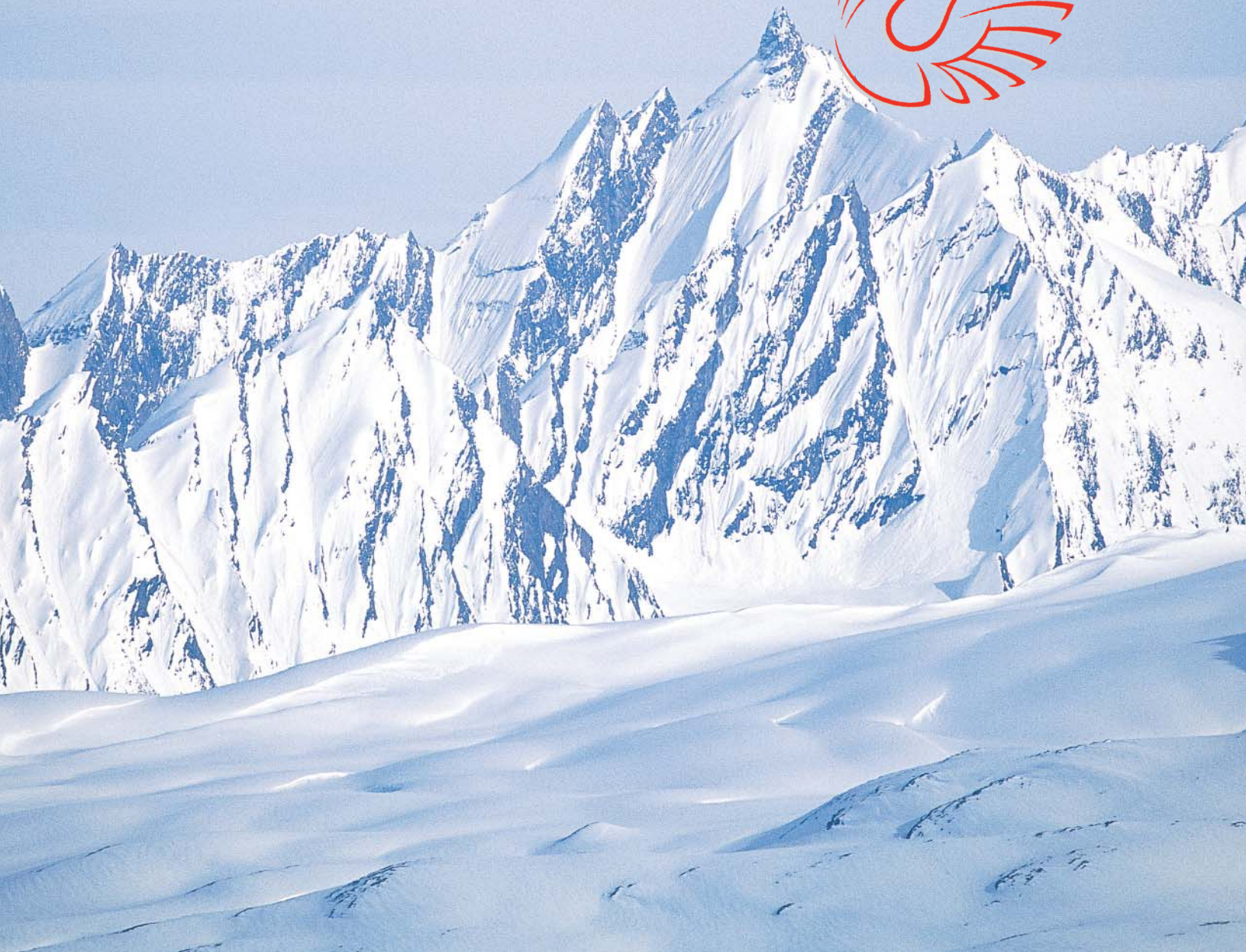


# GOOD NEWS

*Unlimited*



December 2004

## Call His Name Jesus

CHRIST ALONE • GRACE ALONE • FAITH ALONE • SCRIPTURE ALONE

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# EDITORIAL . . .

Goethe was once asked, "Which of all the great religions do you profess?"

"None," was his reply.

The questioner persisted: "Why?"

"Because of my religion," he replied.

Those who have decided that religion is the enemy of society have usually managed to do so while retaining a religion of their own. It is not wise to exclude something from our lives just because we have been exposed to its caricature. The man who shot Yitzhak Rabin said that God had told him to do it. Does this mean that all religion is bad, or does it mean that this man's religion was bad? Many things have been distorted. Take music, for example. There is a cacophony of noises abroad that may give music in general a bad name. But beautiful music does exist, so it pays to seek it out rather than deny music altogether.

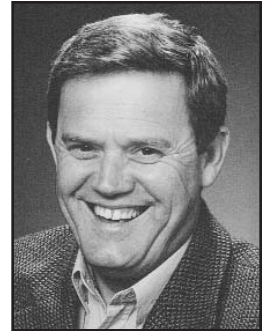
The issue must be—not religion yes or no—but which religion? Any credible investigation of religion would need to include a consideration of Jesus Christ. He is credible because of the premium he places on humanity and humanness. His message is that God values human beings tremendously.

Christianity emerged when the world saw—not an army, a political movement or a revolution—but a person, the Man Christ Jesus. There were those living at the time who said of him, "We saw his glory; the glory of the One and Only who came from the father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). They were gripped by the conviction that God had revealed himself humanly.

We humans have always suspected that our own personalities were the greatest phenomenon in creation. There are hints of immortality in us. We observe that matter is vast

and hostile, but it does not overwhelm our spirits. Often we have mourned the death of a singular leader, and we have said that "His death will not mean the abandonment of his vision; it will not brook the realization of his values." Values have an eternal quality, and values are a feature of us.

