



Volume XXXIX

"...a net...cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Matthew 13:47

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FISH LIGHTS—When I think of this season of the year, it brings sadness to my heart to see the commercialization. However, I try to enjoy it in ways that keep me with a Christian balance. One of the things that I really like is the lights. Since first reading my Bible and finding out that God is light, and then seeing the beauty of lights throughout His creation, it makes me stand back in awe. Man's artificial lights (although I enjoy them) are no match for those of the heavenly Designer and Creator. I cannot imagine what Heaven will be like! The lights of the city of Revelation 21 (read it), I'm sure will take our breath!

Since this periodical is geared to the nautical, we must find some "fish" lights. It took mankind many centuries to discover electricity and many more years to put it to use. Even so, where it is available, elaborate wiring systems and power plants are required before a factory or home can use it, and then it is not always dependable.

In contrast, consider another wonder in God's creation. He gave certain fish throughout the world the ability to make and use their own electricity. Deep in the Caribbean Sea there is a fish only three inches long named the *flashlight fish*, having a light as strong as a small flashlight. Its electricity comes from pouches below its eyes and can be turned on and off at will. A large fish pursuing it in dark waters gives up when it swims swiftly in one direction all lit up, then turns the light off and swims in another direction.

There are some fish that have rows of lights along both sides of their bodies and in the dark look like toy ocean liners with lights shining through the windows. They can turn them on and off as they please. Others, such as the deep-sea *viper fish*, *dragonfish* and more, carry torches on the end of fleshy rods which they can turn in any direction, and there are still others which have bright red taillights. The *gulper eel*, almost five feet long, is one of these. Still others have headlights sending out two beams with reflectors behind them, like a little car finding its way in the dark waters.

So with our electricity we light up our homes and towns, but the author of true light has had the lights on from the beginning. John 1:1-4,9, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."*

Have you allowed this Light to shine into your heart? John 8:12, *"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* Trust Jesus Christ to be your Saviour, then let His light shine this Christmas season! --AWM (2002)

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SAVIOUR'S BIRTH—I'll bet you didn't know the following about the manger that Jesus was laid in. Of course, mangers are animal feeding troughs, but in ancient Israel they were made of stone—not what you would see in a modern-day nativity scene—not comfortable, but great for protection. That's why those who were experts in this matter, the priests, would put their newborn lambs in them for protection—but not just any lamb, the unblemished perfect lambs that were used in the sacrifice for sins. And Bethlehem, where Jesus was born was FAMOUS for the UNBLEMISHED LAMBS used for sacrifice. These lambs had to be perfect so they would wrap them tightly in cloth and lay them in the manger to keep them safe. This is exactly why the only time a manger is mentioned in Jesus' birth story it is being told to shepherds. In Luke 2:12, it says, *"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."* The shepherds would have understood this powerful parallel! THEY KNEW what the cloth and the manger meant! This baby would be THE PERFECT LAMB OF GOD! He wasn't just a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger, He was GOD—perfect, sinless and Holy, humbling Himself to become the perfect sacrifice to reconcile us back to Himself! THAT, my friend, that Perfect Lamb, is WHY WE CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS.

Shepherds would have understood that they were being sent to the place where the sacrificial lambs were born. And where was that? These signs would have pointed the shepherds to the Tower of the Flock (Micah 4:8). The Tower of the Flock, locally known as Migdal-Eder, was, it is thought, located on the outskirts of Bethlehem and overlooked the fields in which the shepherds kept their flocks for the Temple. The bottom floor of this tower was used for the lambs that were dedicated to Temple sacrifice. When an ewe was about to give birth, it was taken to the Tower. If it was without blemish, the new-born lamb was then swaddled and placed in a manger, a clean stone bed.

There was only one place in Bethlehem that had both a manger and swaddling clothes—the Tower of the Flock. The shepherds would have immediately recognized the signs. They would have no problem finding the babe since they knew exactly where He was.

How wonderful is it to know that the *"...lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,"* (John 1:29) wasn't merely a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger? He was God, holy, harmless and undefiled, come to rescue His people (Hebrews 7:26).

(For more on "The Tower of the Sheep" see Alfred Edersheim, "The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah", pp. 186-187.)

--Part author unknown, part MM

RECOGNIZING JESUS—One of my favorite Christmas stories is about the old shoe cobbler who dreamed one Christmas Eve that Jesus would come to visit him the next day. The dream was so real that he was convinced it would come true.

