



CHRISTMAS COOPERATION...NOT!

KING HEROD had blood on his hands. (Matt. 2:16).

In the original "Christmas story,"

there were those who did **NOT** cooperate and follow God's directions. Herod certainly did not cooperate, though he tried to make the "wise men" believe he also wanted to worship the new-born King (Matt. 2:8). Herod was a hypocrite and a murderer, and his type are still alive today, by the untold millions, wanting to kill the Saviour Christ—not openly, of course! Yet, even "modern Herods" can

change...*if they cooperate and follow God's directions.* And what about the religious Jews that told Herod and the wise men where the Messiah Saviour was to be born? (Matt. 2: 4-6). We have **no record of any of them going to Bethlehem** to worship the Messiah that God had promised throughout the thousands of years of Old Testament history. **They knew very well!** Was it their fear of Herod, or fear of the other religious leaders... *their peers...* or maybe their own sinful pride and desire for control. *Nothing is worth losing our soul over* by refusing to cooperate with God. ■

BREXMAS?

As I was offering my previous issue, **two groups of journalism students asked to interview me. The subject was Brexit.** I told them that regardless of which side "wins"...*to leave the EU or remain...* it will not solve the nation's problem, for Britain's problem is far deeper. Eternity will instantly expose the sin and stupidity with which we dealt with many issues, made decisions, and lived the life God gave us... and The Way He called us to live: "*in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life,*" as John the Baptist's father said in the Christmas story (Lk. 1:75). God has clearly shown us The Way He has



provided for us to *get* right and *keep* right with Him. He will not accept our customised counterfeit copies. **Get on track. Vote Leave AND Remain: leave** your sins... *ALL of them...* and **remain** in Christ—the Christ of Christmas! **What a glorious BREXMAS!** Let the truth in this issue "*soak-in,*" leading up to, during *and even after* Christmas. Act on it. **Follow the directions. Cooperate with God.** It will be the right way to enter New Year 2020...*and eternity.* ■

A Blessed & Happy Christmas To All Our Readers!

London Christian Standard ...and Provincial

"Lift up a standard for the people." Isaiah 62:10

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CHRISTMAS COOPERATION

by Gabriel L. Mancino



Special Christmas Double Issue!

I use the **fantasy clipart of Santa and his rebelling elf** to illustrate today's chaotic world. However, this article has **positive direction**, taken from the *real life* "Christmas story" with its sparkling, diamond-like facets! (*See 2 Pet 1:16!).

The Bible "Christmas story"-- *a true story*-- is "pregnant" with **direction**. The world *needs* direction! **But were the directions followed that were given in the Bible record of Christ's birth? Let's see!**

Of course we know that the first item of "pregnant" direction had to do with Jesus' mother, **Mary!** God

chose that **y o u n g girl** to give birth (*while still a virgin!*) to His long-promised Saviour for all the human race. **Mary willingly cooperated with God and followed the directions He gave to her.**

God *also* gave directions to **Joseph**, the God-fearing and hard-working man who was engaged to Mary. Independent of each other, Mary and Joseph had to overcome deep issues and obstacles to **follow the directions** God gave to them. Many people today face deep



THIS ISSUE HAS REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES of people who followed God's direction and found Christ—the Child and Son promised by God (Isa. 9: 6). That Child grew and **also cooperated with the Father's will to complete His mission** as our Saviour (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Jn. 8:29; Heb. 10: 5-10). **As they cooperated with God, so can we all...including YOU!**

issues and obstacles and can gain encouragement from the example of Mary and Joseph. We know the outcome of their cooperation with God. **They followed directions, cooperated with God, and Mary gave birth to the Saviour.**



I was once asked at Oxford Circus “When was Jesus born?” I replied: “April 1973!” The man was stunned and speechless, then asked: “Where did you get *that*?!” I said that *that* is when Jesus was born in ME! **The old Christmas song, O, Little Town of Bethlehem,** says:

**“O holy Child of Bethlehem
Descend on us, we pray.
Cast out our sin, and enter in;
Be born in us today!”**

Yes, Mary gave birth to Jesus,



physically, but the Lord Jesus can be born *also* in us today **if we will cooperate and follow His directions.**



Imagine travelling by camel over 2000 years ago from **Land’s End** in Cornwall to **John o’ Groats** in Scotland; and not on good roads nor in pleasant conditions. **Those non-Jewish “wise men”** travelled 700 to 1000 miles to see this newborn “*King of the Jews*” (Matt. 2:1,2).

God prompted their mission, yet they could have thought, “**What?! Are we seeing things? Can this really be right? But this will take us from all that we are familiar with!**” The blessed result of their united obedience is immeasurable. **They cooperated, followed God’s directions and found the Saviour.** They were “outsiders.” In fact, we are *all* “outsiders,” *including Jewish people*, if we are not right

the Coming Court, as well!