If the mysteries of existence were to be made known to us, it is a fair bet that the revelation would occur in and through personality. In the birth of Jesus, that is what has happened. God has become accessible and knowable in an exquisite person. Therefore, Christmas rekindles faith in human nature. We need not now be judged only by our Hitlers or our bin Ladens. Our race has been dignified and adorned by Jesus. Now we know how wonderful humanity is meant to be. And we learn more. We see in Christ the infinitely beautiful personality of God.



Ron Allen

*Christ by highest heaven adored,  
Christ the everlasting Lord.  
Long desired, behold him come,  
Finding here his humble home.*

*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the incarnate deity.  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus our Immanuel.*

*-Charles Wesley.* 

**Any credible investigation of religion would need to include a consideration of Jesus Christ.**

## GOODNEWS *Unlimited*

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Good News Unlimited magazine also seeks to keep readers up-to-date on all aspects of GNU's ministries. This includes news on national and international radio broadcasts; public seminars, congresses, and Bible schools within the USA (as well as public meetings

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Good News Unlimited is reached by phone at 530.823.9690. Fax 530.823.5338. E-mail [gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org](mailto:gnu@goodnewsunlimited.org).

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**Editor**

Ron Allen

**Associate Editor**

Molly Brown

**Printer**

Auburn Oaks Printing, Auburn, CA

**Graphic Designer**

Debbie O'Brien

**OVERSEAS ADDRESSES:**

**Australian office:**

GNU, Unit 2,  
54-60 Industry Drive  
Tweed Heads 5th  
NSW 2486, Australia

**Canadian offices:**

P.O. Box 537  
Abbotsford, BC V2S 5Z5  
Canada

222 Olive Avenue  
Willowdale, ON M2N 4P6  
Canada



# CALL HIS NAME JESUS -1

by Ron Allen



## Looking for Water

Old man Rudd needed to find water. For years he had dreamed of finding a good water supply beneath his farm. So he listened closely to his son Dave who told him about a water diviner he had seen. “This fella could find water blindfolded; all he needs is a green stick. You should have seen him hangin’ onto that green stick once it got a whiff of the river. He had to let it go else he would have drowned with it.”

Rudd was skeptical, but he was interested. “Bring him out here then” he told Dave, “and let’s see what he can do. It would make a world of difference to us here on the farm if we could tap into a good supply of water. No more worries then!”

Dave brought the water diviner out to the farm. He shook hands with Rudd and then looked around for a green tree from which he cut a forked stick with his pocket knife. “This’ll do,” he said. Then holding a branch of the green stick in each hand he began to walk across the yard in a straight line. Rudd and Dave walked just behind him.

There was silence for a while until suddenly, the water diviner began to grunt and grimace. The forked stick looked heavy in his hands. He stopped, drew a breath, took a firmer grip and staggered forward. “Oh my,” he called out. “Its big! Twenty thousand gallons an hour—at least.” Sweat was pouring from him now. He had the appearance of a man wrestling a bear. “Ain’t this somethin’ Dad,” said Dave. But Rudd was non-committal. “Come over this way,” he said to the water diviner. He led the way to a cluster of low bushes. The water diviner turned in that direction and Dave followed like a disciple.

“Nothing here,” said the water diviner. Rudd moved close to the bushes and called out, “What about this?” and he kicked the bushes. A bucket full of water rose high overhead and split its contents on the ground at the water diviner’s feet. “You’re wasting my time and yours,” said Rudd. “Take yer green stick and get out.” The water diviner left and old man Rudd glared at Dave triumphantly, and they walked back home. Home to things as they had always been.

## Ripe for a Savior

The world is full of those who toy with our dearest hopes. Old man Rudd imagined life on the farm with more water. Water to grow more crops; run more cattle; start an orchard. The human race is ever ripe for a savior. Problems, baffling, annoying and grievous are part of the fabric of our lives, and we cannot help imagining an existence without them. The slaves used to sing, “All my trials Lord, soon be over.” When blues musician, Eric Clapton’s son fell to his death from an apartment tower, he put all our broken-hearted longings into words by singing, “Would you know my name if I saw you in heaven?”

The Bible shows its credentials as a people’s book because it reflects the people’s eternal search for deliverance. In Matthew 1:18-21, God tells Joseph that Mary is to have a special child. “*You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*” Mary’s child was not the first to be called that name. Jesus is the English rendering of the Greek translation of the Hebrew, *Yeshua* or Joshua. It means: God is savior.

The prophets had said that God would send One anointed for the task of saving the people. Jewish families kept that hope alive by calling their sons *Yeshua*. Many a mother thought: Perhaps my son will be the savior of our people.

Two of Israel’s better known Joshua’s were, first of all, the Joshua who came after Moses and led the people into Canaan. This Joshua was courageous. He routed the heathen and gave to each Israelite family a portion of the land; a place to call home. He gave them rest from their forty years of vagrant life in the wilderness. This Joshua lived up to his name—but only to a degree. The salvation he brought did not last. After he was gone, enemies attacked the land and the people were eventually taken into slavery in Babylon.

Generations passed and another Joshua came. He was a high priest (Zechariah 3). He led the remnant of Israel back from Babylon to Jerusalem. In a sense, he too was a savior—but not for long. By the time of Christ’s birth, foreign armies ravaged the nation; the people were subject to alien rulers, and their lives were marred by anxiety and despair.

