

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

Web Page
bedwellglobalministries.com

Email
PKBedwell@hotmail.com

CHRISTMAS – GOOD NEWS IN BAD TIMES

December Issue

Once again we are in the Advent season at a time when our society is in crisis. Crisis after crises reveals the serious condition in which the nation finds itself. Bad news has become the daily diet of T.V. news casts. The stock market plunging - the loss of thousands of jobs- the mortgage crisis- pension funds losing their value- companies floundering in the morass of indescribable debt due in many cases to the greed and corruption of management. The corruption and dishonesty of political leaders is fast eroding the confidence of the people. Add to all of this is the appalling decline of basic spiritual and moral values, which made this nation great. This leads us to question whether or not whether there is any hope for us. How long is

God going to be patient with is? What is it going to take in order to bring society to its senses? The question arises that in the midst of a lost and confused society, is there a thread of hope for us? Is there a glimmer of good news? Is good news a thing of the past?

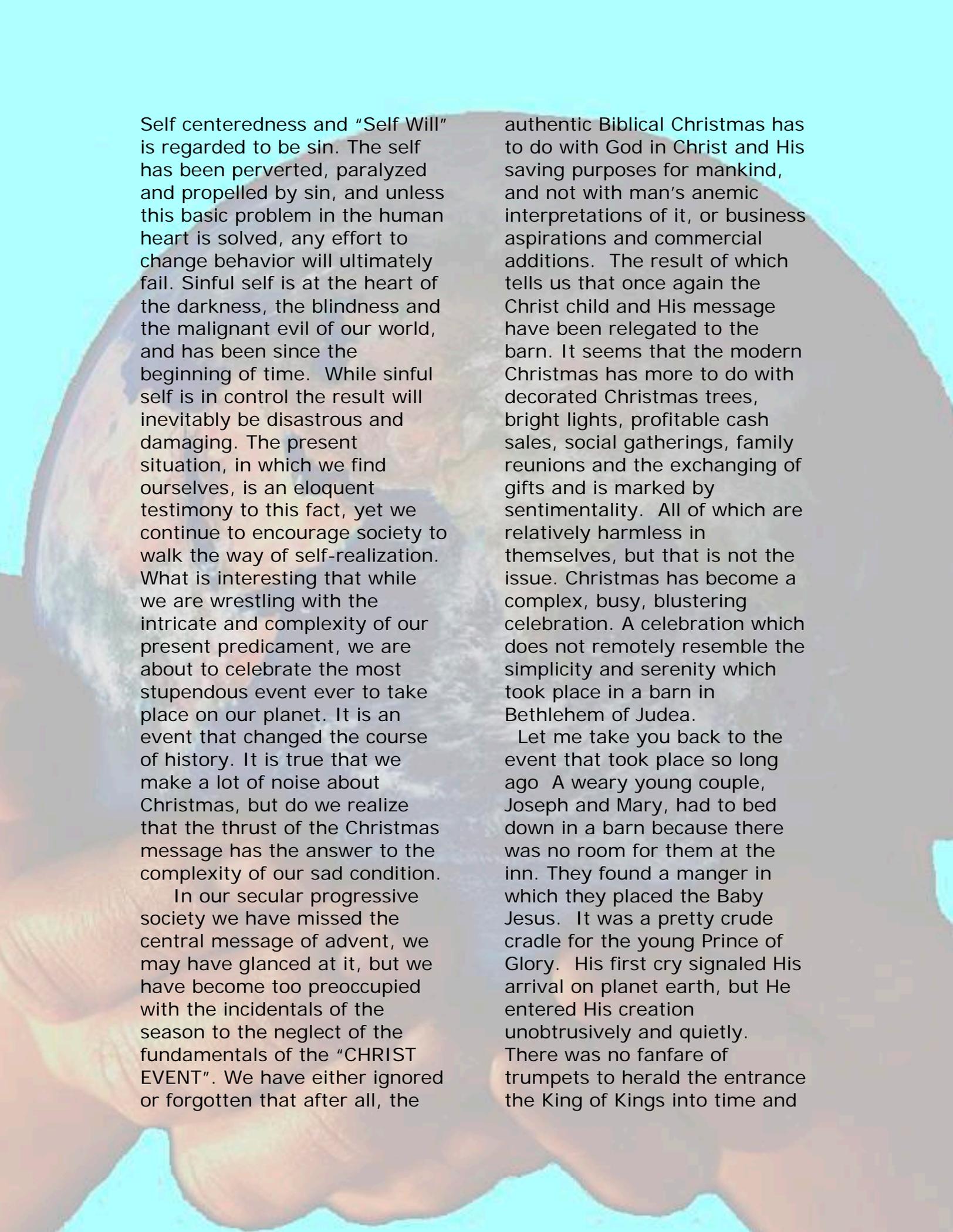
We must not forget that there those who are sincerely trying to resolve society's problems, but the question is, are these efforts sufficient and are they applying the right solutions? There are a multitude of suggested solutions being proposed to the dilemma in which we find ourselves. But the more we try, the worse the world seems to get. We are discovering to our dismay, that the answer does not lie in politics. The solution will not be found in the political arena. Some leading politicians cannot solve their own problems, for they have their personal scandals with which to deal, while others are bent on pursuing the politics of personal destruction with meanness and vindictiveness, many times at the expense of the tax payer. What occurs to me is how can the complex difficulties of our society be solved, while they are so self- absorbed, self centered and dominated by self-ambition? I wonder if we feel like chaplain who was asked to pray for the senate, and he took one look at the senate and prayed for the country.

