying for me." It was as though he was saying, "How much more does a Jewish man have to do to know God?"

Barney had given me a perfect opportunity to share the Gospel. As I talked I could see that he was hungrily listening to everything that I had to say. In place of the arguments against Jesus being the Messiah that missionaries normally expect to hear, there was silence. Barney's heart had obviously been prepared by the Holy Spirit.

Since this was the case, I skipped over most of the Old Testament passages I would normally share and went directly into the New Testament.

Barney listened quietly as I explained that the Messiah had come to atone for our sins.

Up to this point, it seemed as though he was agreeing with everything I said. But he abruptly interrupted, mumbling, "It won't work for me. I love her too much."

I wasn't sure what Barney was trying to communicate but I had a premonition. So I asked, "Barney, do you have some sin in your life that you can't give up?"

He couldn't conceal his amazement as he responded, "How did you know that?"

I explained that the Bible teaches in John chapter three that the reason men don't come to the light is because they desire darkness more than light. Without hesitation, he replied, "You're right. I love her too much. I can't give her up."

Since Barney had not introduced another woman into the conversation up to this point, I asked, "What do you mean?"

This question opened the door to the problem that was plaguing this young Jewish doctor. He began to share the details of his situation with me. Just a few months ago, he had asked his wife, Mary Beth, to take their children and leave their home so he could live with another woman.

As Barney finished his story, I knew I had to confront the issue head on. So I asked, "Don't you realize this is a sin, and you can never know God as long as you're living in sin?"

Barney immediately replied, "What sin? I love her. How can that be a sin?"

The answer to his question was easy. I took him into the Scriptures and showed him how God looked upon adultery. As we studied these passages together, Barney began to see that God would not accept the way he was living. I told him that he was going to have to confess his sin

and ask God to release him from it.

He replied, "I could never do that. I love her too much. I can never give her up. I realize it's wrong, but I can never give her up."

I used this admission to bring Barney to the ultimate truth of God's Word. I said, "Barney, that's exactly why we need a Savior. We need to be redeemed from the power of sin. We can't give up sin on our own, and that's why we need Jesus to deliver us." I took Barney to the eighth chapter of Romans to show him God's testimony to this great truth.

As I talked, the Holy Spirit was working in Barney's heart. The moment of victory came when Barney suddenly declared, "Okay, I'll try to trust Christ."

After we prayed and cried together for the great step Barney was taking in his life, I showed him Scriptures to reaffirm the fact that he was saved by his faith in Jesus.

I could see Barney was absolutely sincere in what he had prayed, but I knew it was not going to be an easy decision to follow. With this in mind, I asked him when he was going to tell the woman he was living with about his decision.

He told me he would probably tell her when he got back home. Then, he honestly confessed that he didn't know how he would be able to do it. I reassured him that God would give him the strength. "I hope so," Barney softly replied. Then once again, we began to weep together for his difficult, painful situation.

As he left, Barney told me he had two operations to perform at the West Point hospital the next morning. He assured me, however, that he would call as soon as he could to let me know how everything worked out at home.

Just as he promised, Barney called the next day. He shared with me how he told the woman he was living with about his decision to accept Christ. Then, he told her she would have to leave.

continued on page 14

THE CULT OF SANTA CLAUS

and other false messiahs



One cult has superseded
has replaced

By HAROLD A. SEVENER

Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon and the Maharishi are just a few of the modern false messiahs who have appeared upon the horizon of history.

The Bible indicates that one of the characteristics of this age will be the rise in false prophets (cf. Mt. 24:11) and false messiahs (cf. Mt. 24:24). Interestingly, in the history of Judaism since the time of Christ, there have been over 50 messianic contenders. The last of these was the great Shabbetai Zevi, who lived in the seventeenth century. Each of these false messiahs, Jew and Gentile, seek to replace the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the central figure of worship.

While these cults and false religions have rallied thousands to their cause, there has been one central cult that has superseded all others. This cult centers around the celebration of Christmas, and it has replaced the central figure of Christmas—the Lord Jesus—with a red-suited, white-bearded gentleman called Santa Claus.