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*The Bible shows its credentials as a people’s book because it reflects the people’s eternal search for deliverance.*

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# CALL HIS NAME JESUS -2

by Ron Allen



## Taxes, Taxes, Taxes

The Roman rulers set the basis for the depressive conditions in Israel at the time of Christ. In 37 B.C., Herod the Idumean had helped Rome capture Jerusalem. As a reward, the Emperor made him king of Judea and Samaria. He offended Jewish sensibilities in many ways. He taxed the people and wasted their money on selfish indulgences. To placate them, he undertook to refurbish their temple. This was a project that continued long after his death in 4 B.C. and throughout the ministry of Jesus.

When he died, the Jews complained to Rome: "He found our land rich, and left it ruined." They asked Rome for some form of self-government, but this request was denied. Instead, the region was divided between Herod's three sons. Antipas became Tetrarch of Galilee. Philip was Tetrarch of East Jordan and Archelaus became Tetrarch of Samaria and Judea, which took in Jerusalem.

Archelaus was so corrupt that riots, banditry and assassinations were commonplace. Life became so dangerous that commerce suffered. At the request of the Jews, Archelaus was replaced with Quirinius; and under Quirinius, law and order was imposed. Rome's rule of law did not come cheap. The Emperor expected to be paid for his protection. A regime of taxes was introduced which included a poll tax, city tax, road tax, water tax, import tax, export tax and market taxes. The collection of these dues were farmed out to opportunistic Jews who corrupted their office and were hated for it by their fellow countrymen.

The Jews were deeply religious people. Their worship and priesthood was maintained by a system of giving that called for big sacrifices. There was the half-shekel temple tax, payable by every person. There were tithes of crops and produce. (Pharisees even tithed their garden herbs). The first fruits of the harvest were for the priests; as were the first born of livestock. Other dues collected by the priests were for sin offerings, thank offerings and offerings for the first born child. It can be seen that Israel had two tax systems. One had to be paid under threat of severe punishment by the secular overlord. The other had to be paid for the sake of a clear conscience.


## Who Will Save Us?

One of the results of these demands on their limited income

was food shortages. Jews were an agricultural people. They lived on what they could grow or sell. Market taxes raised the prices of produce beyond what many could afford. Furthermore, landowners who could not afford slaves were at a competitive disadvantage. They had to hire labor. Many went into debt and had to sell to wealthy, slave-owning landholders. The lot of the poor was made even more bitter by the indifference of rich creditors who cast them into prison when they could not pay; by the intransigence of the Roman governors who demanded their taxes, and by the lovelessness of the priests who lived luxuriously, even forcing widows to sell themselves into poverty to insure that they paid their temple dues.

Such was the life situation of the vast mass of people who lived in Palestine at the time of Jesus' birth. They were swept up in a cauldron of events and affairs that made them feel harassed and helpless, just as many feel today. The present world order is similar to the one Jesus entered into, but on a larger scale. Wealth is enjoyed and controlled by relatively few. The rich vaunt themselves against the poor. People sell themselves into bondage in order to pay their debts. For most of its inhabitants, the world is a terribly unfair place.

If the people of Palestine in the first century were anxious, so are people now. Security has become a primary issue in our time. No one knows what new threat may spring up; what fresh atrocity may be unleashed. And since no one seems to want to try anything other than the oft-failed policy of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," blood and tears is all we have to give to one another. Where will it end? Will we ever be freed from these plagues? Is there a savior anywhere who will take us further than all the saviors we have seen so far?

As this question presents itself, Matthew asks us to consider Jesus. There was, and is, something different about him. His name is Jesus *because he will save his people from their sins*. What a staggering thing to say! What about all our 'other' problems? We need relief from war, terror, famine, economic uncertainty and hardship. We need to be saved from untruth in politics; from dysfunctional neighborhoods with drugs and crime. We want deliverance from bad governments. Who can seriously speak of salvation from *sins* when our lives are being disrupted by so many other problems? 

# CALL HIS NAME JESUS -3

by Ron Allen



## Not an Activist

At the beginning of his story, Matthew announces Jesus as Savior, yet his salvation appears to overlook the life conditions that make people want deliverance. There is no record of Jesus working as an economic reformer or social activist. He did not set out a plan to end slavery, or to prohibit the fraudulent treatment of the poor. But none of this means that he did not care about the oppressed, or that he had nothing to offer those whose life was an unending nightmare of weary longing. All four gospels testify of Jesus' total familiarity with the human predicament. His free association with those on the fringes of society was a political incorrectness on his part that led to his death.

## Many Shrewd Insights

But, *"he shall save his people from their sins."* In Matthew we meet a *Yeshua* who is intimately aware of the things that curse and plague human life, and he seems to think these have a very deep cause. He sees that much suffering is rooted in the depths of the human psyche. More than any other writer, Matthew shows Jesus making shrewd observations about human nature. Only through Matthew do we hear Jesus say that it is not merely violent acts that kill, but the angry thoughts that precedes them (5:22). Not only the act of fornication, but the salacious imagination wrecks relationships (5:28). Truth must come from a deeper place and be backed by something more profound than a man's oath (5:33-37).

In religious matters, Jesus observes that much of it is far too shallow. Going to church, public prayer, speaking religious words and phrases—far from doing anything to resolve problems in the world—can be a mask and a seed-bed for them (6:1-5). Even benevolent activities which bring a certain level of relief to some people, can still conceal that which will go on to produce further evil. Many a person who engages in good deeds harbors evil within which no one but God can see (6:5-8). Jesus seemed to think that some of the most damaging people in the world are religious. He called them wolves in sheep's clothing (7:15, 21).

