

I Would Like to Have Been There **by Lester Roloff**

How would you like to have lived when Jesus lived? People say, "I believe if I could have lived and have seen Him, and if I could have seen those miracles He performed, I believe I could have been a better Christian." The testimony of the Word is against that, because most of the people who lived then turned back on Him. The closer He got to the old rugged cross, the thinner became His crowd. Religion sure turned back on Him. Fast! In fact, religion built that old rugged cross. Religion never has been a friend of God. They saw a lot of things, but they still didn't believe. Jesus marveled because of their unbelief. In a number of instances, Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." He said, "If any man will come after me..." which means that we do have the privilege of following Jesus.

I'm not going to be critical of people who travel so much, but I wish I had the money that folks have spent, going to where Jesus used to be. Jesus didn't say, "I will that they be with me where I have been." He said "I will that they be with me where I am." That's present tense. When you are where Jesus is, things are going on. There's not a monotonous moment about it. I'll promise you this, that Jesus wants us to be where He is right now. I believe that by faith and in the Word of God and through the Spirit, I can be where He was spiritually. I can re-live some of those blessed experiences in this message.

One of the first places I would like to have been with Him, as strange as it may seem, I would like to have gone into Bethlehem with Mary and Joseph. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the Bible said there was no room for them in the inn. If it hadn't been for God in Heaven, they couldn't have even found a manger. A lot of times we feel sorry for Mary going to the manger. Let me tell you something. That's where God planned for her to go. She found the right place. I've heard people say, "It looks to me like God could have fixed them a hospital." Yes, He could have. I have enough faith to believe that He could have dropped a golden hospital down, with all the lights of Glory to brighten up the delivery room. He could have sent a thousand angels down as nurses. He could have sent a Heavenly doctor right down out of Heaven, but He didn't. He didn't have to have it. He could let Jesus be born right there in Bethlehem's manger and all of them be in perfect health. That's the bigness of God.

I would like to have seen the shepherds out on the hills as they heard the heavenly choir singing. One shepherd said, "Have you ever heard anything like that?" I would like to have been there when the wise men said, "Say, look at that star! We'd better follow that star." And that star led them to Jesus. There were some things going on that night, but the world didn't know it. The world don't even know it tonight and it's been 2,000 years since Jesus was born. That's one mother who sent out no announcements, but heaven sent out some announcements! God said to the angels, "Go down and sing to that bunch of

shepherds and tell them something great has happened. Behold, today there is born in the city of David a saviour, who is Christ the Lord." The shepherds left their sheep and said, "We'd better go and see this child." The wise men got an announcement. The morning star gave them their announcement. It led them to Christ. The greatest night the world has ever known was the night that that little baby was laid in the arms of that sweet peasant mother. God came down and manifested Himself in flesh. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

I would like to have been with Him when He was a little boy. Aren't the little twelve-year old boys today in a lot of trouble? Yet Christ was so different. At the age of twelve He was sitting with the scribes, the lawyers, the doctors, the writers, and He really got involved in discussing great matters with them. I would like to have been there when those old boys began to prick up their ears. I can hear one of them asking, "Whose kid is that?" "Where did that lad come from?" They didn't know it, but that was God talking. Think about it. God was twelve years old, as far as His physical body was concerned, yet He had them all flabbergasted. They didn't know that He was God's Son, the One Who made the sun and the moon and the stars. He was the Messiah.

I wouldn't want to swap my state for anybody's, or any other time because I've already gotten saved, but I'm not satisfied. The Lord knows. I get troubled in my soul. I was thinking today, as I walked where Jesus walked, and with Him, how much He did in three years and how little I've done in thirty-eight years. A lot of my ministry has been man-made. It's just been working with human hands. Wood, hay and stubble. But that which I do by nothing but pure faith in Jesus Christ, is going to last. The devil may hinder it, and the rest of us may fight it, but we'll never in this world defeat what God is doing. Jesus never did start across the lake that He didn't make it across. He never did start one thing that He didn't finish. In Bethlehem's manger He started the work of eternal redemption for our souls and on the cross He said "It is finished!" We have a finished salvation.

When Jesus entered His public ministry, I would like to have been there when He walked up to John and said, "I'm ready to be baptized now." John said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" He felt that Jesus should baptize him. John had not been baptized in water but He had received the heavenly baptism. Jesus said, "It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." Then Jesus walked off in the Jordan. What a beautiful sight. He didn't get out there in that water to be saved. He didn't have anything to be saved from. He wasn't being baptized in order to join some church. Jesus is the Head of the church.

The main thing that happened that day was that the Holy Spirit, like a dove, came down upon Jesus. Until that day, when He was about thirty years old, He had never performed one miracle. But He was just as much God before He was baptized

as He was after He was baptized. Jesus Christ subjected Himself willingly to the work of the Holy Spirit, just like you and I ought after we are saved and baptized. And just as much, in a figure, as you and I can do nothing for God and cannot live a miraculous life until we get saved and baptized, even so Jesus subjected Himself to the work of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came down as a dove, He didn't come down as a vulture, He came down as a sweet dove, as a mourning dove. We'll never mourn and groan and weep over a lost world until the Dove comes down. The Holy Spirit protects His children. People say, "It's getting so bad, I don't

believe I'm going to make it." You can make it if you have the Dove in you. When Jesus walked out of the baptistry, I would like to have made a little trip with Him. He met the devil out in the wilderness and there was a battle fought right there. As far as I'm concerned, that's the Battle of Armageddon, spiritually, that proved to me that I can also have victory over the devil. If Jesus whipped the devil, he is still whipped. If Jesus whipped him then and Jesus is in my heart now, then Jesus can whip him right now. And that was before Jesus was crucified, before He was risen from the dead and before He had been in the intercessory office. If Jesus, the virgin born son of God, could lick the devil with the Word of God then, He can do it in me now. That's the only hope we have of making it.

