

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

E MAIL

PKBedwell@hotmail.com

WEB PAGE – Bedwellglobalministries.com

December 2013

***I WANT TO WISH YOU A VERY BLESSED CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR. MAY THE
CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS ALWAYS BE THE LORD OF
YOUR LIFE.***

CHRISTMAS – GOOD NEWS IN BADTIMES.

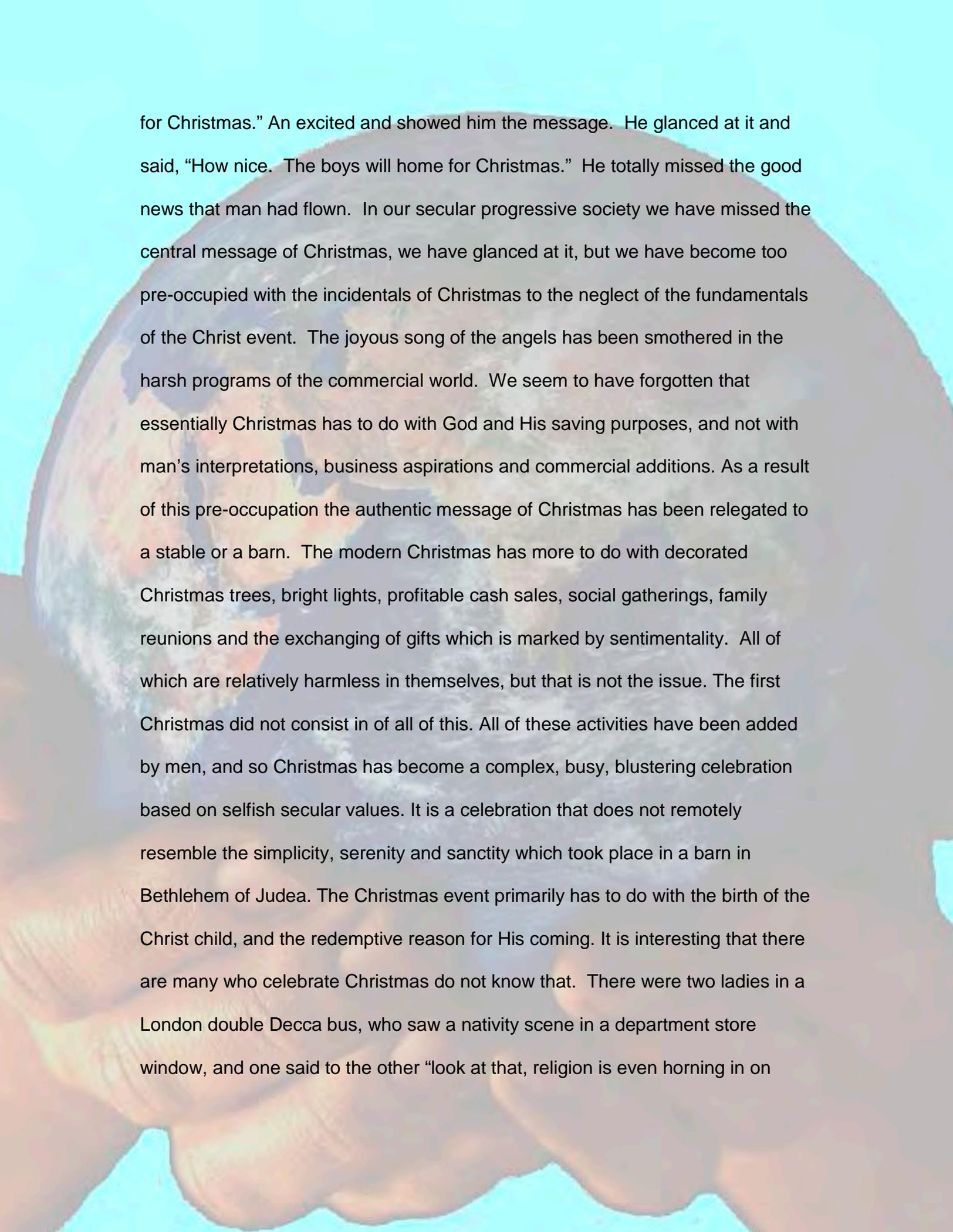
Scripture Reading – Luke 2:1-20.

Introduction

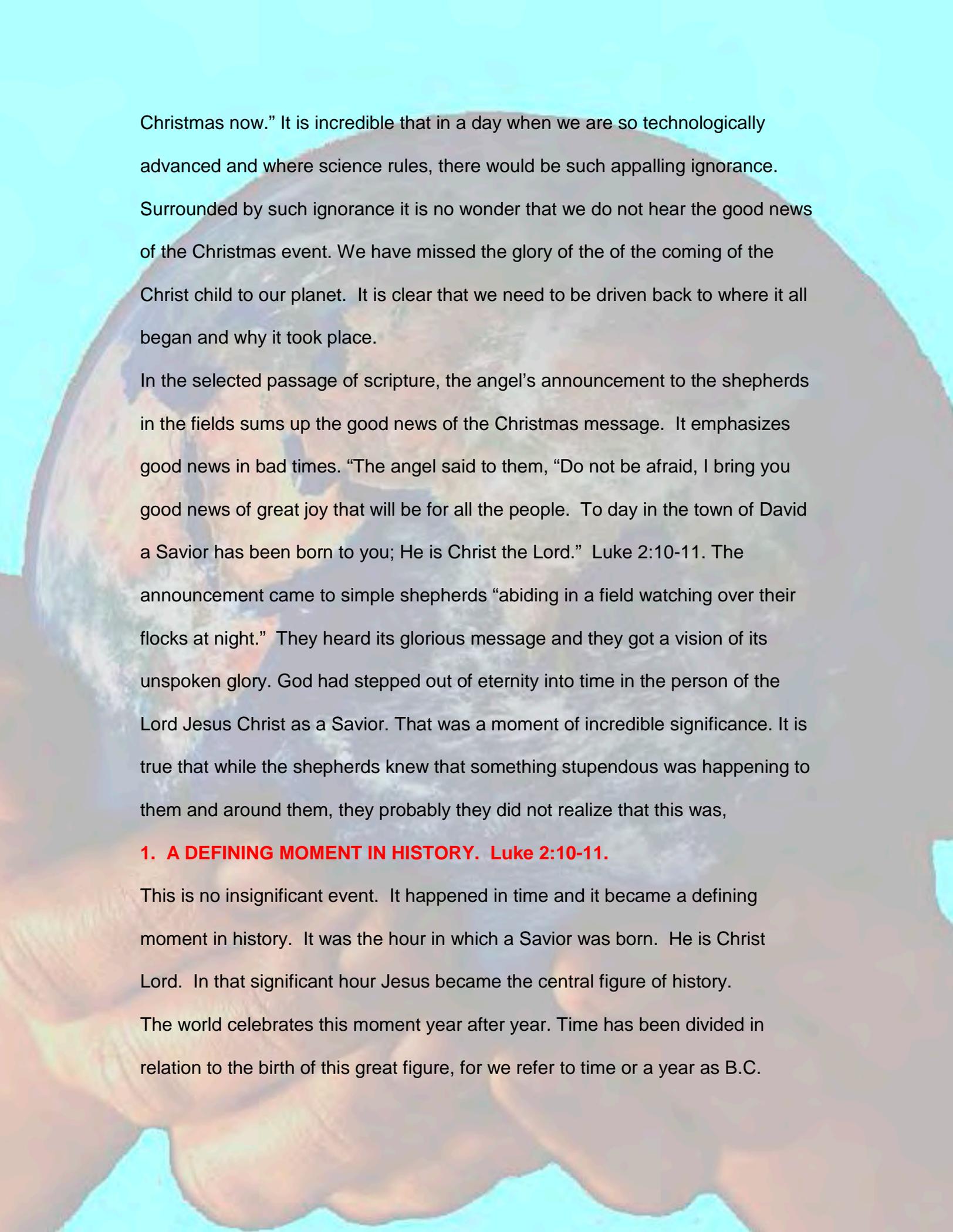
Christmas Good news in bad times is not simply a presumptuous statement. It should get our attention in these days of tumult and tension. Certainly the news which is broadcast every day and all day on some channels, does not have much good in it. This, in itself, is a commentary on the sad condition of our world. You begin to wonder if there will ever be good news to encourage our hearts. This is not to say that there are no good things to report in our world, certainly there are but somehow almost ninety per cent of the time the press seems to ignore it. The reason is clear. In the mindset of the modern world reporting sensational bad news is more profitable than broadcasting good news. We need to recognize that even in these bad times there is good news in which we can rejoice and take

