



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 first-born 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, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

— Holy Bible



Now Is The Time

By Leon Ressler
Lancaster County Extension Director

To Remember The Reason For The Season

This time of the year it is especially important that we take time to count our blessings.

My wife and I spent six years in Kenya on a mission project in the early '80s, and that helps us understand how wealthy we really are when compared to most of the world's population. I will always remember one farmer who served on the management committee, which gave guidance to our development project.

One time when I picked him up for a committee meeting he mentioned he didn't get much sleep last night. When I inquired about that, he reminded me that it had rained hard most of the night. I acknowledged that, but I was still not sure what that had to do with his problem. Then he reminded me his home had a thatched roof, and grass to repair such a roof was very hard to come by because of overgrazing in the region. His roof leaked so bad the only way his family could stay dry was to stand up between the leaks for most of the night!

This past year we had an abundance of rain, which is a blessing after a drought year but it also caused some damage to some crops. But whenever I experience some problems caused by too much rain, I remember my Kenyan friend and am glad that at least I can be dry when I am sleeping!

We do not need to travel overseas however to be able to assist someone in need. All of us can find a needy family who could use a helping hand in our community. Making an effort to get to know their needs and assisting them as appropriate can help us keep things in perspective. This can be a very valuable experience for our children and will help them to be generous and to appreciate what they have. This can also make some Christmas memories your children will remember throughout their lives. Additionally this can also open the doors to be helpful to this family throughout the year since some situations require long-term assistance.

To Enroll In The Chemsweep Program

Secretary of Agriculture Dennis C. Wolff recently announced that 21 counties have been chosen for the 2004 Chemsweep Program. This program is designed to provide businesses licensed to apply pesticides with the means to properly dispose of canceled, suspended, or unwanted pesticide products.

The counties identified for collections of pesticides in the summer of 2004 are Adams, Armstrong, Butler, Carbon, Clarion, Cumberland, Dauphin, Elk, Jefferson, Lancaster, Lawrence, Lebanon, Lehigh, Lycoming, Mifflin, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Venango, and Wayne.

Each year, many pesticide products are canceled by the manufacturer or phased out of operations, leaving growers and applicators with quantities of potentially dangerous and toxic materials. In addition, many commercial establishments, farmers and homeowners have unwanted and/or unusable pesticides. Because of the nature of these potentially hazardous materials, often

limited options are available for responsible management.

The high cost of disposal prohibits many users from hiring professionals to dispose of these materials and also postponing such disposal decisions until a more cost-effective means becomes available. The waste pesticides may then become a safety hazard and environmental liability through long-term storage in barns, garages, or other areas in and around the home.

"Before Chemsweep began in 1992, there wasn't a cost-effective way for people to dispose of unwanted pesticides properly," Wolff said. "We are now taking the necessary measures to ensure that these chemicals do not harm the environment."

Pesticides control, kill, or mitigate pest organisms and can include herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, and rodenticides. The products are classified as Universal Waste Pesticides and will be collected, transported, and disposed of in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations.

"At no cost to the business, Chemsweep provides central collection sites where people are asked to drop off unwanted pesticides, or the hazardous waste disposal company under contract by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture will collect the pesticides directly from the storage location," Wolff said.

For information, visit the Department's Website at www.agriculture.state.pa.us/plantindustry/site or Penn State University's Pesticide Education Program at <http://www.pested.psu.edu/pdaprog> www.pested.psu.edu/pdaprog. Information also can be obtained by contacting the Department of Environmental Protection's Household Hazardous Waste Program at (717) 787-7382 or <http://www.dep.state.pa.us>, keyword: "HHW."

Quote Of The Week:

"Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord."

— An angel appearing to the shepherds near Bethlehem

❖ FARM CALENDAR ❖

Saturday, December 20
Monday, December 22

Adventures in Agriculture Planning Meeting, Northampton County Extension, Greystone Building, 6:30 p.m., (610) 746-1970.

Thursday, December 25
Merry Christmas! Lancaster Farming office closed.

2004
Thursday, January 1

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❖ FARM FORUM ❖

Editor:

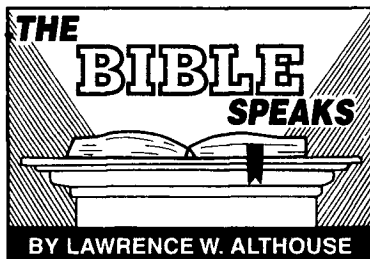
With less than two percent of Americans engaged in farming, each generation is becoming fur-

ther removed from agriculture. There are many people — children and adults — that lack even the most basic concepts of agriculture.

