

HOPE



Achinleck
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
Serving Christ, Serving the Community

The First Noel

When I was a boy at school, I was always a bit confused when we were made to sing the carol, "The first Noel the angel did say...." And the chorus, "Noel, Noel.....". What did "No L's" mean? Later I learned, of course, that it was not "No L's" but that Noel is a word borrowed from French and which can be traced back to the Latin word "natalis", which can mean "birthday" as a noun or "of or relating to birth" as an adjective. So, **the "first Noel" was the first announcement of the birth of Jesus** to the shepherds on the Bethlehem hillside.

However, in this short article I want to think of the fact that in the Christmas story there is an "L" in fact there are three. **The "3L's" of Christmas are Love, Life and Light.**

Love was the motivation for the coming into the world of our Lord Jesus Christ. John 3.16 reminds us that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." **Can you imagine a world without love?** What a terrible place that would be. Sadly, many spend their lives feeling unloved, feeling unworthy of anyone's love and even prepared to do all sorts of things just to get somebody, somewhere to pay them a little attention. However, **God's love is universal, unconditional, unmerited, unfathomable, immeasurable**, as the children's song tells us, "God's love is so high we can't get over it, so low we can't get under it, so wide we can't get around it, Oh wonderful love!" **What an amazing truth - God loves us** and offers us the greatest gift that anyone could receive at Christmas - His Son. **Will you receive Him?** "As many as receive Him, to them are given **the authority (right) to become the sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1.12) Sadly, at the end of the Lord's earthly life we are told that those that hated Him without a cause were numbered more than the hairs in His head. He loved all men but many hated Him. **Do you love Him because He first loved you?** (1 John 4.19)

Light shone at his coming. In John chapter 1 we read, "In Him (Jesus) there was life; and the life was the light of men." (vs 3) **Can you imagine a world without light?** What a terrifying place that would be? Everyone stumbling about, crashing into each other, hurting each other, stepping over, and on, each other, nobody really knowing where they are or where they are going. **That actually sounds a bit like this world, does it not?** However, when the Lord Jesus was born, light came into the world. He came to light up the way through the darkness. He said, "I am the light of the world, that **whosoever believes in Me should not stay**

in darkness." (John 12.46) Sadly, John recalls, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil." (John 3.19) Men refused to come to Jesus as the Light of the world fearing He would expose their sin which they would rather was kept hidden in the dark. The reason the Lord exposes our sin in His presence is that He wants us to see the hurt it does to ourselves and to others so that we repent of it, forsake it and experience forgiveness for it. **Will you step out of the darkness into His light that you might receive forgiveness?**

Life is offered because of his coming. Jesus said, "The thief comes not but for to steal and to kill and to destroy but, **I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.**" (John 10.10)

Can you imagine a world without life? There is a great difference between existing and living!! Sadly many in the world are just existing, **life is just like being on a merry go round** - speeding ever faster but going nowhere. Emptiness, brokenness, hopelessness and meaninglessness abound. Unfilled ambitions, broken relationships, addictions, poverty, suffering, sickness, etc all plague our society. Presently, **there are eight billion people on earth, all are existing but how many are alive?** Jesus offers us life - His life, abundant life, eternal life. It's a far better quality of life than that which we have naturally. The life He offers is not necessarily materially prosperous and pain free but it a life in which He imparts to us His love, joy and peace. It is a life of hope and assurance. It's a life lived in intimate fellowship with Himself. It's a gift we can reject or receive. We read the Lord's words in John 5.40, **"You will not come to Me, that you might have life."** Men would rather exist than live!!! **Will you come to Him and receive His love, light and life this Christmas?**



MEET A MEMBER

EDITH STRAWHORN

HOW I BECAME A CHRISTIAN

I was born and brought up in the North East of Scotland. My parents were both Christians.

When I was eight years old, I received a gold ring as a birthday present. Some months after this, I was sitting in class at school and I started chewing the ring! Being a soft metal I had it squished in no time, causing it to be pressed into my finger. Within a few days my finger was very swollen and bluish. I tried to hide it but my teacher noticed and wrote a letter for me to give to my parents. Then she terrified me by saying, "You're going to stop your circulation."

Well as an eight year old kid I thought this meant that I was going to die! I was terrified of death!

On our wall at home was a Bible verse, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans chapter 6 verse 23.

I knew this text off by heart and had already shuddered at the thought of dying because I was a sinner.

I knew I would die one day but not at eight years old!

I ran home from school and hid in my bedroom. The letter was still in my bag.

I thought about the Bible text and for the first time found myself thinking about the second part. '... But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

I realised I needed to accept God's gift and know that even if my body died, I had a soul (that part of our inner conscious, emotional being that responds to a need for God) that would live on in either Heaven or Hell, depending on my choice.

Eternal life was a gift to me. But, I also realised it was through 'Jesus Christ our Lord.' I knew that Jesus, God's son, came to earth as a sinless man so that he could be tortured, crucified and die voluntary as a punishment for OUR sins. By accepting this 'gift' I could be assured of Heaven after death. All I had to do was accept it!

I knelt by my large toy trunk and asked God to forgive me for my sins. I thanked him for sending Jesus to die for me.



I started crying tears of joy and instantly knew that I was going to be okay. Fear of death had gone and now all I wanted to do was tell everyone!