The Bible tells the comparative “ignorance” during Old Testament times. Yet, even *then*, God told His intent that **all people should hear the news** of His soul-saving Plan in Christ. The “Christmas” angels told the shepherds the same thing: **“to all people!”** (Lk. 2:10)... **and the shepherds started telling people!** Jesus commands all His followers: **“Go into all the world!”** (Matt. 28:18-20; Lk. 24:45-49). **They did!** (Acts 17:6). The shepherds and Jesus’ followers had a personal encounter with Christ before going to tell others (Lk. 24: 48, 49; Lk. 1:8). This paper always has on the front: **“and share with others!”**

Just before Acts 17:31, (see page 6), it says: “*these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day...*” - (Acts 17:30). In His own ways, God overlooked ignorance prior to **Christ’s first coming and death**, but now *demand*s repentance!

That “knee-bowing” scene will be in full display after the next big event in God’s saving of mankind: **the Second Coming of Christ!** The angel said to Christ’s followers as they saw Christ ascend to heaven: “*Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you*

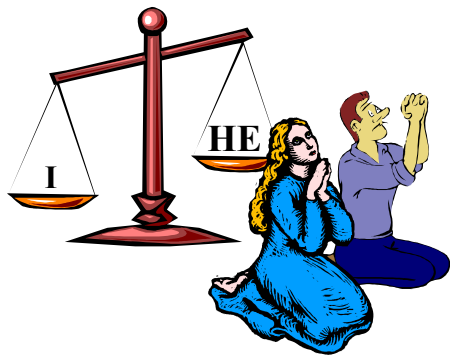
into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Make a note of that: **“This same Jesus!”** It was the Jesus promised throughout the Old Testament Who was **born in Bethlehem’s manger, as foretold**, and Who died for our sins, *as foretold*, and raised from the dead, *as foretold*. Jesus Christ gave the best explanation of the Old Testament ever! (See Lk. 24:25-27, 44-49).

God has never left Himself without witness of His existence (Rom. 1:20; Ps. 19:1; Acts 14:27; 17:27). He gave this evidence using nature. God also sent prophets to declare His truth. Yet in Jesus Christ, God supremely and perfectly showed *Himself* to us, *and also* how we are supposed to live (Heb. 1:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; 1 Jn. 2:6). Jesus made it possible for us to meet God’s demand by His death and resurrection, and by sending His Holy Spirit. God makes all provisions and **directions** available that we need. **Let’s cooperate and follow them...all the way “Home!” He is waiting. ■**



Join me at
The Salvation Army
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Sunday 10 a.m.

yet it applied in the twenty centuries that followed, and applies today: **“HE must increase. I must decrease!”**



John did not make his declaration during **Queen Victoria’s reign** nor the earlier century of **the Puritans**. But though his statement was not **“Victorian”** or **“Puritanical,”** yet John’s declaration is the only path to **Victory** and **Purity**. It applies to all people, whether they are religious or not. **John’s words are the greatest Christmas present anyone in the world could be given** for them to embrace and hold on to 365 days of the year, for the rest of their life!

No one on the human level in this country has the position of **the Queen of England**. She is neither an MP or at any other lower level. That is unthinkable. Many Prime Ministers, MPs and so on have come and gone. **She is still Queen.**

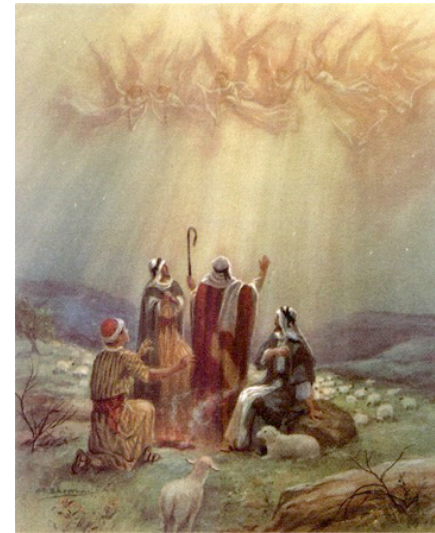
On an infinitely higher level, no one on earth or in heaven (except

God!) or anywhere else has the level of authority, power and identity as **the Christ of the Christmas Story**. No person, prophet, guru, leader or teacher, *religious or otherwise*, has credentials as Jesus Christ has. God said so. Jesus said so, Christ’s disciples, and even His enemies said so. (Note Heb. 1:1-6).

John’s **“He must increase. I must decrease”** is a signpost to forewarn and prepare us that **“EVERY knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God”** (Phil. 2: 5-11). The context of this Bible reference shows that the reason for Christ’s unparalleled position is *due entirely*, and *linked inseparably* to His death on the Cross for the sins of the world.

Yet, still connected to **the Christ of the Christmas Cradle**, another Bible passage tells us something more about **this coming, knee-bowing occasion** just mentioned. It says that God *“has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”* (Acts 17: 31). **The Christ of the Christmas Cradle** is also **the Christ of the Cross and Resurrection**. **The Christ of the Christmas Cradle** is **the Christ of**

with God...on *His* terms. Yet, Jesus came for all, that all may find Him.



Throughout London and the UK, many people work hard, are tired and have little time or money for “fun;” certainly not for “religion!” Yes, others waste time *and* money. **When God “turns the lights on,” things can change.** Those smelly shepherds out on the hills surrounding the **“Little Town of Bethlehem”** had a shocking and unexpected angelic **“light show” in the sky;** and this was **2000 years ago!** Forget modern technology in *this* spiritual arena! But, beware, some may yet try to fool us by imitating similar skyward displays. Let’s earnestly seek and follow “the original,” just as these shepherds did.

