

A young boy with light hair and a wide smile is the central focus. He is wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt and dark pants. He holds a blue umbrella over his head. The background is a bright, sunny field of yellow flowers, possibly daisies, with a soft, bokeh effect. The overall mood is cheerful and bright.

GRACE & TRUTH

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- ***The Lamb Of God***
- ***The Nature Of
Christ's Sacrifice***
- ***Why Did Jesus Die?***

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Remember Him!

Recently I read the May 20th devotion of the *Day By Day, Fourth Year* by Jean Koechlin. The *Day By Day* is a five-year series of daily readings, covering the Bible book by book. I recommend reading it. Copies are available for purchase from *Believers Bookshelf USA* and *Canada* (their contact information is in this magazine on page 33). It is not available from *Grace & Truth*.

The passage Mr. Koechlin listed for this particular day was Luke 9:18-36, as he wrote:

The crowds believe the Lord Jesus to be a prophet, *not the Christ*, the Son of God (v.19). This is what leads the Lord to speak about His pathway of *rejection* and sufferings, along which He invites His own to follow Him. This pathway involves *self-denial*, not simply of one thing or another, but denial of one's *self*, of *the whole of one's own will*. Christians are *dead* (Gal. 6:14) to the world and its lusts, but they are alive to God and to heaven. On the other hand, those who want *to live their own lives* down here have eternal death before them. *Our soul* is at risk in this vitally important choice; our soul is worth more than the whole world.

As well as opening up this difficult pathway where the cross must daily be taken up, in order to encourage His own the Lord wishes to show them where it will end: *in glory with Him*. What will be the great subject of conversation up there? The death of the Lord Jesus. He talks about it to Moses and Elias, since He was not able to do so with His disciples (Lk. 9:22; Mt. 16:21-22). But despite the greatness of these Old Testament witnesses, they must fade away before the glory of the "beloved Son." The law and the prophets have come to an end; from now on God is speaking through His Son. *May we listen to Him!* (Lk. 9:35; Heb. 1:2).

As we have come again to the once per year remembrance of our Savior's death and resurrection, let us not limit our recalling simply to this time. Scripture encourages us to remember the Lord, showing forth His death collectively from week to week (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Acts 20:7). Individually, consider those things daily, as you take up your cross at the beginning of each day (Lk. 9:23). Remember Him!

Paul

“Behold

THE
LAMB
OF GOD

who takes away the sin of the world!”

—John 1:29 NKJV

by Curt Darling

John the Baptist announced this God-given revelation, but the thought of the Lord Jesus Christ being presented as a lamb “was foreordained *before* the foundation of the world” (1 Pet. 1:18-20). Revelation 13:8 says that He, as the Lamb, was viewed as “slain *from* the foundation of the world.” These precious truths display the foreknowledge of God, who laid out history from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

The Lamb Presented By Abel

Man was not yet created when the plan of the Lamb sacrifice’s was made, but we see God foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin. Therefore, a sacrifice would be needed – that of the Lamb of God. He is the One pictured by the offering presented to the LORD by Abel, the second son of Adam and Eve. Hebrews 11:4 says, “By faith

Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts.” It was “excellent” because the sacrifice was a lamb (Gen. 4:2,4). The verse in Hebrews concludes by saying, “... And through it he being dead still speaks.” This is because his offering spoke of the Lord Jesus and “the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (12:24). By contrast, Cain, Abel’s older brother, offered what was of his will and work. God had no respect for that offering (Gen. 4:4). This, the “way of Cain” (Jude 11), is a total disregard for God’s true way: the Lamb of God and His shed blood.

The Lamb For The Passover

In Exodus 12:3-11 we read of the Passover lamb and how it was to

be offered. It was sufficient for a household, without blemish and a male of the first year. Killed at twilight, some of its blood was to be put on the lintel and the two doorposts of the house, providing safety to the firstborn of Israel. Throughout these instructions we never read of the bones of the lamb being broken – nor were those of the Lord Jesus, as Psalm 34:20 testifies (see Ps. 22:17, Jn. 19:33). Paul, writing to believers during our day of grace, wrote: “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

The Lamb As Prophesied By Isaiah

Isaiah wrote about the Lord Jesus, foretelling His last hours before He was crucified: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (53:7). This prophecy was the means of salvation for a man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:27-39).

Later in Isaiah 53 we see that the Lord had done nothing wrong, nor was there even “deceit in His mouth” (v.9). He was made “an offering for sin,” and would “justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities [sins]” (vv.10-11). These points are found in the New Testament as well. Peter said that Christ was sin-

less: “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19). Paul wrote: “[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Only by being without sin could He bear “our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Pet. 2:24). If He were not sinless, He could not have done anything for us.

