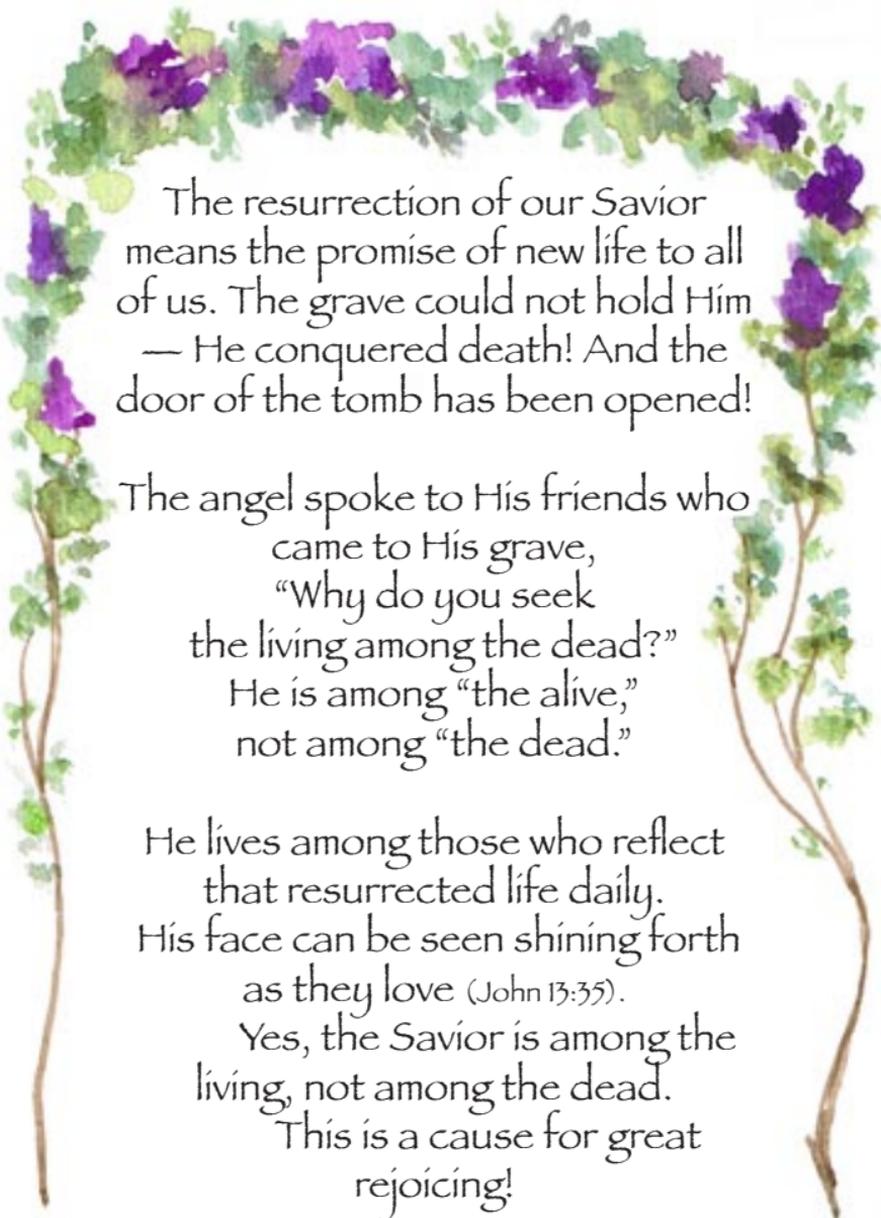


...in the light of  
early dawn, they  
came to the tomb,  
and it was open...



... And the angel said, "Why do you seek  
the living among the dead?" Luke 24:5



The resurrection of our Savior  
means the promise of new life to all  
of us. The grave could not hold Him  
— He conquered death! And the  
door of the tomb has been opened!

The angel spoke to His friends who  
came to His grave,  
“Why do you seek  
the living among the dead?”  
He is among “the alive,”  
not among “the dead.”

He lives among those who reflect  
that resurrected life daily.  
His face can be seen shining forth  
as they love (John 13:35).

Yes, the Savior is among the  
living, not among the dead.

This is a cause for great  
rejoicing!



An open tomb means an open door.  
The resurrection gave us new life.  
It is a life to share.  
Our door is always open to you...

## The Face of Religion

Religion has had many faces on this planet. There are the Mother Teresas, Buddhist monks setting themselves on fire, the Osama bin Ladens, the militant Israeli settlers, religious insurgents ready to pray and kill in the same breath, and then there are the faces of the multitudes of average citizens quietly attending their particular buildings on their particular religious days to express their particular tokens of worship. Faces, many faces...



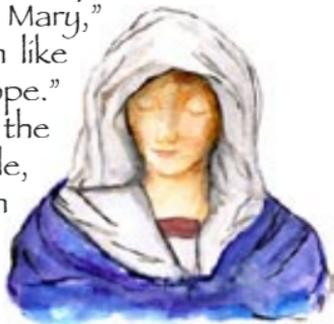
From the grimy-faced youth throwing homemade bombs in the name of his god, to the bejeweled cardinals lying prostrate before the Pope in St. Peter's square, religion has oh so many different faces!