courage.

The question arises that in the hopelessness of a lost and confused society is there a thread of hope for us? Is there a glimmer of good news? There are those who are trying to resolve society's problems. There are a multitude of suggested solutions to the world's dilemma, but the more we try the worse the world seems to get. Certainly the answer does not lie in the politics. The resolution will not be found in the political arena. Some leading politicians cannot solve their own problems for they have their own scandals with which to deal, while others are bent on pursuing the politics of personal destruction with meanness and vindictiveness. How on earth can they solve the complex difficulties of our world, while they are so self-absorbed, self-centered and self-ambitious? The story is told that one chaplain to the senate 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 politicians are built this way, for there are those who are sincerely trying to make a difference to our country. It is obvious thus far, that while some are wrestling with society's difficulties, they still have not found the answer to them. The beauty of the Christmas season is that it provides a time when we can stop and reflect on why we celebrate this season and discover once again what its message is. We must move beyond what many of the traditions say its message is, and not what modern man has declared it to be. In December 1903, after many attempts, the Wright brothers were successful in getting their "flying machine" off the ground. Thrilled, they telegraphed this message to their sister Katherine. We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home



for Christmas.” An excited and showed him the message. He glanced at it and said, “How nice. The boys will home for Christmas.” He totally missed the good news that man had flown. In our secular progressive society we have missed the central message of Christmas, we have glanced at it, but we have become too pre-occupied with the incidentals of Christmas to the neglect of the fundamentals of the Christ event. The joyous song of the angels has been smothered in the harsh programs of the commercial world. We seem to have forgotten that essentially Christmas has to do with God and His saving purposes, and not with man’s interpretations, business aspirations and commercial additions. As a result of this pre-occupation the authentic message of Christmas has been relegated to a stable or a barn. 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 which is marked by sentimentality. All of which are relatively harmless in themselves, but that is not the issue. The first Christmas did not consist in of all of this. All of these activities have been added by men, and so Christmas has become a complex, busy, blustering celebration based on selfish secular values. It is a celebration that does not remotely resemble the simplicity, serenity and sanctity which took place in a barn in Bethlehem of Judea. The Christmas event primarily has to do with the birth of the Christ child, and the redemptive reason for His coming. It is interesting that there are many who celebrate Christmas do not know that. There were two ladies in a London double Decca bus, who saw a nativity scene in a department store window, and one said to the other “look at that, religion is even horning in on



Christmas now.” It is incredible that in a day when we are so technologically advanced and where science rules, there would be such appalling ignorance. Surrounded by such ignorance it is no wonder that we do not hear the good news of the Christmas event. We have missed the glory of the of the coming of the Christ child to our planet. It is clear that we need to be driven back to where it all began and why it took place.

In the selected passage of scripture, the angel’s announcement to the shepherds in the fields sums up the good news of the Christmas message. It emphasizes good news in bad times. “The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. To day in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11. The announcement came to simple shepherds “abiding in a field watching over their flocks at night.” They heard its glorious message and they got a vision of its unspoken glory. God had stepped out of eternity into time in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as a Savior. That was a moment of incredible significance. It is true that while the shepherds knew that something stupendous was happening to them and around them, they probably they did not realize that this was,

