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The Reformation **Messenger**

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WE BELIEVE:

The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer.

He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.

The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness.

The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.

His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.

Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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How Great Thou Art

By Ellen G. White

“**T**he first missionary that Jesus sent to the region of Decapolis was the man out of whom He had cast the legion of devils. The man had begged to accompany Jesus constantly, but Jesus ‘suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.’ This man bore in his own person the evidence that Jesus was the true Messiah. He related his own experience, telling how great things God had done for him, and thus the way was prepared for the message of truth from the lips of Jesus himself.”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 12, 1891

“By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us. ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.’ John 3:16. He gave Him not only to bear our sins, and to die as our sacrifice; He gave Him to the fallen race. To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. ‘Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder.’ God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the ‘Son of man’

who shares the throne of the universe. It is the ‘Son of man’ whose name shall be called, ‘Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.’ Isaiah 9:6. The I AM is the Daysman between God and humanity, laying His hand upon both. He who is ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Hebrews 7:26; 2:11. In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother.

“Of His people God says, ‘They shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land. For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!’ Zechariah 9:16, 17. The exaltation of the redeemed will be an eternal testimony to God’s mercy. . . . The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God’s grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, ‘and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.’ And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,—**Immanuel, ‘God with us.’**” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25–26

Vision



Adapted from a sermon by Timo Martin

Jesus

Do you have a vision or a dream, which you would like to have fulfilled? Most people have a secret desire, a secret dream, which they hope to have fulfilled someday. It may be a position or an achievement, financial security, marriage, a happy family. It can be hundreds of different things. Men and women continue to daydream about all these possibilities. Some people have their dreams fulfilled. However, others do not.

There may be some who have no vision, no expectations for the future. They lose their desire to live. Many even commit suicide, or turn to drugs and alcohol. But most people do have dreams they wish to fulfill, their hopes and desires, but often they do nothing or very little towards their fulfillment. Dreams alone will not get us very far.

There is a saying, “when there is a will, there is a way.” If we try hard enough we can do almost anything. Children can hear beautiful music, and have the dream to become a musician themselves. But then comes the hours of practice, lessons, day after day, for years. And most of them lose this dream and give up. But, the one who continues to keep the vision before their eyes, will become great.

Our dream, our vision is salvation, eternal life. Heaven is our future goal. Or is it? Could it be that our vision of God and heaven fades? And we see only the world, the people here, their ambitions, money, education, success, entertainment. And our glorious hope, our dream is forgotten. Or, at the least, it is dimmed.

The children of Israel had a vision. “And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.” Exodus 3:17. The Israelites wanted to be free from the cruel bondage in Egypt. With this vision before their eyes, they left Egypt. But, soon they lost this vision. And, what did they see?

“And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.” Exodus 14:11–12. Now, what did the people see? The dry wilderness, lack of water and food. The vision of the Promised Land had gone. Two months later they made a golden calf and forgot all

about God and His promise to them. They constantly murmured and complained, because they had lost their vision of the future glory.

Can this happen to us? When we were baptized, we had a vision. We saw Christ's second coming, heaven, the future glory, eternal life, a sinless condition. But then it slowly faded. "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares." Luke 21:34

So many other things become important to us, to occupy our time, mind, and effort.

When I was in Finland, in school, our teachers gave each of us a chart and a compass. We had to go through a deep forest to a place a few miles away. We were not to follow the roads or pathways, only the needle of the compass, in a straight line, in one direction. Some saw pathways going almost in the right direction, and started to follow them, because they were easier to walk on. But then the pathway went off. Others did not look to the compass all the time, they only looked at it once in a while. And meanwhile, they went off course. The ones who made it to the right place followed the compass carefully all the time.

In the woods you set must set the compass in the right direction. Then in the distance you pick a tree or some other marker and walk towards it, keeping your eye on it all the time. Being one degree off leads you away. Sometimes we had to climb over hills, cross swamps, and we were not to choose an easier way around these obstacles. We were not to choose the more pleasant, comfortable way, the more popular way, because it would have taken us off this course. Going in the approximate direction was not safe.

Are there many Christians who change their course because the straight way is not convenient for them? Sabbath-keeping is not convenient. People try to get around it, if possible, asking, do I really have to keep the Sabbath? The commandment is clear, but they hesitate.

"Do I have to take care of my body, is health reform really required, or can I get around it somehow, and still make it to heaven? I am just one degree off course."

Do I have to associate with poor, unlearned people? Judas thought it was beneath him to associate with fishermen. People are looking for a church that is convenient for them, what they enjoy, whom they like, rather than, "Does the compass guide me in this direction? Does the Word of God lead me in this direction?"

Therefore, when the whole Christian world is seeking salvation, eternal life, they are seeking God, and in their search they end up in hundreds of different directions. People go to churches in search of God. They

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SEEK YE THE
LORD
WHILE HE
MAY BE FOUND

Isaiah 55:6

seek salvation, happiness, and peace to their souls. It is not possible that going in so many different directions would bring all Christians to the same destination.

The churches are supposed to be lighthouses to guide the ships through the dangerous waters safely to the harbour. But, they all show a different light, a different direction. If there are different traffic lights in the intersection, red, yellow and green, all shining at the same time, what would the motorists do? This would cause accidents. Are there no accidents or collisions in the religious world? People have lost their faith in the midst of different doctrines, beliefs, and practices. They have become confused, not knowing what to believe, where to go, which is the way to heaven, or which church speaks the truth.

If Christ would come to Toronto for a visit, which church would He enter to worship? The most popular church? The one with the most eloquent speaker? Or perhaps one with the best entertainment? Would He not enter into one where the truth is spoken, where the people love the truth? One who follows the Bible, His Word closely, in commandment, in doctrine, in practice? Jesus said, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,

neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10:26–28. Jesus is telling us, My sheep follow Me, and I give them eternal life.

Now, to find the truth. Now, to find the church of God. Now, to find salvation. We need to find Christ and follow Him. And then we will come to the right place. To find Jesus is the answer. He is the Compass. After you have found Him, all you need to do is to follow Him, go where He goes, and do what He does.

But, how can we find Him? Where is He? How many people are seeking Jesus, the buried treasure? How many people truly seek God? The Bible tells us, "Seek, and ye shall find." Luke 11:9

Millions today are seeking the same thing as in Christ's time. The whole Jewish nation had an earnest expectation of the Messiah to come. They were seeking, waiting. Then suddenly, they came face to face with the Messiah—the Truth. And they said, "not this man, not this church." And today, the Jewish people are still waiting, still continuing their endless search. This is happening today, men and women find Jesus, they find the truth, but do not recognize it when they come to it.

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." Romans 3:11. Is this true? None?

Who is then seeking? "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." Luke 19:10. Jesus is seeking us. The Holy Spirit is seeking us. Does God have to seek us? Does He have to look for us? Does He know where we are? There is a picture of the Good Shepherd, looking for a lost sheep. We are the lost sheep. And Jesus is looking for us, seeking us, trying to find a way to save us.

Jesus has a vision of us, He has a dream to see us saved in heaven. How often His dream is broken. Many are lost after all of His efforts to save us, trying to find us. Jesus came to seek the lost sheep, and found only very few, He had only a small fold. Therefore, in looking over the city of Jerusalem from Mount Olivet, He wept. Jesus wept. After years of searching, and He could only find a few sheep. Where did He seek the sheep? In the church, among the Jewish people.

When the Bible speaks to us, that we are to seek God, it is really only a response to His call, to His searching. "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." Isaiah 55:6

Jesus is near to all of us, speaking to us. Then we should seek Him, and then we can find Him, when He is right beside us.

Jesus was seeking people in the time of the flood, and found how many? He found only eight souls. When God called out to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He was looking for them. What did they do? Did

they not go into hiding? They needed a Saviour because they had sinned. They were lost sinners, but when Jesus came to look for them, they went into hiding. They had no desire to see Jesus.

"These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Doth this offend you? From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." John 6:59–61, 66. They left Him alone.

The Jewish people were not looking for God. They were looking for freedom, independence, prosperity, to be free from the Romans. Judas was not looking for Jesus or God. He was looking for money, for a high position in the kingdom. If Christ would have made Himself the King of the Jews, many would have come to Him. But what were they looking for?