Now I know that not all Politian's are built this way, for there are those who are sincerely trying to make a positive difference to our country. Thus far however, while some have been wrestling with societies difficulties, they still have not found the answer to them. It appears to me that they are trying to change men's behavior, which on the surface is plausible enough, but it is futile to deal with the fruit of the problem (behavior) while the root of the problem (Character) has been ignored. The nature of a person's behavior is determined by the nature of his character. This being true, it seems to me that the solution in man should go beyond his behavior. The man himself should be transformed, and this essential change will determine a changed behavior. The root of our problem lies within men and women. It is character that determines conduct. Jesus clearly said that a bad tree will produce bad fruit and a good tree will produce good fruit. **(Matthew 7:17-18)**. And again Jesus said "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good..... a tree is recognized by its fruit.....out of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." **(Matthew 12:33-35. Jesus is clearly teaching that it is the condition of**

character that determines the condition of his behavior.

We put the cart before the horse when we simply concentrate on a bringing about different behavior. In recent months we have heard a lot about pigs and lipstick. The lipstick "MAY??" enhance the appearance of the pig, but no matter how expensive it is, or how artistically applied to the pig, that pig is still a pig. That is the problem. The lip stick does not solve the problem, for it will take more than lipstick to change the nature of a pig.

We do not deny that there is truth in the proposition that man should change his behavior, and while the efforts to change his conduct may be noble and well intentioned, and while, this goal has merit, the solutions applied are flawed. What apparently has been ignored is that inherent problem in man is "THE SELF." The whole of life revolves around the self. Everything that is done is geared to advancing and enhancing the self. In our age the self is nurtured and fertilized to encourage its growth. Society urges its citizens to follow the pathway to self-realization and or self-actualization. A cursory glance at the condition of our society will reveal that this mind set is disastrous. One of the basic weaknesses of this philosophy is that it does not take into account, that the human self is seriously flawed.



Self centeredness and "Self Will" is regarded to be sin. The self has been perverted, paralyzed and propelled by sin, and unless this basic problem in the human heart is solved, any effort to change behavior will ultimately fail. Sinful self is at the heart of the darkness, the blindness and the malignant evil of our world, and has been since the beginning of time. While sinful self is in control the result will inevitably be disastrous and damaging. The present situation, in which we find ourselves, is an eloquent testimony to this fact, yet we continue to encourage society to walk the way of self-realization. What is interesting that while we are wrestling with the intricate and complexity of our present predicament, we are about to celebrate the most stupendous event ever to take place on our planet. It is an event that changed the course of history. It is true that we make a lot of noise about Christmas, but do we realize that the thrust of the Christmas message has the answer to the complexity of our sad condition.