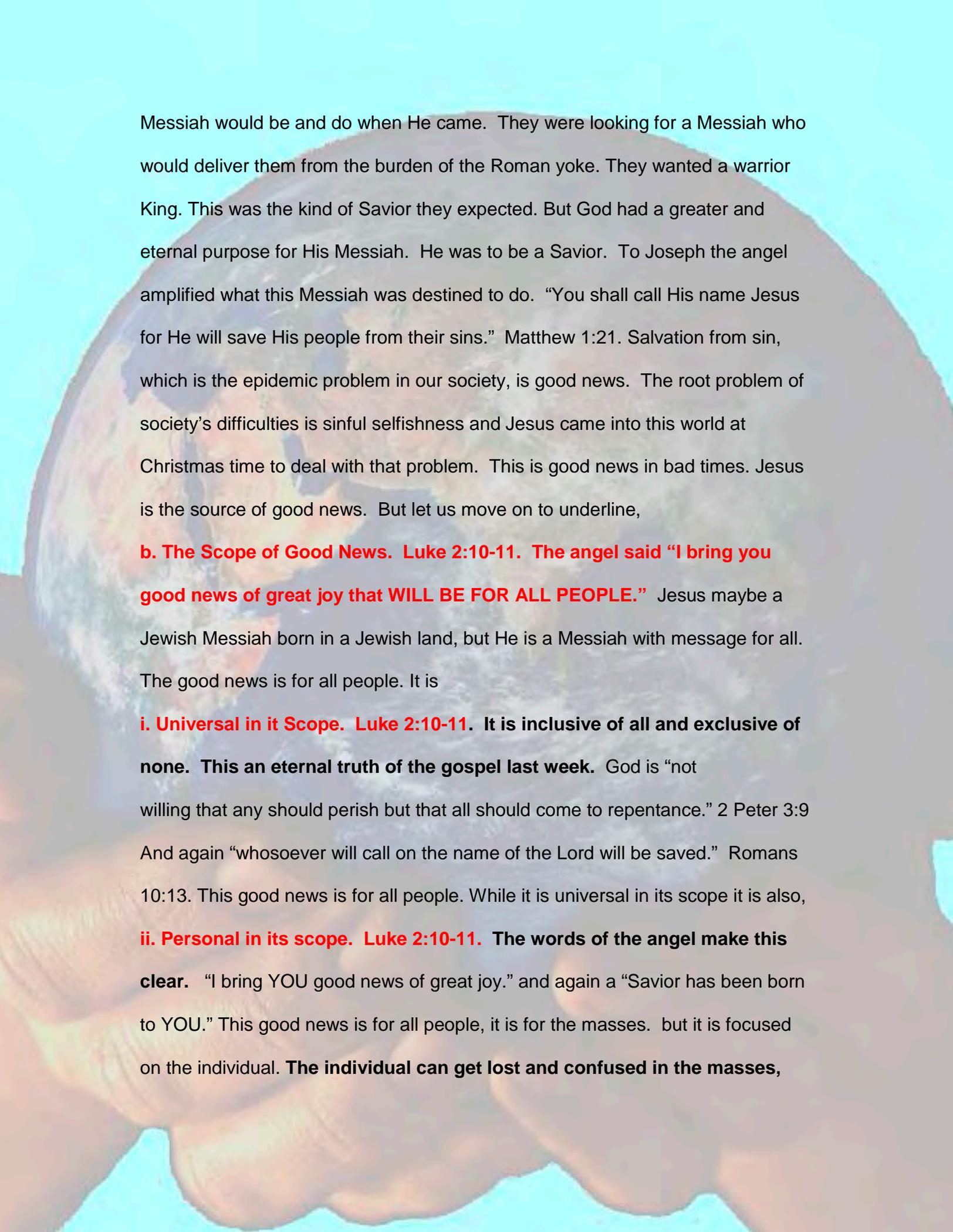
1. A DEFINING MOMENT IN HISTORY. Luke 2:10-11.

This is no insignificant event. It happened in time and it became a defining moment in history. It was the hour in which a Savior was born. He is Christ Lord. In that significant hour Jesus became the central figure of history.

The world celebrates this moment year after year. Time has been divided in relation to the birth of this great figure, for we refer to time or a year as B.C.

(Before Christ) or A.D. (after Christ). There is no figure in time and history who has impacted the world in this way. No one in the annals of time has been given this distinction. Now why is it so defining? Firstly because we must realize this baby Jesus is,

a. The Source of Good News. Luke 2:10-11. The angel said to the shepherds, “I bring you good news of great joy.....A Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” These words are clear on the truth that Jesus did come to this earth. “A Savior has been born to you.” There was a defining moment when He entered time. The scriptures say that, “In the fullness of time God sent forth His Son.” Galatians 4:4. His was not a birth by chance, but a birth by purpose. God sent forth His Son. Unto you is born a Savior! No one who understands history will deny that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. This is a historical fact. We accept it as a fact. It is possible, however, that the fact of His birth could have been stored in the vaults of history, or buried in the graveyard of time, or confined to the dusty scrolls of historical records, if it had not been for who He is. He is the Savior- Christ the Lord. His birth was no ordinary birth because He was no ordinary baby. This baby is God in the flesh. Those words “Christ the Lord” would fan a fire in the heart of Jew. Christ the Messiah. That was the hope of Israel. They were expecting Him, for God had promised him to His people. Through the darkness of the ages, the coming of the Messiah was the one burning lamp in the heart of Israel. The fact that they were under the domination of the Roman Empire intensified their longing for His arrival. Time and circumstances however, had influenced their idea of what the

