

## Going Home

In the year 1823, John Howard Payne touched the heart of the nation when he penned the words, “Mid pleasures and places though we may roam, be it ever so humble there’s no place like home.”

And during the dark years of World War II, the popular song, “I’ll be home for Christmas—If only in my dreams,” served to express the longing of enlisted men and women everywhere.

Yes, home has always held a special place in the heart of man.

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When I was eight years old, my parents, after years of struggling through the depression, sold the family farm and moved into Woodstock.

When the sale of the implements and animals was over and the auctioneer had left, the family piled into our old chevy and drove out the lane.

Mother rode in the front seat, with the chime clock on her lap, and with tears running down her cheeks.

We children were leaving the only home we had ever known.

I became a city kid, grew up, and in process of time, traded my parental home for a home of my own.

And as far as I can remember, we seldom, if ever, revisited the farm.

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About two years ago, my eldest son John, expressed a desire to see the farm that his dad had been born on.

So off we went.

The little red schoolhouse on the corner of our farm had been turned into a family dwelling.

Across the road, at my grandmother's place, there was a family sitting on the front porch.

We pulled in for a short visit, and then headed down the road to the homeplace.

When we drove in, there was nobody home.

In fact, the large red brick house with upper and lower balconies seemed to be unoccupied.

As we drove toward the barn it became increasingly apparent that the old farm was only being used for the prime land it provided.

The barn, that I remembered as a child, and which contained a stable for dairy cattle, a separate wing for chickens, and of course an ample hayloft, was in poor shape, and obviously, empty.

The soft lowing of cattle and the contented murmur of chickens had been swallowed up by a profound silence, broken only by the crunch of gravel under our tires, as we slowly drove away.

For John the Baptist, the time had come to leave the comfort of his elderly parents' home and begin a life of seclusion in the deserts of Judea.

He would be trading his mother's home  
cooking for a diet of locusts and wild  
honey.

Strange, you might say, but John was on a  
mission.

It had been divinely impressed upon him,  
that he was the one spoken of by the  
prophet Isaiah, so many years ago.

He was . . . **"The voice of one crying in  
the wilderness: "Prepare the way of  
the LORD; Make straight in the desert  
A highway for our God."**

Yes, He was Messiah's herald, charged with  
the preparation of God's people.

His message would be . . . **"Repent, for  
the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"**

And that message would spread like  
wildfire throughout Israel, and no  
doubt by word of mouth, to the  
remotest hill towns and fishing  
villages in Galilee.

And it would most certainly be the topic  
of discussion in Joseph's carpenter

shop, where his Stepson was carrying on the family business.

Of course, Jesus knew all about it.

And yes, the time had come.

And so, packing up a few things, and saying goodbye to His mother and the rest of the family, He traded His warm bed and flourishing business for the open road.

He would make His way to the Jordan to be baptized by his cousin John, whom no doubt, He had not seen in years.

Beginning to read now, in Luke 3:21, **"When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.*"**

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Let me to make a little detour, in order to get a better understanding of this last sentence.

**"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age."**

Certainly, by taking His place with His national brethren, Jesus was fulfilling all righteousness.

But there was something about His baptism that was a little unusual.

You see, John was calling upon the people to . . . **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,**" and Jesus had nothing to repent of.

And even before John saw the sign of a dove, that positively identified his cousin as . . . **"the Son of God,"** he instinctively recognized Him as his superior.

**"I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"**

And he was right.

There was something else going on here,  
and it is described in this last  
sentence.

In short, this was the commencement of  
Jesus' . . . "**ministry.**"

You might say, it was His commissioning.  
And it is instructive to note, that the  
sons of Levi began their priestly  
ministry at the age of 30.

We can read about that in Numbers chapter  
three.

Now, I am aware of the fact, that Numbers  
chapter 8 sets the age limit at 25,  
and later, King David lowered it to  
20, but, as far as numbers chapter 3  
is concerned, a Levite entered the  
priesthood at age 30.

At that time, he was anointed with oil,  
setting him apart for his holy  
ministry.

And here, at Jesus' baptism, we are told  
. . . "**Jesus Himself began His**  
**ministry at about thirty years of**  
**age."**

And He was anointed, not with holy oil,  
but by the Holy Spirit, descending  
upon Him in the form of a dove . . .