But of all the faces that have walked this planet, the face of a young Jewish man 2,000 years ago has captivated us beyond all others. He threw no bombs but His one life was explosive beyond words. His face is used again and again to promote this and that agenda down through the pages of history, has left many wondering who that person people call Jesus Christ really was.



Well, the average Baptist would say he knows. But the Catholic sitting next to him on the bus would surely paint a different face. That is, if the Baptist would consider letting him have the paint brush for a moment.

One clear way to know a person whom you have not personally met is to look to those people who knew Him best. In the case of this particular Jewish Man, we can read the written accounts of His best friends, and more than that, we can look at how those friends responded to His teachings. We know for certain that there were some very reliable people who knew Him intimately. Among His most intimate acquaintances, we find the extremely famous “Virgin Mary,” and then there are the great men like Peter, who many call “the first Pope.” And of course, there was John, the most honored and long-lived apostle, plus several others who have been revered over the centuries. All these were sane-minded Jewish people whose testimony should be trusted as credible witnesses by everyone. After all, it is from these very people that we have the New Testament, and really the only recorded evidence that this Jewish Messiah even lived. They are the ones who recorded His words. They are the ones who carried His message to the farthest reaches of the then known world. We all admire those people. So, we must give time to examine how this new religion of theirs worked itself out in their daily lives. What face do we see of their life just after their Messiah rose again and ascended?



## The Response

These great people like Mary, Peter, and John, all had the same response to the teachings they had heard from the One they knew to be the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. They all obeyed Him. How could they not, because He had personally told them, “if you love me, you must obey me” (John 14:23). We know without a doubt that they really loved Him.

The response of all these great men and women was unanimous. When their Messiah left them to return to His Father. They all did the exact same thing, in one accord. Of course we know the story. The day of Pentecost was a great day. They were all together, in unity, as their Messiah had commanded: “Let them be one,” in perfect unity (John 17:21). The Holy Spirit came upon them. They spoke about the Messiah boldly to many people. Everyone who listened, even though they were from all parts of the world, miraculously understood their words. For sure we have all heard about that great phenomenon. But then what happened? Did they all just go home and come back again the next week for another wonderful meeting? No, their life together continued after the meeting on Pentecost. They did not go home — they were *home* already! It says clearly in the Bible that they stayed together! (Acts 2:44, Acts 4:34)

So, the response of those people, those great people that we all admire, the Virgin Mary, the apostles Peter and John, the other apostles, Joseph of Arimathea, blind Bartimaeus, Mary and Martha and Lazarus, was they all loved one another, and all shared

their life together from that day on until they died. They became a “commune” Yes, those famous Bible



characters of the New Testament became a community who shared everything. We know that because “all” of them believed. And it is recorded in the Bible that “all those who believed” did the same thing.

## ALL

“All” is a very important word. People who know the New Testament and have made a religion out of it have taken a couple of the places where the word “all” is and emphasized the importance of the absolute inclusiveness of it. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We have certainly heard *that* “all” many times. And then there is the other one, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that ALL who believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life.” Those are both very important “ALLs.” But what about these ALLs: “ALL those who believed were together and had ALL things in common. They sold their possessions and distributed them among ALL...” Acts 2:44

That is an “all” we never hear much about. The same



“all” is spoken of in Acts 4:32. Is that because people do not like the fact that the Virgin Mary, the

apostle Peter, the apostle John and other very admirable people like that, had that response? Doesn't it seem that what they did was the natural response to such a great salvation as they had just received from their Messiah?

It does seem a bit strange that everyone makes such a big deal about the “all have sinned” and the “all who believe have eternal life and will not perish”, but never mention the “all who believed lived together and had all things in common, selling all their possessions and distributing them among all.” And the “all” who lived together here in Acts 2:44, were none other than the Virgin Mary, the apostle Peter, the apostle John, and the other great people who knew the Son of God personally. They were not some crazed, socialist hippie-type people who had lost their minds...

### **Kibbutz Movement**

A similar phenomenon happened much later in the beautiful land of Israel. The movement of the *Kibbutz* or communal settlement in the Holy Land in the early

twentieth century, was the beginning of the movement to make Israel a nation in 1948. This communal movement was the natural response of the Jewish settlers who had zeal to do the impossible. They wanted to work together to make a nation out of a dusty desert. Perhaps their Kibbutz resembled the communal life set up by the early Jewish believers in the first century. The Jewish Kibbutz is still functioning today in Israel, and has been quite an effective way to live.

Many theologians have worked hard to explain the reaction of the first believers in the Book of Acts, calling it a spurious, a one-time thing, not to be imitated. Some have even gone so far as to say that living communally, as they did, was the first mistake the church made. But what would the virgin Mary, the Apostle Peter, the Apostle John, and the others have said to those theologians?