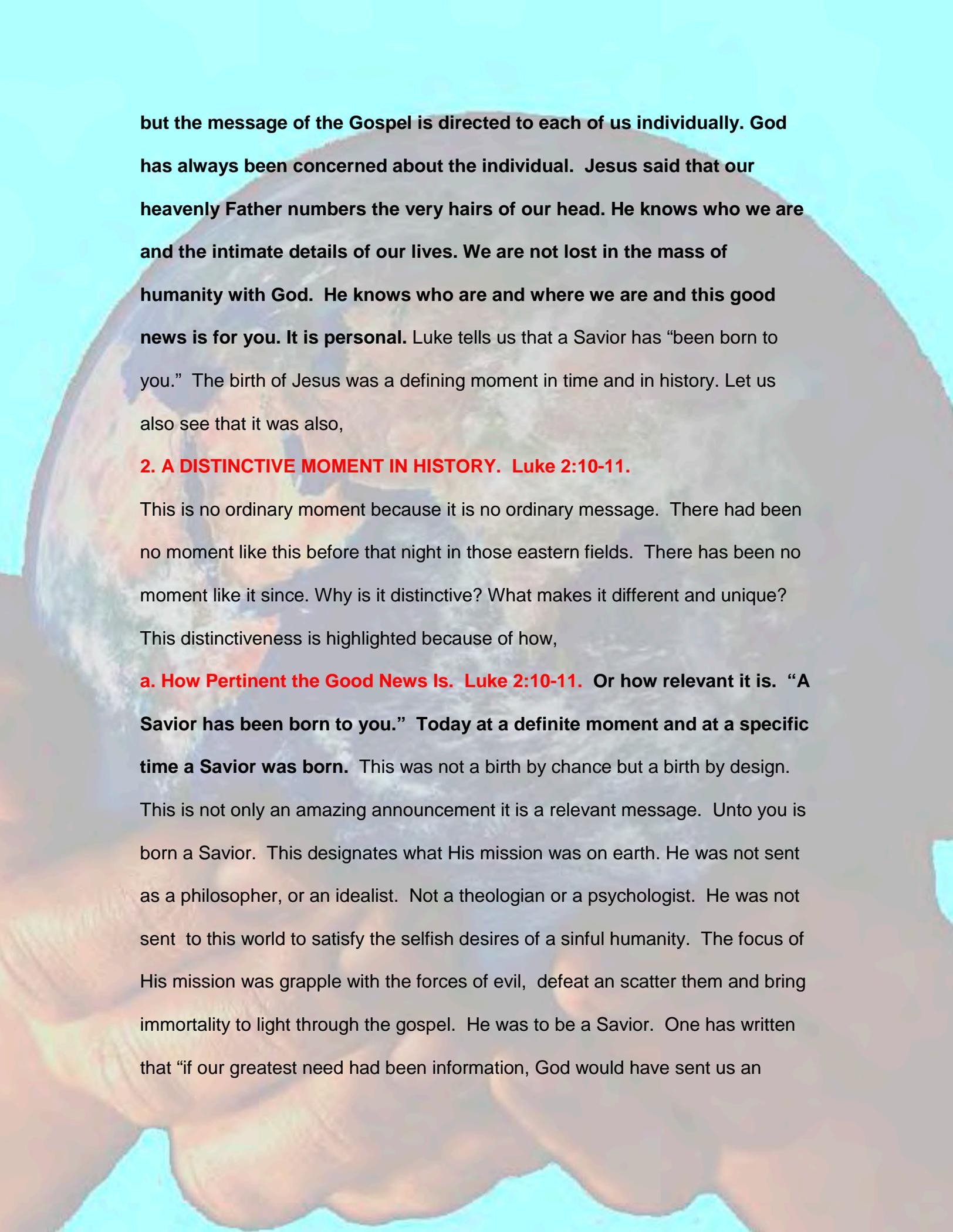


Messiah would be and do when He came. They were looking for a Messiah who would deliver them from the burden of the Roman yoke. They wanted a warrior King. This was the kind of Savior they expected. But God had a greater and eternal purpose for His Messiah. He was to be a Savior. To Joseph the angel amplified what this Messiah was destined to do. "You shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. Salvation from sin, which is the epidemic problem in our society, is good news. The root problem of society's difficulties is sinful selfishness and Jesus came into this world at Christmas time to deal with that problem. This is good news in bad times. Jesus is the source of good news. But let us move on to underline,

b. The Scope of Good News. Luke 2:10-11. The angel said "I bring you good news of great joy that WILL BE FOR ALL PEOPLE." Jesus maybe a Jewish Messiah born in a Jewish land, but He is a Messiah with message for all. The good news is for all people. It is

i. Universal in it Scope. Luke 2:10-11. It is inclusive of all and exclusive of none. This an eternal truth of the gospel last week. God is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9 And again "whosoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13. This good news is for all people. While it is universal in its scope it is also,

ii. Personal in its scope. Luke 2:10-11. The words of the angel make this clear. "I bring YOU good news of great joy." and again a "Savior has been born to YOU." This good news is for all people, it is for the masses. but it is focused on the individual. **The individual can get lost and confused in the masses,**



but the message of the Gospel is directed to each of us individually. God has always been concerned about the individual. Jesus said that our heavenly Father numbers the very hairs of our head. He knows who we are and the intimate details of our lives. We are not lost in the mass of humanity with God. He knows who are and where we are and this good news is for you. It is personal. Luke tells us that a Savior has “been born to you.” The birth of Jesus was a defining moment in time and in history. Let us also see that it was also,

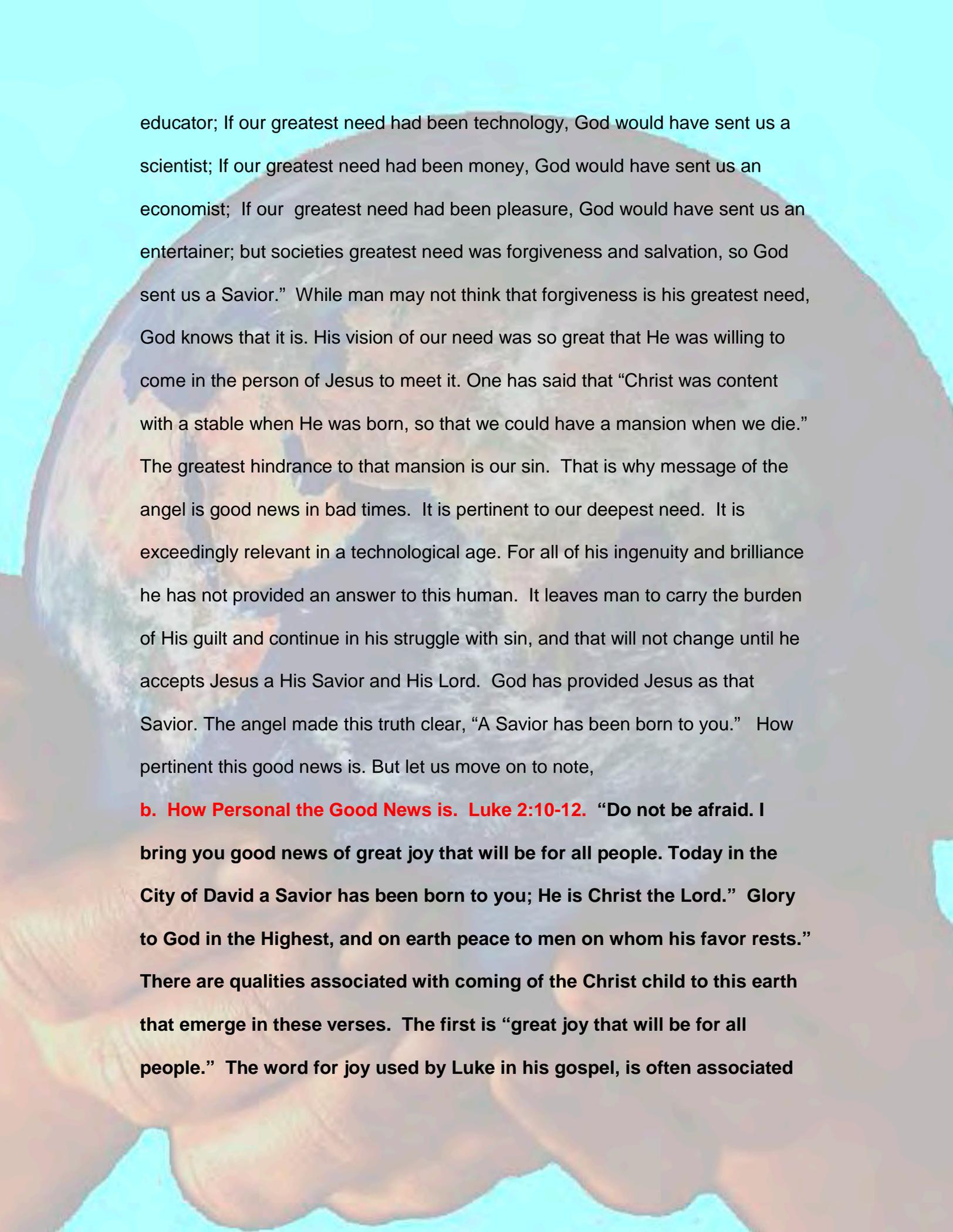
2. A DISTINCTIVE MOMENT IN HISTORY. Luke 2:10-11.