Jesus saw that what passes as respectable, and even admirable, is often worse than useless. *"Make the tree good and the fruit will be good. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man only does good from the good stored up inside him"* (12:25-35). Furthermore, Jesus taught that the destructive

things that human beings do to each other are only the surface part of their evil. *"It's not what goes into a man that makes him bad, it's what comes out of him"* (15:10-20). *"Make the inside of the cup clean, then the outside will be clean"* (23:26).

## Christ Did Not Come to Flatter Us

Like no other savior the world has ever known, Jesus goes to the core of the problem. The reason for humanity's troubles lies far beneath the surface, and it cannot be successfully and totally treated with any superficial remedy. The cause of violence, injustice, pain and loss goes far beyond the outward acts by which these curses are perpetrated. Men and women are out of order at the pith and heart of their being. It is evidence of Jesus' credibility as Savior that he does not visit us with useless compliments. Politicians are careful to tell voters nothing that they do not wish to hear. They know that elections are never won by the candidate who tells the people that they are themselves part of all that is wrong with their world.

I have a friend who has been unwell for years. He routinely sees a doctor who places a stethoscope on him and feels his pulse. This doctor pleases my friend because he tells him how well he is. All this despite the fact that my friend is manifestly sick! Jesus does not patronize us by telling us that any troubles or problems we have are being caused by other things, other people, other circumstances. Instead, he offers salvation from *our sins*. We learn from him that humans have a sickness of the spirit; we need to be renewed from the inside out; we need to be born again. See Jesus confronting the cream of society in his time, and saying to them, *"Woe! Woe! Woe! Your goodness is only skin deep. You are like painted graves. You look good on the outside but inside you are stinking and rotten."* (Matthew 23:27 & 28)

If Jesus had set in motion a program to drive off the Roman legions; if he had instigated a plan of economic reforms to better distribute wealth and the food supply; if he had started a school system to roll back ignorance, he would have done many good things—but he would have been a savior that the world would soon forget. He would have allayed some of the symptoms of what ails us, but would have left the illness untreated at its source. Jesus did not come to adjust circumstances; to provide a new setting in order to produce a

*Continued on next page*

# “... *And Good Will Toward Men.*”



## **Good Will—in General, but Not in Particular**

I never yet have preached a sermon about prejudice without having some people indignantly walk out. They would have been charmed with a discourse about brotherliness in general, set in moving and general terms, but when one carries the message of friendliness into the special areas of our prejudice we resent it. We are like the lawyer who, when Jesus asked him what the great commandments were, gave a noble answer: “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. . . . and thy neighbor as thyself.*” That is a high-minded answer in general. But when Jesus was asked, “*Who is my neighbor?*” he saw his chance to push the issue through; so he said a Samaritan, a good Samaritan, was the neighbor. That faced the lawyer with a difficult situation. The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, and one wonders whether the lawyer’s good will did not go to pieces on his particular prejudice.

## **A Difficult Task**

Consider, for one thing, that in the light of our prejudices we can see how difficult a task good will faces in this world. Some of us, brought up fortunately in Christian homes and schools, at first took good will for granted as the natural estate of human kind, and then afterwards were shocked, horrified, and disillusioned by the cruelty of human life. Of course, the fact is that the ancient backgrounds of the human race, far from being characterized by extensive good will, were dominated by prejudice. Good will is a comparative newcomer, a strange adventurer in a world filled with ill will.

## **Being a Christian**

The whole matter, therefore, comes back to our own doorsills one by one. Here is a world long dominated by prejudice, where the only hope is good will. There are no rules about it. It is an adventure. Carry good will out as far as you can make it go. Experiment with it every day. Believe in it and keep on trying it, even when you have hard luck applying it—that is being a Christian. The coming of Jesus did mean what the angels sang, and no church a man belongs to, and no creed he recites can make him a Christian unless he enters into that Spirit:

*Glory to God on high;  
And on the earth peace,  
And good will among men.*

## **Good Will Enriches Those Who Practice It**

Consider that by such good will as we achieve and express we profit more than do the people on whom we expend it. Prejudice impoverishes its possessor—that is a neglected truth. When a supercilious man shuts himself up in his special set, he thinks he is excluding the world from the fellowship of his valuable self, but he is really excluding himself from the fellowship of the valuable world. He is making not the world, but himself poor; closing doors against kindling contacts and enriching fellowships which come only to those who know that all boundaries can be crossed by friendliness.

How many travelers go abroad covered all over with this self-protection of inveterate prejudice! They will think that all →



*Continued from previous page*

new life for us. He came to give us NEW LIFE, out of which a new world would emerge. All other saviors propose solutions which are a band-aid. Jesus plants goodness within and causes it to grow.

## **Salvation Begins in the Heart**

I was involved in a prison ministry Bible class. Inside I met Andrew. Before he was imprisoned his life had been wasteful, hurtful and shameful. He deserved to be in jail. In prison he met Jesus and he was changed—from the inside out. He would say to me when I visited, “Ron, here I am in prison, but I’ve never felt so free. Christ has set me free.” “You know what Ron? On the outside I made life hell for my wife, and our marriage was hell. Now, I’m in here, and our marriage is wonderful.”

Christ gave Andrew a freedom and love that was not created by external circumstance. Yes, we need deliverance from crime, marriage breakdown, violence and war with all its griefs, poverty, disease and injustice. But these are with us because we bear within us a systemic derangement. We have drifted from our moorings with God, and everything is in disarray on account of this great fact. Jesus is a complete Savior because he gathers up the wild and scattered elements of our lives; our thoughts, ambitions, desires, affections and hopes, integrating them all by anchoring them together in God. Those who experience this inner centeredness; this rightness at the heart of their being, know that they have experienced salvation, and they are ready to deal with the turmoil and suffering around them, and help make things better. Jesus saves. Joy to the world!

