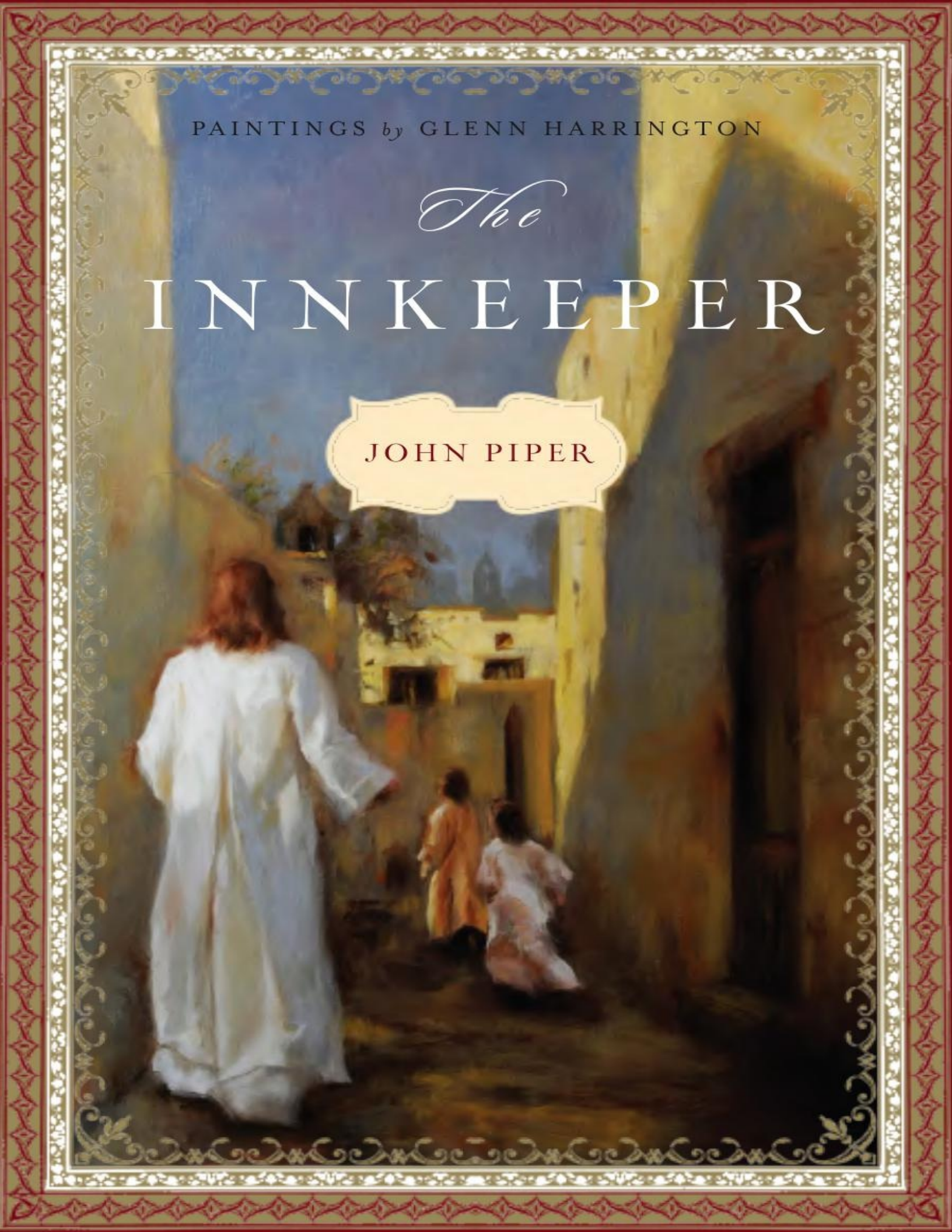
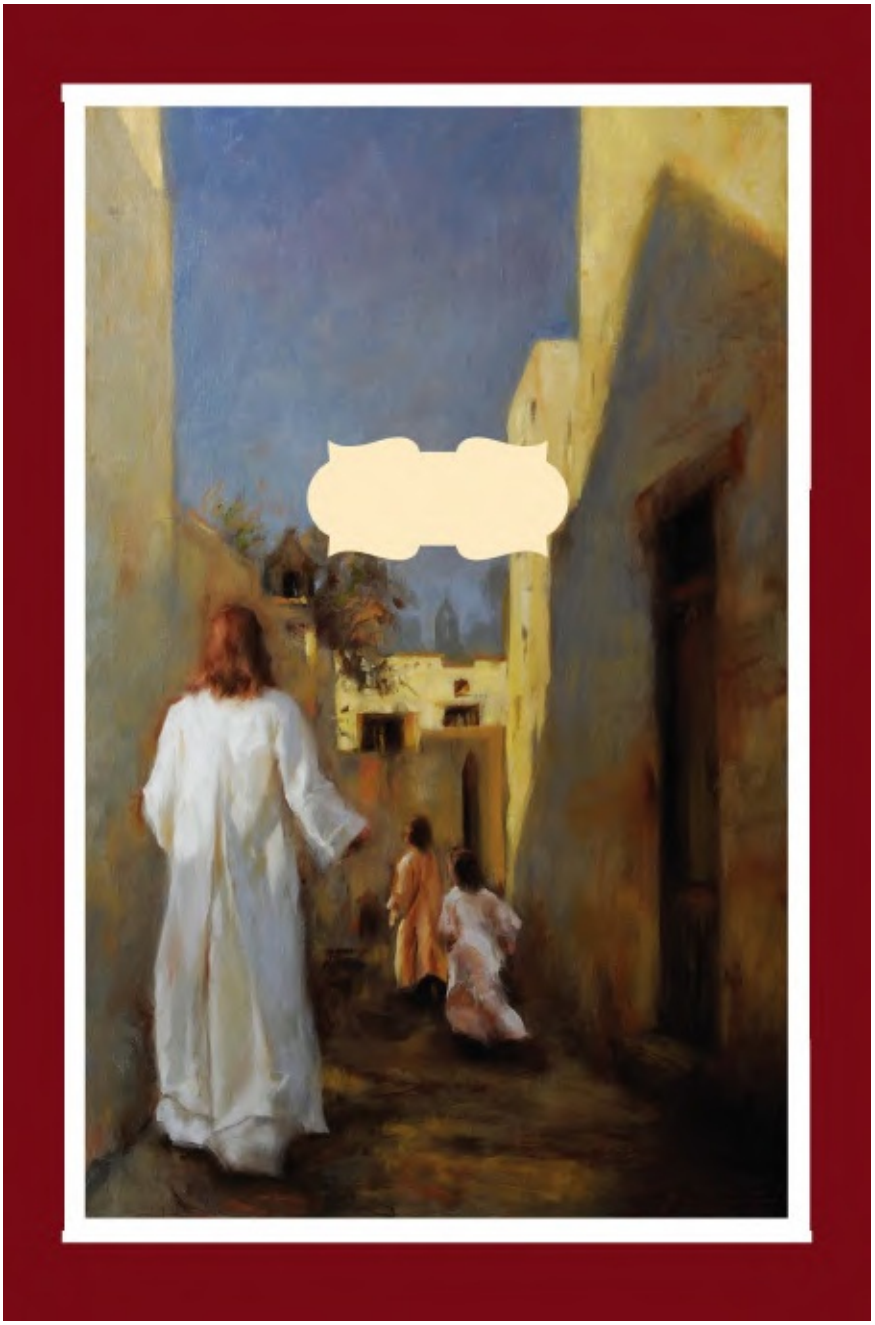