**"and a voice came from heaven which  
said, "You are My beloved Son; in You  
I am well pleased."**

And so, under the direction of the Holy  
Spirit, Jesus was on His way.

His top priority, indeed, He only  
priority, would be His Father's  
business.

All else, including His ties with home,  
would be secondary.

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Before we press on, there is a loose end  
here, that needs tying up.

In Numbers chapter 3 it is stipulated,  
that not only was a Levitical priest  
to begin his ministry at age 30, but  
he was to retire at age 50.

And that requirement was reasonable.

When you consider the fact that the  
priests were involved in the control  
and butchering of full-size bullocks



and even hoisting the pieces onto the brazen altar, which was about 4-½ feet high, they would have to be in good physical condition.

Also, during their time in the wilderness they would be packing up and unpacking the tabernacle, every time they moved. And when they entered the Promised Land, they were given a plot of ground that they could farm, in addition to their priestly duties.

So, 50 years was a reasonable figure.

But, what about John the Baptist's father, Zacharias.

Surely, he was well over the age of 50, and he was still serving in the temple.

How do we explain that?

Well, the answer is found in Numbers 8:25-26.

Yes, ". . . **at the age of fifty years they must cease performing this work, and shall work no more.**"

However, as we read on, we will discover a further stipulation.

**"They may minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of meeting, to attend to needs, but they *themselves* shall do no work."**

So, even though Zacharias was too old to do the heavy lifting, he could help with the needs of his fellow priests.

In this case . . . **"his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense."**

And doesn't the altar of incense symbolize the prayers of God's people?

So then, we older folk may not be able to serve with the vigour we had in former days, but we can still have an effective ministry in prayer.

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Getting back to Jesus' baptism, and in this case, the beginning of **"His**

**ministry,"** there was no time to go home.

Mark's gospel tells us . . . **"immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness."**

Obviously, the Holy Spirit considered this next step to be of great importance. You see, not only was Jesus the Son of God, but He was also the Son of man. As such, He was the possessor of a human body.

Certainly, His incarnation was necessary. Only a man could die for man's sins. However, considering the pathway set out before Him, it was essential that Jesus' body be kept in complete subjection to His will.

No amount of physical suffering could be allowed to alter His course.

And in my opinion, His temptations in the wilderness gave Him the opportunity to develop a physical endurance that would stand Him in good stead in the future.

And part of that future would include that night in the garden of Gethsemane, when He, " . . . **offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.**"

Also, the book of Hebrews tells us . . .  
"when He came into the world, He said:  
"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me."

And that body must be in complete subjection to His will.

Also, included in that wilderness experience, was the total commitment of His physical welfare into the hands of His Heavenly Father.

For instance, even though we know the fast would only last for 40 days, I don't think Jesus had been given that information.

He simply spent one agonizing day after another in complete dependence upon His Father's good judgment.

And Mark's gospel gives us an interesting sidelight concerning that time of testing.

It says " . . . **He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts-"**

So, here we have the Son of God, looking quite thin and haggard, His physical resources nearly spent, and lying quietly beside their Creator are the wild beasts of the wilderness.

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And now, if you want to follow along, I will be choosing my references from Matthew 4:2-11.

**"And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry."**

This of course, was the perfect time for Satan to make his appearance.

**"If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."**

Why don't you use your divine powers to satisfy your physical needs?

If you don't do something soon, you're going to die!

Immediately, Jesus' drew His response from scripture.

In this case, it was Deuteronomy 8:3.

**"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"**

I can almost sense Satan's disappointment.

Even under these extreme conditions, the desire of the flesh had not moved Him.

But there were other ways.

Surely, He would be anxious to claim His title as Israel's Messiah and he had the perfect shortcut to offer Him.

**"Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His**

**angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.' "**

Yes, Satan can quote scripture also, and in this case, it was Psalm 91:11-12.

And didn't this look like a good idea.

Jump off the pinnacle of the temple in front of an awestruck crowd and be borne up by a host of angels.

You would be immediately recognized as the Son of God, and of course, their Messiah.