Let me stop at another place. I would like to have been with Jesus when He went to the land of Gadara. There was a man that the world had declared hopeless and I guess more people had prayed for him to die than to live. I don't know what kept the people from killing him, except that God didn't permit them to. He had bruises and cuts and marks on his body. He was a crazy man, running loose in the tombs. He was a dead man, spiritually.

Jesus cast the devils out of him because He didn't want the devil to possess a man who needed to be free. You people who are possessed with alcohol and cigarettes and dope, He wants to set you free. He put some clothes on him and gave him his right mind, made him whole and sent him back as a home missionary. I would like to have been there when that took place. When Jesus got in the boat to go back, the Gadarene demoniac, who is now healed and in his right mind, safe and saved and blessed, did exactly what everyone of us ought to want to do. He said, "Lord, suffer me to be with you." But Jesus said, "Go show what great things I've done for you. You've shown off a lot of times, but I want you to go show what I've done for you."

I'd like to have gone home with that fellow, wouldn't you? I see him walking straight, a big old smile flooding his face, and the glory of God in his soul. He walked up on the porch and his wife and children really got a surprise. "Honey, I'm glad to be home. Open up. I won't hurt you anymore. I've got to tell you about the man I met called Jesus. I wish you could have met him too, but I can introduce you to Him by remote control. I have Him living in here now." Can

you just see him going in and giving his wife a great big old loving hug and tears of compassion rolling across those old scars and the little children coming out from under the bed saying, Daddy, hug us like that!" I would like to have been there. That's what Jesus does for people. What happens to these drunks when they go home after they get saved? You talk about a reunion. They go and get a job. The little children are glad to see Daddy come home. It's an exciting time. Do you realize that it's not too late for you to do right, or get right. You'll never be able to live right until you get right. That's just the righteousness of God, which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like to have been there when a lot of things happened, but one more time I would like to visit with Jesus. This is the Pike's Peak of my experience with Him. Even though I don't deserve to, when Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, I would like to have heard Him groan under the load of sin of the whole world, saying, "Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." I would like to have been there on that dark night when He prayed, and then as He went up Golgotha's hill. There weren't many people going who loved Him, but if I could have been living then and God would have given me the courage and the grace, I would like to have been along in that crowd. I would like to have seen the very experience that it took to save a wicked sinner like me. I believe I could have imagined the depths of sin better, if I could have seen how deep those old roots of my sin had gone and how much Jesus Christ had to suffer, bleed and die, in order to redeem me. I would like to have seen His rugged wonderful sweet precious compassionate tear-stained, blood soaked face when He died for my sins on Calvary. I wouldn't have wanted to be there like Simon Peter or Judas Iscariot, or some of the rest of them who turned back. That's the reason I'm not saying that I just wanted to be there unless God had given me grace to stand with Him. But, oh, what an experience. I can see and hear those old hammers as they began to drive those nails through His blessed hands, the greatest hands of mercy that ever lifted souls from sin.

Those hands that broke the bread that fed fifteen or twenty thousand and made no charge. Those hands that reached over and put them down on heads of little children. Those hands, dear friends, that had laid themselves on that no-man's land of lepers, and they went down the road healed. Those hands and those feet that walked in mercy when they were too tired to walk.

I would like to have been there when those nails were driven through, but I would not have wanted to leave before the third day. I would like to have been sitting around the fire that cool morning that some people call Easter, when those brave soldiers, sixteen strong with swords and staves and spears, and well prepared to take care of the lowly Nazarene, should anybody come and try to get Him out of the grave. There wasn't one of those Roman soldiers who came out there in order to see Him get out of the grave. They came out there to keep Him in the grave. They didn't have any idea He would rise under the steam and power of the blood of the everlasting covenant. Had they known that, they wouldn't

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have volunteered to serve. They would have been scared. They were superstitious men. They were out there because they were getting paid for guarding the tomb. I don't think they were very afraid of that little bunch of Christians. They had thinned down to nearly nothing. But they were in for some surprise and shock on the third day. I would like to have been there about daybreak when one of those brave sixteen soldiers looked over and raised his eyebrows and said, "Am I seeing things?" But somehow his hand didn't go toward the sword. The Roman seal, which represented all of the power in the world at that time, just cracked open. God's eternal Son stepped out of the grave and these sixteen men fell back like dead men.

There were some great experiences in the life of Jesus, but I'm going to close the message by saying I would like to be here when He comes again. Of all the experiences, you think of just sitting here and in the twinkle of an eye, we're gone. Think of us flitting through the air, singing "Glory to God, He's here!" That will be the greatest power lift of all times.

This is what we've been waiting for. No more sin and no more sorrow, no more blind folks, no more cemeteries. We're on our way Home. There never was a generation that lived so close to the coming of the Lord as right now. I ask you one question. Are you ready? Have you trusted Him as your Saviour? Jesus is willing and able and mighty to save, if you will put your trust in Him. He has a lot of things in store for those of us who love Him. I would like to have been there with Jesus during His lifetime, but I'm going to be there when the saints go marching in. Are you?

If you are without Christ, I invite you to trust Him today.