



## OPINION

### The Christmas Story

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

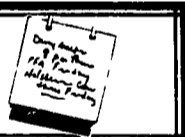
And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

— Holy Bible

## Farm Calendar



Saturday, December 25  
Merry Christmas!

Sunday, December 26

Monday, December 27

Tuesday, December 28

Wednesday, December 29  
Lebanon County 4-H Livestock Club Winter Roundup, Lebanon Fairgrounds.

Thursday, December 30

Friday, December 31

Saturday, January 1  
Happy New Year!

Sunday, January 2

Monday, January 3

Tuesday, January 4  
Mercer County DHI annual meeting.

New Jersey Farm Bureau Dairy Summit, Tranquility Church, Tranquility, N.J., 10 a.m.-3 p.m., continues Jan. 6.

Leola Produce Auction meeting, Bareville Fire Hall, Leola, 12:30 p.m.

Raleigh DHIA Records Workshop, Amos Stoltzfus Farm, Honey Brook, 12:30 p.m.

Mid-Atlantic Nurserymen's Trade Conference, Baltimore, Md., thru Jan. 6.

Wednesday, January 5  
Lancaster County Conservation District annual meeting, Stock Yard Inn, 6 p.m.

Bucks/Montgomery Dairy Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman's Community Center, Chambersburg, 9:30 a.m.-2:40 p.m.

Milk Marketing Board Sunshine Meeting, Pa. Dept. of Ag, Harrisburg.

Thursday, January 6  
Pa. State Farm Show, judging only.

Mercer County pesticide meeting, Elder Sales and Service, Stoneboro, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Financial Management Workshop, Schuylkill Campus, Schuylkill Haven, continues Jan. 13 and 27.

Lancaster County Tobacco Show, Farm and Home Center, 10 a.m.

New Jersey Farm Bureau Dairy Summit, Elmer Grange Hall, Pole Tavern, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Raleigh DHIA Records Workshop, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 7:30 p.m.

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**NOW IS THE TIME**  
By John Schwartz  
Lancaster County  
Agricultural Agent

#### To Work Safely

Winter is a good time to service equipment to keep it in good running order.

When servicing, adjusting, or repairing tractors and machinery, always follow the recommendations in the operator's or service manuals.

When working on equipment, observe the following:

- Have the right tools for the job. Handle them properly to avoid skinned knuckles, strains, and pinched fingers.

- Wear well-fitting work clothes with no loose ends to catch in moving parts or snag on projections.

- Wear personal protective equipment such as safety shoes, gloves, etc., as needed to protect you from various hazards of the job.

- Provide plenty of ventilation in an indoor area, especially when using solvents, cleaning, painting, tuning up engines, etc.

- Make certain equipment is securely blocked when removing wheels. Never rely on hydraulics to hold up any component. Block solidly or use safety stands.

#### To Protect Hearing

Many farmers have something in common with many rock musicians: hearing loss.

Loud rock music averages about 115 decibels. Farm noise ranges between 90-140 decibels, well above the 85-decibel limit at which industrial employers must provide hearing protection for workers.

Consistent, repeated exposure to such volumes may damage your ears before you notice any change. If you must shout to be heard three feet away, the noise is too loud. You must either reduce the noise level or wear protection.

Even though surveys show farmers recognize the hazard of excessive noise, they rarely use hearing protection. Some farmers believe that it is inconvenient, unhandy, or too time-consuming.

Granted, it will take some getting used to, but the benefits far outweigh any inconvenience and the need for buying and wearing a hearing aid.

Noise protection comes in two basic forms — muffs that fit over the ear and plugs that fit inside the ear. Average devices reduce noise volume by about 25 decibels.

When choosing hearing protection, consider comfort and effectiveness. Muffs are comfortable for longer wearing times but are not effective when obstructed by glasses or hats. Plugs are less noticeable than muffs and are small enough to fit in a pocket.

Now is the time to protect your hearing, before it is too late.

#### To Look At Farm Profitability

There are many factors that affect farm profitability.

Every year we must examine these factors and identify those factors that are changing. Once those changing factors have been identified, we may start working on developing plans on how to deal with these changes.

Some factors to consider include the rate of return on assets. The rates in the 1990s are the lowest in more than 40 years. For the past 40 years, the range was 4.89 percent in the 1950s to 10.23 percent in the 1970s.

