

GLENN A SALS BURY

Heavenly Treasures

Signposts to the Savior



*Discovering the
Sovereign Grace
of God Hidden
in the Richness of
His Word*

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Dedication

To the great saints of old who loved the Word of God with all their hearts.

To Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), England’s “Prince of Preachers” whose *Morning and Evening* devotionals have fed my spirit for more than four decades.

To the apostle Paul, whose writings reveal the mystery of grace and whose grasp on the sovereignty of God is unparalleled.

To the Holy Spirit, the One Who leads us into all truth and anoints our minds and hearts with understanding.

To the Lord Jesus Christ, Who called me out of darkness into His glorious light and gave me a hunger for His Word.

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*Signposts
to the Savior*

The only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so I, the Son of Man, will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

—Matthew 12:39b-40 NLT



The Creator Shakes His Creation

*For thus saith the Lord of hosts:
Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens,
and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.
And I will shake all nations,
and the desire of all nations shall come....
—Haggai 2:6-7*



As we watched in horror the ravages of the earthquake and tsunami in Southeast Asia, we were sobered by the reality of the sovereignty of God over His creation.

The news reported that more than twelve nations were physically shaken in this 2004 event. The earth's rotation was disrupted; islands were displaced into new locations; this event was described as "an unprecedented catastrophe."

Yet I wonder how many recognize the voice of God calling for His lost sheep through these and similar events? The Creator speaks through His creation. In the world today we have come to dismiss natural catastrophes or meteorological events as simply the work of "Mother Nature." Or a scientific explanation is given as the reason for these occurrences.

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Yet the Scripture tells us that God often uses natural disasters as a judgment upon evil in the world. It was the Lord Who said to Noah, “Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die” (Genesis 6:17 NLT).

The Lord often demonstrates His presence through earthquakes. The crucifixion of Christ was one of those moments. “He gave up his spirit. At that moment...the earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened” (Matthew 27:51-52 NLT).

At the resurrection of Christ the Scripture records, “Early on Sunday morning...suddenly there was a great earthquake, because an angel of the Lord came down from heaven” (Matthew 28:1-3 NLT). When Christ returns there will be a major earthquake, and the Mount of Olives will split in half (Zechariah 4:3-5 NLT).

The Lord Himself has told us what the signs of His return will include. “Nations and kingdoms will proclaim war against each other, and there will be earthquakes in many parts of the world, and famine. But all this will be only the beginning of the horrors to come. But when these things begin to happen, watch out” (Mark 13:8-9 NLT).

Many of the skeptics say that there have always been these natural events. The apostle Peter wrote about these very skeptics, “In the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth.... They will question the promise Jesus made to return. They will say, ‘Why, as far back as anyone can remember everything has remained exactly the same...’” (2 Peter 3:3-4 NLT).

In response Peter said, “They deliberately forget that God made the heavens by the word of his command, and he brought the earth up from the water and surrounded it with water. Then

The Creator Shakes His Creation

he used the water to destroy the world with a mighty flood. And God has also commanded that the heavens and the earth will be consumed by fire on the day of judgment, when ungodly people will perish” (2 Peter 3:5-7 NLT).

The prophet Isaiah described the Lord’s coming in these words. “The Lord will march forth like a mighty man...full of fury. He will say, ‘I have restrained myself. But now I will give full vent to my fury.... I will level the mountains and the hills....’” (Isaiah 42:12-15 NLT).

Isaiah also wrote, “In an instant, I, the Lord Almighty, will come against them with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and storm and consuming fire” (Isaiah 29:6 NLT). And, again, Isaiah quotes the Lord, “I am the Lord; there is no other God.... I am the one who sends good times and bad times.... Destruction is certain for those who argue with their Creator” (Isaiah 45:5-10 NLT).

The Lord Himself told us how we are to respond in the midst of this earthly turmoil. “When all these things begin to happen, stand straight and look up, for your salvation is near” (Luke 21:28 NLT).

Lord, give us eyes to see You in every aspect of the circumstances and events unfolding in the visible world.

Cain and Abel - Man's Way or God's Way

*Abel was a keeper of sheep.
—Genesis 4:2*



The Old Testament is constantly pointing us to Christ Jesus. Every story, every event, even the very geographical locations are signposts to the Savior, heavenly treasures in the Word. Jesus Himself always taught the gospel from the Old Testament Scripture. “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).

Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, were no doubt both instructed in the Word of God by their parents. Adam and Eve had learned the gospel as it is given in Genesis 3:15. They had both come to know that sin is covered only by the shedding of blood based on the fact that the Lord covered them in coats of skin.

Cain and Abel - Man's Way or God's Way

However, when Cain came to worship the Lord, he brought “the fruit of the ground” (Genesis 4:3). Yet the ground had just been cursed by God (Genesis 3:17). The fruit of this cursed ground was Cain’s offering, the fruit of his own hard work in the field.

Abel, in contrast, was a shepherd, a keeper of the sheep. He apparently understood that sin could only be covered through a blood sacrifice. He brought his finest lamb as his offering. God honored Abel’s sacrifice but did not accept Cain’s offering. Cain, in his anger, killed his brother.

Our Great Shepherd, the keeper of the sheep, came as the Lamb of God and offered Himself as the perfect blood sacrifice to cover and atone for our sins. Yet His own Jewish brothers and sisters participated in His murder. And the religious leaders of the day, proud of the works of their own hands, did not want to hear the gospel. They did not want a Messiah Who would die. They did not believe they were sinners. They did not respond to the voice of the Shepherd.

The Lord Himself confronted Cain concerning his actions (Genesis 4:9). Cain denied his guilt, much like the Pharisees and scribes did. Then the Lord said, “The voice of your brother’s blood cries unto Me from the ground” (Genesis 4:10). Abel’s blood served as condemnation for Cain.

Amazingly, Jesus Himself underscores the significance of Abel’s shed blood. He speaks to the religious leaders of the first century and explains that they, like Cain, will be counted as fugitives from heaven. They have rejected God’s plan of salvation. The “righteous blood” of Abel will cry out from the ground against them because Abel was a foreshadowing of the righteous blood of Christ Himself (Matthew 23:33-36).

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May we remember that the voice of our Shepherd, the Keeper of the sheep, cries out on our behalf every day because His righteous blood covers our sin. We have believed, by faith, in the message from above, which says that “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin” (Hebrews 9:22). Oh, what a Shepherd Who has given His life for the sheep.

The Carpenter: Builder of Heaven and Earth

*Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary...?
—Mark 6:3*



During His days on earth the Lord earned His daily bread through carpentry. Often, when the unbelieving religious leaders heard this Carpenter teaching the Scriptures or saw Him heal the sick, they were undone by the strangeness of it all. They demeaned Him by reminding the onlookers that Jesus was simply a local tradesman, a nobody, a lowly carpenter.

