



# Trumpet's Sound

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"Trumpet's Sound" is a bi-monthly publication of the Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church in Sydney, Australia.

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Cover photos: Sandy snowman.



**Prayer points**

At the close of the year, we thank the Lord for all His goodness

- that His Son came to die for the salvation of mankind
- for a blessed year in which the mission has been active in many churches, villages, and schools
- for the privilege He has given us to take the gospel to government schools
- for opening many doors to preach to the needy, to the poor in nursing homes and to refugees
- for your part in supporting us during the year financially and with your prayer

*All of us at ACM wish you all a Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year.*

*The costs of the publication are covered by the gifts of believers, who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

## **The Good Shepherd**

***"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" John 10:11***

Some years ago while in Armenia I wanted to see a real shepherd as I had some questions for him. Armenia has many shepherds caring for sheep, but my time there was running out and I had not seen one until we were driving in a particular village. I saw a shepherd at the top of the hill with his sheep. I asked the driver to stop and I started climbing the hill. The shepherd looked as if he wondered why this stranger was rushing up the hill! I greeted him, saying I had two questions for him. The Bible talks about the good shepherd and I wanted to know if he was a good shepherd and, if so, what makes him a good shepherd. After thinking for a while he said he was a good shepherd. Not all the sheep he had were his. Some belonged to his neighbours but he said that he cared for them and looked after them like his own. He thought that made him a good shepherd. I thanked him but asked him again because the Bible also says that the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He laughed out loud and said "No, not me. I will never do that for my sheep."

Only Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is the one who came to seek and find the lost. Praise Him. He is the one who gave His life that we may be saved. He demonstrated His love on the cross, and as we celebrate Christmas, we think of the great sacrifice He made for the salvation of sinners like us. Remember, this door of salvation is open wide for you too. Come to Jesus, come now.

HK



*"I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."*

*- Martin Luther*

## ***Past or Future?***

“I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 22:15-16)

**H**ow strange this must have sounded in the ears of the twelve as they reclined with the Lord Jesus to eat the Passover meal! They understood Passover to be a memorial to what God had done so many years before when He had wonderfully delivered the entire nation from their oppression and slavery in Egypt. Moses had commanded them never to forget that miraculous deliverance, and the Passover meal each year was the time that old and young together remembered that God had brought them out in order to bring them in to the exceedingly good land He had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Yet now the Lord Jesus was speaking of it as something to be fulfilled, something that pointed forward, not back into the distant past. They must have been thinking, “How can the Passover be fulfilled? What does it mean? Will there be another miraculous deliverance?”

They could not yet understand that the death of the Lord Jesus was going to accomplish something so much more wonderful, so much more enduring and so much more glorious than what they were remembering during Passover. Paul was later to write, “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7) and they would soon come to see that Jesus had died to deliver a people from sin and from the world to God. This great and eternal deliverance was the Passover fulfilled.

It is not insignificant that the Lord Jesus gave us the bread and the cup, often called the Lord's table, during the Passover meal. When we remember Him, we are remembering the One who died to deliver us from the world and to bring us into the “exceedingly good land” of life in the Spirit and fellowship with Him. We remember that He died for our sins – without His sacrifice there could be no salvation – but actually the Passover sacrifice was not a sin offering. It was a unique

sacrifice that separated Israel from Egypt and made possible their return to the land in which God had said He would dwell among them.

When at His table we share the one loaf, we remember that the Lord Jesus died for us to share His life (John 12:24). When we drink from the cup, we remember Him whose blood sealed an everlasting covenant with His people, promising always to be with them and one day to gather them to Himself forever.

At the Passover, the Jews remembered the exodus from Egypt. At the Lord's table, we remember our exodus from the world through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and we remember our calling to fellowship with Him, in Spirit and in truth.

Neil Buckman



## ***The Strange Sign***

**A**t a recent wedding the bridal party arrived at the church in a Lamborghini stretch limousine. And they arrived at the reception to fireworks and frenetic music and drumming. It was a grand entry. In contrast, although Jesus was announced by angels, His was a humble entry.

At Christmas we remember the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. This was announced when an angel told some shepherds that the Jewish Messiah had been born in Bethlehem. That's amazing because shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder. And Bethlehem was only a small town. But how would the shepherds find him? And how would they recognize him? So they were given a sign from God to help them.

### **What's a sign?**

The Greek word semeion means a "sign". In this context it's the



means by which a person is distinguished from someone else. For example, Judas Iscariot identified Jesus by kissing him (Matthew 26:48). And circumcision was a sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites (Romans 4:11). Miracles signified an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12). And Paul's handwriting showed that his letters were authentic (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

## **The sign**

They were given an unusual sign to identify the Messiah. Important people like royalty, or a President or Prime Minister are usually characterised by pomp, ceremony, security and publicity. That's the kind of sign we would expect for the Messiah.