This cult has literally taken the Christ out of Christmas. Santa Claus and the commercialization of Christmas is the modern-day counterpart to a false messiah.

Let us examine this phenomenal cult called Santa Claus. The myth of Santa Claus grew out of the celebration of Christmas. The word *Christmas* comes from the Latin word meaning "Christ's mass" or the "mass of Christ." (The word "mass" is derived from the Latin word *mittere*, which literally means "to send.") Historically, it came to mean the celebration of the Lord's Supper or Communion.

Now, interestingly, there is no mention of the celebration of Christmas in the Bible. Its celebration seemingly grew out of a fourth-century desire by the Church to celebrate the birth and the baptism of Christ. In the early Church, there was no attempt to distinguish between His baptism and His physical birth. There is absolutely no historical evidence to support the fact that Christmas was ever celebrated during the Apostolic Age or even during the post-Apostolic Age.

Hippolytus seems to be the first man to set the date of December 25 for the celebration of Christmas. He was convinced that Jesus' life was precisely 33 years in length. Therefore, he reasoned that, since Jesus was crucified on March 25, He must have been conceived on March 25. He then calculated nine months ahead from the annunciation and arrived at the date of December 25. Hippolytus had earlier set the date to be January 2. Other scholars of his day set the birth date of Christ at January 6, April 18, April 19, May 20 and March 28.

all others. This cult focuses on the celebration of Christmas, and it the Lord Jesus with a white-bearded gentleman called Santa Claus.

The earliest record of the recognition of December 25 as a Church festival is found in the Philocalin Calendar, circa A.D. 354. This date was set for the celebration of the Western Church, whereas the Eastern Church continued the celebration on January 6 as both the physical and what they termed the "spiritual birthday" (baptism) of the Lord until early in the first half of the fourth century.

Chrysostom (A.D. 386) states, "The celebration of the birth of Christ, according to the flesh, was not inaugurated at Antioch until ten years before that date." He indicates that the celebration of this festival was approved by himself, but was opposed by many others. An Armenian writer living in the eleventh century stated, "that the Christmas festival was invented in Rome by the heretic Artemon, and that it was first celebrated in Constantinople in 373 A.D." In Egypt, this Western birthday celebration was opposed during the early years of the fifth century, but was celebrated in Alexandria as early as A.D. 432.

The Jerusalem church celebrated both the birth and baptism of Jesus on the same day, January 6, until about the middle of the fourth century. His physical birth was celebrated at Bethlehem; His so-called "spiritual birth" (baptism) at the Jordan. The two locations posed great difficulty for the celebration of the feast, and it seems that the Jerusalem bishop of the church asked the Roman bishop to ascertain the real date of Christ's birth. Accordingly, Julius is represented as sending to Cyril a calculation in favor of December 25, based upon the supposition (derived from Josephus) that Zechariah's vision took place at the Feast of Tabernacles. This did not satisfy the Jerusalem church, and they persisted in celebrating Christmas on January 6 until A.D. 549 or later. The Armenians never adapted the Christmas celebration on December 25 and continue to celebrate both the physical and spiritual birthdays of Jesus on January 6.

Now, why is this discussion of the date of Christmas so important? Remember that we are discussing a false messiah—a counterfeit Christ. Historically, the date for Christmas and its celebration was set by man and not God. (It has absolutely no foundation in the Word of God.) It was never a part of the sacred calendar given to Israel, which seemingly finds prophetic fulfillment in the life of Jesus (cf. Lev. 23).

Paralleling God's true program of redemption through His Son, the Messiah, has been a false system of worship—a worldly system; a cultic system. Its roots go back to ancient Babylon and ultimately to Satan himself. This false religious system taught that Tamus was the virgin born son of Semeramis, who the Babylonians

taught was the queen of heaven. Tamus was given the name of Bell, or Bacchus. Semeramis was given the name Cybele, or Rhea. Tamus then was worshipped as God incarnate. He was the incarnation of the sun, or Baal. Throughout the centuries this pagan, mystery religion has counterfeited God's true redemptive program.

