

# Insight Into



November / December 2023

*“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” (Micah 5:2).*

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# Insight Into

## General Information

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Rev. P. van Ruitenburg, *President*

Rev. H. Hofman, *Vice-President*

Rev. H. de Leeuw, *Editorial Committee Member*

Elder K. den Bok, *Editorial Committee Member*

Mr. J. Timmer, *Administrator*

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The address of this magazine is that of the administrator of the Editorial Committee:

Mr. James Timmer, *Administrator*  
12228 Southgate  
Plainwell, MI  
U.S.A. 49080  
Jim@westcoastplants.com

Authors are requested to send their articles to:

Rev. P. van Ruitenburg  
8920-3 Broadway St.  
Chilliwack, B.C. Canada V2P 5W1

If possible, send your contribution by e-mail:  
ppvanruit@gmail.com

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For subscriptions, payment, address changes, or an e-mail copy, please contact:

Mrs. Marian Lagemaat      nrcinsightinto@gmail.com  
8886 Upper Prairie Road      604-794-5887 PST  
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 6H4 Canada

Mailing manager: Mrs. Lena Sterkenburg

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# MEDITATION

## Christmas

*“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”* (Luke 2:11).

Rev. E. Hakvoort

Suggested reading: Luke 2:1-11

Christmas! Today this name is attached to many things, from Christmas trees to Christmas presents. Yet, these things actually don't have anything to do with each other. Really, it is nothing but a belittling of what took place on the first Christmas night. God had sent His Son into the world. He was born out of the womb of the Virgin Mary. The angels could proclaim this message to the fearful shepherds. The Saviour had been born! He was the one who would save men from their greatest misery, which was sin, and bring them to the greatest good, which is the restored communion with God. Yet, for Him there was no place in the inn.

By nature, there is no place for Him in our heart either. Yet, the Lord had made room in the hearts of the shepherds for the Child in the manger. That is why their hearts longed for His coming. During those dark times, the light of Christmas broke through by way of the Saviour's birth. Have you already been taught to long for His coming? Then you must first have learned of the darkness of sin, the darkness of living outside of God. But it would also be unbearable for it to remain this way, and an Advent longing had to be born in your heart, a longing for Him who can only give light. Though we do not seek it of ourselves, it still remains His desire to break through with this light in a surprising manner. *“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light”* (Isaiah 9:2), the light of God's friendly countenance in Christ. Is this something that you understand? Only then will you be able to celebrate Christmas in truth.

Taken from *Beacon: Daily Meditations for Young People*

# A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION ON A VERY SPECIAL DAY

*“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).*

Rev. G. M. de Leeuw

Dear reader, younger or older. From the time of Advent until the time of Pentecost is about a half year. During those months we hear in our churches, since the time of Advent, the glad tidings of Christ's birth, of His sojourn upon earth, and of His steps in humiliation and exaltation. Exalted before the eyes of His dear disciples, when they were together at Mount Olivet and where they saw Him for the last time. A cloud made an end of that seeing. Until the day when He will come with the clouds and when all eyes will see Him (Revelation 1:7.) Did we never see Him before that day, then it will be heard of what we read in Luke 23:30: *“Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.”*

In the text of Acts 2:37, we have the question: *“What shall we do?”* This is a short question. Yet, it is a very weighty one. When coming to this place, and many from afar, they did not realize that such a question would happen. Every year again, as faithful Israelites, they were attending the feast of Passover at Jerusalem. At these days as well. To commemorate the passing by of the angel of destruction, when he saw the blood at the side posts and the lintel of all the houses of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 12:21-28). Yet, what they did not know, although it has been foretold them by the Lord, now it would become the accepted time. Being together with one accord, as every other year they were, yet, now there happened something what they never heard and saw before. Namely, suddenly they heard a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2). Then, they saw upon each one of them *“cloven tongues like as of fire,”* and, so we read, *“they were all filled with the Holy Ghost”* (verses 3 and 4). Whereby they began to speak in other tongues, of which we read: *“As the Spirit gave them utterance”* (verse 4).

Dear reader, here we have the fulfilling of what was promised many years ago in the prophesy of Joel, to which prophecy Peter is referring, namely with these words: *“Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel”* (verses 14-16). And then he is quoting out of this

prophecy what you can read in chapter 2, verses 14-21.