But the angel said, "This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12 NIV). So the sign was a baby lying in a cattle feeding-trough! What a humble birth.

So the shepherds were to look for a baby lying in a cattle feeding-trough. Although there would have been other babies in Bethlehem, it would be unusual for one to be lying in a cattle feeding-trough. It was a strange sign.

## **A baby**

Jesus was born into the world just like all of us. It was a normal birth (following a supernatural conception). He was a tiny helpless baby. Nothing would have seemed supernatural. Why did God choose to enter the human race like this? So that He could provide for our salvation. Jesus had to be fully human so He could die for our sins (Hebrews 2:14-17). He had to become like us in order to save us.

## **A baby lying in a cattle feed trough**

The reason that baby Jesus was lying in a manger was "because there was no guest room available for them" (Luke 2:7). The last supper was held in the guest room of a house in Jerusalem (Mark 14:14; Luke 22:11). According to scholars, the most likely place for a manger in Bethlehem was in a one-roomed peasant house with two levels. People occupied the upper level and animals the lower one. The animals were housed overnight and fed from mangers built into

the floor of the upper terrace or mounted to the walls near the lower level. Presumably there was no cradle in the house, but a manger could perform the same function.

The shepherds were told that they would find the baby in a manger. Shepherds were near the bottom of the social ladder and in many homes they would feel their poverty and be ashamed of their low position in society. But in this case, they faced no humiliation because it was probably a simple peasant house like their own with mangers for the animals. That's why they said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about" (Luke 2:15). And they hurried off to find Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus.

What a strange way for a Messiah and Saviour to enter the world. Even the poorest child would not be found in a manger.

### **Lessons for us**

The Bible says that Jesus gave up His divine glory when He came to earth "by taking the very nature of a servant (slave), being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:7). And "that though He was rich (in heaven), yet for your sake He became poor (on earth)" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He did this (was born, lived, died and rose again) in order to die the death that we deserve. Through what Jesus has done, we "might become rich". The promise is not for physical earthly riches, but spiritual heavenly riches. It's forgiveness of our sins, reconciliation with God, and eternal life. What Jesus did was like an "incredible gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). As a gift, it has no benefit to us unless we accept it. That's why the Bible says, "might become rich", not "will become rich". Have you accepted God's gift? Not many Jews recognised that Jesus was the Messiah. Why not recognise Him as your Saviour?

Those who follow Jesus are to imitate His humility (Philippians 2:1-8). Our attitude is to be one of unity, mutual love, harmony, humility, sacrifice, and service, rather than being self-centred. Saul was recognised for being tall, Zacchaeus for being short and Jesus for being humble (1 Samuel 9:2; Luke 19:1-4). But what is our characteristic attitude?

George Hawke

## **Psalm 5**

**P**salm 5 is the meditation of a man whose trust is in the Lord. He meditates on some of God's attributes and asks for His judgment on the ungodly and protection for all who trust in Him.

David composed this psalm in the manner typical of Hebrew poetry. The initial thought is repeated in different words, often with that thought being developed in some way. So David asked the Lord to give ear to his words and to give ear to the voice of his cry. He wanted the Lord to consider his meditation for two reasons. The Lord is his King and his God; the Lord is the one to whom he prays. He announced that God would hear his voice in the morning; he would lay his requests for the day before Him. His words would be directed to the Lord and David would look expectantly to Him for the answer.

This is the response of the man who fully trusts the Lord. This is an attitude of constant trust in God. Each morning David lifted his voice to God in prayer, looking up to Him in expectation that He would direct his ways.

In verses 4 to 6 David describes the qualities of our God. He is not someone who takes delight in men's wicked practices; there is no evil with Him; in fact, evil cannot live in His presence. Therefore those who are arrogant in their sin cannot stand before Him. Although God loves all people, He abhors their bloodthirsty and deceitful ways. Those who practise iniquity can only expect that the Lord will punish them so that all their plans are defeated.

David paused to think of God's mercy or loving kindness. This word is sometimes translated as steadfast love and refers to an attitude which arises out of a mutual relationship. In a king it is seen in the protection he gives his subjects. With God it is His divine love flowing out in unmerited favour. David could enter God's house in the abundance of His loving kindness, bow before Him in reverence and seek His guidance in the face of many who opposed him.



Because of God's loving kindness, David could ask that he be led in righteousness. He had many enemies who would attack him and he needed protection. Therefore he asked the Lord to make his pathway plain.

