

WHAT ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR?

What are You Searching For?

Wise men seek Christ. The question is: What are you seeking for? Is it fun, friends, fame or fortune? Popularity, prestige or power?

Empty Boxes

Have you noticed the impressive large Christmas trees set up in many shopping malls? Surely you have noticed the beautifully wrapped presents piled up under many of these trees? You will see many children's eyes wide as they look at these bright, shiny, shimmering presents, often with attractive ribbons around them?

Over the years, when my children were very young, they each asked: *What is in those boxes?* The answer is: **Absolutely nothing!** They are beautifully wrapped and attractively presented, but the presents under these Christmas trees in the shopping malls are all empty!

Empty Promises

The world offers so much, but in the end it turns out to be empty. The world, the flesh and the devil promise you everything you could possibly desire. If only you will buy their product or service, you are promised all the fun, fame and fortune you could desire. All the power, popularity, prestige and possessions your heart could desire. But like those alluring and attractive looking presents under the Christmas trees in the mall, the promises of the world turn out to be disappointingly empty.

Dead-End Streets

For those who pursue materialism they will find **merry go rounds** that get them nowhere, **mazes** that get them lost and **dead-end streets** that will frustrate their desires. Hedonism and existentialism prove to be short sighted, meaningless, empty and purposeless. What are you searching for? What is your purpose in life? What's in the boxes you have been obtaining from the world?

Trends are Treadmills

Do not waste your life on the empty boxes of the world. The time wasting treadmill of trends, fashions and fads are ultimately frustrating. Do not settle for less than God's very best. God gives the best to those who leave the choice to Him. ***"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."*** Jeremiah 29: 30

What is Your Life's Purpose?

What are you seeking for in life? What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Christmas should remind us of the danger of missing out on what is most important. We read in the Bible: *"... there was no room for them in the inn."* Luke 2: 7

They Missed the Greatest Opportunity of Their Lifetime

How must all those innkeepers of Bethlehem feel - that they turned away the Greatest Man ever to be born? They had no room for Emmanuel - God with us. They could not accommodate the Creator, the Eternal Judge before whom they will have to stand on the Day of Judgment. They missed the opportunity of all time. They could have welcomed the Holy family - but they missed out. Our Lord Jesus was born in a stable, in a cave, amongst farm animals.

Where Were the Priests?

Wise men travelled great distances in order to worship the King of kings. The shepherds on the hillside came and worshipped. But where was the mayor of Bethlehem? There is no indication that any of the elders and leading citizens of Bethlehem acknowledged the greatest event ever to occur

in Bethlehem, before or since. They missed out on the greatest opportunity and event ever. Where was the High Priest? Where was King Herod? It is extraordinary to note that the entire priesthood of Israel, all the thousands employed at the Temple missed the birth of the Messiah!

There Was No Room for Him

At His birth there was no room for Jesus in any home or inn of Bethlehem. Today there seems to be no room for Jesus at the UN. Nor is there space for Jesus in most of the Xmas cards, in most of the schools and in most of the music. Even Nativity scenes are discouraged and banned in many cities around the world.

Is there room in your heart for Jesus?

"He came unto His own and His own received Him not." John 1: 11

Gifts and Giving

Christmas is the season of giving. Why do we give and receive gifts at Christmas time? After all, it's not our birthday! Why do some exchange their gifts on Christmas Eve, while others do so on Christmas Day?

The Greatest Gift

We give gifts at Christmas time in honour of the greatest Gift ever given. For **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"**. Freely we have received, freely we must give. It is far more blessed to give than to receive.

The First Christmas Gifts

The very first Christmas gifts were given by the wise men from the East. They travelled great distances, across difficult and dangerous terrain, in order to worship the Greatest Person ever born. They presented extraordinary gifts: **Gold** for the King of kings; **Frankincense** for the High Priest of all priests; **Myrrh** for the sacrifice that would end the need for any other blood sacrifices.

These men from the East were wise. They recognised **when** the Messiah would be born. They discovered **where** He would be born. As they came from Babylon and Persia, where Daniel had served. They were no doubt aware of the prophecies made by Daniel, which clearly identified when the Messiah would be born. The gifts they brought were most appropriate.

They recognised that this was not merely an heir to the throne, a prince, being born! **"Where is He who has been born King ...?"** They recognised that **gold** was most appropriate for the King of all kings.

Frankincense is symbolic of prayers and worship, so in presenting frankincense they recognised that the Messiah would be the High Priest over all priests.

Myrrh was an ointment used for burial. Jesus Christ was coming as the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

The Crib, the Cross and the Crown

At Christmas we remember the **crib**, but we also need to look beyond the crib to the **Cross**. The wood of the crib should remind us of the wood of the Cross, on which our Lord would die, a willing sacrifice for your sins and mine. But the wise men looked beyond the wood of the crib and of the Cross to the gold of the **crown**. For we no longer worship a babe in a manger, or even a suffering Saviour on the Cross, but a risen, ascended Redeemer reigning on high who will return to Judge the living and the dead.

The Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah

The crib, the Cross and the crown. The crib reminds us of the Incarnation. Jesus is Emmanuel - God with us. The Cross reminds us of **why** Jesus came. He lived the perfect life that we should have lived and He died the death that we deserve to die. The crown points to the return of the King of kings and the eternal Judge. The first time Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. The next time He will come as the Lion of Judah to conquer and to Judge.

When Will You Bow to Christ?

The question is not: will you bow to Christ, but **when** will you bow to Christ? Will you bow to Christ today in the day of grace, when forgiveness is freely available? When the door to heaven is wide open? Or will you bow on the Day of Judgment, when the door to salvation is firmly closed, when the day of grace is ended? We will either bow to Christ as Saviour today, or we will bow to Him as Judge, on that great and dreadful Day of Judgment.

What Gift Will You Give?

As we remember His birthday at Christmas we should ask: What gift will you give the One whose birthday we are celebrating? What can you give to our Lord Jesus Christ? What gifts would be appropriate for the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Creator and eternal Judge? Our Saviour and Redeemer?

The Boy Who Gave Jesus His Lunch

Andrew brought a little boy to Jesus and the little boy gave Jesus his lunch - five loaves and two fish. With that little boy's lunch, the Lord Jesus fed thousands with the food He multiplied. Jesus can do a lot with a little.

The Widow's Mite

Our Lord Jesus pointed out that the widow gave more than all the rest. The widow's mite may have looked very small in the eyes of those around, but the Lord, knowing how little she had, recognised that she had actually given everything she could.

The Expensive Perfume

Mary gave Christ the gift of expensive perfume, anointing Him for burial. *"Then Mary took a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus feet and wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume".*

Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus hosted Jesus and honoured Him by making restitution and donating much of his riches to the poor.

Give Him Your Attention

Jesus said; **"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** What can you give the Lord Jesus Christ? You can give Him your attention. Study His Word. Learn His Law. Get to know the Word of God and the God of the Word. Meditate on His Word, the Bible. Determine to put first things first. Bible before breakfast. Scripture before supper. Psalm before lunch. Read through the whole Bible this year. That will only take ten to twelve minutes a day to read four chapters of the Bible each day. There are 1187 chapters in the Bible. If you read just four chapters a day you will be able to read through the entire Bible in one year. How can you know His will unless you study His Word?

The Sacrifice of Obedience

"To obey is better than sacrifice." Determine to obey God. Dedicate your life to obeying the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:28. Care for and improve God's creation. Plant trees. Cultivate gardens. Adopt animals. Care for the environment. Recognise that all animals belong to God. Treat

animals with the care and diligence of those who must give an account to the Creator and eternal Judge. Be kind to God's animals. Ensure that animals have access to fresh, clean water and good healthy food. Do not waste food. Think of your pets, wild birds and other animals who can benefit. Do not litter. Recycle. Be thoughtful and considerate.

Make Christ's Great Commission Your Supreme Ambition

Obey the Great Commission. Dedicate your life to making disciples, teaching obedience to all things that the Lord has commanded. Introduce others to Christ. Witness for Christ. Be alert to evangelistic opportunities. Give Christ your love, your devotion, your worship and adoration. Give Him your heart and mind and hands and feet. Devote your time, talents and treasure to Christ and His Kingdom. Use your initiative and energy to advance the Kingdom of God. Be whole-hearted and persevere to the end.

Give Christ All that you Have

Does Jesus have all of you that there is to have? Jesus said that the widow gave all that she had. What have you given to God?

Have you made promises that you have gone back on?

Have you made commitments that you have not honoured?

Be Reconciled to Your Brother

Jesus said leave your gift at the altar and first go and be reconciled with your estranged brother, or sister. Make that phone call. Write that letter. Forgive. Ask for forgiveness. Do restitution.

These would be acceptable gifts and sacrifices of praise to present to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ on His birthday.

Make This Your Best Christmas Ever

Jesus is the Reason for the season. Wise men seek Christ. Give Christ you time, talents and treasure. Your hands, feet, lips, heart and life. Give Him your worship, obedience, sacrifice, attention and adoration. To obey is better than sacrifice. Do restitution. Be reconciled to your friends and family. Be generous. Be grateful. Recognise the many Evangelistic opportunities around you. Give God the very best that you have. Do not waste your life on the empty boxes of the world. Do not settle for less than God's very best.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew 6: 33

Dr. Peter Hammond
Livingstone Fellowship
P.O. Box 74 Newlands 7725
Cape Town South Africa
Tel: 021-689-4480
Email: mission@frontline.org.za
Website: www.livingstonefellowship.co.za