In Egypt, the mother and child were Isis and Osiris. In India, they were known as Isi and Iswara. In Asia, she was known as Sybele, and her son was called Deoius. In Greece, they were Seres and Plutus. Even in far off Tibet and China, the mother was named Shing Moo, and her son was devoutly worshipped. In Rome, the mother became known as Fortuna and her son as Jupiter. Surrounding the worship of this mother and son were the many feast days of Brumalia and Saturnalia. A. H. Newman, writing in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, states,

How much the calculation of Hippolytus had to do with the fixing of the festival on December 25 and how much the date of the festival depended upon the pagan Brumalia (Dec. 25), following the Saturnalia (Dec. 17-24) and celebrating the shortest day in the year and the "new sun" or the beginning of the lengthening of days, cannot be accurately determined. The pagan Saturnalia and Brumalia were too deeply entrenched in popular custom to be set aside by Christian influence.

He goes on to state,

The recognition of Sunday (the day of Phoebus and Mithras as well as the Lord's Day) by the emperor Constantine as a legal holiday, along with the influence of Manicheism, which identified the Son of God with the physical sun, may have led Christians of the fourth century to feel the appropriateness of making the birthday of the Son of God coincide with that of the physical sun. The pagan festival with its riot and merrymaking was so popular that Christians were glad of an excuse to continue its celebration with little change in spirit or in manner. Christian preachers of the West and the Nearer East protested against the unseemly frivolity with which Christ's birthday was celebrated, while Christians of Mesopotamia accused their Western brethren of idolatry and sun-worship for adopting as Christian this pagan festival. Yet the festival rapidly gained acceptance and became, at last, so firmly established that even the Protestant revolution of the sixteenth century was not able to dislodge it. [p. 48]

Having thus established a false day of worship, Satan then instituted a false person to worship—Santa Claus. He substituted a myth of a man giving gifts to the children of men, for the Son of Man, who gave His life for all men. The myth of Santa Claus began, coinci-

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dentially, about the same time as the celebration of Christmas. It finds its origin in the fifth century.

The name Santa Claus is a corruption of the name Saint Nicholas. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* tells us, "His cult is as celebrated as his history is obscure. All the accounts that have come down to us are of purely legendary character, and it is impossible to find any single incident confirmed historically."

The oldest known monument of the cult of Saint Nicholas seems to be the church of S. S. Priscus and Nicholas, built at Constantinople by the emperor

Justinian. Churches dedicated to this mythical, cultic leader are found throughout Europe. And in England, nearly 400 churches are dedicated to Saint Nicholas.

He is the patron saint of Russia and the "protector" of children, scholars, merchants and sailors. One legend tells us that Saint Nicholas miraculously restored three rich youths to life. Another legend states that he surreptitiously bestowed dowries upon three daughters of an impoverished man, thus allowing them to marry. This legend is said to have originated the old custom of giving presents in secret on the Eve of Saint Nicholas, which later was translated to Christmas Day.

The American name for Santa Claus is but a corruption

When I learned who
Christina was, I
smiled inwardly.
Here was a case of
a missionary
meeting a mission-
ary—a child of God
meeting a child of
the world.

Editor's note: One of the greatest messages of Christmas is that the Messiah would bring salvation to Gentiles as well as to Jews. Normally, we work by sowing and reaping in the Jewish portion of the harvest. But, each year we rejoice to find that God has graciously enabled us to introduce a large number of Gentiles to Christ along the way. We felt you would be blessed this Christmas to hear the story of one of those people.

You never know who you'll meet next when you're sharing Christ on the streets. One day, it may be an actor from the TV series "Hart to Hart," and the next it may be

a well-known author of science fiction novels.

Whoever they are and whatever they do, in a city the size of New York, they just keep coming. So, no matter where you go, you have to be prepared to talk to almost anyone about Christ.

As a summer missionary for ABMJ, I had the opportunity to share Christ with the actor and the author. Today, however, I was going to meet Christina.