David prayed that God will hold his enemies guilty and that their own wisdom would bring about the collapse of their schemes. Because of their rebellion against the Lord he longed that they be cast out in the multitude of their transgressions.

David described the workers of iniquity, men whose hearts are bent on destruction. No one is able to trust what they say; there is no faithfulness in their words. Sometimes they are ready to destroy everyone because their throats are open tombs. At other times they flatter people in order to achieve their purposes.

In the last two verses David returns to his prayer for those who trust in the Lord, asking that all who take refuge in the Lord will rejoice. If God defends them, they can indeed shout for joy. Because they love the name of the Lord, they will be joyful in Him. The righteous can take comfort because God blesses them and surrounds them with favour to protect them.

Don Stormer

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*Once a man was asked, "what did you gain by regularly praying to God? The man replied, "nothing... but let me tell you what I lost: Anger, ego, greed, depression, insecurity, and fear of death. "Sometimes, the answer to our prayer is not gaining but losing, which ultimately is the gain"*

- Unknown

*Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.*

- Unknown

## ***The Fruit of the Spirit is Love***

It is fitting that love should come at the head of this list of graces, because “the greatest of these is love”. In another great catalogue of Christian virtues (2 Peter 1), love comes last, for there it is the order of experience, and love is the crowning grace of all.

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul tells us of the pre-eminence of love. In the first three verses he shows that it is greater than eloquence, gift, knowledge, faith, and philanthropy. How little is this appreciated! How often we argue as to who is the most eloquent or most learned among us, but how seldom as to who is the most loving. Yet love is God's own character (1 John 4:8,16). God is never said to be eloquence, or knowledge, or gift, but God is said to be love. We are anxious, and rightly so, that Christians should be sound in faith. Are we equally anxious that they should be sound in love? God desires that we should be both (Titus 2:2).

The ordinary New Testament word for love is agape, and it is used over a hundred times. “The Greek word agape, now in the Revised Version everywhere translated love, describes not an emotion at all, but a deliberate disposition of the will. The Greek word eros, which describes the emotion or passion of love, never occurs at all.” We might add that the word agape is said never to occur in profane writers. It is the grand, characteristic word of Christianity.

In the great chapter already referred to (1 Corinthians 13), Paul gives us some of the characteristics of love. “Love is forbearing and kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love does not brag: is not conceited. She is not unmannerly, nor selfish, nor irritable, nor mindful of wrongs. She does not rejoice in injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth. She can overlook faults. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance” (4-7, Weymouth). There we have the fruit of the Spirit, and the measure of our spirituality is the measure in which the above picture is true in our lives.

Our Lord also taught us that love is the motive of obedience. The

Christian is not under a law that he obeys for fear of the consequences, but he is under a law which he delights to obey. In John 14:13 it is written, "If ye love Me ye shall keep My commandments" (RV) Again in verse 23, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words". If we find His commandments grievous, an analysis of our motives will generally reveal a love of self instead of a love of God.

Again, love is the inspiration of service. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 Paul commended the believers for their "labour of love". Today, we often cheapen that expression, and make it mean labour without remuneration, but when Paul used it he meant "a labour inspired by love". In Revelation 2 the Lord refers to the labour of the Church at Ephesus, but it was not a labour of love, for they had left their first love, and so their labour had lost its power. Paul himself knew the mighty dynamic of love. He could say, "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). That word constrain is used of a fever taking possession of a person (e.g. Luke 4:38). When a person is taken by fever every nerve and every sinew of his body is brought under its dominion. Even so, the love of Christ should captivate us in spirit, soul and body.

Love is also the mark of discipleship. Our Lord taught that in John 13:34 to 35 (also 15:12,17). "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love for our neighbour was enjoined as far back as in Leviticus 19:18, but now a new standard of love was raised, the standard of the Saviour's love, and that standard was to be our distinguishing badge. Just as in the Old Testament the children of Israel were known by the banner of their tribe, whether of Reuben, Simeon or Judah (Numbers 2:2), so the banner of the Christian is love. There was a day when even the heathen said, "How these Christians love one another!" God grant that it may be true of their successors in these dark days.

One final word. How can this love be manifested? We cannot work it up. We cannot force ourselves to love. Love is the Fruit of the Spirit. The missionary could not love degraded savages apart from the energy of the Spirit. Paul tells us in Romans 5:5 that "the love of

God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which was given unto us" (RV). We must believe that, and we must act upon it. We must love whether we feel like it or not. We must lose ourselves in the interests of others. "It is better not to live than not to love." It is the Spirit who enables us. "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22).