But what an amazing treasure is hidden in this hurled epithet. Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Carpenter. The Greek word for carpenter is *tekton*, which means builder or constructor.

In Hebrews 11:10 we read that Abraham looked for the city “whose builder and maker is God.” The Greek word for builder is *technites*, formed from the same root word as *tekton*. God is a *tekton*. He is a carpenter. He is the Carpenter. Isn’t it interesting

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that when He became visible, in His incarnate body, He came as a carpenter? He was revealing His majesty as the Builder of the heavens and the earth.

In the only other New Testament passage that refers to Jesus' trade, the crowd taunts, "Is not this the carpenter's son...?" (Matthew 13:15). Yes, Joseph, too, serving as Jesus' earthly father, was also a carpenter. Yet hidden in these words is another amazing message. God, the heavenly Father of Jesus, the Son, is also a carpenter, for they are One. The Son is the image of the Father.

The Greek word for builder (*technites*) can also be translated architect or designer. Our Lord is an Artist. He is the most gifted Artist Who has ever created! And we are the work of His hands. David, the psalmist, writes, "Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous.... You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb" (Psalm 139:14-15 NLT). Another translation of woven is skillfully embroidered.

You and I are His unique creations. In Ephesians 2:10 Paul wrote, "For we are God's masterpiece, He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." The Greek word for masterpiece is *poema*, from which we get poem, a work of art.

Great architects and designers begin with a plan. They create what they have designed to serve a specific purpose.

Lord, help us see each day the purpose for which You have uniquely designed and embroidered us.

Knowing Your Bible Won't Get You to Heaven

*Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures....
—1 Corinthians 15:3*



The only Scripture in the first century was the Old Testament. And virtually the entire Jewish community was familiar with this written Word of God. These scrolls had been available to them for centuries. The rabbis taught from them in the synagogues.

Trained and educated as a Pharisee, Saul (who later became Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles) knew the Scripture. As a Pharisee he was required to memorize the entire Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. Yet Saul did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. He was murdering the Christians in the years following the resurrection of Christ. Saul knew his Bible, but he had missed the message.

As a Jew, Saul knew that the Feast of the Passover celebrated the slaying of a lamb whose blood, spattered on the wood of

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each home, would protect those within from the angel of death. The destroyer would “pass over” those covered with the blood of a lamb (Exodus 12). Saul had probably heard John the Baptist proclaim Jesus to be the long-awaited Lamb without blemish Whose blood must be shed for protection from God’s judgment on sin.

Saul knew that Isaiah, the most famous of the Old Testament prophets, had described the Messiah as One Who would be “wounded for our transgressions” and Who would die innocently as “an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53).

He knew the significance of the life of the prophet Jonah. Jonah was understood to be a picture of the coming Messiah, Who would be “buried three days and three nights” and be restored to proclaim salvation to all who would believe.

Saul also knew Isaiah had written that the Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14); He would be God in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us (Isaiah 9:6). Saul knew this King would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). In addition, he knew the great Messianic psalm of David’s in which the rejection of the Messiah and His crucifixion are described in graphic detail (Psalm 22).

Yet Saul did not recognize Jesus Christ to be the One Whom the Father had sent. Only when the Lord Himself came to Saul personally and called him by name did he understand the truth (Acts 9:3-6). Then, and only then, was Saul transformed by the “hearing of the Word.” He became Paul, man of God, called to carry the good news to the entire Gentile world of his day.

Oh, the mystery of salvation! Jesus said, “No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65). The Spirit Himself must reveal the Son to us and call

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us by name. For we are “dead in trespasses and sin.” He alone brings life. Without this gift of life we cannot hear His call or understand His written Word.

Oh Lord, in these last days when scoffers abound, open our eyes that we might see. Anoint Your Word in our hearts. May we see Your “blood on the wood” and know You shed it willingly for us, Your sheep, whom You call by name according to the Scriptures.

He was Crushed for our Sake

*Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane.
—Matthew 26:36*



Jesus went to a place called “the olive press.” That is the actual translation from the Hebrew for the word *Gethsemane*. This was an olive grove, the place where the olives were crushed to release precious oil. This treasured oil was the source of light in virtually every home.

And it is in Gethsemane that the crushing of the Messiah begins. The Hebrew word for crushed is *daka*. It is the same word translated as “bruised” in Isaiah 53:10. “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him...” And in Isaiah 53:5 we read “He was bruised for our iniquities.” The Father crushed His only begotten Son so that we could be delivered “from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). We have been translated into the light.

He was Crushed for our Sake

There was another “bruising” being carried out in that same garden. In Genesis 3:15 the Lord speaks to the serpent and says, “The seed of the woman” (the Messiah) will “bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.” It was in Gethsemane that a seed of Satan, Judas Iscariot, betrayed the Seed of the woman and the Messiah was crushed. But the Savior survived the death blow Satan thought would be final. The Lord’s death and resurrection created what will be the final crushing of the seed of the serpent.

The serpent brought death into the world in the garden of Eden by rebelling against God’s plan. Christ brought life into the world in the garden of Gethsemane by submitting to God’s plan.

Because we live in time and space, we have yet to fully comprehend what has been accomplished in the heavenlies. Christ spoke from the cross, “It is finished.” The death blow, the fatal head wound, has been delivered to Satan and his angels. Death has been defeated. But the end of the drama is not yet visible.

The apostle Paul told us that Christ will eventually put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). Paul encouraged the suffering saints in Rome with these words, “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Romans 16:20).

The olives were crushed by stomping of feet. The enemy will be the one who receives the ultimate crushing. God has promised to make all enemies of the Son His footstool (Psalm 110:1).

Lord, our hearts overflow with gratitude and adoration at Your willingness to receive the crushing in order that we might be freed from the penalty of sin and live eternally with You in the heavenlies. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus.

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Death

*Who his own self bare our sins in his
own body on the tree....
—1 Peter 2:24*



The Hebrew word for tree (*ets*) is also the word for wood or timber. In the garden of Eden we find two important trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). The fruit of the second tree was sin which produced death. Eve, and then Adam, ate from the tree of death. One tree dispensed life; the other dispensed sin.

Gruesome reminders of the punishment for sin abound in the Old Testament. The Pharaoh's chief baker was "hanged on a tree" (Genesis 40:19). Evil Haman in the book of Esther was "hanged on the gallows," the wood of the tree. And so it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13 NLT).

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Death

We begin to grasp the significance of Peter's words when he said that Christ was hung on a tree, cursed by God, because He bore our sins. "He who knew no sin became sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Lord was hung on the tree of death and He transformed it into the tree of life for us. When we now eat of Him, the Tree of Life, we have victory over the fruits of sin and death.