Britishers are funny when they talk; all Frenchmen wicked; the Italians unwashed, the Greeks ignorant, the Japanese heathen, the Chinese dreadful. They come back tattooed like sailors with superficial impressions but not inwardly enriched.

Of course I can understand someone saying that he does not intend to go through life lavishing sentimental good will on everyone he meets. Some people, he says, are evil and ugly. Well, did Jesus pretend they were not? Jesus' kindness was very beautiful but I can think of no one whose searching, discriminating, hard-headed judgment a man would fear more. I do not mean the simple brutality of people like those who crucified him. I mean the selfish stupidity of people who make human life seem hopelessly dull and drab, and who take the heart out of a man who tries to do something worthwhile in the world.

Once when Jesus had finished an elevated discourse, a man rushed up to him and said, "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." There are such people, who would hurry to the supreme teacher, just finishing the utterance of great truths, and say that! I wonder if Jesus did not have more difficulty in forgiving them than in forgiving the people who crucified him. At any rate, the most terrific words the Master ever uttered he spoke about them—casting pearls before swine. After that, you cannot call him a sentimentalist. He was not. But he was a tireless experimenter with good will. He would talk not only with a Samaritan woman but with a second-rate specimen of one. And in doing it, he would forget that he was tired and hungry and say to his solicitous disciples, "I have meat to eat that ye know not." He knew how rich good will could make a life.

### **The Future Belongs To People Of Good Will**

Once more, consider that even though good will be a comparatively new adventurer, the future belongs to it if there

is to be any future worth having. We sometimes hear it said that science denies religion. That seems to me nonsense. Science does not deny—it demands—religion. It is science that has thrown across these ancient segregating boundaries the new, reticulating meshworks of intercommunication so that, willy-nilly, we have to live together. It is science that has forced on us these close proximities so that the United States and China are closer together now than Massachusetts and Georgia were when the Constitution of this nation was written.

### **Just As Good For Jews As For Roman Catholics**

A family began to talk of a certain minister, and as his name was mentioned the teeth of an elderly aunt began to click. When some of the younger generation expressed appreciation of him, they clicked even more audibly and at last, unable to repress herself longer she said, "The trouble with that minister is that his sermons are just as good for Roman Catholics and Jews as for Baptists." So! "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" —just as good for Roman Catholics and Jews as for Baptists. "This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" —just as good for Roman Catholics and Jews as for Baptists.

During the Great War, a Roman Catholic chaplain went out under fire to minister to a boy who lay dying in No Man's Land. As he came close the boy said, "Padre, I do not belong to your church." "No," said the Padre, "but you do belong to my God."

Let every man of us say, you do not belong to my church but you do belong to my God. We go back now to a world filled with prejudice, where only good will can help, and there is not a day when you and I cannot help in that most important movement in the world—pushing good will out across all boundaries, as far as we can make it go.

-Taken from H.E. Fosdick, *The Secret of Victorious Living*. 

## **The Choice**

I am trying here to prevent any one saying the really foolish thing that people often say about **him**: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept his claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was and is the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about him being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

-C.S Lewis. *Mere Christianity*, pp. 52 & 53.



# The Gospel and Contentment

by Rodney Nelson

*“The fear of the Lord leads to life:  
Then one rests content, untouched by  
trouble” (Proverbs 19:23).*

## “I Can’t Get No Satisfaction”

Contentment is defined as what one is or has while not wanting more. We live in a culture that is not satisfied with anything. The constant change of society signals the transitory nature of most things, leading to dissatisfaction with the status quo. There is a yearning for more. It may be for a greater quantity of items, experiences or status; but the quest for more besets American society like a plague.

The consumer culture of our day is predicated on the attempt to satisfy the desires of an insatiable appetite for consumer goods. The philosophy is that fulfillment is attained by acquiring more. However, the brand of an item usually indicates to people the quality of an item. It is not merely the issue of how much one possesses, but the label that signifies preference and status. Commercials hourly put forward products which claim to harness potential, bring contentment, meet innermost needs, satisfy the strongest desires and attain the highest goals—if you pay money to obtain it. I have met computer-literate people who are into obtaining the latest and most powerful personal computer, only to find it antiquated in months by another model. It is not that they need another computer; they simply desire another one. I am just happy I have one and know how to use it.

## Contentment From Circumstances

Contentment is not a natural quality. It is engendered by life’s limitations and circumstances. To be content is not a fatalistic resignation to circumstances that life places on us, but it is acquired through life’s lessons given to us by circumstance. Contentment is not surrendering one’s lot in life to circumstances, but being content despite them.

Paul serves as a valuable lesson when he testifies of his discontent at being saddled with his “thorn” that God would not take away (2 Corinthians 12:7). Whatever it may have been (probably a physical ailment), he saw it as “a messenger of Satan to torment me.” He pleaded with God three times to take it away (verse 8), but God answered that “his grace was sufficient.” The word ‘sufficient’ is: *arkei*, meaning ‘continuously sufficient,’ and carries the meaning of contentment. God’s grace is continuously sufficient for contentment. However, we often forget the second stanza to the lesson: “My power is made perfect in weakness” (verse 9).

Paul was by nature arrogant and conceited in his flesh. He was also a man in Christ who recognized his propensities, and if not, God would show them to him through

circumstances. He had been blessed by visions from God seen by few men in history (12:1-6). Now, to keep him from “becoming conceited,” God allowed a thorn in the flesh to keep him from gloating in pride. Therefore, what is Paul’s boast? “I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses (verse 9). His delight was in his weaknesses, hardships and difficulties (verse 10). “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (verse 10).