When these Israelites were leaving their homes, as they did every year in obeying the ceremonial law regarding the holy feasts, leaving for many days, by making dangerous and costly journeys to the city of Jerusalem, they did not realize what was going to happen at this time. Yet, from the Lord's side, the arrows which would be driven into their heart were laying aside already. And then, when He gave to Peter to speak (yes, the same one, who, not that long ago was denying his dear Master), then, dear reader, by God's sovereign mercy, the conversion of 3,000 souls took place. As a remarkable work of the Holy Spirit, directing every arrow. We read in the Scriptures that they all were filled with that Holy Spirit. Think about this.

Nowadays you can ask the question: Is there one soul converted upon 3,000 sermons? God knows it. His Word will not return void unto Him. But now the question to each one of us, while reading this is: Dear reader, and fellow traveller to eternity, do you belong to that multitude of whom we read in Revelation 7:9: "*Which no man could number*"? What a rich blessing has been given by the Lord upon this one sermon by His servant Peter. When, by the Lord's sovereign grace, 3,000 hearers are converted. Is this Peter the one who denied his Master thrice? Yes, he is (John 13:38). History says about him that, when they intend to crucify him during the times of persecutions, he was asking his executioner to be crucified with his head downwards and his feet upwards, which they did.

Oh, dear reader, young, middle-age, or old, how is it with you? We all know how it is a custom to ask: How are you doing? Which of itself is not wrong, of course. And, although it is not always the right time to make there a long story, yet on the other hand, it gives us the opportunity to say something about how we really are doing. For instance, when people, maybe colleagues, are asking this on Monday. Then you have a nice opportunity to say something about your going to church on Sunday, and which message was delivered there for the hearers. What would be their answer when you would say: Not so well, to be honest? And again, it needs to be at a good moment, which the Lord can give in an amazing way. But then, with the question from their side, you have a nice opportunity to say something in a few words, which can make their question for themselves more important.

Dear youth of the congregations, a special word to you as well. Much is going on in the world. The people in Ukraine are in a difficult position. This huge country of Russia, with their rulers, is so unpredictable. These rulers will have to appear before an all-knowing God as well. Among their citizens the Lord has a remnant, known by Him. I do not go further into it, but I will conclude with what we read in 1 Peter 3:15: "*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*"



# A Wonder: To be Taught our Misery




Rev. H. de Leeuw

The doctrine is divided into three well-known parts: misery, deliverance, and gratitude. This is well known by all of us. Lord's Days 2 to 5 deal with the part of misery. It begins by asking "whence knowest thou thy misery?" This opening question brings across how the knowledge of God comes in a person's life, "out of the law of God." This law is the 10 Commandments. Notice then that the conversion of man begins with knowing out of the law of God who God is. *"And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God"* (John 17:3).

Dear reader, the part of misery is often viewed to be a depressing part of conversion. Some people speak only of how miserable they are and with that they think to convince themselves and others how converted they are. In true conversion, the part of misery teaches to know who God is according to His law. They will all learn something then of His holiness, and the Law begins to declare, *"I am the LORD Thy God"* (Exodus 20:2). In true conversion, the Lord pours love in the heart. The sinner who is learning his misery, because God reveals Himself through His law as holy, begins to love the Holy God and the holiness of God. The sinner in his misery makes a choice to obey the Holy God. That's not depressing! Although they do not know of the forgiveness of sin, yet the sinner desires to obey the Holy God. Before, they disobeyed Him! Therefore, the requirement is also not too hard for them, but the requirement to their disappointment becomes impossible to keep, because of their awful nature, they are "prone by nature to hate God and my neighbour" (HC Lord's Day 2, Answer 5). That makes them miserable, not being able to do according to the love of their new heart what God requires. That is the misery of a soul who loves the Lord!

The part of misery is God working to restore fellowship and communion through Jesus Christ by faith. The restoration will not be based on desires or ability, but on the grounds of satisfied justice. He pours love in the heart of His elect and teaches His children who He is. God reveals through His law and through the righteous demand of the law His desire to restore what is broken. That's not depressing; that is an eternal wonder! *"That they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."*



# God of the Hills but not of the Valleys

*“And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD” (1 Kings 20:28).*

Benhadad, the drunkard king of Syria, sent a demand to Ahab, king of Israel. He wanted for himself silver, and gold, and the “goodliest” (verse 3) of the women and children of Israel. Shamefully, King Ahab agreed. But Benhadad was not satisfied. He instructed his servants to take from Ahab’s house anything they desired. This time King Ahab did not agree. So, Benhadad sent a great army to secure his demands. We read that “the Syrians filled the country” (verse 29). God was mindful of His people. He sent a prophet to Ahab: “Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thy hand this day” (verse 13).