PAINTINGS by GLENN HARRINGTON
The
INNKEEPER
JOHN PIPER







T

JOHN PIPER is pastor for

God’s ways are high, and you will know

P A I N T I N G S *b y* G L E N N H A R R I N G T O N

he

T h e

preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist

in time. But I have come to show

INNKEEPER

I N N K E E P E R

Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His

T h e

other poetry books include *The Misery of Job*

you what the Lord prepared the night

and the Mercy of God, *The Prodigal's Sister*,

Only two weeks from His crucifixion, Jesus

you made a place for heaven's Light.

Ruth, and *Velvet Steel*.

has stopped in Bethlehem. He has

I N N K E E P E R

returned to visit someone important—the

GLENN HARRINGTON is an

innkeeper who made a place for Mary and

internationally recognized artist whose

Joseph the night He was born. But His

paintings have appeared in numerous

greater purpose in coming is to pay a debt.

publications, including the *New York Times*,

JOHN PIPER

What did it cost to house the Son of God?

International Artists magazine, and *American Art Collector*. His work has been featured on

Through this imaginative poem, John

over 500 book covers.

Piper shares a tale of what might have

been—the story of an innkeeper whose

life was forever altered by the arrival of

the Son of God.

JOHN PIPER

Ponder the sacrifice that was made that

night. Celebrate Christ’s birth and the

power of His resurrection. Rejoice in the

life and light He brings to all. And

encounter the hope His life gives you for

today—and for eternity.