However, if you compare Satan's words in Matthew 4:6, with the quotation in Psalms 91, you will discover that he left out the last part of V11, which says . . . **"To keep you in all your ways."**

And there was a reason for that.

What he was proposing was Satan's way, and with an ulterior motive attached.

But it could never be Jesus' way.

As He stood there looking down from that lofty height, Jesus knew that such a jump would be an attempt to force His Father's hand, and He could never do that.

So, once again referring to God's Word (as it is recorded in Deuteronomy 6:16) He said . . . **"It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the LORD your God.'"**

Certainly, we have no way of knowing what Satan's thoughts were, but they might have been something like this.

Well, this isn't as easy as I thought.

There doesn't seem to be an ounce of pride in Him.

But I'm not beaten yet.

I have one more weapon in my arsenal, and it is deadly.

I will appeal to the desire of the eyes.

**"Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All**



**these things I will give You if You  
will fall down and worship me."**

But wait a minute.

Hadn't His Heavenly Father promised Him  
these very same things?

Someday, in His millennial kingdom, Jesus  
will have **"all the kingdoms of the  
world and their glory."**

So, what was the appeal, here?

It was simply the fact that Jesus could  
have it now.

There would be no need to go down that  
long road of suffering.

It would be instant gratification and no  
crucifixion.

But there was a condition.

He must change His allegiance.

Just . . . **"fall down and worship me."**

Well, that was the last straw.

**" . . . Away with you, Satan! For it is  
written, 'You shall worship the LORD  
your God, and Him only you shall  
serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and**

**behold, angels came and ministered to Him."**

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Certainly, the angels' ministry must have included food and drink to strengthen Him for His return journey.

And once again, Jesus would be busy about His Father's business.

In a matter of two days, He would acquire His first five disciples, Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.

And on the third day, He would be attending a wedding, perhaps of a relative, in Cana of Galilee not far from His own home.

I will be reading in John 2:1-16 for a while if you would like to follow along.

**"On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding."**

As you will notice, Jesus' mother wasn't a guest.

She was simply, **"there"** to help out.

On the other hand, Jesus and His five disciples were guests.

**"And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."**

By this time, I'm quite sure Mary was a widow.

So, it would be natural for her eldest Son to be her problem solver.

But Jesus' situation had changed, and although she hadn't realized it yet, her situation had also changed.

Jesus had begun His public ministry.

He would be getting His directions from His Heavenly Father, not His earthly mother.

And by the way, this little scene rather puts a damper on the idea that you can petition the so-called queen of heaven

to "Show that thou art his mother" and to "Lay thy maternal commands on the Saviour."

However, even under these changing circumstances, I'm sure Mary was His own dear mother.

And we shouldn't be concerned about the word "**Woman,**" that He used on this occasion.

It was the same endearing word that Jesus used when He entrusted His mother into the care of His disciple John.

But did you notice the words . . . "**My hour has not yet come.**"

Obviously, Mary thought something should be done right away!

But her time was not God's time, and consequently, not Jesus' time.

And Mary had enough discernment to get that point.

Without a word of protest, she turned to the servants and said . . . "**Whatever He says to you, do it.**"

Yes, "*Fill the water pots with water, fill them to the brim.*

*Do exactly what He tells you, leave the miracle to Him."*

**"And He said to them, "Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast." And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, "Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!"**

In my imagination, I am looking at the bridegroom's face.

For some time now, it had been clouded with worry.

Running out of wine on an occasion such as this would be a disgrace.

Of course, he tried to smile when the master of the feast praises him so profusely.

But there was a certain amount of bewilderment in that smile.

I must have a talk with the servants. Surely, they will know what happened.

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Well, the feast was over, and it was time for everyone to go home.

But Jesus wasn't going home, even though Nazareth was quite close to Cana.

No, He was headed for Capernaum, which was about a day's journey away, to have a quick look around.

You see, it would be Capernaum, not Jerusalem, that would be His centre of operation in the future.

So then, Jesus . . . **"went down to Capernaum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; and they did not stay there many days."**

No doubt His family noticed a sense of urgency in Jesus' manner, and it was

not long before He said His goodbyes  
and hurried off.

