

The Gospel Message

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Goodbye, Death Valley

Roy Loney

A wagon train reached the top of a mountain pass, and was prepared to descend into the valley below. One man of the party turned for one last look at the valley they had just left, and waving his hand with a gesture of great relief, cried, "Goodbye Death Valley." This wagon train was composed of the now famed "49ers" who, with their families, had sought a short-cut to the alluring gold fields of California, and had wandered into the now famed Death Valley where they endured terrible hardships in that barren desert of unendurable heat. This was how Death Valley got its name. The group that was able to escape from that furnace of heat were much fewer in number than those who entered, for that valley was dotted with the graves of many who perished under the searing, merciless rays of the sun that sometimes raises the temperature to 134 degrees Fahrenheit, and no person can long remain in that heat without damage to his system. There is no available information as to how many persons have lost their lives in that area.

On a recent trip to California, circumstances permitted me to visit that valley. Of course I did not go during the summer months. It was early December, and the weather at that time of the year was reasonably comfortable, and a trip at that time of the year involved no risks. The scenery was amazing! It would be difficult to describe the grandeur of the varicolored hills and mountains, and the weird and fascinating views all but impoverish one's vocabulary, if a description was attempted orally. Fortunately, my 35MM camera with a roll of colored film pictured it far better than speech could do.

At one point called Bad Water, we reached the lowest point on the North American continent, 274 feet below the sea level, and from that point on a clear day one can see towering, snow-capped Mt. Whitney, the highest point in the continental United States. My first view of the valley greatly deceived me, as the alkali flats presented the appearance of a shallow lake. This appearance rapidly dissipated as we descended lower into the valley. One ghost town, Rhyolite, presented a scene of utter desolation. Men consumed with a thirst for gold, braved the terrible heat of this desert, and recklessly built houses and even a railroad that, in a few years was abandoned to the mercy of the elements.

After a tasty and nourishing meal at Furnace Creek Ranch, we had a couple of hour's leisure to examine the museum, and the immediately surrounding country. Of particular interest were the famed "Twenty Mule Team Borax" wagons that were used to haul borax to points where it could be shipped to factories.

While there I meditated much as to the application of the scenery to the facts of Life, Death and the Hereafter. Since Adam's grievous sin in Eden all of his posterity have been faced with the grim reality of death. The stern sentence of an offended God was "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return"—Genesis 3: 19. Four thousand years later, the apostle Paul stated the solemn, undeniable truth,

"And as it is appointed unto man to die, but after this the judgment"—Hebrews 9:27. Today every son and daughter of Adam's lost and fallen race faces the inevitable experience of death. "Wherefore as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men,

for that all have sinned"—Romans 5:12. It has been estimated that at least 60 billion people have lived on earth up to the present. All of them physically sleep in the dust of the centuries that are forever past. How many unnumbered billions may yet enter the dark tombs of death we cannot know; but this old world which we call "the land of the living" is in reality, the land of death. Satan once stated "all that a man hath will he give for his life"—Job 2:4, and in so stating he expressed the common desire of every normal person to maintain life at any cost. Man's tenacious hold on life, even amid the most unfavorable circumstances, has been the wonder of the ages. Old age with its cruel infirmities does not lessen man's desire to remain in the land of the living. Few indeed are those who willingly and gladly relinquish their hold upon the cords of life, and yet all face the grim reality that "death is the lot of all." No question ever penetrated the mind of man that held greater interest than the question as to what will death bring. Even though man knows that death is inevitable, yet instinctively he shudders at the thought of leaving this world to try the realities of that which is to come. The valley of death, for many centuries, had been shrouded with the dark curtain of uncertainty. To the untaught and unsaved, Death's valley is filled with unnamed, inexpressible terrors. The agnostic tries to comfort himself that he faces only "the dreamless silence of the tongueless dust." or that death is an eternal sleep. But even the prospect of what he believes to be "eternal oblivion" does not dim the fact that they would gladly avoid death's dark shadows.

In the very center of California's Death Valley the traveler finds accommodations either at Furnace Creek Ranch or Furnace Creek Inn. The latter place caters to the wishes of the wealthy. Every luxurious convenience and means of physical pleasure and comfort is found there.