With God’s promised help, they “slew the Syrians with a great slaughter” (verse 21). But it was not long before the Syrians came up again. Why were they so bold after the great slaughter they had suffered a short while before? Well, the king of Syria’s servants had said to him that the gods of Israel were “gods of the hills.” If this time we fight them in the valley, they reasoned, we shall overcome them.

Now we come to the text. God was about to make it known that He was not a God just of the hills, nor a God even of the hills and the valleys, but that He was the almighty God who reigns over all things. How deficient are many people’s views of God today, so very similar to those of the Syrians who thought He was just a God of the hills.

• God is a God of love, they say. But they forget that He is also a God of justice.

• God is too kind, they say, ever to condemn someone to a never-ending hell. But they forget that it was the Son of God who said: *“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched”* (Mark 9:48).

• God will overlook our little faults, they say. But they forget that the word of God declares that if a man *“offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10).

• God, they say, requires us only to live according to the Ten Commandments to the best of our ability. But they forget Christ’s words: *“Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20).

No, our God is not just the *“God of the hills.”* He is the Almighty God. We read that to the dismay of Benhadad’s army, when fighting in the valley, the children of Israel slew of the Syrians a hundred thousand footmen in one day. The Syrians had to prove that the God of Israel was also the *“God of the valleys.”*

- Submitted

*“The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity, hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory – because at the Father’s will, Jesus Christ became poor, and was born in a stable, so that thirty years later He might hang on a cross. It is the most wonderful message the world has ever heard or will hear.”*

~ Rev. J. I. Packer (1926-2020) *Knowing God*

*“There is nothing more to be dreaded than that the Lord should allow us loose reins.”*

~ John Calvin (1509-1564)

*“He cannot have God for his Father, who refuses to have the church for his mother.”*

~ Augustine (354-430)



# Advent Fulfilled

A Branch shall come from Jesse's root,  
A Rod arise on high.  
    So meek and mild,  
    The Holy Child,  
See Him in manger lie.

The Morning Star shall soon arise,  
For those in death's dark vale.  
    In swaddling bound,  
    No beauty found,  
In Bethle'm's lowly stall.

The Sun of Righteousness shall rise,  
with healing; blessed morn.  
    O come and bow,  
    O worship now,  
The Saviour, Christ, is born.

For unto us a Child is born,  
To us a Son is giv'n.  
    To shepherds that  
    In darkness sat,  
Angels descend from heav'n.

He'll come unto His own as rain,  
As latter rain on earth.  
    Simeon's Saviour,  
    Holy favour,  
Anna proclaims His birth.

The serpent bruised My Servant's heel,  
But He has crushed his head.  
    He's Lord of all,  
    Though born so small,  
Wise men to Him were led.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
My heart rejoice in God.  
    Promise spoken,  
    Love unbroken,  
Lo, this is Jesse's Rod!

~ A. H.

# Heavenly Teaching

*“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?”* (Job 38:31-32).

Rev. C. Neele (1962-2022)

Job has to suffer much. He becomes plunged into abject poverty and endures the loss of all his children. He is seized of the most fearful disease. His wife does not comprehend his spiritual life. Standing upon a high point of assurance he says, *“Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?”* (Job 2:10). But he remains not upon those heights. He comes to curse the day of his birth. Questions full of unbelief arise. His friends stand no longer beside him but above him. Yet he can at times look higher. God is not forgetful of His child. Job is even enabled to cry in chapter 19, *“I know that my Redeemer liveth”* (verse 25)! Then it was well. Do you know anything of such a comforting, faith’s view of the precious Saviour?