I ran downstairs and told my mum. She didn't seem to be worried about my finger!

"Dad will cut the ring off", she said. The fact that the ring was ruined was of no consequence either! She was rejoicing with me that I knew God's forgiveness and was 'saved'.

That night was the most important of my life. It changed me forever.

Now, forty eight years later, I'm thankful for the life that trusting Jesus opened up. I love God. He is my friend and I have a relationship with Him through prayer and reading His Bible, a book as relevant and up-to-date today as it was thousands of years ago.

Do I still get afraid? Yes I do but God has all the solutions to life's situations and problems. Psalm 56 v 4 says, '...In God I have put my trust. I will not fear...'

Are you afraid of death? Come with 'child-like' trust and believe that God offers you forgiveness. Accept that he gave his son, Jesus, to die for you.

The result is supernatural peace, a relationship with God, joy, despite our circumstances and a home in Heaven guaranteed when we die.

WHAT A YEAR IT HAS BEEN!!!

The tail end of a pandemic, war in Europe, energy and cost of living crisis, inflation, three prime ministers, the sad loss of our monarch, floods, famines, wild fires, massive changes in the geopolitical world, etc, etc, etc..

It's been a crazy, chaotic, confusing and seemingly out of control year. People been left thinking, "Can't wait to get this year over with."

"But what's next?"

Well, **the Bible tells us what's next and it's not good.** It's very much an intensified version of what we have experienced this year. The last book in the Bible, Revelation, gives an outline of future events and to be honest it's not very pleasant reading, apart from the fact that in the midst of the coming darkness, destruction and death **there is Hope.** I used a capital letter in Hope because Hope is so closely linked with one unique, divine, person. The Bible says, **"Christ, who is our Hope"** and speaks about "His appearing".

As we anticipate a new year may our trust and hope be in Him alone – He is our only Hope.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!!

Christmas and New Year are upon us – it seems no time since we were last rushing about buying presents, organising parties, visiting loved ones, offering season greetings and thinking about, and then quickly abandoning, New Year resolutions.

Time flies!! Life goes past so quickly, and at seasons like this that we become more aware of.

Life can be so busy, and we hardly get a moment to stop and consider what it's all about. How did we come to be on this minute planet, spinning around a massive ball of fire called the sun at a mind-boggling speed of around 67,000 mls/hr **Why are we here?** At times we think that life is all about us, and ours, and we need to keep ourselves as busy as we can, making sure that we are comfortable, secure, satisfied and successful during the "little" time that we occupy an infinitely small place on an infinitely small planet in an infinitely vast universe!! **In fact, we are all, pretty insignificant** – here today and gone tomorrow!! Soon we, and all we have ever accomplished here, will be but fading memories in the minds of others.

Soon life will end and that's it, or is it? Is life just a mad dash from one Christmas to another until we spend our last Christmas with our friends and family and then we are gone – only memories remaining? Surely not. **There must be something more.**

The God who made us, and made everything, never intended us to live self-centred lives at break-neck speed, burning ourselves out trying as hard as we can to be someone down here. **God made us for Himself and made us for eternity!!** However, there is a problem between us and God that prevents us from fulfilling our potential on earth and causes us to miss out on what God intends for us in eternity. **The problem is "sin".** That's all the wrong stuff that we do because of our natural bias towards self-centredness, self-righteousness, and independence. Sin separates us from God, it

thwarts His desire for us to enjoy a fully satisfied life, finding our joy, hope, life and fulfilment in a restful, meaningful relationship with Him. Sin not only separates us from God now but will do so for eternity. **It not only destroys things here but deprives us of eternal blessings in heaven after we die.**

However, the Christmas message, is summed up in a few words, **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** (1 Timothy 1.15). He came to deliver us from empty, broken, meaningless, hopeless lives and bring us into fulfilling relationship with God. We read in 1 Timothy 2.4-6 :- "God, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men,** the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, **that he might bring us to God,** being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit." (1 Peter 3.18).

Praise God the gulf between sinful men and a holy God has been bridged, and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He accomplished through His death, **we can be reconciled to God.** We can know Him as our Father and can enjoy all the blessings and resources that he makes available to His children.

In addition He gives us hope for the future in 1 Peter, 1.3-5 we read, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Do you have this living hope? Or could it be said of you, **"without Christ, without hope and without God"?** (Ephesians 2.12) It doesn't need to be like that but, through faith, you can know Christ and know God and have hope, **"made near by the blood of Christ".** (Ephesians 2.13)





**FOOD
BANK**

**Struggling - Benefits Cut,
Sanctioned, finding it difficult
to make ends meet??**

We provide a food bank in the
hall at Park Road at 2pm every
Thursday & at The Hub, Furnace
Rd Muirkirk at 11am every Friday

Family Service

Our all-age family service is held
each Sunday @ 12.30pm

You are invited to come along to our

Christmas Service

Sunday 18th December
at 12.30pm
Lunch will be
served after
the service

All ages welcome



PARENTS & TODDLERS

Group

Friday @ 9.30 - 11.00
(term time only)
Please contact Ruth on
07940 355 882
for details.

For times of other meetings see website

CONTACT DETAILS

www.auchinleckchristianfellowship.co.uk
hecares4you2@aol.com Mobile :- 07734 709 834
Park Road, Auchinleck. KA18 2AZ