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Song of Songs, 8:7).

"Let all that ye do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14 RV).

Tom Carson

## ***Job (part 3)***

We have seen the extreme difficulties which Job faced.  
But what do we say for him?

### **Job's faith**

What can we say for Job? In this story there are certain truths that stand out about him. The first we have already mentioned: the high praise God gave about him. The second was his refusal to curse God. Even though he had lost so much in Satan's first attack, he did not charge God with wrongdoing. He still worshipped God.

After Satan's second attack, Job's wife was wavering in her trust in God. She advised Job to curse God and die. But Job maintained his integrity, telling his wife she was speaking like one of the foolish women. Later he would express his determination to trust God with the words "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain my own ways before him" (13:15).

During the time he was talking with his visitors, Job openly stated his beliefs. Some of these statements reveal an understanding far beyond what we would expect from an Old Testament saint. Consider

his belief in a resurrection, words which he wanted engraved in the rock forever:

But as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives.

In the end, he will stand upon the earth.

After my skin is destroyed,

then I will see God in my flesh,

whom I, even I, will see on my side.

My eyes will see, and not as a stranger. (19:25-27)

Job also knew that God was so much higher than he.

For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him,

that we should come together in judgment.

There is no umpire between us,

that might lay his hand on us both.

We who live this side of the cross have the knowledge that there is someone who is able to bridge the chasm between God and man. There is indeed a mediator between God and man.

However, Job was not God and therefore did not know what was happening to him. He believed that there was nothing in his life which could explain what had happened. We who read the story have the advantage of knowing what Job did not know – and could not know – in view of the test God was allowing him to experience.

Because Job had no way of knowing what was happening, he concluded that God was the one causing his troubles. He therefore expressed thoughts that he might not have uttered in happier circumstances. But we ask ourselves whether we would have been guilty of the same error in similar circumstances.

## **God Speaks**

We may be struggling between the claims and counter claims of Job and his visitors. But we leave them and listen to God. God answered Job out of the whirlwind with questions that made Job realise

the greatness and majesty of God on the one hand and his own insignificance on the other. God had one question after another which showed His knowledge of and control over the creation He had made while at the same time showing Job how little he knew. God concluded the first part of His message by asking Job if the one who contended with the Almighty would correct Him.

Job had only one answer. He was vile and the only thing he could do was cover his mouth with his hand and be silent. But God continued asking Job if he would condemn God in order to be justified. God also asked Job many things about His creation and how much control he had over them. If he were to control the universe, he would have to handle beasts like behemoth and leviathan. But these animals were far beyond any controlling ability that Job had.

Job could only admit that he had been speaking about things which he did not understand. Having seen the greatness of God, he could only abhor himself and repent in dust and ashes.

However, at this point we hear a message we were not expecting. Job was not condemned. It was Eliphaz and his friends who were condemned for not saying the right things about God as His servant Job had. They had to take an offering and go to Job so that he could offer it on their behalf – God would accept the sacrifice on their behalf if Job offered it!

The book ends with an account of the way Job was blessed. He possessed two times as many goods as he had owned before. And He was given a further seven sons and three daughters. Should we ask why he received twice as many possessions but the same number of children, the answer lies in the resurrection – a central feature of Job's faith. In the resurrection it was possible for him to see his first seven children again.

Let the comment made by James be our concluding point

*Behold, we call them blessed who endured. You have heard of the perseverance of Job, and have seen the Lord in the outcome, and how the Lord is full of compassion and mercy. James 5:11*



We thank God that He does not ask us to experience the testing that Job did. But what we do see is the Lord's compassion and mercy. Although we face trials and temptations, He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear.

Don Stormer

## ***Not my will Lord but yours***

Looking back over the years we see how the Lord has been leading us. We can see who has control, who steers us and gives us direction. As we move in 2024, ACM will be 26 years old. We walk into the unknown, but the Lord is gracious to us in many ways.

Our mission was to take the gospel to the poor, never knowing there would be 120,000 refugees in need of Christ. This has been a big load for all of us, especially for our co-workers in Armenia who are supplying needy people with clothing, food and shelter, and counselling. They are reaching out with the gospel, reaching many children who have been displaced. Most of the families have lost loved ones in the war.

The situation is hard, but the Lord is in control. He is touching many hearts, wiping many tears, and making Himself known to many. Your prayers are important for us. We need wisdom and the direction of the Holy Spirit. If you are led to join our mission team in September 2024, please contact us at [info@acmaust.org](mailto:info@acmaust.org)

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*Belivers from Artsakh*



*Children's ministry in Gyumri*