This is no ordinary moment because it is no ordinary message. There had been no moment like this before that night in those eastern fields. There has been no moment like it since. Why is it distinctive? What makes it different and unique?

This distinctiveness is highlighted because of how,

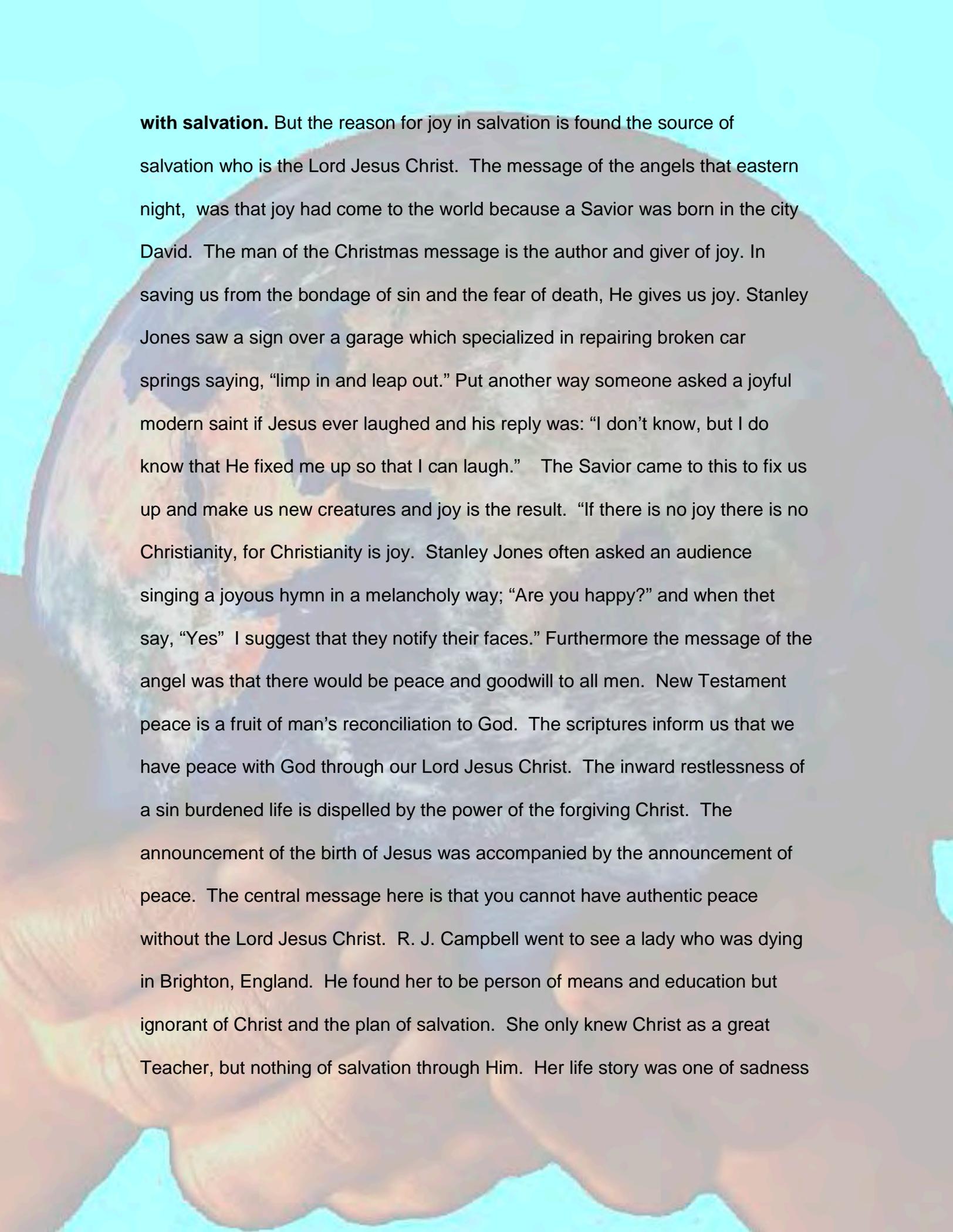
a. How Pertinent the Good News Is. Luke 2:10-11. Or how relevant it is. “A Savior has been born to you.” Today at a definite moment and at a specific time a Savior was born. This was not a birth by chance but a birth by design.

This is not only an amazing announcement it is a relevant message. Unto you is born a Savior. This designates what His mission was on earth. He was not sent as a philosopher, or an idealist. Not a theologian or a psychologist. He was not sent to this world to satisfy the selfish desires of a sinful humanity. The focus of His mission was grapple with the forces of evil, defeat an scatter them and bring immortality to light through the gospel. He was to be a Savior. One has written that “if our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an