At the Ranch any ordinary traveler or tourist can be refreshed, and sheltered with a maximum of comfort. Man has wrought wonders in making that arid, barren place habitable. The Valley has, in a large measure been robbed of its terrors: especially is this true in the late fall and winter seasons of the year. Instead of a valley of death, it has through man's ingenuity become a place of pleasure and comfort.

Since Christ passed through the Valley of Death, it too has been robbed of its terrors. Jesus conquered death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Instead of the valley of death being a place of terror, it has now become a beautiful avenue that leads to endless light and eternal pleasures. Truly Jesus has "delivered them who through fear of death were all their life- time subject to bondage." because he tasted death for every man"—Hebrews 2:14, 15. What a wonderful change!

The blanched cheek that once faced death with the fear of the unknown, is now rosy with a glorious hope of the future. The terrors of death have been turned into the hope of Tomorrow. Instead of shrinking from Death's cold hand, we lovingly grasp it to walk through the temporary darkness into the eternal light of Heaven's glory. This is the hope of the Christian. We may often be called upon to stand by an open grave, and watch with tear-dimmed eyes as the earthly form of a loved one is laid gently to rest in the bosom of Mother earth. We say not "Goodbye, forever," but "Good- night 'till the Morning breaks, and the shadows flee away." For we sorrow not as others which have no hope, but believing with positive assurance that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"—I Thessalonians 4:13,14.

Once I was in a vast crowd that filled to capacity a large church building. That crowd was hushed and tearful as before us was a flower covered casket containing the form of a lovely young woman. Most regretfully her life ended while yet it was noon, and her large family of heart- broken relatives wept unashamedly as the services opened. Sweet-voiced singers in muted tones gave utterance in song to those most beautiful words-- There's a land that is fairer than day; and by faith we may see it afar- for the Father waits over the way, to prepare us a dwelling place there." This was a scene that in general has transpired so many times in every community; but this one was much different. As the singers began their song of spiritual comfort, the grey haired Mother of the deceased lifted up her voice, and

in calm tones sang the song to its melodious end. That mother's sorrow was as deep and poignant as any mother's could be, yet the welling up in her heart of the glorious hope of the resurrection dried her tears and calmed her grief-stricken heart! What a wonderful hope! Listen! "Let not your heart be troubled: Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. . . 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 unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also"—Jesus. With an unshakable faith in Christ, who for us walked gladly and willingly through Death's dark valley, we can say with the Psalmist "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

We write these things to you because it would grieve us deeply if you should be required to go down to the grave "having no hope, and without God in the world." In Christ Jesus, who is our hope, we can have the full assurance of faith as the evening shadows swiftly lengthen over the fields of life, and the chilling winds of death blow toward us from that cold shore of eternity. Be prepared for the certain call of death by surrendering your life in humble obedience to Christ. This is the desire, the hope and the prayer of one who cares for your soul. A soul that has entrusted its future into the hands of the sin-forgiving Christ, will find no fears on the brink of the grave, nor will there be any terrors in the valley.

Christ is reigning upon the throne in the highest heavens, and no power in earth or Hades can dethrone this all-conquering Prince of Peace. His reign shall continue till every foe is conquered, and "the last enemy to be destroyed is death"—I Corinthians 15:25. When death and hades have surrendered its very last victims, then the unnumbered redeemed of all ages of the past can sing in rapture, "Death is swallowed up in victory! O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—I Corinthians 15:54-55.

The lost Eden will be more than restored, for that Old Serpent, the devil who was responsible for the entrance of death into the world, will be eternally removed from all contact with the creatures of God; and then forever, through the unending ages of eternal bliss, the ransomed of the Lord shall dwell in perfect peace and joy. **"Goodbye, Death Valley!"**

Worship Winford Lee

There are two words in the book of Revelation that echo a solemn warning, give forth a plaintive plea, and point humanity in the right direction. Those words are, "Worship God"—Revelation 19:10. In the second chapter of Acts, the gospel invitation was given by Peter and the other apostles, and 3,000 souls obeyed the truth. This fact is very important because the word of God does not require things of us that are not necessary or vital. No one can over emphasize the importance of repenting and being baptized, but the divine instructions go much farther. Man must continue doing the will of the Creator or all else is in vain. The obligation of every Christian is to worship God. Worship is an act of adoration, and the outward act signifies what is in the heart. This does not give man the liberty to perform as he feels in his heart; because God requires us to "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"—Proverbs 4:23. We are responsible to God as to how our hearts perform.