In our secular progressive society we have missed the central message of advent, we may have glanced at it, but we have become too preoccupied with the incidentals of the season to the neglect of the fundamentals of the "CHRIST EVENT". We have either ignored or forgotten that after all, the

authentic Biblical Christmas has to do with God in Christ and His saving purposes for mankind, and not with man's anemic interpretations of it, or business aspirations and commercial additions. The result of which tells us that once again the Christ child and His message have been relegated to the barn. It seems that the modern Christmas has more to do with decorated Christmas trees, bright lights, profitable cash sales, social gatherings, family reunions and the exchanging of gifts and is marked by sentimentality. All of which are relatively harmless in themselves, but that is not the issue. Christmas has become a complex, busy, blustering celebration. A celebration which does not remotely resemble the simplicity and serenity which took place in a barn in Bethlehem of Judea.

Let me take you back to the event that took place so long ago. A weary young couple, Joseph and Mary, had to bed down in a barn because there was no room for them at the inn. They found a manger in which they placed the Baby Jesus. It was a pretty crude cradle for the young Prince of Glory. His first cry signaled His arrival on planet earth, but He entered His creation unobtrusively and quietly. There was no fanfare of trumpets to herald the entrance the King of Kings into time and

into history. Certainly there was no write up the Bethlehem Times, no cantatas in the synagogue proclaiming His miraculous birth. There was none of the fanfare we like so much. But something was astir that night. Something profound was taking place during those midnight hours. Events were unfolding in unusual ways. This was God's moment to enter this world in the form of a man. The scripture tells us that in the fullness of time, God sent His Son to the world born of a woman.

There is no doubt that as the events were unfolding, God was getting His message out into the world. Simple unknown shepherds in the fields, tending their sheep, heard the message of the angels that a Savior was born in the City of David. This baby's birth must have been extraordinary because at least three Kings from the east came and bowed in worship of Him, and what is more the gave Him gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. What is so amazing is that a star, a bright star, the brightest in the sky led them to the Christ Child. And while the world slept and society went about its business, tremendous things were taking place all about them. And world principalities and powers and the rulers of this dark world held their breathe, and shook in fear while the Son of God, the creator of the universe was gently laid in a

manger. His birth signaled their ultimate doom. The Book tells us that it was the birth of this extraordinary Child that gave rise to the angels singing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, and good will to all men." This birth stirred heaven and its choirs sang about it, and while the world in its darkness and sin slept on, GOD came to us.

John the Baptist's father, Zachariah, in his prophecy in Luke 1:68-79. describing the coming Christ, refers to Him as the "Rising Sun." The King James Version has it "The Dayspring from on High will come to us...." His words are important for he spoke of "the tender mercy of our God, by which the Rising Sun will come to us from heaven to shine." In verse 68, Zechariah says "He has come and redeemed His people." The key word here is "redemption" The word redeem literally means "to buy out." And "to release on receipt of a ransom." It has the idea of "cost or a price paid." When we say that Jesus died a redeeming death, we mean that He paid the price of our sin and procured deliverance for you and me, and for all who put their trust in Him. The scriptures make clear that we have been redeemed for a purpose. Jesus came to set us free from our sins. Luke 1:77 confirms that Jesus came "to give His people the knowledge