You see, Jesus had an appointment to keep.  
An appointment foretold by the prophet  
Malachi 400 years ago.

Malachi 3:1-2 **"Behold, I send My  
messenger, And he will prepare the way  
before Me. And the Lord, whom you  
seek, Will suddenly come to His  
temple, Even the Messenger of the  
covenant, In whom you delight. Behold,  
He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.  
"But who can endure the day of His  
coming? And who can stand when He  
appears? For He is like a refiner's  
fire And like launderer's soap."**

The first part of that prophecy had  
already been fulfilled.

At that very moment, John the Baptist was  
busy preparing the way before Him.

It was now time for their Messiah to  
suddenly appear, and **"like a refiner's  
fire,"** cleanse the temple.

**"Take these things away! Do not make My  
Father's house a house of  
merchandise!"**

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From that point on, Jesus' days would be filled with activity, and many of His nights with prayer.

Of course, He visited Jerusalem and the surrounding area, but He was also found in Galilee . . . **"teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him--from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan."**



Understandably, the cry went out . . . **"A great prophet has risen up among us;"** and, **"God has visited His people."**

And it was on this wave of national recognition that Jesus found time to visit His family.

I will be reading in Luke 4:16 to 30, if you would like to follow along.

**"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah."**

Yes, things seemed to be settling back into their natural order.

Once again, Jesus was to be found in His accustomed place in the synagogue.

And no doubt there was a sense of pride, as their carpenter, now a well-known prophet, was handed Isaiah to read.

Quietly He unrolled the scroll until He came to the place, in Isaiah 61, where it says . . . **"The Spirit of the Lord**

GOD *is* upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to *those who are bound*; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD," . . . and there He stopped . . . at a comma.

All eyes were upon Him as He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

Why had He stopped in the middle of a sentence?

There were still the words . . . **"And the day of vengeance of our God"** and so on, to be completed.

The truth is, that comma separated over 2000 years of history.

What He had read foretold the coming of their Messiah.

They all knew that.

The rest of the sentence referred to His second coming, which is still future.

So, what would Jesus' comments be.

Would He admonish them to continue looking  
for their King?

Would He, like John the Baptist, encourage  
them to repent for the kingdom of  
heaven was at hand?

But no, He made no such comments.

Instead, He astonished them all with an  
announcement (and we are back in Luke  
4:21) . . . **"Today this Scripture is  
fulfilled in your hearing."**

Did He really say that!

**"So all bore witness to Him, and marveled  
at the gracious words which proceeded  
out of His mouth. And they said, "Is  
this not Joseph's son?"**

Oh yes, that was the point, wasn't it?

He was Joseph's son, their local  
carpenter.

A prophet maybe, but their Messiah?

Never!

He had stepped beyond the limits they had  
set for Him.

And now, (skipping ahead to verse 28)  
things got very nasty.

Yes, "**. . . all those in the synagogue,**  
(and don't forget, many of them were  
His neighbours) **. . . "when they heard**  
**these things, were filled with wrath,**  
**and rose up and thrust Him out of the**  
**city; and they led Him to the brow of**  
**the hill on which their city was**  
**built, that they might throw Him down**  
**over the cliff."**

Oh, He was totally in control, and . . .  
**"passing through the midst of them, He**  
**went His way."**

But, what a homecoming!

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Some time had passed.

By this time, Jesus had gone, ". . .  
**through every city and village,**  
**preaching and bringing the glad**  
**tidings of the kingdom of God. And the**  
**twelve were with Him."**

And it was in the company of these faithful men, that He returned once more to His hometown.

Yes, it was good to be home again!

And it would be so good to lay His head down in His accustomed sleeping place with all those familiar things around Him.

In the morning, there would be breakfast, served by His sisters, eaten with His brothers, and with His mother smiling across the table at Him.

Of course, there was the memory of that last visit when the members of the synagogue were so violent.

And on a more personal level, His brothers did not believe in Him.

But still, it was good to be home.

And this time, all His disciples were with Him.

They would visit the quiet streets where He had played as a boy.

And there was the carpenter shop that He had spent so many hours in plying His trade.

How small it looked now.