The Lamb In Revelation

Jesus as Lamb is mentioned 22 times in Revelation. The first reference is Revelation 5:6, where we find the Lamb in the position of power, rather than meek and suffering for our sins. The preceding verse says He is “the Lion of the tribe of Judah the Root of David.” He “prevailed to open the scroll” detailing the judgments to come upon the earth. Why? Because He *purchased* this world with His own blood – apart from the fact that He is the Creator (Heb. 1:2; Col 1:16). That is why He is pictured in Revelation 5:6 as the Lamb. Then the apostle John recorded in verses 11-12 that he, in the Spirit, “looked, and heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and

riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

In Revelation 6 we observe the Lamb opening the seals and the judgments beginning, continuing to chapter 19. In Revelation 7 we are told about the salvation of an uncountable multitude from many nations. These saved ones, in verse 10, cry out “with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” By contrast, those who suffer the judgment from God will beg the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them “from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb” (6:15). The Lord Jesus spoke about this prophetically in Luke 23:30, as He was led to the cross.

In Revelation 14:1 the Lamb is seen “standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father’s name written on their foreheads.” Later, in chapters 19 and 20, we see the same person as King of Kings and Lord of Lords reigning for 1,000 years, which closes out the period called “time.”

Revelation 21 describes “the

holy Jerusalem” (v.10) descending from heaven. This city is called the Lamb’s wife. Here we have “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb” as the temple (v.22) and the wall of the city being built on “twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the apostles of the Lamb” (v.14). There will be “no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in [the city], for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light” (v.23). Then, in Revelation 22 we find the Lamb having part of the throne of God (vv.1,3).

Although there are many other passages that could be considered, may we simply look at Revelation 21:27, which tells us that the only people to enjoy eternity with the Lord are “those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” – believers. These are the people who are saved by His death on the cross. All others, whose names are “not found written in the Book of Life [will be] cast into the lake of fire” (20:15). May we “behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” **GT**

Behold the Lamb, whose precious blood drawn from His riven side,
Had power to make our peace with God, nor lets one spot abide.

To Him, then, let our songs ascend, who stooped in grace so low:
To Christ, the Lamb, the sinner’s Friend, let ceaseless praises flow.

–William Trotter (1818-1865)

The Nature Of

The sacrifices described in the Old Testament provide us with many types, lessons and applications. Besides their historical context and meaning for those days, they pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah and His sacrifice. The Lord Jesus summarized this in His words to Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn. 3:16 NKJV). Christ’s coming into this world and His finished work on the cross – including His resurrection, exaltation and present session at God’s right hand – provide the foundation of our salvation.

The New Testament elaborates on these important matters with instructions on how to be saved and then live as believers, serving Him and waiting for His return. Paul, for example, wrote to the Christians at Thessalonica: “You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Th. 1:9-10). This testament contains the doctrines concerning Christ’s coming and teaches the meaning of His work, as the following passages clearly show:

Christ’s Sacrifice

by Alfred Bouter

*Redeemed
how I love to
proclaim it!*

*Redeemed
by the blood
of the Lamb;*

*Redeemed
through His
infinite mercy,
His child, and
forever, I am.*

—Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915)

• “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

• “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Scripture is a complete unit. Each part is related to all the other parts, mutually casting light on one another. We cannot isolate any passage from its context, nor should we put one portion above others, for all Scripture – Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 – is interdependent and needed for our understanding of God’s thoughts. This is also true when we consider the nature of Christ’s sacrifice. That doctrine is found especially in the New Testament Epistles, yet we should not separate those passages from the rest of Scripture. Furthermore, the passages we have already quoted show how God’s written Word closely associates the person of Jesus Christ with His work and its results. In the following pages we do not speak of His work as

Creator, but as *Redeemer* – even though both topics lead us to worship Him, now and throughout eternity (Rev. 4:10-5:14).

This brings us to some of the terms that are at times used to summarize the meaning of Christ’s redeeming work: atonement, redemption, forgiveness and justification.

Atonement

When we use terms that are not found in the Bible we are in danger of introducing wrong concepts, but even using biblical terms does not guarantee us to be correct. The term atonement indicates an important aspect of Christ’s redeeming work, namely that He became our Substitute to endure the wrath of God we deserved. Remember, His blood cleansed us from our sins. The Old Testament often uses the terms “atone,” “atonement” or “ransom” to translate the Hebrew *kaphar*, which essentially means “to cover.” In a physical sense, Noah used a tar-like substance called “pitch” to *cover* the gopher wood of the ark inside and outside (Gen. 6:14). Later, the blood of the Passover sacrifice *covered* the first-born son and saved him from God’s wrath (Ex. 12:1-13). Sometimes, a *cover* was provided by silver (Ex. 30:12-16) or gold (Num. 31:50). However, these

means could *only* cover sin; they were never able to erase it or take it away.