I was walking down the boardwalk when I first saw her. She looked like a typical American girl in her mid-20s, one who might live in the apartment next door.



By DIANA
HOLDITCH
Summer Missionary

Christina Thought She
Would Go To Heaven Some
Day If She Was

ONE OF THE
144,000

DIARY OF A
SUMMER MISSIONARY
PART II

of the Dutch San Nicolaas, and the custom of giving gifts was brought over to America by the early Dutch colonists. There are many other myths and legends relating to the name Santa Claus, but behind each of them is the attempt to focus on an individual other than the Lord Jesus Christ as the giver of gifts to men.

The man with the red suit and the white beard, representing commercial joy and happiness, is a unique precursor to the symbolic red dragon seen in Revelation 12. The dragon is none other than Satan himself, who attempts, through commercial and ecclesiastical Babylon (cf. Rev. 17:18), to destroy the nation of Israel and the Person and testimony of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, by

placing in the hearts and minds of men an image of his own making (cf. Rev. 13).

Isn't it about time that we as believers put Christ back into Christmas? Let us give back to Him that which He has given to us—our lives, our love and our dedication (cf. Rom. 12:1, 2).

As yielded believers, let us bear witness to the world that there's only one gift of eternal value that has ever been given to mankind. No matter what the world may think, that gift didn't come to us by way of Santa's sleigh. We can only find it in an empty tomb beneath a tree called Calvary. □

When I asked her if she would like to take a religious survey, she said, "Sure, why not? I don't have anything better to do, anyway."

We hadn't progressed too far into the survey when we came to the subject of Jesus. The moment I mentioned His name, a puzzled look came across Christina's face. "I don't understand," she said, "you're wearing a Jewish necklace but you're talking about Jesus. Are you Jewish? Are you some kind of cult?"

I told her that I'm a Gentile who loves the Jewish people. Now Christina was really puzzled. I could sense the amazement in her voice as she responded, "I always thought Jews and Christians were supposed to be *against* each other."

I reassured her that this wasn't the case—that Jews and Gentiles could be one in Christ.

It was obvious that this young lady had never run into anyone quite like me. Her curiosity was pricked, and she wanted answers to a lot of questions.

"Who are you?" she quizzed. "What organization are you with? What kind of training have you had?"

After patiently answering each of her questions, I began to ask some questions of my own.

As we talked, I discovered that Christina's parents were dedicated atheists. Since Christina couldn't find any satisfaction in their persuasion, she began searching out various religions on her own. Eventually, she had become a Jehovah's Witness. Her reason for choosing their beliefs was that they promised her heaven. Now she was one of their missionaries.

When I learned who Christina was, I smiled inwardly. Here was a case of a missionary meeting a missionary—a

child of God meeting a child of the world. This was the perfect opportunity to reaffirm the truth of I John 4:4, "... greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

I turned Christina's attention back to the survey and to the *L'Chaim* (Hebrew for "To life") booklet. Basically, this booklet is patterned after the "four spiritual laws," but it has been specially adapted to share Christ with Jewish people.

Normally, it takes just a few moments to read this booklet. Christina wasn't going to be so cooperative, however. She repeatedly interrupted the flow of the spiritual truths being set before her. She was obviously trying to avoid the issue. Throughout our conversation, Christina constantly told me, "I'm a Jehovah's Witness. I believe in Jehovah, and I work for His kingdom. I'm going to heaven someday, if I'm one of the 144,000."

It's so easy to become discouraged and give up under such circumstances. But God has promised to bless His Word. So a well-trained missionary keeps pushing on as long as the door remains open. With this in mind, I continued prodding Christina along through the spiritual principles presented in the *L'Chaim* booklet in spite of her flood of questions and objections.

Eventually, I sensed her resolve beginning to weaken. Then I saw a flicker of doubt flash across her mind. Still, I was not prepared for her response when we reached the end of the booklet.

The presentation of the Gospel in *L'Chaim* is absolutely clear. So when we come to the end of this booklet, we always ask, "Does this express the feeling of your heart?"