"When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither His disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." John 6:24–26. Many come to church for personal gain, to find benefits for themselves, blessing, protection, eternal life, they come for loaves. They do not love Jesus; His suffering and death touch them very little. All they care about is their personal gain. They have a vision, a dream, but it is an easy life, friends, comforts, good things for themselves.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Luke 18:10–13. One was seeking mercy, the other was seeking praise from others; he felt himself good.

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Luke 5:32. Christ is still in the world today, seeking the lost sinners. Not the righteous ones, not the self-satisfied, proud professors of religion.

The disciples of Jesus had a vision, a dream, but their dream broke, they were disappointed. "And it came to pass, that, while the communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know



Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Luke 24:15–17. Why were they sad? Because of their broken dreams.

"And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them. What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done." Luke 24:18–21

Sadly they told Jesus of their broken expectations. The chief priests and rulers had delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him, and now is the third day since these things were done.

So fast did all these things come to pass. So quickly were their expectations crushed. In three days, the years of expectation were crushed. Friday was the first day, then Sabbath, and now Sunday, the third day since these things began to happen.

What did Jesus answer? "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Luke 24:25

There was no need to be sad or disappointed. It was their false dreams that deceived them, they did not understand the messages of the prophets. They should have rejoiced that now salvation is come to all people. What is your dream, your vision? Is there a secret desire in your heart? If it is anything else than to be with Jesus and to follow Him, even if it would lead you to death, you will be disappointed. Your dreams will deceive you. Selfish dreams will be broken if you seek your own good.

"Love seeketh not her own." 1 Corinthians 13:5. Jesus did not come to be ministered unto but to minister. We are not on this earth for our own pleasure and comfort, but to serve humanity—to do the work of God, to save perishing souls. Let not the cares of this life, your hobbies, or ambitions fade your vision of Christ. Have Him before your eyes, as on the needle of a compass. Look to Him, follow Him, even if your way may lead to Gethsemane, to the Judgment hall and to Calvary, the places where many would rather stay away from. Have only one dream and that is to be with Jesus, to become like Him.


Try to fulfill your dream with all your heart, with all your strength and with all your soul, and it will be fulfilled. You will be in heaven. Do not ask, "what would I like", only ask, "is this what the Bible says, does the Compass lead me in this way?"

Amen.

Canadian Field
Newsletter

[Top] Calgary youth preparing for “Sing the Light” project
[Left] Toronto youth outing
[Right top] Canvassing Department’s Seminar
[Right bottom] Calgary members gathering





Abraham Part 2

Abram – Abraham

Based on Genesis 16–20

By Edda Tedford

Years passed since they came from Haran,
still Abram had no son,
For Sarai was barren.
God promised them a son,
so Sarai thought it may not be her own.
But from another woman.
While in Egypt, then still a child,
Hagar was given her to be her maid,
Has become a young woman,
She might conceive a son from Abram.
Then she gave her handmaid Abram for his wife,
this would solve the problem in their life (?)...
As soon as Hagar knew she was with child,
she got haughty,
refusing to be Sarai's maid,
was behaving very naughty.
To Abram Sarai said he should rebuke her,
but he said she should deal with her.
Hagar then one day did simply run away.
Not knowing where to go,
she ended at a fountain in the wilderness.
An angel did appear inquiring, what she is doing here
–
Fleeing from her mistress in her distress!
The angel told her to return,
serving Sarai humbly as her maid.
And God will bless her well, she will bear a son,
she shall call him Ishmael.

He will be a quite wild man, controversial to all men.
Hagar called the name of the LORD
"Thou God seest me!"
And the well was called Beerlahairoi,
then returned with joy.
She bore Abram a son, he being 86 years old then.

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At the age of 99, God appeared to Abram again,
Confirming and adding to His covenant with him.
Also changing there his name Abram to Abraham,
Meaning of many nations – Abraham a father,
God now made him.
How could Abraham endure God's presence
Repeatedly to him appearing, being not consumed
By the divine majesty intense?
Abraham was humble,
walking in the fear of the LORD,
Obeying faithfully His every word.
By all his riches, wealth he got,
arrogant nor stingy he was not.
He was honest, kind and candid in his dealings,
Be it his servants, strangers, or with merchants,
Thus was regarded with respect as man of genuine
authority and caring generosity.
God promised Abraham,
Canaan where he is a stranger

To give his seed this land to be its home
 And to the generations that will come,
 As an inheritance,
 where He will be their God for ever.
 As His people,
 Abraham and his descendants to keep the covenant
 Was given the rite of circumcision,
 for every male and newborn male child
 In future generations as a token
 to be God's special nation.
 God also said to Sarai, Sarah now be called,
 He will bless her,
 Bare a son, at this time next year,
 and Isaac to be called.
 God will establish an everlasting covenant with him
 and his seed after him.
 Concerning Ishmael – he will be blessed,
 Be very fruitful, will be a nation very great
 with 12 princes to beget.

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Once again God appeared to Abraham –
 here in disguise on this wise:
 It is a very hot day, three men are on the way,
 Abraham sitting at the tent door sees them coming,
 At once he gets up and
 running bowing to the ground,
 That in favour he be found.
 With heartfelt courtesy he intreats them be his guests,
 Humbly offering his best,
 to refresh themselves and rest;
 Urging them to stay
 before continuing their journey on the way.
 While the guests enjoyed the meal at the shady tree,
 Abraham observing, the LORD is speaking, asking:
 "Where is Sarah thy wife?"
 "My LORD she is in the tent."
 "I will certainly return to thee
 according to the time of life,
 And Sarah shall have a son."
 Hearing this behind the door of the tent
 Laughing to herself, we are far too old for this event...
 But nothing is too hard for the LORD to do,
 Confirming the baby will be due,
 according to His word...
 The three men rose up,
 looking toward Sodom now departing,
 Abraham a distance with them walking.
 And the LORD commending Abraham
 becoming a great nation and a blessing,
 To all his household God's commandments, justly,
 faithfully addressing.

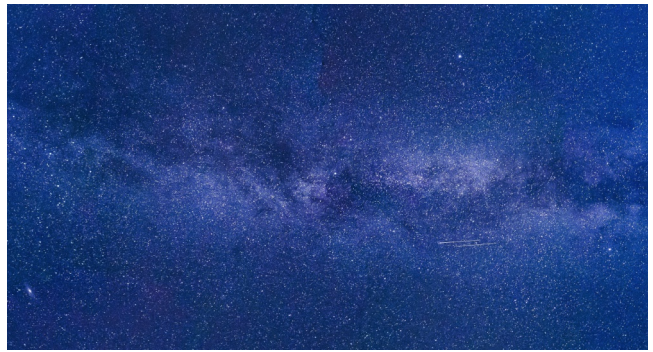
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Therefore, the LORD does not withhold
 what to Sodom and Gomorrah
 He intends to do, by going there,
 for the grievous sins committed there.
 Abraham alarmed by hearing this, took courage,
 protesting vehemently,
 Shall the Judge of all the earth not acting rightly?
 Be it far from Him to destroy the righteous
 with the wicked!
 Surely the LORD had His delight in Abraham
 so fiercely defending the righteous,
 Tenderly assuring Him
 not to do anything so distressing!
 Then the LORD departed and
 Abraham went back home,
 Wondering what of Sodom and Gomorrah
 would become.
 But then seeing the smoke of burning
 in the morning from Sodom and the plain,
 He knew that not even ten righteous souls
 were found therein.

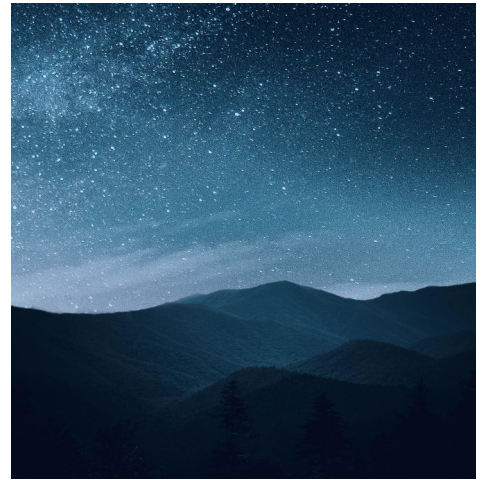
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O Abraham, Abraham –
 what are you doing now again?
 Known as just and righteous man?
 Bringing danger to your wife,
 thinking thus to save your life?
 Did you forget – you become a nation great –
 why are you now afraid?
 Making God with your unbelief now sad!
 Did you not learn from Pharaoh,
 and now do lie to Abimelech the king?
 This thought everyone this story hears does think,
 (Reader): How is it with you, are you perfect,
 invincible, when on a brink?
 All of us are faulty, apt to fail and fall,
 Sometimes we are winners,
 how often unbelief affects us all...
 There are consequences for the committed wrong
 God knows the measure of temptation,
 in mercy His grace does go along,
 when sinners mournfully are seeking reconciliation...
 With Abimelech God Himself was dealing,
 Abraham was to pray for him for healing, opening
 For Sarah's sake the shut-up wombs
 Of Abimelech's wife and maidservants,
 giving the blessing now for child bearing.
 Abraham were given sheep and oxen,
 men and women servants, and to dwell
 There in the land
 according to king Abimelech's grant.