The 1980s had a return to assets of 8.15 percent while the 1990s have only 1.4 percent. However, 17 percent of the farms in the United States will earn more than 10 percent return on assets.

The key to profits are cost control and low overhead. Two areas

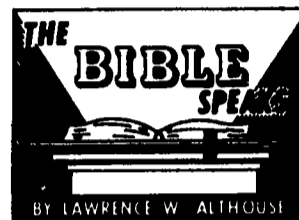
to look at are debt load and family living expenses. Fifty percent of American farms are debt-free. The average American farm has a \$2.50 of debt for every dollar of net farm income.

Debt to net farm income is strong, up to 5 to 1. This ratio is deadly when it goes beyond 10 to 1. Average family living cost on farms is \$36,000 to \$40,000. This is the fourth or fifth largest expense in agriculture.

On many farms, this is the fastest increasing cost on the farm. Successful business people are able to make objective evaluations and take the necessary steps to maintain profitability.

As we approach the end of another year, now is the time to take a hard look at your farm business and look for ways to control costs and lower overhead.

*Feather Prof's Footnote: "In the race to be better or best, do not miss the joy of being."*



**THE BENEFITS OF TEMPTATION**  
December 26, 1993

#### Background Scripture:

Luke 3:21,22; 4:1-15

Devotional Reading:

Matthew 4:1-11

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis says, "There is a silly idea about that good people don't know what temptation means." He's right, for many of us assume that temptation is the snare of only those who are weak. It came as a shock to me to learn that some of the "good people" I knew were sorely tempted and sometimes succumbed.

But Twain is quite correct: this is "a silly idea," because we all ought to know better. In the gospels we find a time when Jesus himself was sorely tempted. Perhaps the problem is that, although we know that, we assume his temptation was not real—real like ours. But Luke uses the word "tempted" meaning that Jesus had to feel the pull of it; there had to be the possibility that he would give in to it. That makes his temptations just as real as ours.

One of our misunderstandings the belief that the temptation itself is the sin. If we think about doing something wrong, we do not sin until we do it. Someone has said that we can't keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building nests in our hair. You and I—and Jesus, too—cannot keep the tempting thoughts from our minds, but we can keep them from being translated from thought into action. So often we exhaust ourselves spiritually, feeling guilty, not in succumbing to temptation, but in being tempted. There is no shame in being tempted, only in giving in to it.

#### STONES INTO BREAD

Also, we often assume that temptation is always evil in appearance. To be sure, there is a definite attraction to "forbidden fruit," but more often the most dangerous temptations are the ones, like those of Jesus, that appear so compellingly reasonable. For example, the first was to use the power of God for material needs: "Command this stone to become bread." What's the harm

in doing that? Why not use that power to turn stones to bread and feed the people? Surely that would bring them into the fold! Even in our own day, just think of all the starving people we could feed if we could turn stones into bread.

And the second temptation is no less reasonable: the kingdoms of the world in exchange for worshipping the tempter. Once again, Jesus, consider all the good you could do throughout the world with this kind of power! Does it matter whom we worship so long as we get the job done?

#### SQUEEZED BENEFITS

The third temptation is possibly the most compelling: if you are really the Son of God, throw yourself down from this pinnacle and prove that you are God's Son. But in this one, as in the previous two, Jesus is able to resist because he keeps his attention, not on the temptation, but upon the relationship with God. The more we stare at the temptation, the more quickly we forget God. The more we focus on God, the less compelling the temptation.

Actually, there are some benefits to squeeze from the experience. Just as Jesus came through his temptation spiritually stronger and more confirmed in his mission, so resisting temptation makes us stronger and gives us a sense of satisfaction. One experience of resisting gives us a base for defense against future snares.

But we must realize, when we have resisted, we have won a battle, not the war. Someone has said that most people who fly from temptation usually leave a forwarding address. "And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time". Even in Jesus' life, the tempter would return. Celebrate your victories over temptation and be ready for the next occasion.

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(Note: the 34th Ski & Spa Holiday in Badgastein, Austria led by the Althouses is set for March 4-19, 1994. For information, contact: 4412 Shenandoah Ave., Dallas, TX 75205)

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