### **That Face has a Name**

The Messiah was born and lived His whole life in a Hebrew culture. His mother and all His Jewish friends called Him by the Hebrew name “Yahshua ha Mashiach” (the Messiah), but later, the Greek-speaking people started calling Him *Iesous Christos* (Jesus Christ). Maybe His real name was too hard for the Greeks to pronounce, or maybe they did not like the Jewish sound of it because they were anti-Semitic. But whatever their reason, they stopped calling the Messiah by the name His mother gave Him at birth — *Yahshua*. Surely the Virgin Mary was pretty fussy about calling Him by His proper name because it was an actual “angel” that appear to her and spoke to her in her native tongue, announcing to her

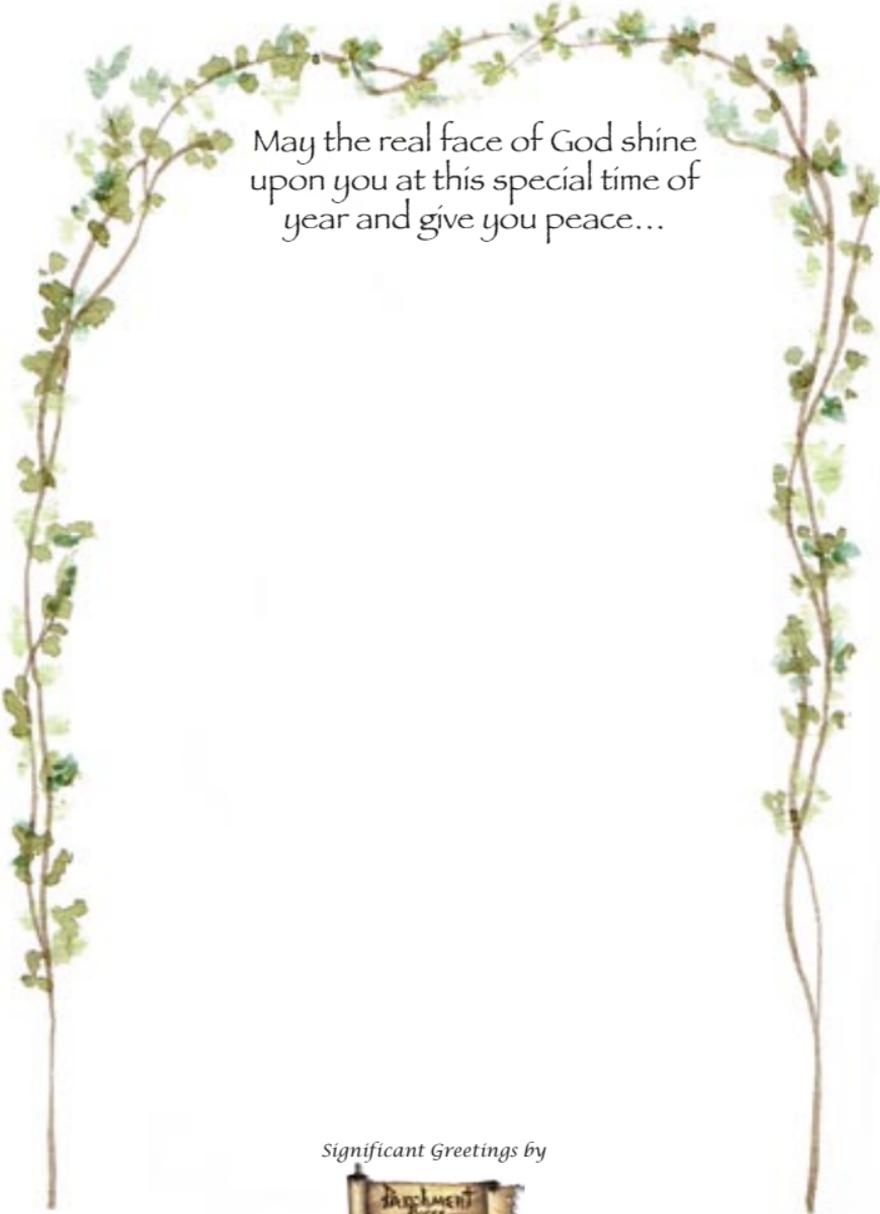
the miraculous birth of her Son. Surely the angel would not have suddenly switched to Greek when proclaiming the name God intended to call His Son. This story is clearly told in the first book of the New Testament by the famous apostle Matthew (Matthew 1:21), and by the respected doctor Luke (Luke 1:31), who recorded accurately the events from the mouths of the apostles of all that happened during the appearance of the Savior. In Acts 26:12-16, the New Testament writer even took the time to make it very clear that when the voice spoke from heaven, announcing His own name to the humbled Saul of Tarsus, it was in Hebrew. He said, "I am Yahshua..." It is strange that it somehow got



### **Acts 26:12-16**

changed to a Greek name that does not even resemble the sound of that very special name.

This inexplicable change is accompanied by other odd changes that have occurred over the decades since the face of this man was seen along the dusty roadsides in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. These changes have marred the clues we have to what the real face of the "risen Savior" really looked like...



May the real face of God shine  
upon you at this special time of  
year and give you peace...

*Significant Greetings by*