We find the record stating what the 3,000 did after they obeyed the gospel and became the lord's disciples. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"—Acts 2:42. This shows that the religion of Jesus is a revealing religion, not dependent on feeling; but upon whether the commands are kept. It is possible for us to have the right

motive prompting worship, and yet we may not worship God in the right way. For example, let us consider the case of Lydia in the 16th chapter of Acts. She was a saleslady quite a distance from home, and had assembled with other women outside the city of Philippi. When Paul arrived in that city, he speaks to the women who had resorted by the riverbank. According to Acts 16:14 this woman worshipped God, but she was not worshipping according to the law of Christ. She was worshipping according to the law of Moses which had ceased to be effective. We learn in Romans 10:4 that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness." If Lydia's worship was all right, why did Paul speak to her of the gospel and induce her to obey it?

Do you know there are four kinds of worship mentioned in the New Testament, and only one of the four is acceptable to God? Let us consider each one separately.

1st: Vain Worship. In Matthew 15:9 Christ States, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Jesus says there is a vain worship, and if you say any worship is all right as long as a person is sincere, it is you and the Lord for it. The word vain means, "empty, devoid of any real value." According to the Bible, this "vain worship" is brought about by using the doctrines and commandments of men instead of the law of Christ.

Next, we have 2nd Ignorant Worship. When the apostle Paul went to Athens, and saw it given wholly to idolatry, he informed the Athenians that the "Unknown God" whom they "ignorantly worshipped" was the God he preached unto them. Ignorance has always been a curse, and always will be. According to Isaiah 5:13 the Israelites went into captivity because they lacked knowledge of God and of God's ways. An understanding of the Bible is still the world's greatest need. No one can acceptably worship God unless they know what God desires. Timothy was instructed to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"—II Timothy 2:15. Is ignorance excusable? Absolutely Not! If I believed it was I would quit preaching at once, because if ignorance is going to save people eternally, the more ignorant the better. Such thinking is ridiculous! The apostle Paul was not commending Israel when he said they "had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge"—Romans 10:2. Next, we will consider any other type of worship

3rd. Will Worship. This kind of worship is also undesirable, as it is that which is self-willed, not God willed. There are some people in the world who cannot see the truth for the simple reason that they won't. They are imbedded in the traditions of their religion to the extent that they won't believe what the Bible teaches when it is shown to them in black and white. Jesus said he came "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"—John 6:38. Now let us consider the last and final form of worship.

4th. True Worship. There were plenty of religions in the world when Jesus came, but he came to set up a different standard. A standard that would meet the needs of all the people under all circumstance! Jesus informs us that "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth"—John 4:24. Here we have the ultimatum, and there is no alternative. We must worship in spirit and in truth. There is only one way by which you can know if your worship is acceptable to God. It must be measure by the word of the Lord.

THE ENDLESS ACTIVITY

Wm. J. Hensley

The holy Scriptures are brought to the reality of an endless activity which brought joy and spiritual well-being to the children of God in the early days of Christianity.

"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God"—I Corinthians 1:18. The preaching of the gospel in word and life was a daily part of every Christian's activity. This led the follower of the Lord Jesus to look upon his unsaved neighbor or relative as one to whom he owed a debt of love. In this, one away from Christ, he could see the greatest of all needs, the salvation of the soul from sin.

To those who read this writing: First, if you are in sin today, someone wants to see you saved. Secondly, if you are already a Christian in the Bible sense of the word, you are the one who should want to see the unsaved, saved from sin.

The ministry of making the gospel known to the world was paramount in the minds of the early Christians. Remember, even in the hour of great persecution, they went forth preaching the word—Acts 8:1-4. They were urged to live righteously as well—Philippians 1:27. If you are a Christian, you will always owe a debt of love to those about you. To your brethren in Christ, and to the sinner without the ark of safety your obligation to the latter is to live and speak in the way that will lead his soul to Christ.

The Humanity of Christ **Roy Loney**

"And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth"—John 1:14.