End of Part 2.
 To be continued.

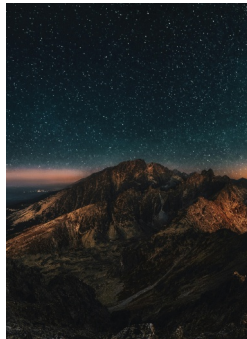
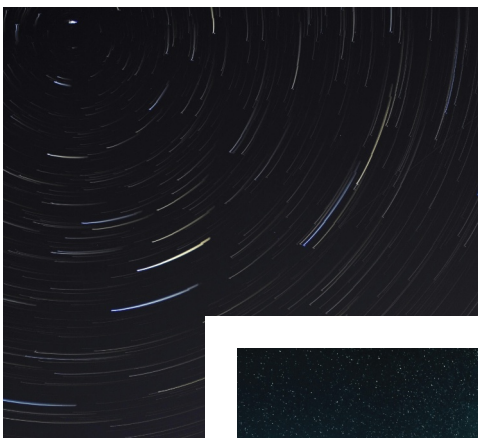


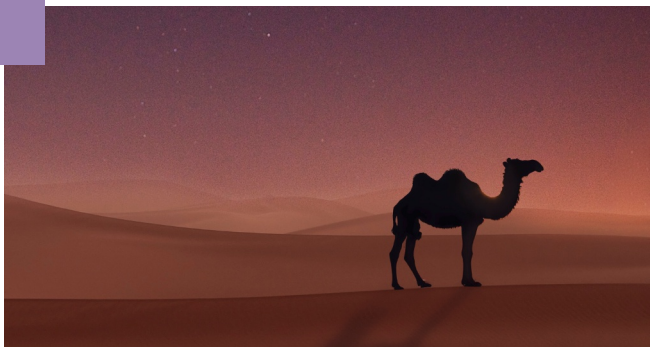
By Victor Shumbusho



Wise Men

In my country there is a common saying, “my star”, “your star”, “his star”, which means that something good has happened, or will happen. For example, when one has been unemployed and soon finds a job, people may say “his star has come.” Other sayings are, “none can take your star”, or, “wait for your star.” These sayings mean that the time of a specific blessing will come to each person. What does the word “star” have to do with the blessings that a person is given? I do not know where culturally the word came from, but let us connect it with the Bible verse it may have been taken from. “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.” Matthew 2:2. This question was asked by the wise men when Jesus was born.





The darkness of 2024 vs the full light of 2025

Jesus is the light of the world and King of kings. At His birth, the question was asked: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" During His judgment before His death, Pilate the Governor asked, "Art Thou the king of the Jews?" "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world." John 18:33, 36. At His death, the sign above the cross read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Jesus grew up in Nazareth, a humble worker, and also our Saviour. He was, and is, the "King of kings and Lord of lords." People still today need to know about Him, where He is, and why.

The year 2024 passed with many experiences both good and bad. I am sure you remember what you went through. In this last year, did you look for Jesus, asking every day, "where is my King?"

The Wise men 2000 years ago

2000 years ago there were wise men who travelled in the night, but they followed the light. They could only make their trip by night because they "saw His star".

They were led by the star which could appear only in the darkness.

The year 2024 has passed, and the year 2025 has begun. Indeed, when a year draws to a close and the new one begins, it is a time to reflect on the past year and meditate deeply upon our profession of faith, our spiritual progress, our relationships with others, without forgetting our religious, family and social duties. Wisdom is valued more than money. "A wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." Ecclesiastes 8:5. We also read in Proverbs 3:35, "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools." This shows how wisdom is necessary to each one of us. It is very different from knowledge and intelligence. You can have intelligence without wisdom. How can we be wiser in 2025, the new year that has been given to us as an opportunity, as another probationary time?

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." Matthew 2:1-2

"The wise men from the East belonged to a class that represented wealth and learning. Among these were upright men who studied the indications of God in nature and were honored for their integrity and wisdom. The wise men who came to Jesus were such men. As they studied the starry heavens, these devout, educated men saw the glory of the Creator. Seeking clearer knowledge, they turned to the Hebrew Scriptures. There were prophetic writings in their own land that predicted the coming of a divine teacher. Balaam's prophecies had been handed down by tradition from century to century. But, in the Old Testament, the wise men learned with joy that the Savior's coming was near. The whole world was to be filled with a knowledge of the glory of the Lord.

"The wise men had seen a mysterious light in the heavens that night when the glory of God flooded the hills of Bethlehem. A glowing star appeared and lingered in the sky, an event that stirred keen interest. That star was a group of shining angels, but the wise men did not know this. Yet they were impressed that the star held special importance to them." -*Humble Hero*, p. 22. And thus they could say, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

Dear reader, ask yourself: Do I search the scriptures to seek for a sign of the second coming of Jesus? What do I do to draw close to Jehovah in these perilous times? The wise men had welcomed the light of truth that Heaven had sent, and so it shone on them in brighter

rays. God instructed them through dreams to go in search of the newborn Prince. Is it the same with you? Do you discern the light of the truth among the darkness of the world today? Do you really work uprightly in the light that has been sent to you? Do you have such faith? Do you also follow the light where others see only darkness? Are you able to discern God's light amidst the confusion of others?

A Journey by Night

"[The wise men] had to travel by night in order to keep the star in view, but at every pause for rest the travelers searched the prophecies. The conviction deepened that God was guiding them. The journey, though long, was a happy one." *-Ibid.*, p. 22

This is my wish for you in this new year, 2025. It is a long year, but let it be a happy one. It is possible to have inner peace in this troubled world.

After a long journey, solely by night, they finally reached the land of Israel and had Jerusalem in sight, and the star rested above the temple. Eagerly they hurried onward, confidently expecting the news of the Messiah's birth to be found there. But the priests who claimed to be keepers of God's oracles, boasted of their religion and piety while they denounced the Greeks and Romans as sinners. These wise men were not idol worshipers, and in the sight of God, the Jewish leaders felt they stood far higher than these professed followers, as the Jews looked on them as heathen. Their eager questions touched no responsive chord in their conscience.

There is much we do not know about these men: How many men were there? What country were they from? How far did they travel? What are their names? How old was Jesus when the wise men arrived in Bethlehem? Was He, a few days . . . weeks . . . months . . . two years? However, we can learn much from them, and take some lessons for our long journey in this year 2025 and during our life on earth.

The Bible and Spirit of prophecy say nothing about the above questions. But Tradition has assigned a number, indicating there were three, and assigning their names as: Baltasar, King of Arabia; Gasparv, King of India; and Melchior, King of Persia. True or not, we only know that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Corinthians 10:11

Important lessons for this year 2025

Why are these men called "wise"? In God's eyes they were wise because of Whom they sought, what they thought,

what they brought as gifts, and what they taught.

They have also been called kings or Magi. According to one commentary, the term Magi "suggests that they were priestly sages from Persia, who were experts in astrology and the interpretation of dreams."

Among the darkness they saw the star and recognized its meaning. Many at the time were reading about the promised Messiah but these men understood. "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." Proverbs 1:5

"Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment." Ecclesiastes 8:5

We are living in a perilous time of darkness. Many lies shall cover the world and only the wise shall know the truth, the true way, and follow it. The prophet Daniel wrote, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12:10

The wise men who sought Jesus met opposition in Jerusalem, the priests despised their research. In these last days, only the wise shall be purified, shall be made white, be tried and will understand.