Even as the Lord hung on the tree, there were two other "trees" present. Each one had a thief hanging on it, under the curse of death because of his sin. One thief chose not to come to the Tree of Life. He died, cursed. The other thief cried out for forgiveness; he ate of the Tree of Righteousness and received eternal life.

Another significant tree is found in Luke 22:3, at the scene of the Last Supper, where we read, "Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot." And when Judas later realized that his betrayal would cost Jesus His life, Judas "went out and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:5). The Son of God hung on the tree and the result was life. The son of perdition hung on a tree and the result was death. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

As the book of Genesis opened with the tree of life in a garden, so the Lord closes His written Word with the tree of life. In the last chapter of the Bible we see the heavenly city of Jerusalem with the tree of life in a garden. (Interestingly, here the Greek word for tree is *xulon*, which means "living wood.") And we read, "There shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:3).

Oh Lord, how we praise You for hanging upon the tree in our place and exchanging our sin for Your righteousness. May we fall down in adoration and continual praise!

*Peace and Safety
are Ours*

*He was beaten that we might have peace.
He was whipped, and we were healed!*
—Isaiah 53:5 NLT



Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. That is the means of our salvation. Our Lord died in our place. He paid for our sins. Most of us feel secure in our salvation because we have believed this truth.

However, do we fully understand and appreciate all His death provides for us? “He was beaten that we might have peace.” In the King James Version we read, “The chastisement of our peace was on Him.” One of the major fears or anxieties in the heart of believers is the sense that God is not happy with us. We are quite aware of our sins and shortcomings. And we have a vague concern, if not a paralyzing fear, of what God will do to us because of our failures.

Peace and Safety are Ours

Yet in this verse we see that the Lord took upon Himself the “chastisement,” the heavy hand of God that would have been laid upon us as sinners. He stood in our place so that we might never have to receive or be worried about receiving this form of God’s response to sin. Thus the Lord provided peace for us. Perhaps in praising Him for this peace that is ours, we will experience a greater awareness of this incredible gift. Peace. It is ours because of His being chastised in our place.

And then we read, “He was whipped, and we were healed.” The Hebrew word for whipped or stripes is *chaburah* and it means bruises and scars. The Lord received bruising and scarring on our behalf. Why? Because God hates sin. Mysteriously, the Lord reached down through the ages and lifted our individual sins, all of them, off of us and onto Himself. Our Lord Jesus experienced the horrific lashing, in addition to the agony of the cross itself, so that we will never be whipped.

What does the Scripture say is the gift to us? “By His stripes we are healed.” The Hebrew word for healed is *rapha*. Significantly, one of the names of God is Jehovah-Rapha, the One Who heals and makes whole. In Psalm 23:3 we read that “He restores our soul.” The name of God used there is Jehovah the Healer. He restores us to wholeness in our souls by His stripes. We are no longer broken, scarred people if we are in Christ. The Father now sees us as whole, perfect, righteous, and restored to complete wellness spiritually.

The apostle Peter must have lived with great self-condemnation and spiritual self-flagellation. Yet his comfort was in this very work of Christ. Christ was flagellated, whipped, so Peter (and we) might let go of our own self-flagellation. Peter wrote, speaking of Christ, “Who of his own self bore our sins

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in his own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:24-25).

Lord Jesus, we give You endless praise for the peace and wholeness that is ours because Your body was scarred and broken on our behalf. Help us to see this incredible truth.

Thorns: A Sign of God's Curse

*Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns....
—John 19:5*



Jesus told the disciples that mockery would accompany His death. The Son of Man, He said, shall be delivered to “the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge and to crucify” (Matthew 20:19).

It is not surprising that one of the wicked instruments Satan used in this mockery was the painful crown of thorns. In Genesis 3:17-18 we discover that thorns are a result and a visible reminder of God’s curse on sin. “Cursed is the ground... thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”

Christ is the Head of the Body (the believers for whom He died). He took the curse of sin upon His head so that the curse would not fall upon His body. The crown of thorns signals this truth to us.

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When the Lord spoke of His coming death, He said He would provide the Jews with one sign and one sign only, the sign of Jonah. “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40). (It is significant to note that Christ believed Jonah’s experience to be a literal one, just as His own would be.)

When we read of Jonah’s experience we discover he actually died inside the great fish. He descended into Sheol, the place of the dead, with weeds wrapped around his head! “I cried... unto the Lord out of the belly of hell (Sheol)...the weeds were wrapped about my head...the earth with her bars was about me forever” (Jonah 2:2, 5-6). Jonah was a sign, complete with a crown of “thorns!”

The Lord spoke to the fish and Jonah was resurrected, delivered to high ground by the Word of God. The curse, which results in death, was removed from Jonah because he cried out to the Lord for help as he was dying, having recognized his own rebellion.

As believers we have been delivered from death, from the curse of sin, by the “hearing of the Word.” In Matthew 13 Jesus uses the parable of the sower to illustrate this. He teaches that the seed that falls on ground that is under the curse of sin will be choked out by thorns. The Greek word for thorn here is *akantha*, the same word used to describe the crown of thorns. Yet the seed that falls on good ground springs up and bears fruit. Good ground is soil that has had the curse removed so it can receive the seed.

Jesus provides the explanation of His parable. He says the sower of the good seed is the Son of Man, the ground is the

Thorns: A Sign of God's Curse

world, and the seed is the Word of God (Matthew 13:18-23, 37-38). The “good ground” represents the person who hears His Word and understands it.

It is significant that “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). In order for the seed (the Word of God) to take root and bear fruit, the thorns have to be removed. The “good ground” had to be prepared by the Sower Himself. The One Who removed the curse of sin from us by taking the curse on His own head is also the One Who removes the rebellion (thorns) in our own hearts so we can be translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light by faith.

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. He wore the crown of thorns so that we can wear the crown of life through faith in His death and resurrection on our behalf. What a Savior!

Oh how we praise You, Lord, as the One Who has saved us from the curse of eternal death. You hung on the tree of death so that we may eat from the tree of life eternally.

The Scriptural Significance of Clothes

*After they had nailed him to the cross,
the soldiers gambled for his clothes....*

—Matthew 27:35 NLT



The soldiers had no idea of the significance of these clothes, the clothes of the King of righteousness.

In Genesis the Lord teaches us the significance of clothing. After Adam and Eve sinned “they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves” (Genesis 3:7 NLT).

The Lord God taught them that their attempt at clothing themselves to cover up their shame (sin) was inadequate. He Himself shed blood in the garden and “made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife” (Genesis 3:21 NLT).

The prophet Isaiah recognized the message God was sending in the garden. He wrote, “We are all infected and impure with

The Scriptural Significance of Clothes

sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6 NLT).

Zechariah, another Old Testament prophet, reinforced this biblical message. He described a vision of an earthly priest standing in a heavenly court. He wrote, “Jeshua’s clothing was filthy. So the angel said, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then He said to Jeshua, ‘See I have taken away your sins, and now I am giving you these fine new clothes’” (Zechariah 3:3-4 NLT).