## Contentment With Circumstances

Scripture has much to say about being content with what you possess. Contentment with circumstances is an acquired attitude. Listen to Paul’s list of contentment:

*“Known yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything” (2 Corinthians 6:9 & 10).*

How can you have nothing yet possess everything? Because perspective is everything. Knowing Christ “and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Philippians 3:10), is the perspective of Paul and that of any sincere Christian. Contentment bred by sharing in Christ’s sufferings, and becoming like him in his death will deliver to the believer the perspective of having nothing, yet possessing everything—everything that truly counts, and is eternal.

## Eternal Realities

Perspective determines contentment. Two realities are at work when discussing contentment. First, the reality that all is temporary and transitory.

*“For we brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out of it” (1 Timothy 6:7).* This reality must transform our motives for contentment into an eternal perspective. Second, contentment is based on Godliness and God’s promises to care for us and meet our needs.

*But Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6).*

*For physical training is of some value, but godliness has some value for all things, holding promise for the present life, and the life to come (1 Timothy 4:8).*

*Command those who are rich in this world not to be arrogant, nor to put their hope in wealth which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17).*

*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).*

## But For The Grace of God

Keith Urban is a Country-Western singer. Several years ago →



# THE UNIQUENESS OF JESUS CHRIST

by Ralph Cansler

## JESUS CHRIST

1. Birth foretold. Isaiah 9:6; 7:14.
2. Claimed to be God. John 10:28-36
3. Sinlessness proclaimed  
II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 7:26.
4. Forgiver of sins. Luke 11:13; 1 John 1:9
5. Died and resurrected. Luke 24:53; Acts 1:6-11.
6. Promises to return. John 14:1-3.
7. Taught that God loves us though we are not good.
8. The Light of the World. John 6:12.
9. His death paid the ransom for all the people's sin for all time.

## OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS

- Birth not foretold.
- Sane leaders never claimed divinity.
- No claim to sinlessness.
- Not able to forgive.
- Dead and buried.
- No promise to return.
- Taught us to be good so God will love us.
- Unable to be the light of the world.
- Could not redeem sinners.

***“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest”  
(Matthew 11:28).***

he had a hit song titled: *But for the Grace of God*. In the song, Urban describes two situations of discontentment. The first describes a family who constantly fights and disturbs the neighbors. The second pictures a wealthy old man who takes his daily walk only to return to his empty home surrounded by his things. The person reflecting on these two situations is the one who lives by the grace of God. Listen to this line:

*And silently I say a little prayer...but for the grace of God go I. I must've been born a lucky guy. Heaven only knows how I've been blessed by the gift of your love. I look around and all I see is your happiness embracing me. O Lord, I'd be lost but for the grace of God.*

### **Gospel Contentment**

The truly satisfied person is a believer in the gospel of Christ. How can a believer not be content at “good news.” If it is good news, then we cannot but rejoice with the angels who heralded the birth of Christ. “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests*” (Luke 2:14)

Only a recipient of the gospel message of Christ's work on the cross can appreciate the contentment that comes with being at peace with God through Jesus Christ. The gospel gives what the world could never dream of furnishing. Peace with God allows a person to pursue life with joy, enthusiasm and purpose. Gospel contentment is the key to living life free of fear, anxiety and worry.

The gospel is not just the starting point for a contented life; it is **the** contented life because it is centered on Christ.

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal* (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

Only by focusing on the eternal reality can one achieve earthly contentment. Only by knowing Christ can one know both.



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# Passion Week & The End of the World (3)

by Desmond Ford

## The 4 M's

The history of all human movements shows this sequence: man, movement, method and monument. A man emerges as a dynamic leader to meet the need of the age. He makes disciples and soon you have a movement. But as with any organization—however philanthropical, however religious to start with—by the second generation there is a threat that methods will become so inflexible that the movement becomes a monument. It becomes dead, formalized and secularized.

In the account of our Lord's cleansing the temple on the Monday of Passion Week, we have a warning to every Christian and every Christian organization: It takes great effort to go uphill, but it takes no effort whatsoever to roll downhill, to float with the stream and the current. The tide of worldliness is such that every Christian institution is forever imperiled unless it recognizes its weakness and looks to Christ.

## Ashes Or Flames

Charles E. Hummel wrote a book called, *The Fire in the Fireplace*. In it he said that recurrently, the flame in a church fireplace flickers and dies in the very fireplace designed initially to foster the blaze. Accumulations of soot clog the flue and smother the fire. But the custodians of the fireplace often resist the cleansing which now becomes necessary. The custodians have become comfortable in customs and secure in traditions that have assumed divine authority. Change with its risk is resisted.

Then Dr. Hummel asks the question, what can be done? He says the kindlers of the flame are tempted or forced to move their fire out into the middle of the floor. This is dangerous because it can rage out of control, or the isolated coals can die down for lack of a proper hearth. The best place for the fire is the fireplace, but it should be regularly cleaned, and if necessary, remodeled.

## The One For The Many

We speak about all institutions and individuals that profess the ideals of heaven. Continual reform is the condition for prolonged usefulness. The conflict between Christ and Caiaphas is forever being repeated in church history. Think of that scene where the tall, regal, ancient leader, Caiaphas could say, "It is expedient that one man should die for the people that the whole nation perish not." There was Judaism with its hundreds of years of sacred history, divinely elected for special service, but now in antagonism to the king of glory. Every

honest man and woman of that day had to choose between Christ and Caiaphas—between the organization with all its grandeur, history and traditions, and the One who was the Way, the Truth and the Life.