“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth, and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer, and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment, for ‘in the multitude of counselors there is safety.’” –*Last Day Events*, p. 91

We are called to be wise and not foolish. The Book of Proverbs uses this word to mean heavenly wisdom, the upright man or woman.

In this year 2025, and for the rest of our life in this world, let us learn from those wise men, and ask God to increase our knowledge and wisdom. Now we will read of the needed wisdom in our life every day.

“Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” James 3:13–18



• What they sought

Who were they seeking for? In Jerusalem they asked, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” Matthew 2:2. This shows they understood that Jesus could come in the nature of Man: “Where is He?” Also, He would come as a Monarch: “Born a King,” and the Messiah: “Of the Jews.” Their quest was in response to, “We have seen.” Their search involved adoration. “We are come to worship.”

• What they thought

When they reached Jerusalem, the wise men were neglected by the priests and leaders of the people. Their pride, as educated teachers, would not allow them to stoop to be instructed by heathen people. It could not be, they said, that God had passed them by, to communicate with ignorant, pagan Gentiles. The star first led them to Jerusalem, but they were disappointed. “As the shadows of night fell, the wise men left Jerusalem alone. But to their great joy, they saw the star again and were directed to Bethlehem. Disappointed by the careless attitude of the Jewish leaders, they left Jerusalem less confident than when they had entered it.” –*Humble Hero*, p. 24

• What they brought

“The Eastern country was rich in precious things, and the wise men did not set out empty-handed. They brought the most costly gifts in the land as an offering to Him in whom all the families of the earth would be blessed.” –*Humble Hero*, p. 22

From their studies, they knew that this star was unusual. They had been reading the promises in the Scriptures. They were encouraging each other while walking to the place where they would see the newborn King. But who told them that He is a King, Priest, Prophet etc.?





They brought:

- Gold = A gift for a mighty King.
- Frankincense = A gift for a ministering Priest.
- Myrrh = A gift for a martyred Prophet.

In their study of the Scriptures, they discerned that “His star” is solemn, and that He would be a king, prophet and priest. How do you know Jesus? Who is He for you? Do you bring offerings and tithes to the house of God when you come to worship, as they did? Do you value the gifts you bring to God? The wise men came to worship, but not with empty hands. Today we are required to do more than in ancient times.

“The magi had been among the first to welcome the Redeemer. Their gift was the first that was laid at His feet. And through that gift, what privilege of ministry was theirs! The offering from the heart that loves, God delights to honor, giving it highest efficiency in service for Him. If we have given our hearts to Jesus, we also shall bring our gifts to Him. Our gold and silver, our most precious earthly possessions, our highest mental and spiritual endowments, will be freely devoted to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 65

“The liberality required of the Hebrews was largely to benefit their own nation; today the work of God extends over all the earth. In the hands of His followers, Christ has placed the treasures of the gospel, and upon them He has laid the responsibility of giving the glad tidings of salvation to the world. Surely our obligations are much greater than were those of ancient Israel.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 337–338

• What They Taught

There are many precious lessons we can learn from the story of these Magi who came to see Jesus, the new King that was born.

- Some who are far away find Christ before some who are perhaps in the church.
- Finding Christ is worth all the effort one puts forth. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Matthew 7:7. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33
- You can behave like those wise men in this year 2025, and during your lifetime, and teach it to others.
- You can see the light in the darkness. Today most people are filled with confusion and do not follow the truth. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.” Isaiah 60:1–2
- Never let what you think override what God has revealed.
- We have to recognize Jesus as our King, personal Saviour and Master.
- We are blessed if we are not discouraged by the doubts of other people, even if they have been in the faith; we have to continue on our way until we see Jesus in heaven.
- Offerings are, and have been, a principle for worship service if we recognize the goodness of the Lord

This is an inspiring story about the philosophers, the Magi, the wise men who sought Jesus at His first coming to earth, born as the Messiah for our salvation. You yourself can decide to be wise men and wise women in this New Year, 2025. Carefully analyze your relationship with God, with the church, the truth, and your fellowmen making the necessary preparation to face future events.

Why were the Magi called Wise men? It is because of what they sought, what they thought, what they brought, and what they taught.

It is a time for reflection, when each one of us can ask himself, "Who am I? Am I wise or not? Where am I going? Am I guided by His star, even if others do not see it? Who is my King, Lord and Saviour? Who is my neighbour? Am I a real Reformer?"

In closing, dear reader, let us read the words in Ecclesiastes 2:14; 4:13. "Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king. . ." The wise man's eyes are in his head; but the fool walketh in darkness." May God help all of us to face this new year with the resolution that the year 2025 will be a new era for each of us, an era of walking wisely, looking and following only God's light: "His star." An era of unity, solidarity, and love. May our church be called a church of wise people. Remember that we cannot have pure wisdom without Jesus. May God bless us all.

Amen.

“

The wise man's eyes
are in his head;
but the fool walketh
in darkness.

Ecclesiastes 4:13



Women in Jesus' Genealogy

By Makoto Matsumoto

Many Christians try “Bible Reading Plan” projects. As we start reading, we often begin from either Genesis or Matthew—each being the beginning of the Old and New Testaments. However, as we open the first chapter of the New Testament, many are surprised by a very unexpected introduction. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias; . . .” Mathew 1:1–6. And a lot of unfamiliar names continue.

If it is someone who is reading the Bible for the first time, he/she would expect a more “fancy” and “cool” introduction, like “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” in Genesis 1:1; or, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” in John 1:1. And yet, what we see is a long list of names. And it is not even a complete list; it starts from Abraham and not from Adam, hence seemingly to be just a partial genealogy.

However, just as with any other part of the Bible, there is a reason why God wrote such an introduction for the New Testament. One key to opening its mystery is in the names of the women. Not counting the virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, four women are mentioned in this Genealogy: Thamar, Rachab, Ruth, and the wife of Urias. Let us look into the story of these “mothers of Jesus” and find the secret of Matthew chapter 1.

Thamar

Thamar’s story is deeply related to the mistakes and sins of Judah, the son of Jacob. Unlike what we would imagine from Matthew chapter 1, Thamar was not Judah’s wife. Judah’s wife’s name is not recorded, but she is introduced as “the daughter of Shuah,” a Canaanite (Genesis 38:2,12). She gave birth to three sons with Judah, named Er, Onan, and Shelah (Genesis 38:3–5). Now, the wife of the firstborn of Judah, Er, is our main character in this section—Thamar (or Tamar). “And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord slew him.” Genesis 38:6–7

It was a custom at this time and in this area that the younger brother had to marry his brother’s wife if the older brother died without any sons. The firstborn between them was to carry on the dead brother’s name and receive the firstborn’s heritage. This system prevented the younger brother from killing the older brother to receive the inheritance. It also supported and protected the lives of widowed women, especially from a financial perspective.

We can find this system as part of the Mosaic Law in Deuteronomy 25:5–6. Just as the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, and paying of tithes were kept before the declaration of God’s law on Mount Sinai, it is clear that this law existed among God’s people as His law, not only as a custom. The following verses show that God expected the second son of Judah to fulfill this duty, proving this point:

“And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother’s wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it

“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ...”

Matthew 1:1

came to pass, when he went in unto his brother's wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord: wherefore He slew him also.” Genesis 38:8–10

Onan, the second son of Judah, refused to fulfill his duty to his brother and sister-in-law. Hence, God slew him for his disobedience and unfaithfulness. Now, Judah had to give his third son to Tamar. However, Judah hesitated. Even though it was very clear that his two sons died due to their sin and wickedness, Judah blamed Tamar for their deaths. He believed that they died because there was something wrong with Tamar. Judah was afraid that his youngest son would also die if he married Tamar. So Judah made a faulty promise to Tamar that he would let her marry his son when he reached the age of marriage, without any intention of keeping his promise.