Just as I asked this question, a young man came over and sat down

beside Christina. He sat so close, in fact, I thought they were friends. Then he began to talk, and it became apparent that he had never met her. Who was he? A servant of Satan who had come to destroy the seed of truth I had been planting in her heart.

Now I was sure she would never make a commitment. Throughout our conversation, I had noticed that she was quite shy. How would she even bow her head and pray to receive Christ with this complete stranger sitting alongside her? This would certainly keep her from coming to Christ, even if all the objections she had voiced didn't.

Yet, the question had to be asked. So I said, "Christina, does this express the feeling of your heart?" Without a moment's hesitation, she replied, "Yes, it does."

Yes! I thought, "How *could* it? Did she really know enough about Jesus to be saved?"

I gently probed to find out if she really understood what she was saying. "Christina," I inquired, "what difference will it make if you pray to accept Christ into your life?" Without a note of shyness, she responded, "This is exactly what I want. I want to have peace in my heart and be free from my sins." The scales of spiritual darkness had fallen from her eyes.

So, we prayed together that afternoon, and Christina, a child of this world, became a child of God.

As I left her and continued down the boardwalk, my heart was filled with joy. Only one question remained in my mind—"Who'll be next—a doctor, lawyer, taxi cab driver or, perhaps, another Christina?" You never know who you'll meet next when you're sharing Christ on the streets. □



What Are You Giving Jesus for His Birthday This Year?

Can you imagine what it would be like if all your friends gave you a birthday party and they brought gifts for everyone but you?

Take a moment and think about how you would feel. The air would be filled with the happy sounds of laughter, and everyone around you would be full of joy. But there wouldn't be any joy in your heart. Why? Because deep down inside you'd know that your friends didn't care about you too much after all.

Isn't it a lot like this at Christmas? We talk about celebrating the birth of Jesus, and everywhere we go there are bright lights and Christmas carols. Yes, there are even presents—piles of them, for everyone except our Lord.

Christmas doesn't have to be that way. Jesus should be first on our shopping list.

Maybe you've been wondering, "What can I give Jesus for His birthday this Christmas?" Actually, the answer is quite simple. After 1900 years He still wants the same thing. His desire is to redeem the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

You can give Him that gift this year by helping support the ministry of ABMJ.

- Yes, I want to give a birthday gift to Jesus. Enclosed you'll find my check for \$_____.
- Yes, you can count on me to continue to pray for your worldwide outreach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

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I told Barney that God would give him strength. "I hope so," he softly replied. Once again, we began to weep for his painful situation.

continued from page 9

Barney confessed, however, that he had been deeply shaken by the experience. Her loss had left a vacuum in his life that was going to be hard to fill.

As a missionary, I constantly rejoice at how God gives us just the right words at the most difficult times in life to bring about spiritual healing. This was going to be one of those times.

I responded to Barney's comments by asking, "How did the operations go this morning?" For the first time in our conversation a note of brightness entered his voice as he responded, "Fine, they really went well."

I then asked, "Are the patients recuperating now? Will they still have some pain?"

Almost matter-of-factly he answered "yes" to both questions. God had led in this conversation so I could draw a parallel between the patients' physical pain and Barney's emotional pain. I told him, "God has performed spiritual surgery in your life to bring about healing, just as you have performed surgery on your patients to bring about physical healing. Just as it will take time for your patients' physical wounds to heal, it will take time for your spiritual wounds to heal too."

The next day Barney called to share some exciting news. When I answered the phone I didn't recognize his voice because it was like listening to a new Barney.

His voice was filled with joy as he declared, "Sam, isn't God good!" I replied, "I've always thought so—what makes *you* think so?"

Then he told me that he had called his wife, Mary Beth, to ask her to forgive him and take him back. Naturally, he was a little apprehensive at how she might respond, but he was utterly shocked when Mary Beth gave him her answer.

She told him how broken-hearted she had been when he asked her to leave their home so he could be with someone else. In the painful days that followed she turned to God and found Jesus! Of course, she would forgive him and take him back! His call had been an answer to her prayers.