POETRY

9

19.9 $

.S.U

[

T h e

I N N K E E P E R



T h e

I N N K E E P E R

f

J O H N P I P E R

P A I N T I N G S *b y* G L E N N H A R R I N G T O N

W h e a t o n , I l l I n o I s

The Innkeeper

Copyright ©1998, 2011 by Desiring God Foundation

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street

Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided by USA copyright law.

Cover Design: Studio Gearbox

Paintings by: Glenn Harrington

First printing 1998

Reprinted with new cover and new art 2011

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-4335-3027-5

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-3026-5

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-3027-2

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-3028-9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Piper, John 1946–

The Innkeeper / John Piper.

p. cm.

ISBN 13: 978-1-58134-027-3 (alk. paper)

ISBN 10: 1-58134-027-3

1. Jesus Christ—Nativity—Poetry. 2. Hotelkeepers—Bethlehem—

Poetry. 3. Christian poetry, American. I. Title.

PS3566.15915 1998

811'.54—dc21

98-36322

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

LB

21

20

19

18

17

16

15

14

13

12

11

14

13

12

11

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

3

2

1

TO ROLLIN

And All Who Ever Lost

A Child

[

Title

A W O R D *f r o m* J O H N P I P E R

[

So quickly do we pass over the Christmas words, “Herod . . .

slew all the male children . . . two years old and under.” But the poet lingers, weeping, raging, looking at the dark spot, in hope that any prick of light might become a portal for the sun. And what he sees he strains with words to show—-pressing us against the perforation in the wall of pain.

Why this struggle? Why does the poet bind his heart with such a severe discipline of form? Why strain to give shape to suffering? Because Reality has contours. God is who He is, not what we wish or try to make Him be. His Son, Jesus Christ, is the great granite Fact. His hard sacrifice makes it evident that our

spontaneity needs Calvary-like discipline. Perhaps the innkeeper paid dearly for housing the Son of God. Should it not be costly to penetrate and portray this pain?

The Innkeeper seeks to reveal the Light that shines behind this brutal moment in history and our own path of suffering.

Come and see!



9



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

J ake’s wife would have been fifty-eight

The day that Jesus passed the gate

Of Bethlehem, and slowly walked

Toward Jacob’s Inn. The people talked

With friends, and children played along

The paths, and Jesus hummed a song,

And smiled at every child he saw.

9

15



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

He paused with one small lass to draw

A camel in the dirt, then said,

“What’s this?” The girl bent down her head

To study what the Lord had made.

She smiled, “A camel, sir!” and laid

Her finger on the bulging back

Where merchants bind their leather pack.

“It’s got a hump.” “Indeed it does,

And who do you believe it was

Who made this camel with his hump?”

Without a thought that this would stump

The rabbi guild and be reviled,

She said, “God did.” And Jesus smiled.

“Good eyes, my child. And would that all

Jerusalem within that wall

Of yonder stone could see the signs

Of peace!” He left the lass with lines

Of simple wonder in her face

And slowly went to find the place

Where he was born.



Title

10

17



Title

13

18



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

Folks said the inn

Had never been a place for sin,

For Jacob was a holy man.

And he and Rachel had a plan

To marry, have a child or two,

And serve the folks who traveled through,

Especially the poor who brought

Their meal and turtledoves, and sought

A place to stay near Zion’s gate.

13

19



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

T hey’d rise up early, stay up late,

To help the pilgrims go and come,

And when the place was full, to some,

Especially the poorest, they would say,

“We’re sorry there’s no room, but stay

Now, if you like, out back. There’s lots

Of hay, and we have extra cots

That you can use. There’ll be no charge.

The stable isn’t very large,

But Noah keeps it safe.” He was

A wedding gift to Jake because

The shepherds knew he loved the dog.

“There’s nothing in the Decalogue,”

He used to joke, “that says a man

Can’t love a dog!”

14

20



Title

14

21



Title

17

22



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

T he children ran

Ahead of Jesus as he strode

Toward Jacob’s inn. The stony road

That led up to the inn was deep

With centuries of wear, and steep

At one point just before the door.

The Lord knocked once, then twice, before

He heard an old man’s voice, “’Round back!”

It called. So Jesus took the track

That led around the inn.

17

23



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

T he old

Man leaned back in his chair and told

The dog to never mind. “Ain’t had

No one to tend the door, my lad,

For thirty years. I’m sorry for

The inconvenience to your sore

Feet. The road to Jerusalem

Is hard, ain’t it? Don’t mind old Shem.

He’s harmless like his dad. Won’t bite

A Roman soldier in the night.