Yet Job remains not upon this high point of faith either. In chapter 23 he complains: *“Behold I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him”* (verse 8). He has lost sight of Christ, and that is deep darkness in the life of the church – after so many blessings and mercies received to end as it were in death. But Job is, under all this, still not at one with the Lord. He cannot bow under this way. What will become of Job? Perhaps you ask this question at times. So blind in the way of salvation; no access anywhere. What is needful then? Heart teaching. And this instruction Job receives from a fourth friend, Elihu. He tells Job that he must bow under God’s justice. Then he will find deliverance and pardon.

But this kind, outward instruction does not bring Job to his right place, so God Himself begins to speak. He comes in a whirlwind, so we read in chapter 38. And then the Lord instructs Job and brings him into the right way. He does so by opening to him the wonders of creation, with the end of humbling His child, causing him to bend. So God enquires: *“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?”* The Lord points out to him

a constellation. Actually, it is a little group of stars in the constellation Taurus. Pleiades or the “Seven Stars” can be clearly seen in winter. You then observe six, or with good eyes seven stars which are very close together. But if you look with a telescope, you will see within that little group no less than 623 stars. The old Arabic astronomers called the Seven Stars a cluster of jewels. God had assembled that little cluster and displays it unto men. And now the Lord speaks of the sweet influences of the Seven Stars. The little bundle of jewels has a very sweet radiance. The Lord has created this group of 42 stars with His right hand (Isaiah 48:13), and so to them too those words of the psalmist apply: “*At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*” By pointing to the Pleiades the Lord shows forth the power of His love and in so doing asks Job, “*Canst thou bind the sweet influences?*” or in other words, is the power of My love in your hand? Do you rule over My love? O Job, if you would but taste something of love, you would bend. One drop of love and your heart melts; the enmity is broken. Have you, reader, ever tasted a little of that love? Then you know what it means to bow or bend. The Lord makes plain to Job how dependent he is upon the power of God’s love.

But the Lord asks further, “*Canst thou ... loose the bands of Orion?*” Orion is a glorious winter constellation. Three stars in the middle, the so called “Belt,” and around them at some distance four other stars are to be seen. It appears just as though those three middle stars are bound with cords to the outer four stars. Now the Lord asks Job if he can break these four cords. Job has no such power. But the Lord means more with this question. The old astronomers said that every year there came a moment when those cords were broken. This happens at the end of winter when the constellation slowly sinks from view. Then those strong cords become as it were loose. Eventually, Orion disappears before coming into view again the following winter. Now, said they of the ancient East, when the cords break, “Spring is coming!” The Lord then is asking Job, in effect, “Can you make it springtime in your life? Let the spiritual winter of storms and rain then come to an end – is it then within your power to bring forth the dawn of a spiritual song-time, when the flowers appear on the earth?” The Lord will break the enmity in his heart. Job must learn again to live in dependence. “*Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?*” (verse 32).

There are differing explanations of the word Mazzaroth. Our Bible translators have left the word in the original, because they were doubtful as to which constellation was intended. Later commentators, helped by the increase in the knowledge of astronomy, point to the constellation Centaurus. Job would have been able to see this constellation at the beginning of the month of March. Bright stars lie in the southern sky. Now

the Lord asks Job if he can make these stars appear in their time. No, Job can do no such thing. Yet the Lord *“bringeth out their host by number ... by the greatness of His might”* (Isaiah 40:26). That is a lesson for Job. The Lord saves in His own time – not at the time which you determine in the spiritual strife. The writer of Psalm 69 was favoured to know and confess that there is an *“acceptable time.”* Have you learned this lesson? God’s time is the very best time. *“Canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?”* (verse 32). This question of the Lord’s points to the constellation “The Great Bear” – or HEAVENLY TEACHING 43 as we often call it, the Plough. This is visible all year round in the night sky. The old Arabic astronomers saw in this group a wagon or wain carrying a bier. In front of the bier went the children of the departed. Now the Lord asks whether Job can guide this wagon with the children. The Lord means that He and not Job reigns over life and death. All through the year, the preaching of death and life is to be seen in the starry heavens.

This brings Job to consider his guilt. He had not been pleased that God had given him life. He had cursed the day of his birth. He would rather that he had died. He was not pleased with the path of his life. But now the Lord says that He has control of it. Job must learn to follow. Then he will see by faith that Another shall taste death and shall triumph over it with an everlasting victory. Job was favoured to bow beneath the divine instruction. He could say, *“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”* (Job 42:6). Job is brought to his right place. He is nothing but a sinner without rights – *“That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest; and be clear when thou judgest”* (Psalm 51:4). But this bowing sinner is led in chapter 42 to the altar – to the blessed Substitute who has wrought out an everlasting righteousness. Then can he sing from the heart: *“The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and He helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee”* (Psalm 116:6-7).



