

Selections from the Classic

Desire of Ages



Selections from

The Desire of Ages

Abridged and adapted from the Classic Bestseller

E.G. White

Contents

1. Unto You a Savior
2. The Baptism
3. The Marriage Feast
4. Nicodemus
5. At Jacob's Well
6. Healing on the Sabbath
7. Bethesda and the Sanhedrin
8. A Night on the Lake
9. One Thing You Lack
10. Lazarus, Come Forth
11. The Feast at Simon's House
12. Gethsemane
13. Calvary
14. The Lord Is Risen

Copyright © 2022 by John Howard
All rights reserved

Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts are from the New King James Version (NKJV), copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

Unto You a Savior
(Read Luke 2:1–20)

In the same fields David led his flock as a boy, shepherds were still watching sheep through the night as they talked and prayed together about the promise of the coming Messiah to take over David's throne. "And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord'" (Luke 2:9-11).

Taking in the scene and hearing these words of the angels, the shepherds' minds filled with hope and anticipation. The Messiah had finally come to Israel! Because Israel had associated the coming of the Messiah with power and greatness, the angel had to prepare the shepherds to recognize their Savior in poverty and humiliation, with the words, "this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

The heavenly messenger told them how to find Jesus and had tenderly given them time to become accustomed to the divine radiance, but the joy and glory could no longer be hidden. Suddenly, the whole plain was lit up with a host of angels singing — "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, good will toward men."

After the angels disappeared and the light faded away, the shadows of night once again fell on the hills

of Bethlehem, but the brightest picture ever seen by humans burned in their memory. “So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:15, 16).

Leaving the scene, they went about joyfully sharing what they had seen and heard. “And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:18).

The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. While in heaven, Satan had hated Christ for His exalted position. He hated Him, even more, when he himself was dethroned, and yet into the world where Satan claimed dominion, God permitted His Son to come as a helpless babe, subject to the weakness of humanity. He allowed Him to meet the same horrible temptations and dangers that we face, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it, at the risk of failure and eternal loss, in order to rescue us.

The heart of the human parent trembles over the dangers surrounding their children. The mother looks into the face of her child and trembles at the thought of life’s dangers. The father longs to shield his child from Satan’s power. But to meet a more fearful conflict at a far greater risk, God gave His only begotten Son so the path of life could be made safe for our little ones. “In this is love” (1 John 4:10). The heavens marvel at the sacrifice.

The Baptism (Read Matt. 3:13–17)

Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins, but they had had no direct contact with each other while they were growing up. John knew about the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. He knew about His sinless life and believed that He was the Messiah, but he had no definite assurance. Still, John the Baptist waited in faith, believing that in God's time, everything would be made clear.

God had revealed to John that the Messiah would come and seek baptism from him, and he was informed that a sign would be given to him at that time. When Jesus came to be baptized, John recognized a purity of character in Christ that he had never seen before in any man. The very atmosphere of His presence was holy and awe-inspiring.

When Jesus approached him and asked for baptism, John drew back, exclaiming, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me" (Matt. 3:14)? With firm but gentle authority, Jesus replied, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). So John, yielding to His command, led the Savior down into the Jordan and buried Him beneath the waters of baptism, then "Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him" (Matt. 3:16).

Jesus did not receive baptism as a confession of guilt for Himself. Rather, He identified Himself with

sinner, taking the steps that we must take and doing the work that we must do. His life of suffering and patient endurance after His baptism was also an example for us to follow.

When He came out of the water, Jesus bowed in prayer on the banks of the river. Beams of glory came directly from the throne of God. The heavens opened up, as a dovelike form of pure light rested on the Savior's head, and from the heavens, a voice was heard saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). These words embrace all humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. In spite of all our sins and weaknesses, we are not cast aside as worthless. "He made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). The glory that rested on Jesus is a pledge of the love of God for us. It tells us of the power of prayer — how the human voice can reach the ear of God, and how our prayers can gain acceptance in the courts of heaven.

By sin, the earth was cut off from heaven and alienated from its communion. The umbilical cord between heaven and earth had been severed, but Jesus once again connected this earth with heaven. "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Our Redeemer has opened the way for the most sinful, the most needy, the most oppressed and despised, to find access to the Father. The voice that spoke to Jesus says to every believing soul today, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

The Marriage Feast (Read John 2:1–11)

After His baptism and conflict in the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee. There was to be a marriage at Cana, a little town not far from Nazareth. The wedding parties were relatives of Joseph and Mary. Jesus was invited to the feast with the disciples, and as they meet, the disciples tell Mary what they saw and heard at the baptism and beyond, concluding by stating, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote” (John 1:45).

As the guests assemble, many seem to be preoccupied with some topic absorbing their interest. A suppressed excitement seems to permeate through the crowd. Little groups talk together in eager, but quiet tones. Curious glances are turned towards the Son of Mary. Noticing their looks, Mary wanted to see Jesus prove to the company that He was really the Messiah. She hoped there would be an opportunity for Him to work a miracle in front of them.

At the time, it was the custom for marriage feasts to continue for several days. On this occasion, before the feast ended, all the wine had been used up prematurely. This caused the hosts great stress. Its absence would be viewed as a lack of hospitality. As a relative of the parties, Mary had assisted in the arrangements, and she now talked to Jesus, saying, “They have no wine.” These words were a suggestion that He might supply their need, but Jesus answered, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come” (John 2:3, 4). This



www.hopetracts.com