The prophet Daniel saw the Lord Himself. He saw the Ancient One sit down to judge all men. “His clothing was as white as snow, his hair like whitest wool (Daniel 7:9 NLT).

The apostle John saw the Lord in the heavenlies also. “And standing in the middle...was the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe...His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow” (Revelation 1:13, 24 NLT). Then the Lord tells the churchgoers in Sardis that He will never erase their names from the Book of Life if they are clothed in white (Revelation 3:5).

Christ, as the second Adam, became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Thus He hung naked on the cross, just as Adam found himself naked in the garden. (A Jewish man without a full undergarment on was counted as naked.) He did this so we could be clothed in white, the garment of His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

As the soldiers at the foot of the cross gambled for the Lord’s earthly clothing, just above their heads, cleansing blood was being poured out for sin—the blood that could provide eternal clothing for them. The blood that, though their sins were “as scarlet, they shall be white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). They missed

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the significant message. They were preoccupied with the visible, the events of this world.

Lord, help us not to be distracted with the visible when what You have provided for us is to be experienced in the invisible realm of Your kingdom. May we look to Your cleansing blood and walk in the heavenly garments of Your righteousness.

Good Results from the Worst Calamities

*She called his name Ben-oni (son of sorrow),
but his father called him Benjamin (son of my right hand).*

—Genesis 35:18



This verse comes from the account of Rachel and Jacob. Rachel, the mother of Joseph, died at the birth of her second son. Just as she was leaving this earth “she called his name Ben-oni,” which means son of sorrow in Hebrew. She was faced with death, never to be with her beloved Jacob again, never to have the privilege of raising this son.

Yet Jacob, who treasured his wife Rachel, even in his sorrow while standing by her side in this moment, changed this boy’s name to Benjamin, “son of my right hand” in Hebrew.

As the Scripture often provides, there is a foreshadowing here of another mother and another Father and their Son. When Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit, the Father of the Son, she was told her child would save His people from their sins.

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The prophet Isaiah told us that the coming Messiah will be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” The Lord’s mother understood the sorrow that would be hers in the death of her Son. Yet, His Father knew that this Son would serve “at His right hand” for all eternity. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

An encouraging truth is hidden in these scriptures. As Charles Spurgeon wrote in his commentary on this account in Genesis, “To every matter there is a bright as well as a dark side.... Faith’s way of walking is to cast all care upon the Lord, and then to anticipate good results from the worst calamities...when death itself appears, faith points to the light of resurrection...making our dying Ben-oni to be our living Benjamin.”

Surely this is one of our most difficult daily challenges as children of the King—to see His hand of love at work in the darkest, most difficult circumstances. Yet this is the life of faith. If we understood the events that seem tragic or difficult or senseless, we would not need to walk by faith. But the Lord is teaching us to rely on Him, His character, His unchanging love, His perfect plan, and His promise that all the details of our lives are designed for our good and His ultimate glory.

Lord, lift our eyes off that which we see around us. Help us to see into the realm of the invisible where You reign over all.

We are Drawn to Know Christ!

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
will draw all men unto me.
—John 12:32*



The Lord continuously depicted His crucifixion as His being “lifted up.” In John 3:14 He explained, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” In this passage, Christ refers to the strange truth found in Numbers 21:7-9. There we find sins forgiven in the lives of the Israelites who believed God’s Word and looked up, by faith, to the brass serpent on a pole.

This was a picture, or type, of the coming Messiah, Who would “become sin” (the serpent image) and pass through the fire (brass) on behalf of all who would look up to Him by faith.

But there is a greater truth hidden in the Lord’s statement, “I will draw all men unto me.” Do “all men” come to know and believe in Christ? No. Then what does the Lord mean in this statement?

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In this passage the Greek simply reads, “I will draw all unto me.” The Lord had explained this truth in an earlier discourse with His disciples. In John 6:37 we read, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. Christ continued to explain what He meant in John 6:44. “No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent Me, draw him....”

The New Living Translation reads, “However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.... For people can’t come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me...” (John 6:37, 44 NLT).

Jesus is saying that when He is lifted up on the cross, all those who have been given to Him as a gift from the Father will come to Him. And the Father will draw them to the Son.

Christ goes on to say, “And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day” (John 6:39 NLT).

The magnificence of the grace of God is displayed in these amazing truths. First, we are told that the knowledge that Christ died for our sins (was lifted up on the cross) is the spellbinding truth God uses to draw us to the Son. Then we discover that the Father has given us as His own gift to the Son. The sovereign Lord of creation, the Potter, has turned a lump of clay into a bejeweled vessel of honor as a love gift to His Son. That lump of clay is you if you find yourself drawn to Jesus Christ.

And more good news! No one, absolutely no human being on the planet who is drawn to believe in Him will ever be turned away. Why? Because there is nothing in us that qualifies us for eternal life. The basis for our receiving the gift of eternal life is the Father’s plan. His plan is to give you, a child of faith, to His Son. And He will accomplish His plan.

We are Drawn to Know Christ!

Listen to these grace-filled words from the Son as He talks about those “sheep” who are His. “I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them away from me. For my Father has given them to me, and He is more powerful than anyone else. So, no one will snatch them away from me” (John 10:28-29 NLT).

Father, we are drawn to Your Son. And now we see that You are the Author of the drawing. To think You have created us as love gifts to your beloved Son! We bow in awe at Your throne of grace.

A Bride by Blood Shed

*And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam,
and he slept; and He took one of his ribs,
and closed up the flesh...
and from the rib made He a woman,
and brought her unto the man.
—Genesis 2:21-22*



Adam obtained his bride through the shedding of his own blood. How startling it is to see the Lord teaching us of His eternal plan in the very opening pages of His book!

We know that Jesus Christ is called the second Adam. Adam was the first man and his actions brought death to all human beings. Christ became man so that His actions might bring life to all who believe. Paul the apostle wrote, “Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:47 NLT).

God Himself caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. The Hebrew word for sleep in this passage is *yashen* and, figuratively, is a picture of dying. (An entirely different word for sleep is used, for instance, in Genesis 15:12 when it says “a deep sleep fell upon Abram.”)

A Bride by Blood Shed

The Father caused the Son to enter into death so that His Bride could be created. The place of this death was “near a garden...” (John 19:41 NLT). During the death process, the second Adam, like the first Adam, had His side pierced and His blood shed in order for His Bride to join Him.

The first Adam was made of the earth. But his bride was a unique creation. She was not made from the dust of the earth. She was created from Adam’s very own flesh and bone. “She is part of my own flesh and bone!” (Genesis 2:23 NLT). Paul wrote of us, the Bride of Christ, “We are members of His body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Ephesians 5:30).