# Lessons from the Stork, Turtledove, Crane, and Swallow with the Approach of Winter

***“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but My people know not the judgment of the LORD”*** (Jeremiah 8:7).

Rev. E. C. Adams

Dear young people, I hope there are times when you observe, and walk through God’s amazing creation, that you have some impression of God’s greatness. May you also feel the need and desire, that this omnipotent God needs to be your God, through Jesus Christ His Son, by His almighty and sovereign grace. We read in Job 12:7, *“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.”* This text about migrating birds gives us special instruction for our life.

The prophet Jeremiah was sent to Judah to earnestly warn the people, accompanied with the exhortation to repent. If they would not do so, destructive judgments would soon descend upon them. In verse 5, the prophet lamented, *“They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.”* In verse 6, we read, *“No man repented him of his wickedness.”* To impress upon their hearts their foolishness, he points them to the birds of the sky.

When you read this article, fall has arrived, winter will soon be here, followed by the end of the year. When the weather becomes cooler with shorter days, many birds, some sooner or later, migrate southward where the climate is more favourable, and food more plentiful. Then this remarkable movement is proof of an almighty and all-wise Creator. Biologists have done many studies as to how the birds know when to leave, but also how they navigate their way. They admit it is a phenomenon which they cannot fathom, understand, and explain.

*“Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times.”* The stork, a common bird in the land of Canaan, does not need to be encouraged, exhorted, or coaxed, but at the appointed



time they fly southward. Readers, I think you can make the application. We are travelling to eternity. We are living in the summer of the precious day of grace. We do not know when the winter of the day of our death shall arrive. Ecclesiastes 9:12 states, *“For man also knoweth not his time ... and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them.”* Do you ponder over these things? Young people, although we have God’s given Word, and the vivid examples that life is short, we still live so easy in our unconverted state. Does it not show how dead in sins and trespasses man by nature is? We desperately need the quickening work of the Holy Spirit. Beg the Lord for the wonderful instruction of the Holy Spirit, to receive grace to flee to the place of Refuge, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.



*“The turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming.”* This refers to the returning of the birds

in the springtime, for the purpose of building their nests, laying their eggs, and raising their young. The swallow is a bird which leaves particularly early in the autumn and arrives back late in the spring. The swallows do not take chances, but listen to the God-given instinct, wherewith they are created. They do not arrive back too early in the spring, and they do not wait for the first snow blizzard to arrive in the fall.

My young friends, *“But ask ... and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.”* The birds do not have a Bible to instruct them, and they don’t have a speaking conscience like we do. Young people, ask the Lord, that you may be made wise as the birds that migrate. I hope you are not like Gallio who *“cared for none of those things”* (Acts 18:17). Do not be like Felix, who told Paul to go for this time, and in a more convenient season, he would be called again (Acts 24:24-25). Or as Israel halting upon two opinions (1 Kings 18:21). What would you think of a bird? Let’s picture a large crane with its long neck, pondering, thinking, intending, hoping to depart, flapping its wings, trumpeting, but remaining in the area where in the winter there will be no food source left for them.

Would you not be inclined to endeavour or compel the crane to ascend and fly away? That is my desire for you, my young friends, like Paul has persuaded and beseeched the church of Corinth (2 Corinthians 5:11, 20).

*“But my people know not the judgment of the LORD.”* Judah did not hearken and see the approaching judgments. Young people, it cannot be different, when you see all what is transpiring and



changing in this world, when the cold winds of declining love are so prevalent (Matthew 24:12), together with the blustery and powerful winds of temptation, that many fears fill your young heart. Am I not right, young people, although perhaps you are too timid to tell what lives in your heart? The winter of God's judgments is at hand. And therefore, today when you read this word about migrating birds, do forsake sin, repent, seek, and flee to the Lord with whom there is a place of refuge.