We were filled with joy for the miracle God had worked in the life of this couple. Normally, our story would end here. But God was going to use Barney and Mary Beth to touch others in an almost unbelievable way.

When Barney asked the chaplain at West Point about being baptized, he was told that a meeting was already scheduled down by the lake. All the cadets who were potential Sunday school teachers for the West Point chapels were going to be meeting for a retreat. The chaplain suggested this would be the perfect time and place for me to baptize Barney and Mary Beth. He asked them to give their testimonies before the baptism, and they were delighted at the opportunity.

On the day of the baptism, I drove to West Point. Barney and Mary Beth did a superb job of telling the cadets how God had worked in their lives to bring them to a saving knowledge of Christ. As they talked, I noticed that some of the cadets looked embarrassed. By the expressions written across their faces, I could see that they knew they could never openly share in the same way. This was an opportunity I couldn't miss!

So, as I led Barney into the water, I began to share with these cadets. I told them that I had noticed some of them looked puzzled and troubled by Barney and Mary Beth's testimony. Then, I preached the Gospel to them for nearly ten minutes, emphasizing that having a religion is not enough and the importance of having a personal relationship with Christ. As I finished speaking, the Lord led me to give an invitation.

My heart was filled with praise as 20 to 30 cadets raised their hands to signify that they wanted to invite Jesus into their lives.

It was a miracle! The testimony of Barney and Mary Beth had touched the hearts of some of America's finest young people. As a result, these young men and women who had come to West Point to follow in the footsteps of such great men as MacArthur and Eisenhower are now following a much greater leader. They're walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

Questions and Answers

by DR. HENRY J. HEYDT

QUESTION: I would like to know if Hanukkah has any relationship to the sun-worshipping celebrations at this time of the year.

ANSWER: The festival of Hanukkah (or, *Chanukkah*, "dedication") was instituted by Judas Maccabeus and the elders of Israel in 165 B.C. as an annual celebration of the purification and rededication of the sanctuary after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. It lasted eight days. For the historical account see 1 Maccabees 4:36-61. The lighting of lamps and torches played a prominent part so it was also called the Festival of Lights (see *Josephus, Ant. xii.7.7*). It was because the idolatrous heathen worship under Antiochus had been stopped that the festival arose. It was in honor of the true God and had nothing to do with sun worship. In the New Testament it is called "the feast of the dedication" (Jn. 10:22).

1 Maccabees 4:59 reads: "And Judas

and his brethren and the whole congregation of Israel ordained, that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their seasons from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month Chislev, with gladness and joy." The month Chislev usually begins around the end of our November and parallels much of our December. For the occasion an eight-branch candlestick called the *menorah* is used. One light is kindled on the first night and another one each succeeding night. A ninth light extending from the rear is used to light the others and is called the *Shammash* (servant). In the synagogue the dedication-offering of the princes is read from Num. 7:1-8:4. At home the evening is spent in playing various games and spinning the Hanukkah top which is called the *dredel* or *trendel*. The custom of giving gifts has also become a part of this celebration.

QUESTION: A group teaches that Jesus laid aside His deity completely when He was on earth. I will greatly appreciate it if you will answer this.

ANSWER: The answer to this false teaching, known as the *Kenosis* theory, is already given in Col. 2:9, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." God can never be any less than He is. His attributes are not like clothes that He puts on or off at will. When God the Son was manifest in the flesh He did not lay aside His attributes but merely His own exercise of them, never asserting His Godly prerogatives. This is the teaching of such Scriptures as Phil. 2:6-8 and Heb. 10:5-9 as well as many passages in the Gospels. Had He laid aside His deity the efficacy of His atoning death would have been nullified, and He could not have been a *sufficient* sacrifice as a ransom for all, nor would His death have had an *eternal* weight of glory.

Where can you go in your local area...

when you have a question about witnessing to your Jewish friends? Or where can you invite your Jewish friends to help introduce them to Jesus? For the answers to these and other questions, contact your nearest ABMJ regional director.



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