In Genesis we read that the Lord Himself presented the bride (Eve) to the first Adam. He “brought her” to Adam (Genesis 2:22). In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul, describing the second Adam, wrote, “He gave up his life for her...He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church... (Ephesians 5:25, 27 NLT). The Lord created and presented the bride in both scenarios!

The Bible closes with a scene in a garden with a river, fruit trees, and the tree of life. In the midst of the garden is the Lamb and His Bride. “In the midst...was the tree of life...and there shall be no more curse...and the Spirit and the bride say, come” (Revelation 22:2-3, 17).

If we are in Christ by faith, we are new creations, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. We are a part of His Body and will be presented to Him, “not having spot or wrinkle...holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

Lord, You have done it all. What a mysterious, glorious, grace-filled plan! And how wonderful of You to give us clues to what You are doing from the beginning to the end of Your Word!

Saved From What?

Salvation is of the Lord.
—Jonah 2:9



The word *salvation* rarely comes up in social gatherings. Have you noticed that? You don't really win friends and influence people by asking them if they have been "saved." Yet "salvation" is the main topic in the Bible.

Why is it that we are pretty comfortable with other biblical terms like love, peace, hope, and joy? But somehow most folks are not comfortable discussing the topic of salvation. There must be a reason for that.

The Hebrew word for salvation provides shocking insight and understanding. The Hebrew word is *yeshuah*. Does that ring any bells for you? The Battle of Jericho was led by Joshua, which is actually Jehoshua, translated as Jesus in the Greek! In other words, salvation, *yeshuah*, actually means "God saves." Thus, Jesus is the Savior; He is a God Who saves people.

Saved From What?

The Hebrew word *yeshuah* means to be brought to safety. The Greek word for salvation is *soteris* and means to be brought to safety and made to be sound or healthy, whole. To be saved is to be made safe, to be made sound.

Then comes another question. From what do we need to be saved? Here is where the heart of discomfort lies for most people today. The Bible says that, left to ourselves, we are headed for eternal destruction and the world just doesn't buy that.

Many will talk about Jesus Christ as a great teacher, even as Savior in some general sense. Many of these same people will even say they believe Christ died on the cross. They occasionally go to church, on Easter or Christmas. But the idea that all human beings, left to themselves, are headed for hell? No. That would be far too radical for most sophisticates in the world today.

Perhaps it would be valuable for us to review exactly what the Bible says about the dangerous condition of human beings which requires that we be rescued, brought to safety by the Savior.

Paul reminded us that all humans "have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." In other words, we are under condemnation because we have broken God's laws. The Greek word for condemnation is *krisis*, which means the judgment of God. (And thus we have the English word crisis.)

The Savior Himself describes what that judgment includes. For those of us who do not come to Him, recognizing that we are sinners who need a Savior, Jesus says, "Depart from Me... into everlasting fire...into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:41, 46).

Those of us who believe the Word of God and have placed our faith in Christ as Savior have been saved from the wrath of God. Have we really grasped what it means to be safe in Him?

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Have we truly praised Him for the fact that He has provided the way out of this path we were on?

It is noteworthy that in Noah's day he preached that God's judgment was coming on the entire world. Safety was to be found only in the ark. But that was not happy conversation at the social gatherings of the day, given the fact that only eight people went into the ark. The Lord Himself said, "As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26). The desperate need for safety from destruction is His message to all who will hear.

Oh Lord, give us grace to hear, to believe, and to treasure the rescuing truth of Your Word. "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Heavenly Dew

I will be as the dew unto Israel.
—Hosea 14:5



These words are those of the Lord speaking to the Israelites, who are grieved over their own failures, sins, and lack of faith. And these are His words to every believer, each one of us who longs to experience more of His grace and mercy in the face of our own inadequacies.

It is interesting that the Lord uses the metaphor of dew as a description of what He is to us. Dew is very gentle, arriving almost unseen and certainly unheard. Dew comes in the night, just before dawn. It cannot be seen initially. The Lord tells us that is how He comes to us. In our darkness, quietly, gently, initially unnoticed, He descends upon us in the midst of our circumstances. His presence is a signal that the light is coming!

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There is also a mystery and a miracle about dew. How is water gathered up from the earth, brought into the clouds, and poured out as torrential rain or as gentle dew? The moisture in the atmosphere distills into dew. Who can explain it? And so with the Lord. His work is both mysterious and miraculous. It is worth observing that the dew is not to be explained by man's efforts or anything man can do. So is the mystery of the Holy Spirit coming to refresh our spirits.

In Exodus 16:13-15 we discover that manna, the heavenly food that fed the Israelites, came with the dew. When they asked Moses what this was, He answered, "This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat." The refreshing dew is a heavenly gift. The bread is as well. No wonder Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever" (John 6:51).

The combined presence of the dew (the water) and the manna (the bread of heaven) has another spiritual application. Jesus explained to the woman at the well that He was the living water, the source of everlasting life (John 4:10,14). He also explained to the disciples that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). There is a mysterious truth in the combination of the dew (water) and the manna (the Word of God). Paul wrote that the Lord sanctifies and cleanses His own "with the washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26).

It has been said that the heavenly dew is the refresher of our spirits. Earthly dew achieves its purpose through its constancy. It is the constant coming of the dew that allows the desert to blossom and trees to bear fruit. The Lord has promised His constancy in our lives. "I will never leave you nor forsake you"

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(Hebrews 13:5). It is through the heavenly dew that the Lord removes our barrenness and sustains our lives.

The Scripture calls us to look heavenward for any and all of our needs. His light shines; His water flows down; His dew drops down; the dove descends with peace; the Comforter comes down from above; the wind brings the breath of life; even His purifying fire comes down from heaven (Luke 9:54).

David wrote that the same dew that descended on the icy peaks of Mount Hermon in Israel is the dew that descended on the lower regions, the mountains of Zion (Psalm 133:3).

Help us understand, Lord Jesus, that You Yourself are the dew. "I will be as the dew..." You will refresh us and sustain us forever, whether we are on the mountain top of life or in a lower valley. You remain constant.

The One and Only Sign

*You ask for a miraculous sign, but the only sign
I will give is the sign of the prophet Jonah.*

—*Matthew 12:39 NLT*



You will remember the story well. The prophet Jonah was a believer who was born in Galilee, served the Israelites faithfully, and then became utterly disobedient to the Lord's call. Instead of obeying the Lord's request to go to Nineveh to preach, Jonah headed in the opposite direction. We know what followed. Jonah was chastened through drowning in a raging sea; then he was rescued by a "prepared" fish. He ultimately ended up in Nineveh and a gigantic revival occurred in that Gentile city. Yet Jonah still had a rebellious attitude about some of the Lord's ensuing actions.