When you read this short meditation, then for our young friends living in Canada, the Thanksgiving Day is past, and for those living in the USA, it soon hopes to be observed. May you by grace be given to resemble the birds also in the way of prayer and thanksgiving. How they sing God's praises! In Psalm 148, the Psalmist not only exhorts flying fowl to praise the Lord, but also young men, maidens, old men, and children. We read in Isaiah 38:14 of Hezekiah, who prayed, *"Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove."* The whooping or trumpeting of the crane is heard at vast distances during the night, as they fly at elevated altitudes through the sky. Young people, does the Lord hear your voice in the way of need, distress, godly sorrow, love, missing, hope, but also in the way of thanksgiving? If not, may you begin today! Of course, when it is true and genuine, then you shall also resemble the migratory birds, seeking for a better country, whose Builder and Maker is God. There shall be no more mourning, but eternal Thanksgiving!

One more thought: Are there among our young people who know what it is to resemble a young bird which has left its nest, who have great difficulty flying, and are beset by many fears? Perhaps, there are people who know what it is to have weak, lame, or even broken wings with ruffled feathers. People who feel they cannot soar aloft on the wings of faith. Then I read a precious promise in Psalm 68:13, *"Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."* May the Lord apply this simple instruction to your young hearts by His Spirit.

~ The Hebrew word is translated both as turtle and turtledove in the King James Bible. The context always indicates that we are speaking about a bird and not the shelled reptile.

*"No man ever repented of being a Christian on his deathbed."*

~ Hannah More (1745-1833)



# Mary and Joseph

Rev. P. van Ruitenburg

**M**ary, the mother of Jesus, was young, probably under twenty. She knew her Bible, she was humble and chaste, and she knew what it was to rejoice in God. Mary had faith. She was submissive and willing to sacrifice herself to be the mother of the Lord.

When the angel Gabriel came to say she was going to be a mother, Mary asked how that could be, because she hadn't "known" a man. Even though she was betrothed to Joseph, she was sure she couldn't be expecting. There was no other man involved either. What a beautiful testimony. Thankfully, there are still young people who are engaged without being too intimate with each other, because they want to obey the Lord. And yet Mary could not understand that she of all people should become the mother of the Messiah. "The humble hath God exalted," she sang. That humility is also a beautiful feature of her sincere faith. Anyone who compares Mary's song with that of Hannah's sees striking similarities. From this we can conclude that Mary knew the song of Hannah and perhaps even by heart. In short, Mary was not the first to be special. Not that she deserved to be the mother of the Lord, certainly not. But it is striking that the people who witnessed the birth of God's Son were all His people. Perhaps not the shepherds, but Zacharias and Elisabeth, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna were quickened people who lived tenderly with God, righteous, fearing Him, departing from evil. Young Joseph and Mary were spiritually connected to much older people.

Let me emphasize the word "graceful" here. Mary did not deserve God's blessings, but God rewarded her for the life He Himself had worked into her heart. God accepts sinners, and the greatest sinner can be saved, but those who live in sin should not count on God's blessings. Life goes



well for the righteous, and even when it is difficult, these righteous are given the grace to take up their cross and follow.

Mary is not a mediator and we do not pray to her. She did not ascend to heaven, but we may call her blessed. A woman, we would say a young girl, who played an important part in God's plan. What would we like to do? Do we belong to those kinds of people? Is Christ born in our hearts and therefore, are we different?

Joseph heard that his fiancée was expecting and that shocked him deeply, because he knew that the child could not be his. Still, he reacted remarkably calmly, but he wanted to leave Mary quietly. It wasn't his style to disgrace her, and he didn't need revenge. Because he was a righteous man, he thought it would be better to disappear. What a special person! An engagement in those days meant much more than it does today. Breaking an engagement was almost like adultery, because you had basically pledged allegiance. It was amazing that Joseph did not overreact and surrendered to the Lord after he heard the beautiful story from Mary. He couldn't make anything of it, yet he couldn't go on with Mary.

Was Joseph a noble young man of good character? That's not how the Bible portrays him. The word used for him is that he was "righteous." In the Bible, righteous meant much more than it does today. Righteous and righteousness are translations of the same word in the Bible and relate to a change of heart, the result of repentance. That is why Jesus said that our righteousness must be more abundant than that of the Pharisees and the scribes.