So the next morning he got up and went out and cut green boughs and decorated his little cobbler shop and got all ready for Jesus to come and visit. He was so sure that Jesus was going to come that he just sat down and waited for Him.

The hours passed and Jesus didn't come, but an old man came. He came inside for a moment to get warm out of the winter cold. As the cobbler talked with him he noticed the holes in the old man's shoes, so he reached up on the shelf and got him a new pair of shoes. He made sure they fit and that his socks were dry and sent him on his way.

Still he waited. But Jesus didn't come. An old woman came—a woman who hadn't had a decent meal in two days. They sat and visited for a while, and then he prepared some food for her to eat. He gave her a nourishing meal and sent her on her way.

Then he sat down again to wait for Jesus. But Jesus still didn't come.

Then he heard a little boy crying out in front of his shop. He went out and talked with the boy and discovered that the boy had been separated from his parents and didn't know how to get home. So he put on his coat, took the boy by the hand and led him home.

When he came back to his little shoe shop it was almost dark and the streets were emptied of people. And then in a moment of despair he lifted his voice to heaven and said, "Oh, Lord Jesus, why didn't you come?" Then in a moment of silence he seemed to hear a voice saying, "Oh, shoe cobbler, lift up your heart. I kept my word. Three times I knocked at your friendly door. Three times my shadow fell across your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet; I was the woman you gave to eat; I was the boy on the homeless street."

Jesus had come. The cobbler just didn't realize it.

--Melvin Newland

HE MUST INCREASE!—Have you ever felt dissatisfied with your faith? Have you ever thought that if only you had a better quality of faith, then you could be sure of your salvation? This is dangerous thinking. Why? Because we are never called to have faith in faith. Since when does the Bible say, "*Being satisfied with our faith, we have peace with God*"? Compare Romans 5:1.

Satisfaction with Jesus, His person and work is what is called for. We are never called to be satisfied with our faith but called rather to be occupied with Christ and His objective, outside of us, finished work! Let's look further at this. Gospel faith takes a hold of Christ and His accomplishments on our behalf. Gospel faith releases us to set our affection on things above where Christ is seated in authority (Colossians 3:2). Gospel faith takes us out of ourselves and into the Lord Jesus. The result of gospel faith is satisfaction with Christ and His substitutionary work done on our behalf. Gospel faith sees and rests on this. Do you

remember John the Baptist's words, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30)?

In summary, faith, no matter how perfect, is nothing in and of itself. Faith, however, points us to Jesus. It commands us to look away from ourselves and look to Christ, the risen, exalted, crucified Lord. Faith agrees that "Christ is all" (Colossians 3:11). Faith constantly urges us to look to the One who says, "Look unto me" (Isaiah 45:22). He must increase! --MM

SEA-SON'S GREETINGS—Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter—isn't it strange how the change in weather affects us on earth? These seasons are about three months in duration, depending upon where you are in the hemisphere.

The changing seasons are actually caused by the changing position of the earth in relation to the sun. When the North Pole slants toward the sun the northern hemisphere receives more sun, thus the Summer season. When the pole slants away from the sun it receives less sun, thus the Winter. The Spring and Fall seasons begin when the poles begin to slant toward or away from the sun. Now the oceans play a very important part in this change. Because they retain heat, the seasons change only gradually, avoiding drastic changes.

The seasons with their changes affect us more than you would think. Consider our Winter, for example. There is more sickness and depression and death, business and industry slow down, even the fishing business is at an all-time low. It is sobering to think that modern man, with all his mental and physical power, can be put out of business by a God who can just turn off the heat!

Because that is true, it is good to know the God of the seasons. His Son, Jesus, makes knowing Him possible. Remember, the Saviour is not some babe in a manger (He was), but a risen, exalted Lord who stands with outstretched arms to provide a change for even you this **sea-son**.

Sea-son's greetings, my dear friends. --AWM(2003)

SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS

--Sleep in your clothes so you'll be dressed in the morning.

--Never tell your mom her diet's not working.

--Don't flush the toilet when your dad is in the shower.

--When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?", don't answer him.

--When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone.

--Never try to baptize a cat.

--Wear a hat when feeding seagulls.

--Never tell your little brother that you're not going to do what your mom told you to do.

--Listen to your brain; it has lots of information.

--Remember the two places you are always welcome, at church and Grandma's house.

FISHY QUESTION—Last edition's question asked what five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it—the answer is SHORT! Let's see how many of you can name the city that is 3/7 chicken, 2/3 cat, and 2/4 goat! Write (or email) soon.