As a lifelong dairy farmer, I am constantly amazed at how many people cannot tell you where milk comes from, other than from a plastic container at the local grocery store. Agriculture is a leading economic enterprise in the commonwealth, yet a lack of knowledge about agriculture within the general public can be extremely costly to an economic infrastructure that essentially revolves around the industry.

As secretary of agriculture, I am committed to agriculture education, and this includes educa-

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BY LAWRENCE W. ALTHOUSE

PROMISES, PROMISES

Background Scripture: John 14:6-4.
Devotional Reading: Matthew 1:18-25.

In the past few weeks we have bought a car, had a new roof put on the house, and purchased a computer software program that was supposed to permit us to orally compose manuscripts by talking into a microphone.

Despite the car salesman's "guarantees" that his prices were the lowest in Dallas, we found we could have bought the same car for the same price at three different places. Despite the roofer's promises as to what would happen while we were away, we came home to find a mess that has taken more than a week to rectify.

But the biggest of all disillusioning promises was that of the computer program that assured us that it would work fine after just a day or two of programming it to recognize Valere's voice. We not only couldn't make the program work, but also talked to at least four other parties who had the same experience. *Promises! Promises!* They don't seem to mean anything.

As you may have noted, those ex-

periences have left me somewhat sour about human promises. As a well-known politician recently told a colleague about whom he had told a vicious lie, "It's only politics, John." So, when I expressed my views of the present ethics of entrepreneurs, I was told, "it's only business, Larry."

By You Or To You

Many of us have known the heartache of broken promises in personal relationships. "I will love you forever." "I'll never do that again." "I assure you it wasn't I who did that."

From your own experiences, I'm sure you can add some additional broken promises that have either been committed by you or to you.

So what promises can we live by? For our own self-protection, must we become thoroughgoing cynics?

Those are timely questions to deal with as we approach Christmas, which is essentially founded upon God's promises. The first of these in Matthew's Christmas story is the significance of the name to be given to him: "... and you will call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (1:21). In Hebrew, the name was Yeshua, which we can render as either Jesus or Joshua and means "Yahwe (or God) is salvation."

Note that the promise is not to save God's people from temptation, enemies or disaster, but "from their sins." Anyone who becomes a Christian for the sake of avoiding trouble, deprivation, or prejudice is subject to a rude awakening. Christians die in plane crashes, automobile wrecks, sinking ships, collapsing buildings, epidemics, and natural disasters. Christians get cancer, go bankrupt, and even get thrown in jail.

God's promise is not to keep us from the consequences of being human beings, but from our sins, which ultimately are of more conse-

quence than any other disaster. Paul's life was a lot tougher because of his apostleship (see 2 Cor. 11:23-29). And Jesus ended up on a cross!

God Is With Us

There is a second promise and this, too, has to do with a name drawn for Isaiah's prophecy (Is. 7:14): "... and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (Mt. 1:23). So far as we know, no one called Jesus by the name Emmanuel during his lifetime in the flesh. But the writer of Matthew identifies Jesus with the Emmanuel of whom Isaiah wrote. The reason for this identification is that Emmanuel means "God is with us."

In the midst of our accidents, diseases, disasters, and tribulations, Jesus represents the promise that God is with us, just as he was with Paul in his tribulations and with Jesus on the cross.

Being a follower of Jesus Christ does not promise us protection from our crosses, but the power of God to overcome them with victory. The good news of Jesus Christ is not that we shall escape human tragedy, but that by the power of God we may see it through. Where is my proof? I have no proof, but I trusted in other promises, believing they were true and they have been proven otherwise. None of the other sources to which I have looked for my well-being have panned out.

That leaves the promises of God to be with me in the midst of life and save me from the folly of my sins. It is on them that I will stake my life and my destiny.

How To Reach Us

To address a letter to the editor.

- By fax (717) 733-6058
- By regular mail: Editor, Lancaster Farming P.O. Box 609, 1 E. Main St. Ephrata, PA 17522
- By e-mail: farming@lancasterfarming.com

Please note Include your full name, return address, and phone number on the letter. Lancaster Farming reserves the right to edit the letter to fit and is not responsible for returning unsolicited mail.

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