“Then said Judah to Tamar his daughter in law, Remain a widow at thy father's house, till Shelah my son be grown: for he said, Lest peradventure he die also, as his brethren did. And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.” Genesis 38:11

Time passed, and Shelah reached his age, but Judah did not keep his promise. Seeing Judah had lied to her, Tamar decided to secure her son from Judah. “And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep. And she put her widow's garments off from her, and covered her with a vail, and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place, which is by the way to Timnath; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given unto him to wife. When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face. And he turned unto her by the way, and said, Go to, I pray thee, let me come in unto thee; (for he knew not that she was his daughter in law.) . . .” Genesis 38:12–16

It was customary among the Hittites and Assyrians for the father-in-law to arrange for the widowed daughter-in-law to conceive if no brother was available so that the boy could receive the inheritance and protect his mother as he grew up. This was not part of God's law. We do not know how much Tamar had known about God's law, including the sin of deceiving Judah. So, we do not know if Tamar acted based on what she understood to be her right according to her knowledge or if she committed sins against the light she might have received. Only God knows the result of the judgment against her. That is not what we need to know. The Bible does not state clearly how God regarded Tamar's actions. However, there is one thing the Bible is making clear here: the sins of Judah.

When Judah learned that this woman was his daughter-in-law, he confessed as follows: “And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more.” Genesis 38:26

Judah did not keep his promises and duties toward Tamar, and his failure to control his lust was evident. However, Judah admitted his sins and repented. This story is recorded in the Bible between Judah's suggestion to his brothers to sell Joseph to merchants in Genesis 37 and Judah's pleading with Joseph to take him hostage to protect Benjamin in Genesis 44, which shows Judah's growth and change. Therefore, this story of Tamar is recorded as the event of Judah's shameful sins and his repentance and growth.



Rahab

We know the other three women in Jesus' genealogy very well. Rahab was also a Canaanite, or heathen, like Tamar. While Tamar pretended to be a harlot, Rahab was a harlot herself.

Rahab had shown kindness to the Israelite spies and expressed her faith in the God of Israel, confessing that He is the only true God. "And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath." Joshua 2:11

God rewarded Rahab by saving her and her family from the destruction of Jericho. She became a part of Israel, living among them. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." Joshua 6:25

Ruth

Like the previous two women, Ruth was also a heathen. She was a Moabite. The story of Ruth starts with Naomi, who was Ruth's mother-in-law. Naomi's husband died, along with both her two sons. As she headed back to her hometown, Bethlehem, she tried to send her two daughters-in-law back to their parents' houses so that they could find new husbands and have a stable life. "And Naomi said unto her two daughters in law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept." Ruth 1:8-9

Indeed, Naomi's life as an old widow would not be easy. Ruth 2:2 says, "And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to

the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter." In Old Testament times, people were not to pick up grain they dropped on the ground while they harvested, as God ordered those to be kept for the poor. This shows that Naomi and Ruth were very poor. Also, this Bible verse indicates that Naomi was too old to work and that Ruth had to find food for them both.

Ruth was well aware of this reality. Yet, she chose to follow Naomi to support and help her in her life. She also confessed her faith in the God of Israel. "And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17

God blessed her faith and rewarded her with a new husband and family, financial stability, and the privilege of being included in the genealogy God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Wife of Urias

Bathsheba seems to be an Israelite, based on the records of her father and her grandfather (2 Samuel 11:3; 23:34). Yet, she is also considered of heathen origin, given that she married Uriah, or Urias, the Hittite. Bathsheba's story recounts the sin of King David, who committed adultery with her and murdered Uriah to take her as his wife. David repented of his sin and was forgiven.

Note that her name was not directly written in Matthew 1. Instead, Matthew used the expression "the wife of Urias." By doing so, Matthew reminded the reader of the history of David's sin.

He used the same method also as he introduced Tamar. Let us look into this in the next section:

The Mother of Twins

Matthew introduced Tamar as the mother of two sons. "And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Tamar." Matthew 1:3. This is a notable

verse because this is the only occasion when Matthew wrote the names of more than one son. As for the rest of the list, he wrote either only one name per generation or one name with the expression “and his brethren” (Matthew 1:2, 11).

We need to know their history to understand why Matthew wrote two sons’ names. “And it came to pass in the time of her travail, that, behold, twins were in her womb. And it came to pass, when she travailed, that the one put out his hand: and the midwife took and bound upon his hand a scarlet thread, saying, This came out first. And it came to pass, as he drew back his hand, that, behold, his brother came out: and she said, How hast thou broken forth? this breach be upon thee: therefore his name was called Pharez. And afterward came out his brother, that had the scarlet thread upon his hand: and his name was called Zarah.” Genesis 38:27–30

Phares (or Pharez) and Zara (or Zarah) were twins. And as Tamar was giving birth, Zarah was about to come out first, but he went back in, and Phares came out first. This story is very impactful, and whenever someone hears the term “Phares and Zara,” it becomes a reminder of Judah’s sin.

Therefore, by quoting Phares and Zara with Tamar and calling Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, Matthew emphasized the story of sin and repentance.

Matthew’s Choice

The four gospels describe Jesus from different perspectives. Mark describes Jesus as a servant, Luke describes Jesus as the Son of man, and John describes Jesus as the Son of God.

Matthew describes Jesus as the King. It is the only gospel that describes the visit of the wise men, Herod’s attempt to kill baby Jesus, and His escape to Egypt, certain parables of the kingdom—the parables of the weeds, the ten virgins, the sheep and goats—and Pilate’s wife’s dream. The gospel includes many verses, starting with “The kingdom of heaven is like...”

This emphasis is found also in the genealogy. It starts with Abraham, the father of the nation, and calls David, “King David,” instead of just first his name, like the others. Along

with these two figures, Matthew emphasizes the carrying away into Babylon, implying that this is the royal family’s genealogy and that many kings’ names are on the list. “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. . . . And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon. . . about the time they were carried away to Babylon: And after they were brought to Babylon. . . So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.” Matthew 1:1, 6, 11–12, 17

Four women we have studied share specific characteristics: they are all heathen! If Matthew wanted to emphasize Jesus as the King, was it not better for him to choose women who were respected by the Jews, such as Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah? Matthew goes even further and emphasizes the shameful history of Judah—the name of the chosen tribe—and David—the most respected king of the nation—through the names of these women. Why?

The Kingdom of Our King

Matthew did not describe Jesus as the King and Messiah that the Jews expected. He emphasized the kingdom of Jesus as it is. These four women have various backgrounds. One was a harlot, which is a shameful job. One was very poor, while another was the wife of a high-ranking captain, later becoming the king’s wife.

Matthew did not choose only shameful names, such as Tamar and Bathsheba, as that could give space to a misunderstanding that all heathens are shameful. Matthew did not select only names respected by the Jews, such as Rachab and Ruth, as that could cause misunderstandings about the fact that only righteous women without any record of sins are to be accepted unto the kingdom of Jesus.



*“For whosoever shall do
the will of my Father which is in heaven,
the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*

Matthew 12:50

The message is clear: Our background does not matter. Our blood, background, culture, education, degree, certificate, socioeconomic status, or achievements do not determine whether we can be part of His kingdom.

It is not about what we did. It is all about what He did. The one name that stands at the end of this genealogy. That is what matters: “And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.”
Matthew 1:16

It does not matter if we are Jews or heathen. It does not matter if we are rich or poor. It does not matter if our name comes with a good or a bad reputation.

Those are not the conditions that matter. The only condition to be a part of His kingdom, going beyond all that, to be a part of His genealogy and be a part of His family, is the name of Jesus.

“Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession. It was not like that of the earth’s famous conquerors. No train of mourning captives, as trophies of kingly valor, made a feature of that scene. But about the Saviour were the glorious trophies of His labors of love for sinful man. There were the captives whom He had rescued from Satan’s power, praising God for their deliverance. The blind whom He had restored to sight were leading the way. The dumb whose tongues He had loosed shouted the loudest hosannas. The cripples whom He had healed bounded with joy, and were the most active in breaking the palm branches and waving

them before the Saviour. Widows and orphans were exalting the name of Jesus for His works of mercy to them. The lepers whom He had cleansed spread their untainted garments in His path, and hailed Him as the King of glory. Those whom His voice had awakened from the sleep of death were in that throng. Lazarus, whose body had seen corruption in the grave, but who now rejoiced in the strength of glorious manhood, led the beast on which the Saviour rode.” –
The Desire of Ages, p. 572

This is the kingdom of Jesus. This is the King that Matthew is describing to us. People discriminate based on their standards, such as blindness, dumb, cripples, lepers, widows and orphans. Those are not the criteria for His kingdom and royal family tree. He is the King of those who believe in His Father and do His will.