Perhaps to many the incarnation of Christ, is the greatest mystery of the entire Bible, the one fact hardest to understand, and yet the one truth most essential to man's salvation. Anyone who denies that Christ came in the flesh, is antichrist—II John 7. We ponder the great mystery as to how God could be made manifest in the flesh. The difficulty of believing this fact lies not in any unreasonableness of what is revealed, but in man's incapacity of understanding the working of God's infinite mind. If we believe in God, we must likewise believe that God's power is unlimited. With the prophet we can say, "Ah Lord God, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee"—Jeremiah 32:17. We behold mysteries every day, yet give them little thought. What could be a seemingly greater mystery than when we eat a dish of vegetables, those vegetables are, in a matter of hours, turned into human flesh and blood. The same grass which a cow eats which is turned into milk for human consumption, also causes the bony structure to grow which we call horns. We should not reject a thing because our little minds may not comprehend it. Nothing can be harder to believe than that this great universe, of which we are a very small part, could exist without the creative power of God. If God could speak the great worlds into existence, it certainly would not be impossible for him to send his Son into the world clothed with the flesh of humanity. This is the great fundamental fact of the Bible. Believing this to be a fact, we may rightfully search for the purpose God had in sending his Son into the world in the form of the Babe of Bethlehem. Just what are the revealed purposes of God in this matter?

1st. Christ became a man in order that he might reveal God to man. Moses once wanted to see the face of God, but the Lord said, "No man can see my face and live"—Exodus 33:18-20. If the light of the sun at noonday is too bright for the endurance of our eyes, how much more would be the brightness of God's glory? Yet it is important that man should know God if man is to render homage and service to

the Author of his being. One time Jesus was teaching his disciples about the Father. One of the disciples, Philip, spoke up saying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." His desire to see God was reasonable and understandable; and it is perhaps the universal desire of the majority of mankind. Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father"—John 14:8, 9. The appearance of God as to form and shape matters little. But to know the attributes of God, his love, compassion and mercy, is to know the real God. That is what Jesus in the flesh revealed. The record of Jesus' life as written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is a revelation of God's personality.

The marvel of Jesus' life and teaching has been the world's greatest wonder. His high idealism and absolute purity is the marvel of the ages. If one would know what God thinks and plans, let that one read carefully the life of Jesus Christ, and he then will know God.

2nd. Jesus was manifested in the flesh that he might be a perfect example for man. Man in sin has wandered far from God. And in order to get back to God, man must have a leader, one who can point the way by precept and example. The life which meets with God's approval, was perfectly exemplified in the person of Christ. Pilate's decision, "I find in him no fault at all" is the universal decision of all who have carefully studied the record of his life. Tempted in all points as we are, yet he resisted every effort of Satan, and lived a life of spotless, unblemished purity while on earth. That life lived amid manifold temptations and persecutions reveals to all mankind a science of right living. His deep interest in the welfare of all mankind, his evident sympathy for all in trouble, and his unselfishness in ministering to the needs of the hungry, the sick, and all in sorrow is a revelation of the character of a loving, and merciful Father. Jesus never retraced a step nor retracted a word. He went through every experience that a man is subject to, without once stumbling into error. That life of his is our example to follow. "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps"—I Peter 2:21. In a word- Jesus taught men how to live by the way he lived, and the noblest accomplishment of all time is to learn to live according to the high idealism of Jesus Christ.

3rd. Jesus became man that he might be a perfect High Priest. The work of a priest is to stand between sinful man and an offended God. He must mediate the difference between the two, because man in sin cannot approach God. Paul said, "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels- But he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behove him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"—Hebrews 2:17,18. Perfect God and Perfect Man! He who would atone for the sins of others must understand the frailties of man, as well as the stern justice of God. He who had no sin, took upon himself the sins of the whole world. "The wages of sin is death"—Romans 3:23 and because all had sinned, the world of mankind was doomed: but Christ, the Perfect One, paid our debt to God. God made him "to be sin for us, who knew no sins, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"—II Corinthians 5:21. Truly, we need no other priest but Christ. The God who became man, helps man to become like God.

The Place Called Calvary Selected

When Christ was born at Bethlehem, the night turned into day: but when he was crucified at Calvary, they day turned to darkest night.