In my imagination, I see them meeting some of Jesus' old customers.

They wondered if He might be returning sometimes soon.

Certainly, the other fellow was a good chap, but he didn't seem to have that special touch they were used to.

And now, we will be reading in Mark 6:2-6.

**"And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing *Him* were astonished, saying, "Where *did* this Man get these things? And what wisdom *is* this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! "Is this not the carpenter . . . ?"**

Yes, our assumption had been correct.

As the oldest son, Jesus had taken His stepfather's place in the carpentry

shop, to provide for the needs of the family.

But familiarity breeds contempt, doesn't it?

And in disbelief, they cried out, ". . . what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands! "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house."

Certainly, this wasn't the response He had been getting in the other synagogues. By this time, everyone looked upon Him as a mighty prophet, and His authority in the scriptures had not been questioned.

But not in Nazareth!

His brothers and sisters and of course His mother, were well known.

And they certainly knew He had spent His time in the carpenter shop, not in a rabbinical school.

So then, . . . **"Where *did* this Man get these things?"**

As a result, " . . . He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed *them*. And He marveled because of their **unbelief.**"

That was the bottom line, wasn't it?

**"He could do no mighty work there."**

It wasn't a case of would not but could not.

And when we are talking about Someone who had flung the stars into space, that is a shocking revelation.

And this conclusion is further strengthened when we consider the two blind men who came to Jesus for healing.



As you might remember, Jesus said . . .

**"Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, saying, "According to your *faith* let it be to you."**

Yes, Jesus' miracles must be accompanied by faith.

Of course, that doesn't mean we have any power over His ability.

No, it's just the way it works.

It is . . . **"According to your faith let it be to you."**

So, what about us.

Are we limiting . . . **"the Holy One of Israel?"**

Are we doubting the One who flung the stars into space?

May it never be said of us . . . **"He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief."**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

"Fear not, little flock, from the cross to the throne,  
From death into life He went for His own;

All power in earth, all power above,  
Is given to Him for the flock of His love.  
Only believe, only believe;  
All things are possible, only believe.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Fast-forward to that night in the Upper  
Room.

Tomorrow, Jesus would be facing the wrath  
of man, and for our sake, the  
righteous judgment of God.

Tomorrow, He would be made . . . **“sin for  
us, that we might become the  
righteousness of God in Him.”**

And then, after rising victorious from the  
grave, He would be going home.

Returning to His former glory and His  
rightful place at His Father’s right  
hand.

But He had no intention of abandoning His  
disciples.

Oh no!

As He promised those rather frightened men  
“ . . . **I will pray the Father, and He  
will give you another Helper, that He**

may abide with you forever--"the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you."

Yes, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, He would always be with them. And someday they would be going home also.

**"In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also."**

And someday we, who love the Lord Jesus, will be going home to be with Him. It's called the rapture, and it is our blessed hope.

Yes, " . . . in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead

**will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality."**

The redemption of our bodies is a very last step in our total redemption, and it will be accomplished at the rapture.

It is part of our blessed hope.

But maybe, like so many others, we will be welcomed home before that event, leaving our bodies to catch up later.

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“Going home, going home,  
I’m just going home.  
Quiet-like, slip away-  
I’ll be going home.  
It’s not far, just close by;  
Jesus is the Door;  
Work all done, laid aside,  
Fear and grief no more.  
Friends are there, waiting now.  
He is waiting, too.  
See His smile! See His hands!

He will lead me through.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Well, I must close quickly for my time is more than up.

But I cannot leave without a word of admonition, indeed a word of warning.

I think the apostle John put it in a nutshell, when he said . . . **“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”**

Yes, eternal life is a gift, not the result of our good works.

It is **“ . . . by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”**

And Jesus left no doubt about who is the author of our salvation, when He said . . . **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”**

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The world as we know it is on the  
threshold of God's judgment.

If we have not already done it, it is time  
to surrender our life and our eternal  
destiny into the hands of the One who  
said . . . **"Come to Me, all you who  
labor and are heavy laden, and I will  
give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you  
and learn from Me, for I am gentle and  
lowly in heart, and you will find rest  
for your souls. "For My yoke is easy  
and My burden is light."**