When Jesus wrote His genealogy through the hand of Matthew, He did not choose the names of His mothers based on human perspectives. He did not choose them based on their records, reputation, honour, and achievements, as we often do. He chose the names of these four heathen women to teach us one lesson: “But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? and who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.” Matthew 12:48–50

Now, let us return to our first question. Is Matthew Chapter 1 a strange introduction to the New Testament? Not at all. Nothing would have been a better description of the family tree of the greatest King of kings. It is my wish and prayer that all those who read this message become the “brother, and sister, and mother” of the King Jesus Christ.

Amen.

A steam train is crossing a stone viaduct in a mountainous valley. The train is emitting a large plume of white steam. The landscape is hilly and somewhat barren, with some greenery in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

Only with the Help of God

Experiences from
the Life of Johannes Altwein

Part

4

MY EXPERIENCE WITH GÜNTER GÖTZE

My brother Gerhard became infected with lung-tuberculosis, which made him severely ill for many years. According to my doctor, I had been infected by him three times, but thanks to my strong constitution, my body responded quite well.

In 1950 I was approved for a four-month stay in a sanatorium specializing in the treatment of lung diseases. There were about 50 to 60 patients, most of them young men. One of them especially caught my attention. He used to walk around with his head hanging low, seemingly depressed. Somehow, I felt an urge to get into a conversation with him. At the time I was no more than 19 years old myself.

“What bothers you, maybe I can help you?” I asked him. He told me that he got a “Golden Close-Combat Badge”, which caused him severe trouble. “Do you know what it means to get a Golden Close-Combat Badge?” he asked me. Since I largely kept away from military matters, I had no clue what it meant. I learnt that one had to go through several stages to reach the Golden Close-Combat Badge. Each stage concerns many close combats in the trenches. He told me many details, which I wish to spare the reader here. At the

end of our conversation, he said: “You don’t know what it means to have to live with the memories of what I have done, and the guilt, day after day!” Then he walked away slowly with his head hanging low and a pained expression on his face. My eyes followed him with compassion.

He was plagued with guilt for killing so many men during the war. Did he go to the front line voluntarily? Did he have a choice? Had he refused to be on active service in the trench, he would have been shot himself. As a young lad, he wanted to live.

We met again at lunch, so we went to the dining hall and arranged to meet and talk after we had eaten, and I read from the Bible to him:

*“Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord:
though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as
snow; though they are red like crimson,
they shall be as wool.”*

Isaiah 1:18

He was relieved to hear that, and I had the impression that he had experienced our Father’s forgiveness. From that time on he walked upright and was able to enjoy life again. Glory To God and His mercy.

THE COW AT THE FARM

In the early fifties, while doing missionary work, I came to a farm to offer devotional literature. From a distance I saw an almost fully-grown cow lying on the ground in the presence of two men. When I came closer, I realized that those men were torturing the cow. One of them continuously beat the cow on her head with a club, the other twisted her tail.

As a vegetarian and a lover of animals, I just could not stand by and watch this cruelty. I asked what on earth they intended to do with the cow. "The animal must be weighed and therefore needs to be led into an open cage," they replied. Obviously, the cow had no intention to move.

As a young man who had grown up in a town rather than on a farm, I had no experience with looking after animals, but nevertheless, I asked the men to stand aside. I knelt next to the cow's head, sent a heartfelt plea to my God and spoke very soothingly to the cow. After gently stroking her, I took her by the halter and told her that it was now time to get up. The cow slowly got on her feet and very quietly allowed me to lead her backwards into the box. "This is how animals are supposed to be treated," I said to the speechless men, who just stood there watching.

This success cannot be based on my experience with animals. I thank my God that He made this animal docile, because the situation could have ended quite differently. Even animals feel the presence of God and respond to love.

CONFESSION OF FAITH ON THE TRAIN

At that time, hardly anyone owned a car, and as a result, many people went by train. When traveling in one compartment for some time, people started to talk to each other. I remember discussing various subjects. I liked to talk with my fellow travelers about my faith. I told them much about God and my relationship with Him. Again and again, during those conversations I turned to my experiences with my God.

While I was traveling to our yearly conference, I shared a compartment with about six or eight fellow travelers. They listened to me attentively. One middle-aged man was especially interested, so a deep conversation began to develop. When I had reached my destination and was about to leave the compartment, that man said to me very seriously: "I wish I never met you."

He had realized that from now on he would have to change his life, and obviously he was not ready for that. I left it to God to open the seed which I had sown. Unfortunately, I have never heard from him again.

MY RETINA PROBLEM

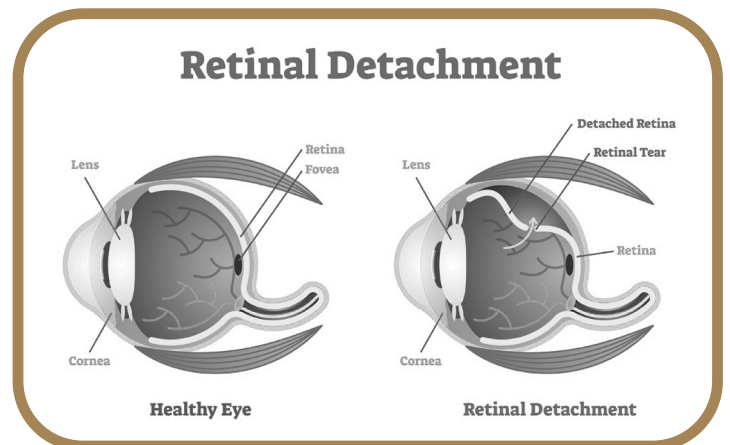
In May 1951 I was doing missionary work in Hameln/Weser. While riding my motorbike I suddenly noticed that I had impaired vision in my right eye. I went to the ophthalmologist, who diagnosed a progressive retinal detachment in my right eye. Since he could not treat the retinal detachment himself, he referred me to the University Hospital in Göttingen.

On the morning of our departure, we had our daily devotion and read about Hezekiah, King of Judah. We learnt that the prophet had told him that he would die. Hezekiah prayed to God to extend his life, whereupon the prophet informed him, that he would be given 15 more years to live. The story of Hezekiah strengthened my trust in the Might of God. It was God who had given me eyesight, and if He sees fit, He will take it, or preserve it. I fully trusted God and promised Him, that I would not have an operation in the hospital in Göttingen.

When I arrived at the hospital, the retinal detachment in my right eye was immediately confirmed and, to make matters worse, the beginning of retinal detachment in my left eye was also noted. They told me that an operation on both eyes was inevitable, and this was the only possible treatment to preserve at least some of my sight. With an operation I would have a 50/50 chance. "Without it," they said "you have no chance." That was the verdict of the specialists.

Under normal circumstances, an operation would have looked quite attractive at this point, and generally I am not against operations if they are necessary. However, in this case, because I had promised my God that morning, that I will fully trust in Him and His Might, I rejected the operation. I was firmly convinced that God would not leave me alone with my problem, and that was all there was to it. It took me quite a few hours to come to this decision.

When I explained this to the doctors, they could not believe their ears. This decision was met with complete incomprehension. Even the Adventist eye specialist could not understand this. Shaking their heads, they



explained to me that I would be totally blind within only a few weeks. But they accepted my decision. They gave me a pair of multiple pinhole glasses to keep my eye still. Furthermore, I was told not to make any abrupt movements, no lifting, nor bending. Since they could not do anything for me, I was discharged from hospital.

As I did not know what God intended to do with my eyesight, I had my future mother-in-law come and pick me up from the hospital just in case I would not be able to go home by myself.

It was May—springtime—the chestnut trees were in full bloom and the fields were lush and green. Should I be deprived of all that beauty in the future?

I started having severe doubts. Did I make the right decision to refuse the operation? Wasn't it also true that God only interfered when men could not do any more for themselves? Was it the right thing to do, not to believe in traditional medicine in this case? Maybe the operation would have helped me after all? Had I been too rash in my decision, ignoring God's will? While reasoning like that, many other thoughts crossed my mind. After some hard hours of doubt and prayer, I took new heart and stuck to my original decision to keep the promise I had given to God, not to have myself operated on.

The very next day I went to my eye specialist again, this time as an outpatient. Unfortunately, he stated that the condition of my retina had deteriorated. He could not help me, he said, and I did not need to come back again.

My family did not give up and they did everything humanly possible to help me. We had heard that clay poultices and clay water baths could be of help. Thus, they went by bike and brought masses of clay. I lay in a clay water bath for eight hours. My eyes, too, were covered with clay.