Nevertheless, the Lord Himself speaks of Jonah in an amazing, honoring way. He describes Jonah's life as a "miraculous" sign, the "only" sign the Lord would use to reveal His identity

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to the Jews. (Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights as the Lord was to be in the belly of the earth three days and three nights. Both died during their ordeal. Jonah was resurrected from the fish's belly as a sign of the Lord's coming resurrection.) The Lord even testified to Jonah's effectiveness as a preacher. He said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation and condemn it." The Lord explained to the unbelieving Jews that the Gentile—formerly pagan—Ninevites will be resurrected because they believed as a result of Jonah's preaching.

Isn't it a display of amazing grace that there is never a mention of Jonah's disobedience or his angry attitude? The Lord simply points to the wondrous results that flowed out of the life of a saint. This is the Lord Who said, "I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions for my own sake and will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

Or what about Abraham's nephew, Lot, who escaped from the judgment poured out on Sodom and Gomorrah? We recall that Lot's actions were not honorable when he offered to give his daughters over for sexual exploitation by the wicked, fornicating men of Sodom (Genesis 19:4-8). The Lord prevented that from happening. Yet later, after Lot and his daughters had been rescued from that city, Lot became drunk and committed incest with his daughters.

In the New Testament, we read that the Lord delivered "righteous Lot" who was vexed by the wickedness of his day. That "righteous man" had his "righteous soul" vexed day after day there. But "the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation" (2 Peter 2:7-9). Not one word is written to remind us of Lot's sins and failures. Rather, he is described as a

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righteous saint, a godly man whom the Lord delivered out of a terrible judgment on evil. The Lord arranged for angels to deliver Lot, much like the fish that had been arranged for Jonah in his circumstances (Genesis 19:15-16).

Or what about Rahab, the harlot? Here was a Gentile woman who was a practicing prostitute in the city of Jericho. She hid two Israelite spies who came in to spy out the land. When the King of Jericho asked her where the men were, Rahab lied. She told him they had left town when, in fact, she had hidden them on her own roof (Joshua 2:1-6). Eventually she was miraculously delivered during the attack on Jericho. She married an Israelite (Salmon) and was Ruth's mother-in-law and King David's great great grandmother! In that lineage the Savior was born (Matthew 1:5-16; Luke 3:23-32).

When we read the roll call of the heroes and heroines of faith in the Old Testament, Rahab is listed with the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses (Hebrews 11:17-31). Rahab's incredible faith was displayed in her willingness to receive and protect the spies. She "perished not with them that believed not." God's grace was so showered on Rahab's life that she ended up in the hall of fame for the faithful!

What a Savior we have! He delivers "the godly" out of the worst of circumstances by His "prearranged" plans. And His definition of "godly" is those who believe in Jesus Christ as God in the flesh and the only way into God's presence (1 John 4:1-3.) He saves us from the wrath of His eternal judgment. He doesn't even remember our sins. And He carefully designs the ordained means by which we will serve Him, in spite of ourselves. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has ordained for us" (Ephesians 2:10).

The One and Only Sign

We, like Jonah, Lot, and Rahab, are “miraculous signs” that point to the amazing grace of Jesus Christ!

Lord, may we praise You continuously for Your miraculous gift to us...grace abounding.

The Good Fruit

From Me is thy fruit found.
—*Hosea 14:8*



As believers, we often hear sermons on the importance of “bearing good fruit.” Paul told us in Galatians that “works of the flesh include adultery, fornication...hatred...envyings,” (Galatians 5:19). In contrast, he wrote, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...gentleness, goodness” (Galatians 5:22). He exhorted believers to “walk in the Spirit” and “not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). And truly we desire to do exactly what the apostle outlined—live a life full of the fruit of the Spirit.

The question is, “How is this achieved?” How do we know if we are really bringing forth good fruit? Maybe our good works (trying to serve others, trying to love irritating people, trying to not be angry) are purely the result of disciplined flesh. We are trying to be “good Christians” but our hearts may well be unchanged. What is the Scriptural answer to this dilemma?

The Good Fruit

The foundational truth for fruit bearing begins in the garden of Eden. There we see two kinds of fruit trees: the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9). Adam and Eve were given the tree of life to eat from freely; but they were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We know that the tree of life is a symbol of Christ Himself, the life who hung on a tree in our behalf. The other tree infected mankind with the lie that we can be like God, knowing how to make good choices, wise enough to differentiate between good and evil. Today the world abounds with secular humanism, the lie that man is basically good and wise and capable of producing good fruit and good works.

Jesus Christ Himself gave us insight into these two trees. He said, “Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them” (Matthew 7:17-20).

Let’s examine what the Lord is really saying here. Good trees cannot produce evil fruit. Evil trees cannot produce good fruit. The issue at hand is the tree, not the fruit. In other words, an apple tree cannot produce pears. For apples to be present requires the tree be an apple tree. If we tie apples on a pear tree it may look like an apple tree on the outside, but eventually the fruit will rot because it is not gaining life from the source.

The prophet Hosea quoted Jehovah, “From Me is thy fruit found.” Jesus taught the same truth in John chapter fifteen. “I am the true Vine...the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except

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it abide in the vine. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:1, 4-5).

In other words, if we are in Christ, the good tree, the Vine, we will produce good fruit because the good life is in us. The Holy Spirit is producing His fruit—His nature—in us. The good tree will produce good fruit because that is the kind of tree it is.

Paul gave us insight and encouragement as believers who want to know how to walk in the Spirit, producing good fruit. “Even when we were dead in sin God made us alive in Christ...this is the gift of God, not of works...for we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:5, 8-10).

If we confess with our mouths and believe in our hearts that Jesus Christ is Lord, we are in the Good Tree, the Tree of Eternal Life. In us, this life will bear fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. And He who has begun this good work in us “will perform it” until the day Jesus returns (Philippians 1:6).

Father, we trust Your faithful work in us, looking unto Jesus, the Vine. He has promised that from Him our “fruit will be found.” Thank You, Lord.

The Hand of the Lord

*Filled with compassion, the Lord reached
out His hand and touched the man.*

—Mark 1:41



In the opening chapter of Mark we read, “A man with leprosy came to Him and begged Him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean’” (Mark 1:40 NIV).

It is worth noting that this man knew his condition; he knew Christ could heal him if He chose to do so; he knew that Christ was worthy to be worshipped (he came on his knees); and he asked to be made clean. He knew Jesus had the power to heal; yet he also knew Christ might not choose to heal him. He simply came, knowing there was no place else he could go! Jesus was his only hope.

Leprosy, in the Scripture, is a symbol of sin. Like sin, it seems insignificant at first, a small single white spot on the skin. But as one writer says, “its consequences are devastating.” The disease

eventually attacks the limbs and the soft tissue and, without treatment, it is fatal.