I’m sure those shepherds did

not abandon their sheep to the local wolves when they left the hill-sides in order to investigate **the unquestionably-clear and personally-given directions** they had just received. **God gives us directions today the same way: personally and clearly.** Yet, He does not expect or want us to be irresponsible in order to obey and follow His directions.

Like my in-laws’ cows on the dairy farm years ago in Michigan, USA, **the shepherds’ sheep likely had names.** Bible verses like the familiar 23rd Psalm show the care of the shepherd for his sheep. Jesus showed this same care, as seen in St. John 10. **But now, the Bethlehem shepherds left their sheep to find this angel-announced Baby.** That Baby became *“the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”* (Jn. 1:29, 36) by being *“the Good Shepherd that gives His life for the sheep”* (Jn. 10:11). Yes, *both!*

No doubt, the shepherds had affection for their sheep. Jesus gave us the story of **“The Lost Sheep”** (Lk. 15: 1-7). There, He told how the shepherd left his ninety-nine *safe* sheep in order to go and look for the one that was *lost*. He told of the rejoicing as the shepherd excitedly told his friends of the lost sheep that had been found.

But in the Christmas Story, we have shepherds that go to find a

Lamb that was there to find them! These shepherds poured their hearts' affection all over this new Baby, for the angels had told them who He is! And then, what? After they poured affection upon their new Find, they went all over the area telling others about it, just as the shepherd that had found the one lost sheep. This was a **holy kissing and telling!** And in *this* case, they told of *finding...and being found!* They were **so glad they cooperated with God-sent directions.**



A well-aged man named **Simeon**, had been waiting for God's promised Messiah-Saviour to come (Lk. 2:25). Simeon truly loved, worshipped and sought God continually. God had promised this old man that he would not die until he had seen the long-promised Messiah. Note these lessons from Simeon: **1)** If we *truly* seek God with all our heart, we will find Him (Jer. 29:13; Matt. 7:7; Lk. 11:9). But if people play games with God,

they will "seek" and *not* find, as Jesus said (Jn. 8: 21-24). **2)** God makes it clear that if we are to "get right" with Him, we must do so before we die. For *this*, the Bible *never* says "tomorrow," but *always* "today!" (2 Cor. 6:2; Heb.3:7,8,15).

Old Simeon did not waste his time when God spoke! That last message to him was like music to his ears! The Bible suggests that Simeon took off like a flash...as fast as his old bones could take him, I'm sure... and he got there in perfect time! **He had needed no extra help in knowing or going! His Informant as well as His mobility aid was The Holy Spirit of God**, who is mentioned again and again in Simeon's exciting part in the Christmas story!

The blessed Holy Spirit helps us to hear God's voice and to respond to it as we should. Packages often come as a bundle. In Jesus' birth, the "bundle" included the bundled Baby and the Spirit of God (Lk. 1:35). They are not obtained separately! We cannot get to God if we refuse



We meet at Christ Church on the corner of Brent Street and Heriot Road in Hendon (NW4) at 5:45 pm Sundays. Nearest Tube: Hendon Central.



this bundle, though many think they can. Simeon knew the truth, **cooperated and followed the directions—*instantly and constantly!***



There was **another outstanding old couple in the Christmas story.** I refer to **the parents of John the Baptist.** John's mother, Elisabeth, and Jesus' mother were related. This part of the story is in Lk. 1. **Mary cooperated with God's directions to visit Elisabeth.** Thank God she did! This God-inspired visit called for human cooperation to work with Him in order to save man from sin. **God calls likewise today, and it may require a visit!**

One point in this part of the story of Christ's birth is of supreme importance to anyone who truly wants to *find* God, *live for* God and finally make it through to heaven to be forever *with* God. The next paragraphs tell about this.

The Old Testament foretold the coming of John the Baptist and his uniquely important role in the plan

of God to provide salvation (a saving rescue) for anyone in the world that will come to Him for it. God provided for all, He calls to all and will save all, *if* they will only come to Him. He clearly tells us how we are to come to Him, and He doesn't change that pattern for anyone.

The Christmas story introduces John into this world for God's Master Plan. Never do we read of conflict between "cousins" Mary and Elisabeth, or between the two husbands, Joseph and Zacharias, though both pregnancies were by God's miraculous working. John's birth was by natural human means, though Elisabeth was well beyond capability to become pregnant. Jesus was *virgin-born* to Mary, without Joseph's or other human involvement. Neither couple tried to say that *their* miraculous pregnancy was better than the other, but Elisabeth certainly said that Mary's Child was greater than hers! (Lk. 1: 41- 45).

So, what is the supreme lesson that we should learn here? John stated it perfectly as God's prophet to present Christ to the world. John said of Jesus: "**HE must increase. I must decrease;**" (Jn. 3: 30), just like his mother said to Mary! **That Decisive Declaration** is to be applied by all people everywhere and in all situations...if they want "victory." John said this in about 26-30 A.D.,