After six months, I could still see and went to the eye specialist again. "Can I examine your eye?" the specialist asked. "That's what I'm here for," I answered. He prepared his analysis apparatus and looked deep into my eyes. Suddenly he dropped his hands into his lap, exclaiming: "If only you could see this! ... In my 30 years of practice I have never seen anything like it, nor have I heard about it. True, I can see the retina has continued to detach, but it has grown back again by itself. This can only be a miracle by God!" Then I remember how his pencil rolled off his desk and dropped onto the floor. Immediately I bent down to pick it up. The doctor was shocked, he said: "Oh no, no! Do not bend over, under no circumstances should you do these movements." He looked at me totally stunned and said very solemnly: "I didn't know that you have such a long arm to our heavenly Father."

Since the scars on my right eye reached up to the middle, I regrettably became completely blind in the right eye. If I had followed the doctors' advice and had behaved "like a slow old man", this probably would not have happened. On my left eye the scars remained on the edge, therefore I still have good vision there.

I am over 90 years old now and by the grace of God have enjoyed my eyesight to this day, despite bending over, climbing trees, building houses, etc.

When I saw an eye specialist just recently and told him that my eyes have healed without an operation, he just told me that at my age I must have forgotten that I was operated on, because without an operation I would definitely be blind.

I just smiled at his ignorance. He knows nothing about God.

There are no words capable of describing my gratefulness. Every morning when I wake up and see, I thank God for His gift. Not a day passes by without me thanking the Lord for my miracle eyesight.

AT THE JOB CENTER IN HAMELN

Karla Beese and I married in 1952, and in October 1953 our first child was to be born. Shortly before the birth, I was back at the employment office to ask for support. I learnt from two very friendly officials that the following regulation had already come into effect in Hannover: Unemployed people, who refused a job for religious reasons, as in my case for example, I did not want to work on the Sabbath; I would consequently be denied unemployment benefits. I then gave my card to one of the officials, asking him to make a mark on my card, indicating that I was there. "From now on", I said, "I will do without my unemployment benefit." He was confused, saying that we were in Hameln after all, not in Hannover. I returned: "That's right, but Hannover is only 46 kilometers away from here, and it won't take long until that regulation will also come into effect in Hameln." I simply wanted to spare that friendly official having to convey bad news to me by voluntarily forgoing payment already today.

"Well, how do you want to survive then, shortly before the birth of your first child?" I pointed upwards, explaining to him that there was someone who would care for me. The two officials were dumbfounded and accepted that they could not persuade me to change my mind. All that happened on a Friday.

On Sabbath evening I read the newspaper and came across a job advertisement in which various articles had to be sold by way of door knocking, from house to house. On Monday morning I went for an interview and got the job, on the spot. Seven others and I were assigned to work in several different districts. If a

turnover of 30 DM (= approximately 21 US Dollars) was reached by the evening, we would earn 10 DM (= approximately 7 US Dollars) each, which corresponded to the average wages of an unskilled worker at that time. I was glad to have that job, since I did not have to work on Friday evening, nor on Sabbath.

On the following Sabbath the doorbell rang during our family worship. As we did not want to be disturbed, we did not answer the door. Later, we found a note in our letterbox with the request to call the job center on Monday. The official had personally delivered the note.

Thus, I did not go to work on Monday morning, but went to the job center instead. These two friendly officials wanted to know how I was now going to go on: "Now, did the One Above think of you?" I told them of my job as a salesman. I can still hear the official's words in my ears as if it was yesterday: "So it is actually true, after all!" They found me a good job in an orthopedic workshop where I did not have to work on Sabbath. Even in winter I was able to finish work early and got the possibility of making up for the missing hours on Sunday morning. This proves to me, that it is always worthwhile to obey God.

BOAT DRIVING LICENSE AND MY EYESIGHT

Years later, when we lived in Hamburg, we had somewhat recovered financially. Meanwhile, we could

even afford a motorboat. Even in those days it was compulsory to have a motorboat driving license. The examination included an eye test. Candidates with visual problems were referred to a certain eye specialist in St. Georg Hospital. Sixteen years have passed since my retinal detachment was diagnosed. The specialist in St. Georg Hospital asked me: "What can I do for you?" I told him that I had once suffered from a retinal detachment. "When did you have your operation?" came the routine question. I told him that I had not undergone any operation. "This cannot be, you would be blind!" he replied firmly. I suggested that he should convince himself. So, he sent me to the darkroom.

After having examined me, he admitted that obviously I did have a retinal detachment, and that there were no signs of an operation. He tried to persuade me saying: "Don't tell this to anybody! Nobody will ever believe that!" But I contradicted him, explaining that I would always give honour and glory to God, as often as I could, because He was the one healing my eyes. The way he looked at me made me realize that he didn't really understand what I was saying.

In any case this is more evidence for the miracle God has worked on me.

Amen.

To be continued.



Asleep in Jesus

We are deeply saddened to announce the peaceful resting of our dear pioneer brother, John Altwein, on Thursday, January 30, 2025, at the age of 93. Br. Altwein was known for his unwavering faithfulness and dedication, first in Germany and later in Australia, where he continued to uplift the cause of reform. He is the author of this article series, *"Only with the Help of God."*

He is survived by his beloved wife, Karla, daughters Sonja and Ellen, and grandchildren. His legacy of service, both in writing and within the church, will live on in the hearts of those who knew him.

After moving to Australia to join his daughter Sonja and her husband Fritz Baumung, Br. Altwein and his wife were welcomed into the Toongabbie church, where he served faithfully as treasurer, committee member, and auditor for many years. His tireless dedication and selfless service made him a cornerstone of the church.

Brother John will be deeply missed by all who knew him, but his legacy of faith, service, and writing will continue to inspire us.

God's Character

Part 4 of 5

Abundant in Goodness

By Ylenia Gallo

Dear Readers, we have now reached the fourth article of our series of readings dedicated to studying the character of God, according to the text in Exodus 34:6: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

In this article, we will focus on the second-to-last attribute mentioned here: "abundant in goodness", which in Hebrew corresponds to the term "*khesed*". The meaning of this word remains somewhat mysterious, as it is difficult to translate into other languages.

This term combines three characteristics: love, generosity, and a continuous commitment to keeping one's word, all encapsulated in a single expression. Therefore, "*khesed*" describes an act of loyalty motivated by deep concern and affection.

This expression appears multiple times in the Old Testament, particularly in the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman married to a man from the people of Israel. After her husband's death, Ruth is left with nothing but her poor mother-in-law, who was also widowed. Having nothing else to offer the young woman, Naomi urges her to return to her homeland, to her family.

But Ruth is determined to stay by her side and take care of her. Ruth's act was one of goodness, as she remained loyal to the end, even in unfavorable circumstances. This gesture of "*khesed*" is entirely unconditional—it does not matter whether the other person can reciprocate the kindness received or whether they are deserving of it. This attribute depends solely on the nature and character of the one who gives it.

Thus, Ruth acted in this way because her character was generous and filled with the kind of love that remains faithful to its word. This is what "*khesed*" means.

The affection and loyalty of Ruth are an inspiration to us, but the only One who is truly abundant in goodness at all times and without measure is the Lord, our Heavenly Father.

To demonstrate this, I would like to mention the experience of Jacob. Despite his deceitful past—having deceived his own family in a crafty manner, the Lord still chose him and repeated to him the promise once made to his grandfather Abraham: "And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be." Genesis 15:5



This promise assured the patriarch that he would have a great multitude of descendants, through whom the Lord would bless all of humanity.

And behold, twenty years later, when Jacob finally acknowledges his wrongdoing and deems himself unworthy of divine grace, he proclaims: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies [*khesed*] and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant." Genesis 32:10

Take note that God's "*khesed*" never depended on Jacob's merits or righteousness, for the goodness of God is the natural expression of His loving and faithful character.

Throughout the centuries, the Lord has continually proven Himself to be a good God, even in times when His people lost their moral compass and willingly turned away from His precepts.

Even after delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage, they murmured and despaired during their journey through the wilderness, fearing they would perish at the hands of the surrounding nations. They were so spiritually blind that they even threatened to harm

Moses and sought to return to Egypt, from where they had been delivered.