Sit down.” And Jacob waved the stump

Of his right arm. “We’re in a slump

Right now. Got lots of time to think

And talk. Come sit and have a drink.

From Jacob’s well!” he laughed. “You own

The inn?” the Lord inquired. “On loan,

You’d better say. God owns the inn.”

18

19

24



Title

18

19

25



Title

21

26



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

At that the Lord knew they were kin,

And ventured on: “Do you recall

The tax when Caesar said to all

The world that each must be enrolled?”

Old Jacob winced, “Are north winds cold?

Are deserts dry? Do fishes swim

And ravens fly? I do. A grim

And awful year it was for me

When God ordained that strange decree.

How could I such a time forget?

21

27



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

W hy do you ask?” “I have a debt

To pay, and I must see how much.

Why do you say that it was such

A grim and awful year?” He raised

The stump of his right arm. “So dazed,

Young man, I didn’t know I’d lost

My arm. Do you know what it cost

For me to house the Son of God?”

The old man took his cedar rod

And swept it ’round the place: “Empty.

For thirty years alone, you see?

22

23

28



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

O ld Jacob, poor old Jacob, runs

It with one arm, a dog . . . no sons.

But I had sons . . . once. Joseph was

My firstborn. He was small because

His mother was so sick. When he

Turned three, the Lord was good to me

And Rachel, and our baby Ben

Was born, the very fortnight when

The blessed family arrived.

22

23

29



Title

25

30



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

And Rachel’s gracious heart contrived

A way for them to stay—there in

That very stall. The man was thin

And tired. You look a lot like him.”

But Jesus said, “Why was it grim?”

“We got a reputation here

That night. Nothing at all to fear

In that we thought. It was of God.

25

31



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

B ut in one year the slaughter squad

From Herod came. And where do you

Suppose they started? Not a clue!

We didn’t have a clue what they

Had come to do. No time to pray,

No time to run, no time to get

Poor Joseph off the street and let

Him say good-bye to Ben or me

Or Rachel. Only time to see



T h e I n n k e e p e r

A lifted spear smash through his spine

And chest. He stumbled to the sign

That welcomed strangers to the place,

And looked with panic at my face,

As if to ask what he had done.

Young man, you ever lost a son?”

The tears streamed down the Savior’s cheek.

26

33



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

28

29

34



Title

He shook his head, but couldn’t speak.

“Before I found the breath to scream

I heard the words, a horrid dream:

‘Kill every child who’s two or less.

Spare not for aught, nor make excess.

Let this one be the oldest here,

And if you count your own life dear,

Let none escape.’ I had no sword,

No weapons in my house, but Lord,



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

I had my hands, and I would save

The son of my right hand. . . . So brave,

O Rachel was so brave! Her hands

Were like a thousand iron bands

Around the boy. She wouldn’t let

Him go, and so her own back met

With every thrust and blow. I lost

My arm, my wife, my sons—-the cost

For housing the Messiah here.

9

36



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

W hy would he simply disappear

And never come to help?” They sat

In silence. Jacob wondered at

The stranger’s tears.

30

9

37



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

32

33

38



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

I am the boy

That Herod wanted to destroy.

You gave my parents room to give

Me life, and then God let me live,

And took your wife. Ask me not why

The one should live, another die.

God’s ways are high, and you will know

In time. But I have come to show

You what the Lord prepared the night

you made a place for heaven’s Light.

In two weeks they will crucify

My flesh. But mark this, Jacob, I

Will rise in three days from the dead,

And place my foot upon the head

Of him who has the power of death,

32

33

39



Title

T h e I n n k e e p e r

And I will raise with life and breath

Your wife and Ben and Joseph too,

And give them, Jacob, back to you

With everything the world can store,

And you will reign forever more.”