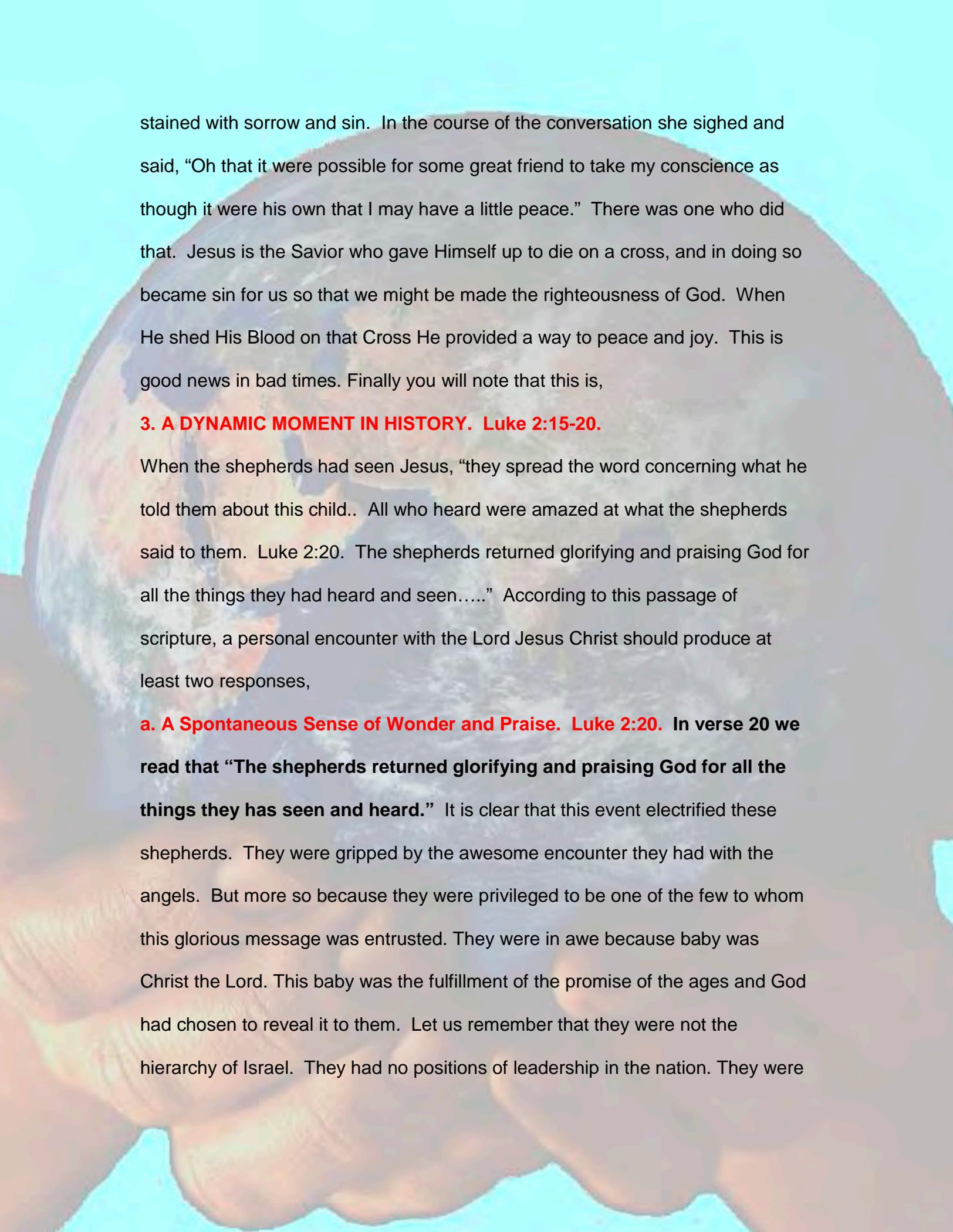


educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; but societies greatest need was forgiveness and salvation, so God sent us a Savior.” While man may not think that forgiveness is his greatest need, God knows that it is. His vision of our need was so great that He was willing to come in the person of Jesus to meet it. One has said that “Christ was content with a stable when He was born, so that we could have a mansion when we die.” The greatest hindrance to that mansion is our sin. That is why message of the angel is good news in bad times. It is pertinent to our deepest need. It is exceedingly relevant in a technological age. For all of his ingenuity and brilliance he has not provided an answer to this human. It leaves man to carry the burden of His guilt and continue in his struggle with sin, and that will not change until he accepts Jesus a His Savior and His Lord. God has provided Jesus as that Savior. The angel made this truth clear, “A Savior has been born to you.” How pertinent this good news is. But let us move on to note,

b. How Personal the Good News is. Luke 2:10-12. “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the City of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.” Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.” There are qualities associated with coming of the Christ child to this earth that emerge in these verses. The first is “great joy that will be for all people.” The word for joy used by Luke in his gospel, is often associated



with salvation. But the reason for joy in salvation is found the source of salvation who is the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of the angels that eastern night, was that joy had come to the world because a Savior was born in the city David. The man of the Christmas message is the author and giver of joy. In saving us from the bondage of sin and the fear of death, He gives us joy. Stanley Jones saw a sign over a garage which specialized in repairing broken car springs saying, "limp in and leap out." Put another way someone asked a joyful modern saint if Jesus ever laughed and his reply was: "I don't know, but I do know that He fixed me up so that I can laugh." The Savior came to this to fix us up and make us new creatures and joy is the result. "If there is no joy there is no Christianity, for Christianity is joy. Stanley Jones often asked an audience singing a joyous hymn in a melancholy way; "Are you happy?" and when they say, "Yes" I suggest that they notify their faces." Furthermore the message of the angel was that there would be peace and goodwill to all men. New Testament peace is a fruit of man's reconciliation to God. The scriptures inform us that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The inward restlessness of a sin burdened life is dispelled by the power of the forgiving Christ. The announcement of the birth of Jesus was accompanied by the announcement of peace. The central message here is that you cannot have authentic peace without the Lord Jesus Christ. R. J. Campbell went to see a lady who was dying in Brighton, England. He found her to be person of means and education but ignorant of Christ and the plan of salvation. She only knew Christ as a great Teacher, but nothing of salvation through Him. Her life story was one of sadness