This greatly displeased the Lord, and His anger was kindled against Israel. But at that moment, Moses stood as an intercessor, reminding Him of His abundant goodness, saying: "Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy [*khesed*]." Numbers 14:19

Moses did not plead based on whether Israel deserved God's forgiveness or not, but rather, he asked the Lord to show mercy because it was consistent with His character.

The only reason why the God of heaven is able to show "*khesed*" unconditionally is that it is part of His very nature. The Lord delights when His children respond positively to the kindness they receive, but even when they do not, His goodness remains unshaken.

The prophet Isaiah compares Israel's goodness to the morning dew, which disappears in an instant; but the "*khesed*" of God endures forever.

David himself, in Psalm 136, declares twenty-six times: "For His mercy [*khesed*] endureth forever."

When we critically examine the history of the world, which is filled with violence, injustice, wickedness, and death, we reach the conclusion that most people have forgotten God, misusing His "*khesed*".

Yet, in the darkest moment of the world's history, He did not hesitate to demonstrate the most extreme act of kindness: Taking on human form, identifying with human suffering, and uniting us to Himself through Jesus, His only begotten Son.

Those who walked with Him and followed Him as their Master saw the character of the Father in His love and goodness. Jesus remained faithful and loving until the very end, and through His life, death, and resurrection, God opened for us a way and a new future.

Not because of our merits, but because it is consistent with His Holy character!

What a wonderful truth it is to know that, despite our fallen nature, the Father is always ready to show His goodness towards us.

May the Lord help us to experience the "*khesed*" of God in our lives and share it with others.

May the Lord bless you. Amen.



Healthy Recipes

Squash Strudel

By Franziska S. Pedersen

Ingredients:

- 1 Butternut squash
- Phyllo dough (12 sheets)
- 1 cup bread crumbs (250 mL)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup pure liquid honey (180 mL)
- 3 tsp. cinnamon (or 3 tsp. substitute) (15 mL)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup oil (180 mL)



Preparation:

Thaw the Phyllo dough in refrigerator overnight and let it come to room temperature before using.

Then lay it on a tray onto your work table and cover with a tea towel to keep it moist.

Cut the squash across in half, scrape out the seeds, and slice and peel it. Shred the peeled squash in a food processor with a fine blade. You need about 10 cups (2 ½ liters). Then pour it into a bowl.

Instructions:

Place a sheet of Phyllo dough onto your work surface near you with the length towards the right and left. Drizzle 1 Tbsp. (15 mL) oil over it; then lay another open sheet nicely on top of that. Spread about 1 ¼ cup (310 mL) of the shredded squash near the edge, evenly over the length of the dough.

Now drizzle 3 Tbsp. of honey (45 mL), then sprinkle ½ tsp. (2 mL) cinnamon substitute or cinnamon (your choice), and about 2 Tbsp. (30 mL) plain breadcrumbs over the squash. Fold one inch of the dough over the left and right side of the filling, all the way down the sides. Now roll the strudel to the end of the dough, with the edges closing each side of the strudel. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet, with the edges of the dough always under the strudel.

Repeat this five more times. Brush the six strudel rolls with a pastry brush and a little oil before baking on the middle rack in a 350F (180C) preheated oven for 35–40 minutes, until golden brown. My baking sheet is 11" x 16" (28 cm x 40cm). It holds 6 strudels.

Cinnamon Substitute:

You can make this seasoning by mixing 1 part finely ground cardamom and 2 parts finely ground coriander. You can store this with your other seasonings for later use.

Butternut squash is a nutritional powerhouse of essential vitamins, such as A, B, and C. It also contains magnesium, potassium, manganese, and is a good source of calcium and iron.

Coriander is high in Vitamin B2 and B3, as well as fiber, copper and other nutrients. Cardamom is rich in phosphorous, manganese, and zinc.

Cinnamon, which is harvested from tree bark, flowers, and tree roots, to name a few, can have some health benefits, but more research is needed to be able to know all the benefits and negative information in this seasoning. One of the findings we have in studies is that it can irritate the digestive tract, the lining of the stomach and can cause stomach ulcers, if used too much.



Ecuador



Guatemala



Madagascar



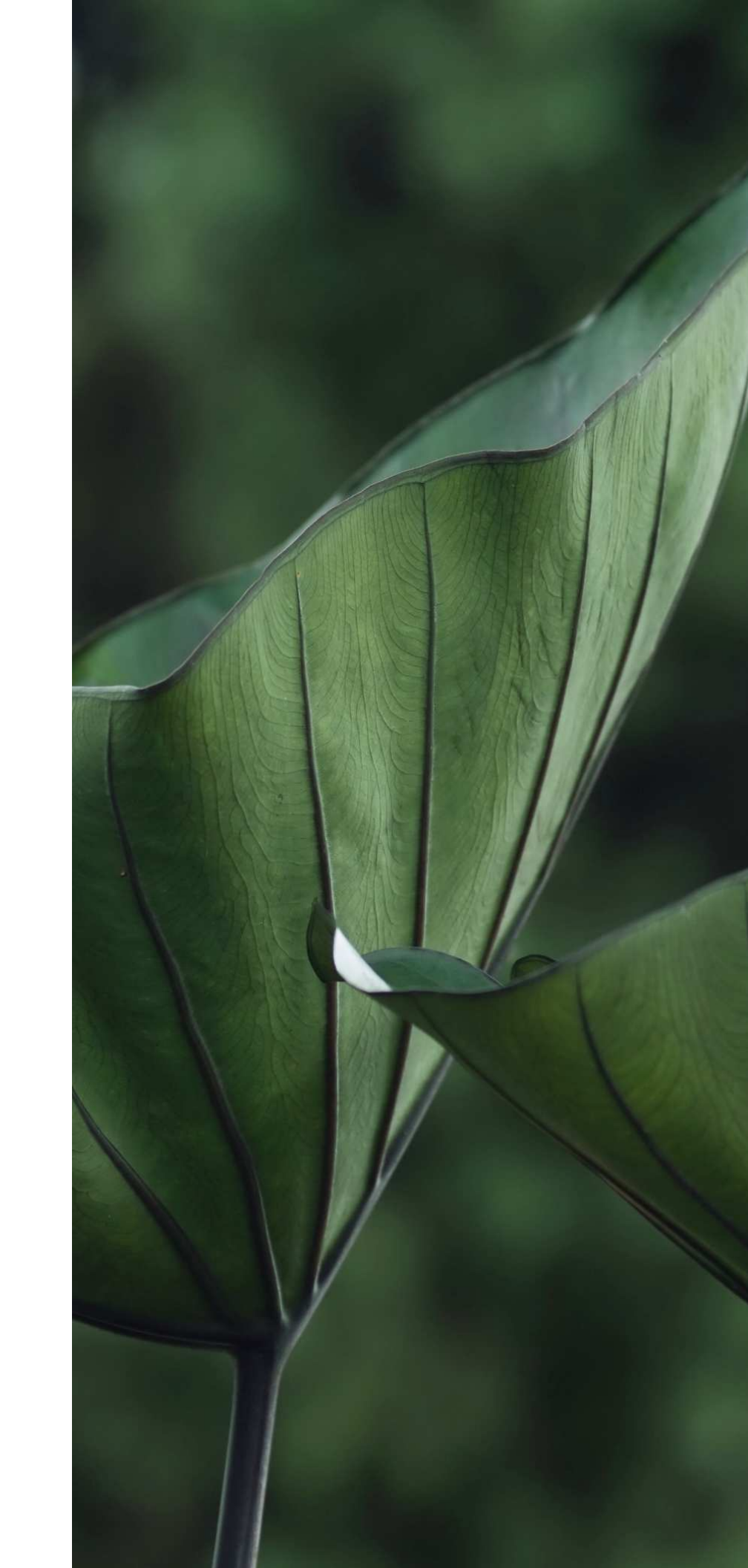
Panama



Tanzania



Zambia



“I saw how great and holy
God was. Said the angel, ‘Walk
carefully before Him, for He is
high and lifted up, and the
train of His glory fills the
temple.’ I saw that everything
in heaven was in perfect order.
Said the angel, ‘Look ye, Christ
is the head, move in order,
move in order. Have a
meaning to everything.’ Said
the angel, ‘Behold ye and
know how perfect, how
beautiful, the order in heaven;
follow it.”

–*Manuscript 11*, 1850



**International
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