34

40



Title

34

41

Title

42



Title

43

Title

44

Title

45

Title

46

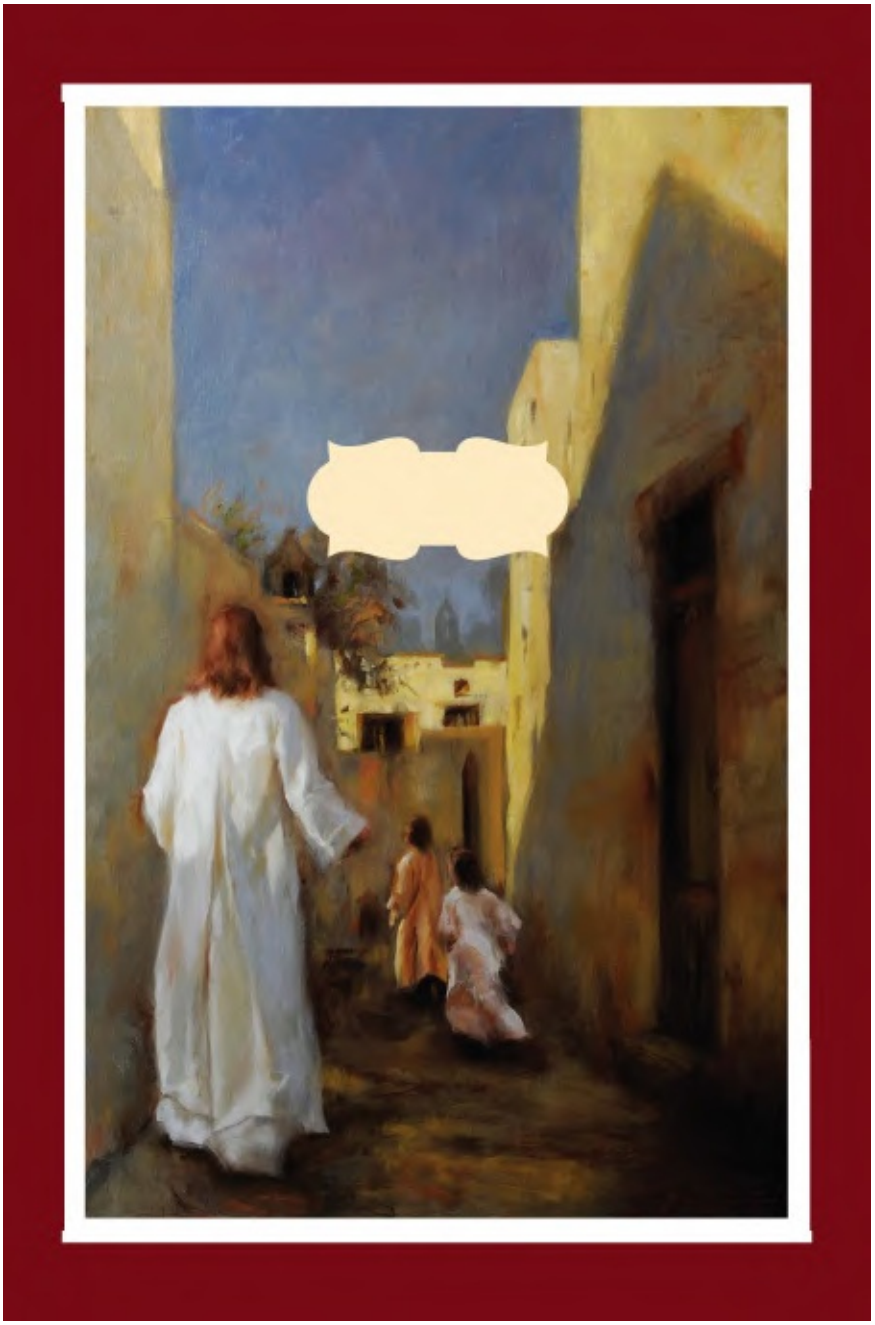
Title

47

Title

48







T

JOHN PIPER is pastor for

God’s ways are high, and you will know

P A I N T I N G S *b y* G L E N N H A R R I N G T O N

he

T h e

preaching and vision at Bethlehem Baptist

in time. But I have come to show

INNKEEPER

I N N K E E P E R

Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His

T h e

other poetry books include *The Misery of Job*

you what the Lord prepared the night

and the Mercy of God, *The Prodigal's Sister*,

Only two weeks from His crucifixion, Jesus

you made a place for heaven's Light.

Ruth, and *Velvet Steel*.

has stopped in Bethlehem. He has

I N N K E E P E R

returned to visit someone important—the

GLENN HARRINGTON is an

innkeeper who made a place for Mary and

internationally recognized artist whose

Joseph the night He was born. But His

paintings have appeared in numerous

greater purpose in coming is to pay a debt.

publications, including the *New York Times*,

JOHN PIPER

What did it cost to house the Son of God?

International Artists magazine, and *American Art Collector*. His work has been featured on

Through this imaginative poem, John

over 500 book covers.

Piper shares a tale of what might have

been—the story of an innkeeper whose

life was forever altered by the arrival of

the Son of God.

JOHN PIPER

Ponder the sacrifice that was made that

night. Celebrate Christ’s birth and the

power of His resurrection. Rejoice in the

life and light He brings to all. And

encounter the hope His life gives you for

today—and for eternity.

POETRY

Document Outline

- Cover
- Title Page
- Copyright
- Chapter 1
- Back Cover