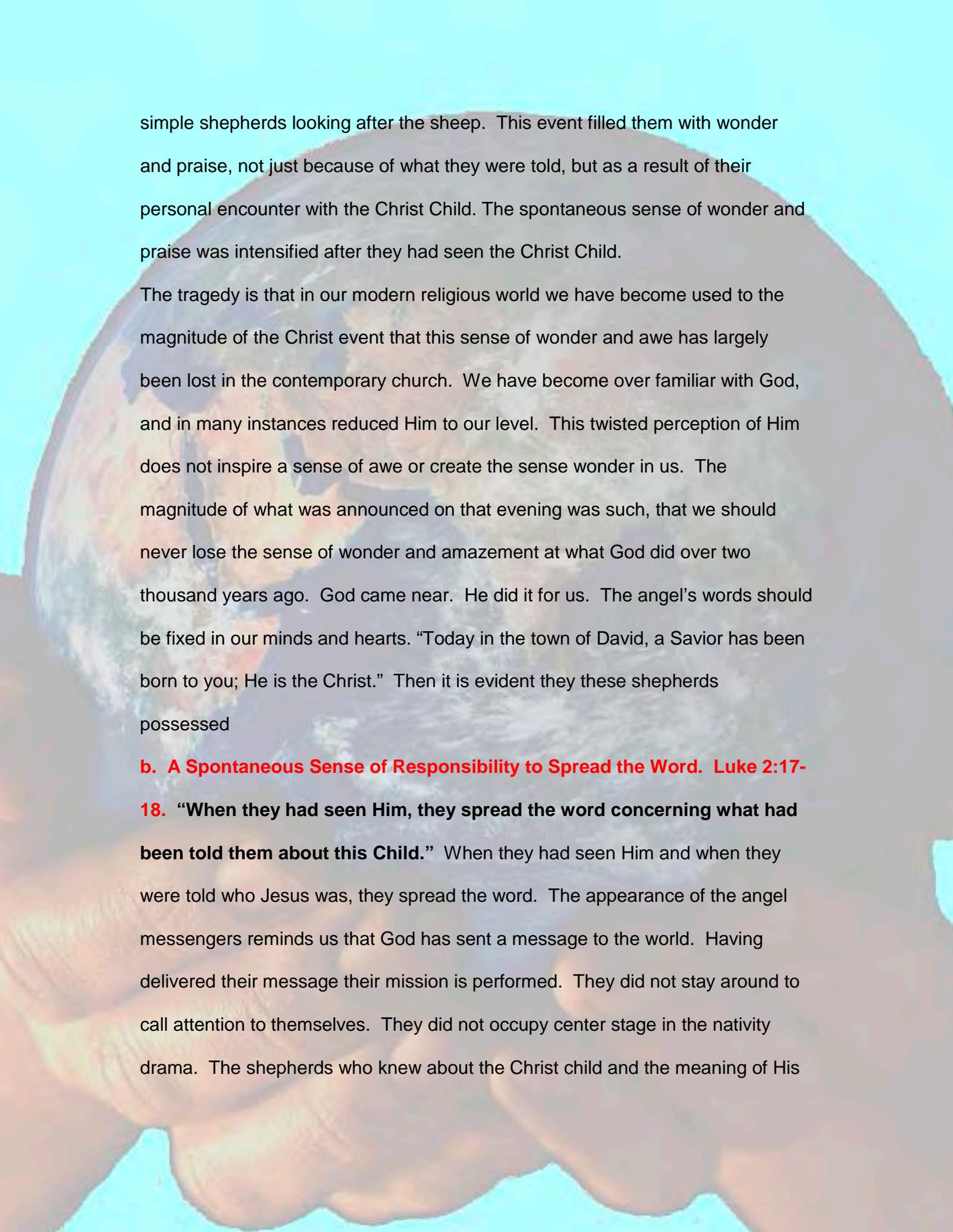


stained with sorrow and sin. In the course of the conversation she sighed and said, "Oh that it were possible for some great friend to take my conscience as though it were his own that I may have a little peace." There was one who did that. Jesus is the Savior who gave Himself up to die on a cross, and in doing so became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God. When He shed His Blood on that Cross He provided a way to peace and joy. This is good news in bad times. Finally you will note that this is,

3. A DYNAMIC MOMENT IN HISTORY. Luke 2:15-20.

When the shepherds had seen Jesus, "they spread the word concerning what he told them about this child.. All who heard were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Luke 2:20. The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen....." According to this passage of scripture, a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ should produce at least two responses,

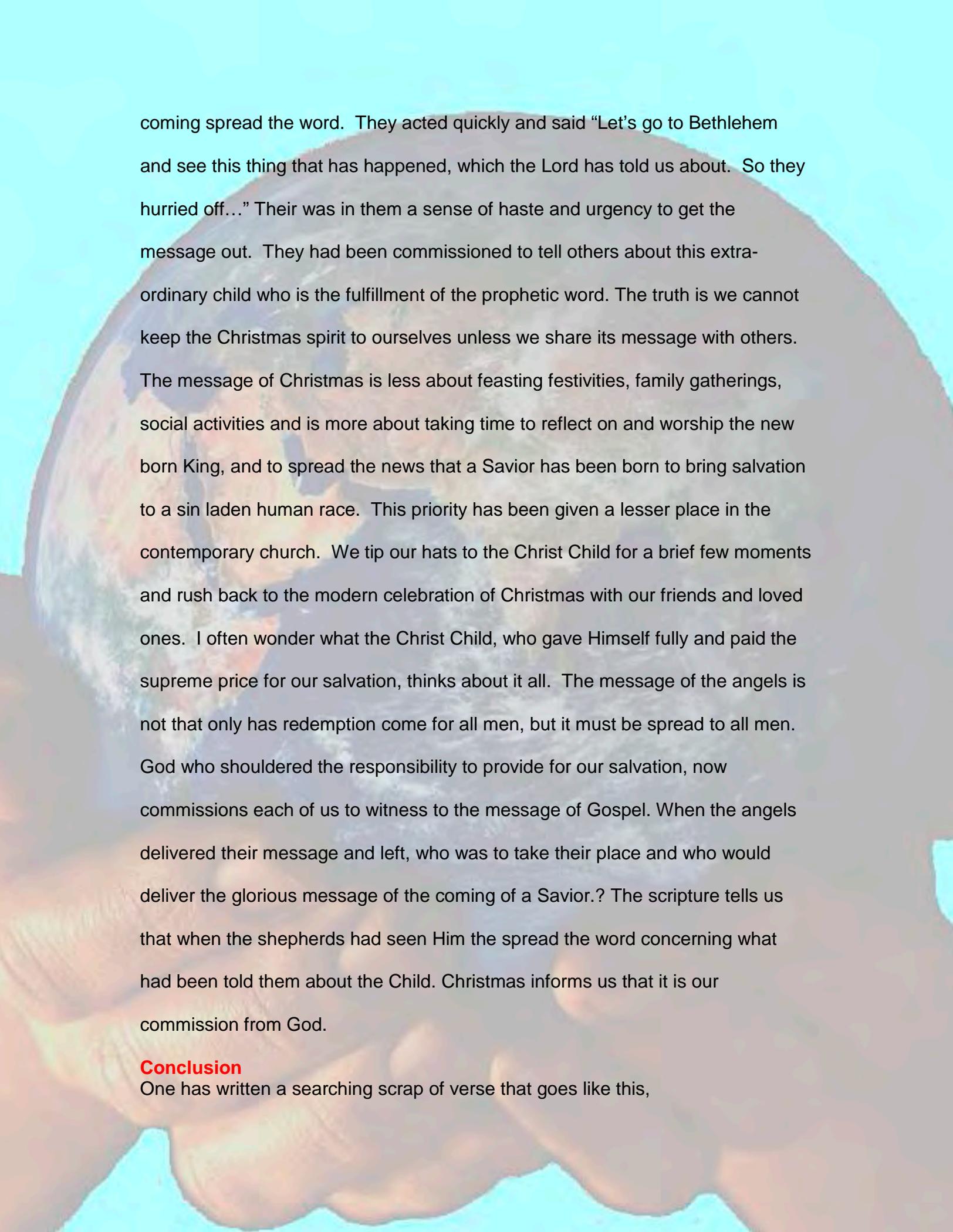
a. A Spontaneous Sense of Wonder and Praise. Luke 2:20. In verse 20 we read that "The shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they has seen and heard." It is clear that this event electrified these shepherds. They were gripped by the awesome encounter they had with the angels. But more so because they were privileged to be one of the few to whom this glorious message was entrusted. They were in awe because baby was Christ the Lord. This baby was the fulfillment of the promise of the ages and God had chosen to reveal it to them. Let us remember that they were not the hierarchy of Israel. They had no positions of leadership in the nation. They were



simple shepherds looking after the sheep. This event filled them with wonder and praise, not just because of what they were told, but as a result of their personal encounter with the Christ Child. The spontaneous sense of wonder and praise was intensified after they had seen the Christ Child.