## The Daily Bath

This is not a condemnation of any specific church because they are all like the people who compose them. A little boy protests to his mother that he does not need a bath; he had one yesterday. But we do need washing every day. The church and individuals need cleansing which can only happen as they come in contact with the word of God. This brings continual reform.

## Renovating The House

Edward Fudge speaks of a religious group as being like a venerable family that has occupied the same house for many generations. The rooms are comfortable. The furnishings are familiar; the attic is full of fascinating memorabilia. When Spring comes, it's time for a thorough house-cleaning. Filled with youthful enthusiasm, ideas drawn from other homes, some of the children now expect radical renovation. They are ready to throw out everything that is old. They want to ignore the past altogether. They want to forget their family heritage, both good and bad.

Some of the older family members try to restrain them. They suggest each room be examined individually and on its own merit. Only some of the heirlooms are worth saving. But some of the aunts and uncles in their dotage, who have grown dim of sight and hard of hearing, want to know where everything is; love the familiarity of it all, and don't want anything disturbed. They suggest, "Just a dusting, just a dusting."

But it will not do. Every church must come back to Holy Writ to survive. It must measure every tradition, every custom and every practice by the words of the Son of God. The test will always be Jesus, his person and his truth.

## Spurgeon's First Words

When Spurgeon became a preacher at the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, these were his first words:

I propose that the subject of the ministry in this house—as long as this platform shall stand, and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshipers—be the person of Jesus Christ. I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist. I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist. But if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, 'It is Jesus

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## **Spurgeon's Last Words**

Just before his death he said this:

If you wear the livery of Christ, you will find him so meek and lowly that you will find rest unto your soul. He is the most magnanimous of captains. There never was his like amongst the choicest of princes. He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold, he always takes the bleakest side of the hill. The heaviest end of the cross lies ever on his shoulders. If he bids you carry a burden, he carries it also.


If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind and tender, lavish and superabundant in love, you will

always find it in him. His service is life and peace and joy. I pray that you would enter in at once. God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus Christ.

## **The Church, A Christian Organization**

Paul says, "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord." (2 Corinthians 4:5) A true Christian Church will make Jesus first, last and best in everything.

But we should begin by criticizing our own lives, our own hearts and our own customs. This will enable us to recognize that the testimony of history is that men often settle down in comfort. God threw off the Jewish church, and threw off the Medieval church. The Anglican church was severed by the rise of Methodism. Many times God has been forced to bring new light by the anguish of separation.

How much better would it be if men individually and corporately looked to Jesus! Churches must examine their creed in connection with the holy Word of the Savior, and make the necessary changes. This is the only way to life. 



# TO and FRO with the Editor

## A Thank You

I want to thank you for sending me Good News Unlimited. I am always interested in the things you are doing for the gospel's sake. May God bless you in spreading the gospel to those who do not know it. Things are happening in this world so fast now. I don't think it will be long before the Lord will come, and I do look forward to his coming soon. As I talk to people each day, it seems as though their interest is not in his soon coming, but only in this world.

When I think of all the time wasted that each of us are accountable for, I think of the time that I have lost and I am so sorry for it. May God help us to remain in him forever and always. This is my prayer. Thanks again, and God bless you all. D.M.

## Question:

How do we know that the sacrificial system of ancient Israel pointed to the sacrifice of the Messiah, Jesus, on the cross? Or was this a Christian invention after the fact to fit Jesus into the Old Testament verses?  
S.K.

## Answer:

Hebrews 9:21+22 states what must have been accepted as a principle by early Christians. Namely, that *"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."* No doubt the church must have felt that this principle was firmly grounded in temple ritual as taught in the Law. This, despite the fact that the Law provided that in the case of extreme poverty, a person could present a meal offering at the temple in place of a live animal (Leviticus 5:11ff.). Nevertheless, the broad tendency of the Jewish sacrificial system reinforced the idea of atonement through the shedding of blood. That is to say, through the giving of a life.

Now, note that Israel's prophets saw that the shedding of blood, of itself, was not a magical cure-all for sins. *"I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats"* (Isaiah 1:10-13). *"I desire mercy not sacrifice"* (Hosea 6:6, compare 1 Samuel 15:22). The killing of animals, as part of an approach to God for atonement for sins, points to something greater than the raw gushing of blood from hapless beasts.

When Jesus came, Christians—all Jews at first—naturally expressed their understanding of Jesus' death on the cross in the familiar language of the temple cult. For them, Jesus is *"the lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). Jesus himself spoke of his forthcoming death in terms of *"the blood of the covenant"* (Matthew 26:28).

If the prophets of the Old Testament could warn against making a talisman out of the blood of animals, so in the gospel we need to see beyond the mere red fluid that drained away from the body of Jesus. The New Testament uses the blood to signify Jesus' death. But the blood meant the giving of a life. The life of the flesh was seen as being in the blood. It is in the giving of his life that the truth of Jesus' death is to be found. It

lies in the moral worth of his choosing to live unto God despite all consequences. This makes his death more valuable than that of any other. The Christian estimate of the atoning value of Jesus' death is built on the conviction that it was his choice; his free act, and therefore a deed of unequalled love. Further, the Christian interpretation of Jesus' death is also based on the principle of corporate personality that was taken for granted in Jewish society. As the Davidic prince, Jesus' sacrifice has implications for his people. They are included in his ordeal and his triumph.


## Question:

I am puzzled about Jesus' statement in Matthew (5:17) regarding the law. When Jesus said that not the least stroke of a pen would be put aside until all was fulfilled, was the fulfillment he spoke of his death on the cross or the second coming?  
M.D.