Jesus was a Jewish rabbi. Jews were never to touch a leper, according to the Jewish law. This would make them unfit for worship. Yet we read, “Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man” (Mark 1:41 NIV). The Greek word for compassion is *spla*, which means to be moved in your insides. The Lord experienced a deep emotion of caring, seeing the heart’s desire, the faith, of this leper kneeling before Him.

Christ spoke to this man, “I am willing. Be clean.” Instantly the man was cured (Mark 1:41 NIV). There is cleansing power in the Word of God. There is healing power in the Word of God. The Lord touched this leper with love, spoke His Word, and the leper was transformed. In fact, this new man “went out and began...spreading the news.” This is surely an appropriate response to being set free from such agony!

Though we may have come to Christ and asked to be forgiven and made alive in Him, we still, as believers, get infected with sin in our daily lives. Often we feel separated from and rejected by the Lord because of our “leprous” condition.

It is good to remember that the Lord looks upon us with compassion. Like the leper, we can kneel before Him and beg Him to free us from our current condition. And He sees our hearts, not our leprosy.

Though we cannot see the Lord’s physical hand today, we have His written Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit Who intercedes for us, applying the Lord’s healing touch in our lives. The nail scars in Christ’s hands remain a testimony to His love,

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grace, and mercy for those who come by faith, worshipping Him.

Lord, continue to apply Your shed blood in our lives, day by day, that we might be clean. We offer up our hearts, full of thanksgiving.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

*And He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it....
And He said to them,
This is my blood, poured out for many....
—Mark 14:23-24 NLT*



Let's reflect on the biblical significance of giving thanks. The Greek word for thanks is *euchar*. This is the root word for the Christian term describing the communion table, the Eucharist celebration.

At the Last Supper the Lord offered up thanks (*euchar*) over the cup of wine, which He said represented His shed blood. He was thanking the Father for what the wine represented, His own blood sacrifice, His death on the cross!

In the Old Testament we read, "Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving..." (Psalm 107:22 NLT). In Hebrew, the word translated as sacrifice is *zebach*, which means to slaughter. In other words, the deepest meaning of thanksgiving is related to a death, a giving of thanks for a blood sacrifice!

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

In Psalm 116:17 NLT we read the words of King David, “I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on “the name of the Lord.” When David called on the Lord’s name, he was aware of the element of this deep connection with sacrifice or slaughter, the shedding of blood.

In Romans 12:1 (NLT) the apostle Paul wrote, “And so dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice....” The Greek word translated as sacrifice is *thusia* and means slaughtered animal.

The New Testament clearly teaches us that we died with Christ on the cross. “The law no longer holds you in its power, because you died to its power when you died with Christ on the cross” (Romans 7:4 NLT). In Galatians we read, “I have been crucified with Christ. I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:19-20 NLT).

The heart of true thanksgiving is an awareness that the ultimate slaughter has occurred. Christ shed His blood in our behalf and He thanked His Father for the privilege of going to be slaughtered, to die, so that His sheep would not face death. Even the Old Testament saints knew that the blood of bulls and goats simply represented the ultimate sacrifice Who was coming soon.

As we thank the Lord for our daily bread and His abundant blessings, it is good to rejoice in the greatest of all blessings—we have been given eternal life through His shed blood. The cup of wine over which Christ gave *euchar* represents the

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thusia (slaughtered animal), which prompts an outpouring of thanksgiving!

Lord, help us offer up thanks for the fact that You were slaughtered in our place. And, Father, may we learn to give thanks for the sacrificial places to which You sometimes call us as believers.

The Wardrobe of Heaven

*On His robe and thigh was written
this title: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.*

—Revelation 19:16



The Scripture focuses often on garments. For example, when the King of Kings entered the world the first time, He was “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” He came as a dependent baby, in the dark of night, dressed in torn rags, “strips of cloth.”

Again, when the King of Kings was crucified on the cross, rejected, scorned, and humiliated, the soldiers stripped Him naked and “cast lots” for His garments.

Yet another defining moment in world history is due to unfold at any moment. Christ has promised to return, visibly, as the conquering King. The apostle John was given a clear vision of the precise details of this scene.

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When the Lord returns He will be mounted on a white horse, not astride a humble donkey. His eyes will be as flames of fire. On His head will be many crowns. Out of His mouth will be seen a sharp, glistening sword, a symbol of the Word of God with which He will deliver the wrath of God on all unbelievers. His robe will be blood-stained, a reminder of Who He is: the Lamb of God, slain for the sins of all who believe. Written on this blood-stained robe and engraved on His thigh will be His name: King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Read Revelation 19:11-16).

This is the manner in which Christ will return, no longer to bring salvation, but rather to bring judgment upon all the kings of the earth and all who have refused to call Him Lord in this life.

Interestingly, “the armies of heaven” will come with Christ, also upon white horses. They will be “clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (Revelation 19:14). It is clear that those who are a part of this King’s army must also have special clothing. These white robes symbolize the sinlessness of those who are followers of the King of Kings. The King Himself has provided their clothing: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord...for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation. He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).

As we await the arrival of the King, it is good to examine the “clothing” we are wearing. The prophet Isaiah tells us that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). In other words, all our human efforts and good works will not get us ready to greet the One coming to judge the world. Rather, He must provide us with the “garment” of salvation, the cleansing of His blood shed for our sins.

The Wardrobe of Heaven

Very few were prepared for the first arrival of the King wrapped in rags. Most rejected Him and were part of a crucifying crowd. He is about to appear again, unexpectedly, “like a thief in the night” to those who do not know Him. His name will be in clear view on His garments, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

“Even so, come Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).

The Prince of Peace

*His Name shall be called Wonderful,
Counselor, The Mighty God,
The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
—Isaiah 9:6b*



This is a startling Scripture if we actually read it and believe it. The first half of the verse is so familiar to us that we often don't hear or believe the last half. "For unto us a Child is born, a Son is given...and His name shall be called...." The name of Jesus Christ, this Child, born of the virgin, is "the mighty God." Christ's name is God. And Christ's name is "the everlasting Father."

The Lord Himself confirmed this again and again as He walked on earth. "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" (John 14:9). "The Father and I are One" (John 10:30). "Before Abraham was born I existed" (John 8:58). Christ is the visible reality of the Lord God of Israel, Creator of heaven and earth (John 1:18).

The Prince of Peace

Practically speaking, what do these names of Jesus Christ mean to us? Certainly we can rejoice every single hour if we understand Christ is indeed God. This light alone is a miraculous gift that will keep us grateful day after day.

Yet there is much more. His name is also Prince of Peace. The Hebrew word for peace is *shalom*. It means safe, well, happy, friendly, prospering, and healthy.

The Greek word for peace is *eirene*, which implies rest, quietness, prosperity, well-being. In today's world most people are longing for a sense of well-being. "I just want to be happy." "I'd just like some peace, some security." "I'd like to get some rest." Maybe we are looking for peace in all the wrong places.