The tragedy is that in our modern religious world we have become used to the magnitude of the Christ event that this sense of wonder and awe has largely been lost in the contemporary church. We have become over familiar with God, and in many instances reduced Him to our level. This twisted perception of Him does not inspire a sense of awe or create the sense wonder in us. The magnitude of what was announced on that evening was such, that we should never lose the sense of wonder and amazement at what God did over two thousand years ago. God came near. He did it for us. The angel's words should be fixed in our minds and hearts. "Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you; He is the Christ." Then it is evident they these shepherds possessed

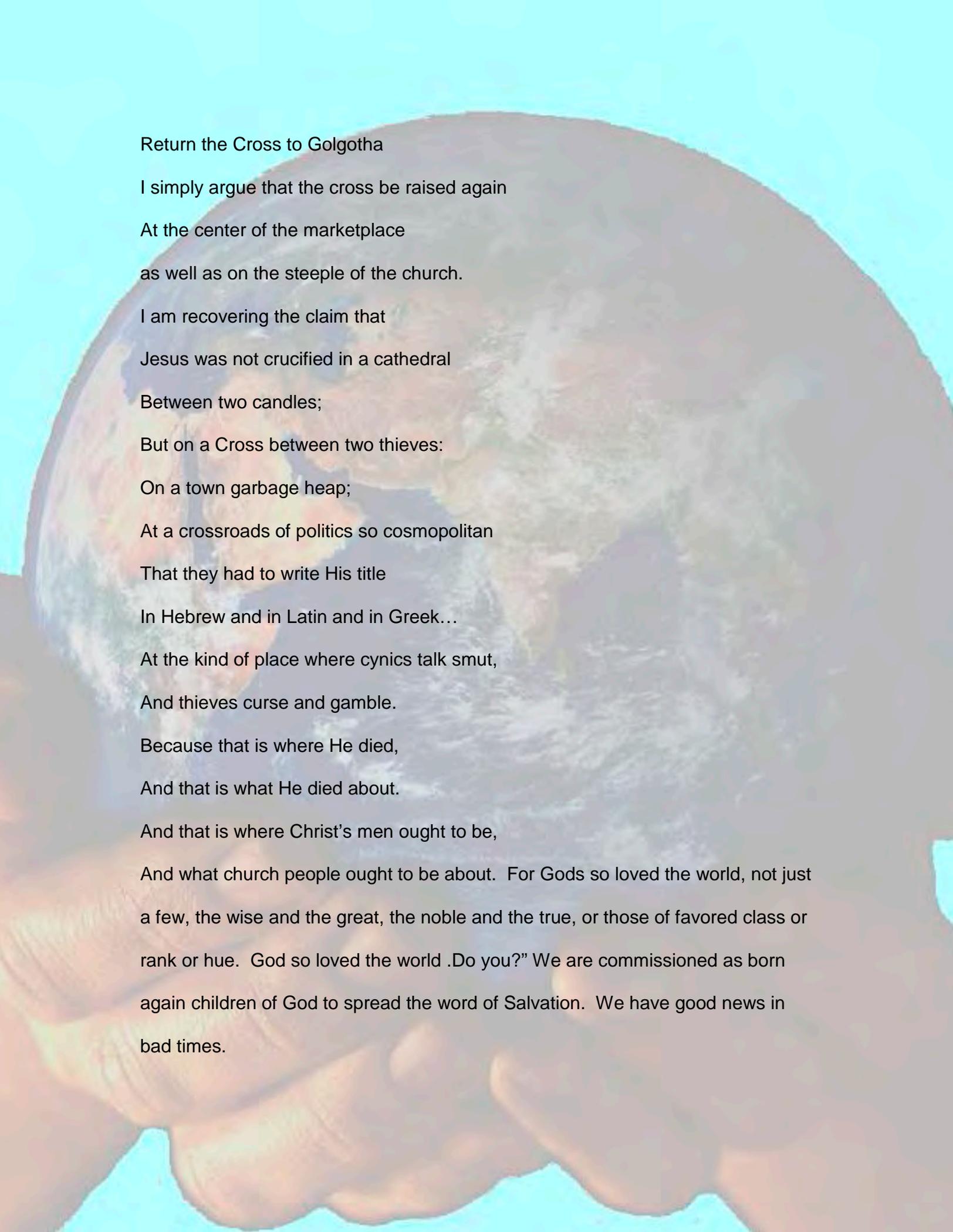
b. A Spontaneous Sense of Responsibility to Spread the Word. Luke 2:17-18. "When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this Child." When they had seen Him and when they were told who Jesus was, they spread the word. The appearance of the angel messengers reminds us that God has sent a message to the world. Having delivered their message their mission is performed. They did not stay around to call attention to themselves. They did not occupy center stage in the nativity drama. The shepherds who knew about the Christ child and the meaning of His



coming spread the word. They acted quickly and said “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off...” Their was in them a sense of haste and urgency to get the message out. They had been commissioned to tell others about this extraordinary child who is the fulfillment of the prophetic word. The truth is we cannot keep the Christmas spirit to ourselves unless we share its message with others. The message of Christmas is less about feasting festivities, family gatherings, social activities and is more about taking time to reflect on and worship the new born King, and to spread the news that a Savior has been born to bring salvation to a sin laden human race. This priority has been given a lesser place in the contemporary church. We tip our hats to the Christ Child for a brief few moments and rush back to the modern celebration of Christmas with our friends and loved ones. I often wonder what the Christ Child, who gave Himself fully and paid the supreme price for our salvation, thinks about it all. The message of the angels is not that only has redemption come for all men, but it must be spread to all men. God who shouldered the responsibility to provide for our salvation, now commissions each of us to witness to the message of Gospel. When the angels delivered their message and left, who was to take their place and who would deliver the glorious message of the coming of a Savior.? The scripture tells us that when the shepherds had seen Him the spread the word concerning what had been told them about the Child. Christmas informs us that it is our commission from God.

Conclusion

One has written a searching scrap of verse that goes like this,

A background image showing a hand holding a globe of the Earth. The hand is positioned at the bottom, with fingers wrapped around the globe. The globe shows the continents of North and South America. The overall image has a soft, slightly faded appearance.

Return the Cross to Golgotha

I simply argue that the cross be raised again

At the center of the marketplace

as well as on the steeple of the church.

I am recovering the claim that

Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral

Between two candles;

But on a Cross between two thieves:

On a town garbage heap;

At a crossroads of politics so cosmopolitan

That they had to write His title

In Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek...

At the kind of place where cynics talk smut,

And thieves curse and gamble.

Because that is where He died,

And that is what He died about.

And that is where Christ's men ought to be,

And what church people ought to be about. For Gods so loved the world, not just

a few, the wise and the great, the noble and the true, or those of favored class or

rank or hue. God so loved the world .Do you?" We are commissioned as born

again children of God to spread the word of Salvation. We have good news in

bad times.