In the Old Testament days the sheep died for the shepherd: but in the New Testament days, the Good Shepherd died for the sheep.

God loved Abraham so much that he spared Abraham's son on Mount Moriah: But God loved the world so much that he could not spare his own Son at Calvary.

When hanging on the cross Jesus cried, wary.

"My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" One reason he was forsaken was that he might give us the wonderful Promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

The first thing that Jesus did when he got to the cross was to ask forgiveness for those who nailed him there. The last thing he did was to commit himself to the Father. He prayed, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit." The two thieves who died with him had sin in them; but Jesus had sin on him.

Three crosses were placed on Calvary. On each cross a man was dying. One was dying in sin; the other was dying to sin. The one on the middle cross was dying for sin.

Someone has suggested that three trees were planted there, each tree bearing a different kind of fruit. One tree was bearing poisonous fruit; the other tree was bearing the fruit of repentance. The tree in the middle was bearing the fruit of love.

One thief on the cross rejected Christ. The thief on the other cross received Christ. On the middle cross Christ died to redeem the world. It has been suggested that in the three crosses we have (1st) the cross of rejection, (2nd) the cross of reception, and (3) the cross of Redemption.

John in his gospel said that he saw blood and water coming from the spear pierced side of Jesus. It is believed that the blood came from the heart and the water from the pericardium. The pericardium is a small sack or membrane surrounding, or encasing the heart. It contains a small amount of fluid or water to facilitate the motion of the heart. We are told that under normal circumstances there is about one teaspoon of water in the pericardium, but when a person suffers great anguish or pain this amount has been known to increase as much as twenty-four teaspoons full. There was so much water coming from the side of Jesus that John was able to see it with the blood as he stood on the ground below the cross.

It speaks to us of the great suffering and bitter anguish endured by Jesus, our blessed Lord. "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." He died that we might live. He became poor that we might be rich. He was bound that we might be made free. He was bruised that we might be healed. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear crowns of glory. He endured the tortures of hell in order that we might enjoy the wonders of heaven. He who was the Son of God became the Son of man that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God.

When Jesus died upon the cross, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Not from the bottom to the top, but from the top to the bottom signifying that God did it.

In the Old Testament days, no one but the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies; and he could enter only once a year with the blood which he offered for his own sins, and for the sins of the people. This had to be repeated year after year. No doubt each time the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies, and would see the blood stains of the previous years, he would realize that this was only a temporary arrangement. His work was never finished. Because of this, there was no place in the holy of Holies where he could sit down. How wonderful that when Jesus died, he was able to say "It is finished!" By one sacrifice he has forever provided redemption for all who will accept. His 'work was finished, so he has now sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. "But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God"—Hebrews 10:12. Let us praise him for his past sacrifice as our Redeemer, for his present ministry as our Advocate, and for the promise that he will come again and receive us unto himself, that where he is, there we may be also.-Selected.

News & Notes

Lloyd Riggins has recently spent considerable time with the churches in northern California, first at Mill Valley where one was baptized, then at Reedley and San Lorenzo. Elders were appointed at the latter place. This was formerly the Oakland congregation. ~ Winford Lee reports the appointment of four deacons at Martinsville, Ind. recently. He also has labored the past month at Speedway City, Indiana and Bloomfield, Ind. ~ Wm. Hensley has been spending the first week of each month in development work at Kirksville, Mo. and reports good interest and attendance. ~ Roy Loney has spoken at Lawrence, and Ottawa, Kansas recently, and at Bogard, Mo. He will be at Speedway City, Ind. from March 19th to the 23rd, and then to Bloomfield (same state) from the 26th of March over the 30th. April 2nd he begins a meeting at Bethany, Missouri to continue over the 9th. Jerry Reese expects to assist in this work. ~ Wilford Landes has currently been assisting the churches at Ottawa and Lawrence, Kansas. ~ Eugene Suddeth is reported on a trip to California, and spoke at Compton, Calif. February 5th. ~ C. R. Turner spent the month of February with the LaVerne, Calif. congregation. ~ Jerry Reese will be with the Lily Grove congregation, near Chillicothe, Mo. the last week of February; and then he will do extensive work at Red Cloud, Nebr. during March. ~ Roy Loney is scheduled at Carrollton, Mo. for March 5th.