## Answer:

Matthew 5:17 ought not be read without due regard to Matthew's whole scheme of writing in his gospel. One of Matthew's aims is to show to the Jewish Christian community that Jesus in no way discredits or overturns the historic revelation given through Moses. Jesus' statement in this verse shows his bona fides within Judaism. There are other similar statements which back the law of Moses (22:34-40).

Christians can, with some justification, claim that Jesus climactically fulfilled the Old Testament on the cross. But I do not think Matthew 5:17 is primarily a statement about when that fulfillment would occur. It is instead part of a recurring theme in Matthew in which Jesus, having shown that he is consistent with and continuous to the law of Moses, also claims to be more than it and greater than it. For example, in 5:20 he declares that the righteousness of the kingdom that he has come to establish surpasses the righteousness of the chief exponents of the law. The transfiguration scene in chapter seventeen is designed to show that Jesus is himself, without Moses and Elijah (the law and the prophets), the new lawgiver; alone sufficient for the Christian's moral inspiration and guide.

With this in mind, I think it is better to say that Jesus, rather than the cross or the second coming, is the fulfillment of the law. 

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*"... His compassions never fail. They are new every morning"* (Lamentations 3:22+23).

# NEWS BITS . . .

## Faith in North Korea

“North Korea used to be a Christian country before the communists took over in 1945,” according to Yoon Kwon Chae whose father was one of the first Christian ministers in Korea. But now, according to the U.S Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the government in North Korea suppresses all independent religious activity. People who engage in public religious expression or other unauthorized religious activities continue to be arrested and imprisoned.

“What will happen to the North Korean Christians?” asks Yoon Kwon Chae, the minister’s son, who is himself a missionary. “No one knows. However, these Christians will keep on meeting and will be increasing in number. Even from North Korean governmental reports, an increase of about 50 percent every year is apparent. The communistic government may be able to destroy freedom; they may be able to destroy democracy; but God they cannot destroy.” -Crosswalk.

## Bonhoeffer Remembered

COPENHAGEN. The German Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, hanged in 1945 for his opposition to Adolph Hitler, has been commemorated in Denmark by the country’s Lutheran church. The commemoration took place on the Danish island of Fanoe, where 70 years previously, Bonhoeffer had taken part in a key international church gathering which denounced the pro-Nazi German Christians, and gave support to the Confessing church which grouped German Protestants opposed to Hitler. -ENI. PO Box 2100 CH-1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland.

## Decline in Religious Identity

A new survey by the institute for Jewish and Community Research concludes that religious identity in the United States has declined over the past decade. The San Francisco based group’s survey titled The Decline of Religious Identity in the United States, found that 16 percent of respondents declined to identify with a particular faith, up from less than 10 percent in the early ‘90s. This no-religion grouping is now the third largest in the nation, behind Catholics, at 24 percent, and Baptists, at 17 percent. -BNN.

## Christians Come to Blows

An age-old dispute between Christian denominations that share the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem erupted into a brawl over the opening of a door during a Greek Orthodox procession. The incident draws attention to the rivalry between the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Ethiopian, Egyptian Coptic and Syrian Orthodox denominations who rigorously guard their sections of the church under a “status quo” law passed in 1757 during the days of the Ottoman Empire. It erupted as a Greek

Orthodox procession approached the door to a Roman Catholic chapel in the church, traditionally revered as the hill of crucifixion and the tomb of Christ’s burial. -ENI.

## Evangelical Women and Depression

Like her father, evangelist Billy, Ruth Graham knows how to deliver an uplifting message. After she speaks before large crowds at Christian Women’s Conferences, long lines form to have a few words with the youngest daughter of one of the most famous preachers in American history. Many of these women come to discuss a subject previously taboo in evangelical Christian circles, a subject that used to suggest weakness, or even lack of faith, for those dragged down by its tentacles. That subject is depression, a topic the younger Graham addresses with credibility because she has fallen into that black hole. Graham is not alone in her disclosure. Depression is a condition prominent evangelical women are coming to grips with.

## Headscarf Ban

A German court has ruled that a regional ban on Muslim teachers wearing headscarves must also apply to Christian nuns, reports say. The southwestern state of Baden-Wuerttemberg passed a law in April preventing teachers from wearing Islamic-style headscarves. But Germany’s highest administrative court says the law must apply to all faiths, Der Spiegel magazine reports.

## Christian Peacemakers Attacked

Settlers in the occupied territories have again attacked Christian peacemakers in Hebron. Settlers launched a vicious attack on a Christian Peacemaker Team. They were whipped with chains and severely beaten.

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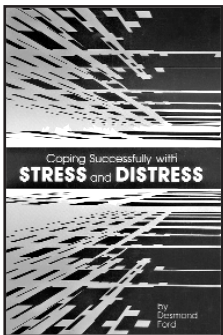
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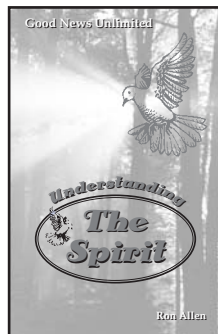
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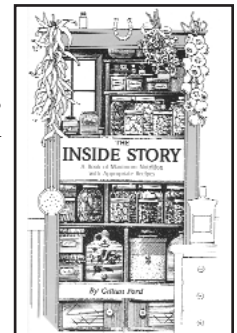
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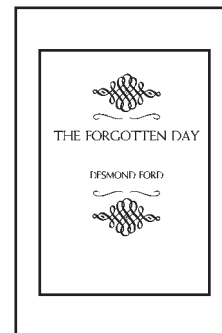
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