of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins." The purpose of this redemption is to "ENABLE us to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days." Herein lies the solution to the sinful self. The redemption of man touches his character. "The knowledge of salvation of their sins enables them to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days." The key word in these verses is the word "ENABLE." **The power of the Christ child enables man to live in righteousness and holiness.** This is why the message of Christmas gives hope to our world. There is no hope for the world if it is thought that sinful man can solve its problems. Up to this point man has made a mess of things. This is this so, because up to this point in history, man has chosen to ignore the Christ Child and his message. Maybe there are still those who wonder whether this message is really relevant to the present condition of our world? Does it have the answer to our present predicament? Can it solve the ills of our society? Is our present predicament too big for the Gospel of Christmas? We have already postulated that "**sinful self will**" is the inherent problem in man, and that it is the root of all of our problems. All that has happened and is happening can be traced

back to the promotion and exaltation of self. Corrupt men and women will do anything for the promotion of the self. When **SELF** dominates, it disregards those about it and will walk over principles and people to gain its own ends. While modern society promotes self realization and self-exaltation, the gospel proclaims the need for the crucifixion of sinful-self. The Christmas message informs us that man finds peace, joy fulfillment and fruitfulness only when he surrenders himself to the Sovereignty of Christ. The gospel demands that a man give up his rights to the Sovereign God, and it is in this full surrender that he discovers the solution to his problem of a perverted and sinful self. We have deserted the altar of Almighty God, to worship at the altar of self. The rapid increase of what we have seen in recent days in our society, is the inevitable fruit of a sinful grasping self-centeredness. It is clear that there has to be change at the root of the problem for society's behavior to change. The scriptures make clear that this change can place at the heart of man. If change is made here, then society will turn around to walk in the pathway of morality, goodness and righteousness. A voice from this country past once said.

America is not good because she is great; she is great because she is good." This is

an assessment from the past, and I wonder if that voice would make the same assessment today???

The good news of the Christmas message proclaims that there is power in the Christ Child to change character of men and women. Jesus brings forgiveness and redemption to us, it order to empower us to live in righteousness and holiness. This indeed is the expectation of the scriptures. The Apostle Paul wrote that Jesus died for all, "that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.....if anyone is in Christ, he is NEW creature, the old has gone, and the new has come. All of this is from God....." **"2 Corinthians 5:15-18." God does not patch up the life, he makes us new creatures.**

When we repent of and confess our sin to God, there will be a change of character that takes place, and it will produces the fruits of righteousness in our conduct. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians urges us to **"to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."** **Ephesians 4:24. This is not reformation but regeneration. Reformation of life depends upon the efforts of the individual, therefore the possibilities of success are limited.**

Furthermore reformation does not change the sinful-self. It is totally dependent on the efforts and the abilities of man. On this level man depends upon the old self to live righteously. It ends up as total failure. Reformation is the work of the human.

Regeneration, however, is totally the work of God. It is only God the Holy Spirit who can take a repentant heart and make him a new creature. It is God who creates a new heart. The message of this great gospel, tells us that we can be made new creatures in the power of God. There can be a change of character because; Jesus came as Babe in Bethlehem to "ENABLE US TO LIVE IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND IN HOLINESS."

The Rising Sun has come to us from heaven to rescue us from our enemies and to enables us to serve Him without fear in true holiness and righteousness. Furthermore Zechariah tells us that the "Rising Sun" or the "Spring of Day" comes from "heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:78-79. This is the Christmas message and it is good news in these bad times. It is told that "Among the Jews of Jerusalem, the dawn of the day of

A pair of hands, one larger and one smaller, are shown cupping a glowing globe of the Earth. The globe is the central focus, showing continents and oceans with a bright, ethereal light emanating from it. The hands are positioned at the bottom and sides, with fingers slightly curled as if gently holding the globe. The background is a deep, dark blue or black, which makes the glowing globe stand out prominently. The overall mood is one of care, protection, and hope.

Atonement was eagerly awaited. A watchman stood at the walls watching for the sunrise. When he saw the first rays of the sun he would shout. LIGHT! Light! I have seen the light." Let us tell men and women in this present darkness that we have seen the light, for what our society needs is to accept and allow the Christ Child - the Dayspring from on High - the dawn of hope and salvation to transform its character and conduct. Let us pray that we will see the light and walk in it!!