The Hebrew word for prince is *sar*. (In Russian, it is czar!) It means the captain, the ruler, the commander, the one who reigns over and is in charge of a realm. Christ is the One in charge of peace! He reigns over the realm called Peace. If you or I want to live in that realm, we have to go to the *sar* and ask to walk in His realm, under His dominion, living within the truths of the kingdom of peace!

The apostle Paul tells us that Christ is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). In Christ all of our concerns are lifted; all of our needs are met. Because He is King over the realm of peace, He knows how to solve all problems; He is never faced with the "unexpected;" He has a perfect plan for every citizen in His realm. And this plan is designed for our highest good. He has written our days in a book (Psalm 139). Our steps are ordained (Proverbs 16:9). He loves us completely, in spite of our failures, inadequacies, bad habits, and lack of trust.

Because Paul understood these realities, he could confidently write, "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about

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everything.... If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand" (Philippians 4:6-7 NLT).

Are we living in the realm of the Prince of Peace because we are alive in Christ? If so, are we experiencing the peace that is supernatural, the peace that defies the circumstances we might be facing? It is this kind of peace the Prince provides. The key is to believe the *sar* has everything in perfect order and will faithfully work out the details of our lives.

Lord, please deliver the experience of Your peace to our hearts by Your Spirit.

God's Sovereignty in the Details

*And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from
God unto a city of Galilee,
named Nazareth, to a virgin,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
—Luke 1:26-27*



It is fascinating to discover the tiny details that hide behind the surface of biblical truth. Here we have a familiar quote from Luke chapter one. Let's ask ourselves this question: In the sixth month of what? If we return to Luke chapter one, we discover that it is the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy.

Who is Elizabeth? Elizabeth is the wife of a Jewish priest named Zacharias. Elizabeth, who had been barren for some time, has been blessed with becoming pregnant after Zacharias' fervent prayer. And the coming birth of this child is announced by an angel (Luke 1:11-13) and the angel's name is Gabriel (Luke 1:19).

What was so special about this baby that an angelic announcement was given? The angel himself tells us the answer.

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This child's name will be John and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit before he is even born (Luke 1:13-15).

Why was John going to be so important? Because he was going to be the one to go throughout all of Israel and trumpet the news that the Messiah had been born; he would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord." His name, of course, is John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17).

Interesting, isn't it, that it was this same angel, Gabriel, who brought the news of pregnancy to Mary (Luke 1:26). When Mary discovered she was pregnant (and not married), she "went into the hill country" to visit her cousin Elizabeth. The angel Gabriel had told Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, who was very old, was also pregnant. In fact, she was six months' pregnant (Luke 1:35-40).

Isn't the Lord's timing amazing? He made sure Elizabeth remained barren so that when she did become pregnant she would clearly see the hand of God at work. And the Lord planned the timing so that Jesus' second cousin, John the Baptist, would be just six months older than He, so John could announce the arrival of the Lamb of God (John 1:29).

What a special gift the Lord gave these two women. He ordained the timing of their miraculous pregnancies; He gave them angelic visitations; He knit their destinies together; He made certain they were born within the same family tree so they would be cousins. God is sovereign and gracious. These two women must have shared so much and been so grateful for each other's company and the confirmation of the Lord's hand in their lives.

Finally, isn't it interesting that Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron, the high priest who served with Moses? She was named

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after Aaron's wife whose name, in Greek, was Elizabeth. Mary was named after Aaron's sister Miriam, whose name in Greek is Mary. The Lord sends us signals in the Word that He is the God of all the details, even the details of our daily lives.

Oh, sovereign God, give us eyes to see Your hand in every detail of our days and nights, in every season of our lives. Glorify Your name in us.

Spotless!

There is no spot in thee....
—*Song of Solomon 4:7*



There exists the mythical idea that because God is loving He will be generous when judging sin. It is believed by most that God basically grades on a curve. There are some really bad people in the world so, if hell exists, those people will go there. But others of us are not really that awful, so, if heaven exists, we will qualify. Especially because we believe in God, sometimes pray, and mostly try to do the right thing.

Sound familiar? Seems logical, doesn't it? Yet that entire philosophy or outlook is totally based on human reasoning. It is completely unbiblical and has its source in the enemy of God, the great deceiver, who twists the Word of God.

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the lamb or heifer that was chosen as the sacrifice had to be “without blemish,” “without

Spotless!

spot.” “Bring thee a red heifer, without spot” (Numbers 19:2). Jesus Christ was announced as the sacrificial Lamb of God by John the Baptist. Christ’s death on the cross was the blood sacrifice. “He offered Himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14).

Again, in the Old Testament, leprosy is described as “a freckled spot that groweth” (Leviticus 13:39). A leper was considered unclean and sent “outside the camp.” Leprosy became a symbol, biblically, of sin. Whether a leper had just a spot or was completely ravaged by the disease, he or she was counted as unclean. When Jesus healed lepers in His ministry, they were described as being “cleansed” (Mark 8:3).

How does this relate to us? The Word of God says every person who expects to be received of God must be “without spot, unrebukable” (1 Timothy 6:14). Those presented to Jesus Christ in heaven are described as “not having spot, or wrinkle... but must be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

It is clear from the Scripture that God does not grade on a curve. Not even a blemish, not one spot of sin will enter heaven. And this is why the gospel is, in Greek, the *euaggellion*, the declaration of good news.

Evangelism is simply the declaration of the greatest good news on the face of the earth or in the heavenly spheres. Christ, the spotless One, has paid the price for our spots, our sin. And He rose from the grave to prove His victory over sin and death. “This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent” (John 17:3).

When the Spirit of God opens our eyes to this incredible truth—that only through faith in Christ are we counted worthy of heaven—we begin to grasp the monumental significance of being a believer.

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It is to those of us who are in Christ, born again by His Spirit (John 3:7-8), that the Lord Himself speaks these amazing words: “There is no spot in thee” (Song of Solomon 4:7).

In the poetic symbolism of the Song of Solomon love story, Christ is the Bridegroom speaking to His bride, the church, the body of true believers. He says, “You are so beautiful, my beloved, so perfect in every part.... How sweet is your love, my treasure, my bride...” (Song of Solomon 4:7, 10 NLT).

The apostle Paul used this same imagery to describe the believer’s relationship with the Lord. In speaking of Christ’s love for the church, depicted as His bride, the apostle wrote, “He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean.... He did this to present her to himself...without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27 NLT).

Lord, we fall before Your throne in gratefulness, knowing that You deem us as spotless because You, the Lamb without blemish, have made it to be so. Hallelujah!

Feel free to contact Glenna for more information or
to speak at your event, retreat or conference.

Phone: 480-483-7731

Email: ISpeak4U@aol.com

Website: www.glennasalsbury.com