I believe that the most characteristic thing about Joseph's reaction is that he didn't want to take revenge. He was also not in a position to repay. Joseph was not God, and he was a sinner himself. On the other hand, he did have the boldness to leave Mary, and there was nothing against that in itself. He was not yet married and even if he had been married, he should have left her. An angel told him that Mary's pregnancy was from the Holy Spirit and she would be the mother of the Saviour. That changed things, and the righteous Joseph was allowed to be the foster father of God's Son.

Like Mary, Joseph did not deserve anything from his righteousness. The righteousness he had was God-given and meant not only that he had been forgiven of his sins, but above all that the fruits showed that he had a new heart. A new heart must be revealed, and so it was with Joseph. He was still young, but yet a sincere child of God. He must have known what a broken heart and a contrite spirit was. He had self-knowledge. Something to be jealous of. Such a calm person! God was His life and Christ his Saviour.

# QUESTIONS

Rev. M. Romeyn (1913-1971)

We read in the Book of Job 35:10-11: “*But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night; who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?*” We are living in a modern world. Education is indispensable today. Everything is investigated. Education is for the purpose of comfort and improvement. The main questions today are: How can I enjoy life, or where can I find a job that I can provide plentifully for me and my dear ones? Or where is fame, where is honour, where is wealth, where is entertainment and pleasure? Where can I get a good bargain? What shall we eat and drink? Shall all these questions lead us to a satisfactory answer? Let reality answer this question!

The people of our day and age have so much more liberty and privileges than the people of the past. Does this make people happy? Are the youth of our days satisfied? Is there more unity in social life? How are the circumstances in every country? And how is it internationally? Wars and rumours of war, riots, crime, danger, etc. The world is full of unrest. Many people are nervous, and the medication needed for an educated world is tremendous. The number of physicians and psychiatrists are many times multiplied today, and yet, the number of patients is larger. The world is striving and searching for peace, and no peace or rest seems to be found. What is the reason for this? Our text gives us the answer, “*But none saith, Where is God my Maker?*” If God would forget or neglect man, as man is ready to forget and neglect God, we could not exist anymore upon this world.

Young friends, what can the world or things which are so attractive do for us, at times of sickness when we are filled with sorrow; who shall comfort us in the day of our afflictions? Who shall deliver us out of misery? We cannot do so ourselves, none of our dear ones is able, and the knowledge of the world is insufficient. There is only one, and this is God, our Maker, “*who giveth songs in the night.*” What shall it be for a person who is involved only in the things of the world, if he never asked the question in the time of grace, “*Where is God my Maker?*” This is the

time of grace, the Word of God invites us, seek the Lord while He is to be found, call upon Him while He is near. We do not see God with our physical eyes, but God sees us at all times, and He is near to everything and every person. God our Maker is the comforter of His people, even as everything is incapable to comfort us in distress. God my Maker, *“who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.”* The beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven are created by the Lord. But man was placed above them and made wiser than both. The purpose of creation was to redound to the honour of God, but man in his deep fall became more ignorant and foolish. The beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven do not reveal enmity against their Creator. Now man in his fallen state neglects and forgets his Maker. Is this not very sad? Shall the outcome of such forgetfulness not be very harmful? Shall our forgetfulness make us innocent? Moreover, it is made known to us, that even when man does not ask, *“Where is God my Maker?”* God did not forget His creation and man who is created in His image.

Many times we hear the calling of the Lord, in the way of His means, in the way of His providence, by His Word and everlasting gospel. My young friends, many times the Lord has said to you already: Where art thou? Why did you not say: *“Where is God my Maker?”* Did God not bless you with many outwardly blessings, did the Lord not make you wiser than the beasts of the earth and the fowls of heaven? Is the gospel not extended to you day after day? Is not a precious salvation preached to you? Is it not passed on to you that all things are possible with the Lord? What shall be our answer? Oh, young friends, it may be a question as long as we are in the time of grace yet. This might be, Lord, grant me above all Thy blessings, this blessing; that I may learn to say, *“Where is God my Maker?”*

Young friends, the greatest blessing for a person who is conceived and born in sin is that he cannot live without his Maker, who has revealed Himself to be a God of mercy, pardon, and salvation in Christ His Son, the Mediator of His people. May the Lord forbid that we would be at ease or satisfied with the blessing of God, without the God of all blessings. Remember, it is time yet, but the time is short.

*“He who hath heard the word of God can bear His silences.”*

~ Ignatius (1491-1556)