Christ's perfect sacrifice settled the matter of our sinful condition once and for all (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:10-12). God forgave our sins, but He could not forgive "sin," that is, our sin nature. The Lord Jesus became our Substitute by taking our place under God's judgment. No one else could do so, but He was able and willing to shed His blood and give His life (Lev. 17:11). He did so at the proper time, in the right manner and as the supreme sacrifice, having glorified God in all the details of His life.

Redemption

This term refers to the sacrifice that was needed to pay the penalty and provide for the blessed results, setting the sinner free and keeping him from harm and danger. The Lord Jesus is "God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5), and He became Man – the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:14) – to become our Redeemer. All humans entirely failed, but the Lord Jesus shed His blood on the cross, satisfied God's holy and just claims, and laid the necessary foundation for all to be saved (2 Cor. 5:15). This salvation is available to all, but it must be accepted by faith (Jn. 3:16). Doing so,

we enter the realm of redemption, where we are outside the claims of the enemy even though the world in which we live is filled with darkness and sin, under the enemy's sway.

The moment we believe we are identified with our great Redeemer, who rescued us from this world's control but then sent us into this world to represent Him where He was crucified. We now wait for Him, as Redeemer, to take us physically away from here at the rapture (1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Th. 4:16-17). These two passages show that all God's resources are in Christ, who:

- Has become to us *wisdom* from God,
- Made us right with God (*righteousness*),
- Set us apart for God (*sanctification*), and
- Will come again to complete the work of *redemption*, even as to our bodies.

Our redemption was settled on the cross and in Christ's resurrection, for He paid the full price that the holy and righteous God demanded. Yet, as far as we are concerned, our redemption will only be completed when Jesus takes us to Himself in heaven. That is why we wait for Him as Savior – or Redeemer – who with amazing power will conform our

bodies to His glorious body, *a true metamorphosis* (Phil. 3:21). In the twinkling of an eye (1 Cor. 15:52) He will take us to Himself, that where He is, we may also be (Jn. 14:3). Amazing, but true!

When Israel was in bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh's control, God's people were not able to serve Him on His terms. Then God sent Moses as their redeemer. The Israelites were delivered, enabling them to serve God in the wilderness and later in the Promised Land. Even though we are living in this world, we no longer belong to it because for us this world has become desolate, or barren. Here we can serve God as Israel did in the wilderness, but we also may already enter "the Promised Land" – "the heavens"¹ – to be occupied with our heavenly treasures.

What was true for Israel in stages that followed one after another is true for us simultaneously. For all are true at the same time:

- As to our bodies, we are in this world;
- As to faith, this world is a wilderness; and
- In our spirits, in tune with the Holy Spirit, we are in the heavens in Christ.

Soon the Lord Jesus will come and usher us into that heavenly land, but in the meantime we

may take possession of all our heavenly blessings (Eph. 1:3). Praise God! Truly the theme of redemption is very rich.

Forgiveness

As guilty sinners, we not only needed redemption but also forgiveness. Thus, we enjoy an unhindered relationship with our Lord, with God and with other believers. In this connection, the judgment seat of God and of Christ will manifest all the details of our individual lives (Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10) so we may appreciate the greatness of God's grace,² in forgiving us and in enjoying true communion continuously. This communion is not only for special occasions, such as the meeting to remember Him (1 Cor. 11:20-31), but always. That is why Paul was looking forward to appearing at the judgment seat, for he desired to be fully "in tune" with God and with His people already here and now.

We should not fear God's condemnation, because *Christ* was condemned on the cross in *our* stead (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). Nor should we think that we must still undergo a process of further purification, for we have been purified already (Col. 1:20-22). Just as the visual symbol of the cross displays a vertical and a horizontal connection, so forgiveness is in view of

our relationship with God – which comes first – and then with our fellow human beings and believers. Consider Colossians 3:13: “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”

Throughout eternity we will enjoy what forgiveness has brought to us.

Justification

As a Man, our Lord Jesus, in His life and death, glorified God in the place where He had been dishonored by all of humanity. The Lord Jesus accomplished a work so great that God became, as it were, a Debtor towards the whole human race. That is why it is such a serious matter to reject Christ’s coming into this world and His work on the cross.

At the final judgment session, the great white throne, all unbelievers will stand before the Man to whom God has given authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (Jn. 5:27). The Man Christ Jesus, who is God and has given Himself to save us (1 Tim. 2:5-6), will be the Judge! Before Him, “the earth and the heaven” will flee away, and all who refused to believe and be

saved will be judged and condemned to eternal damnation (Rev. 20:11-15). In contrast to this, all who accept His work of redemption and believe are declared right³ with God already now. That is what justification means, and it opens the floodgates of heaven. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

I encourage the readers to use a concordance to find and look up the passages that refer to the above themes. Also, study portions of Scripture about the blood of the Lamb, the love of God, God’s grace revealed and His rights maintained, and many other related topics. Such endeavors will bring great blessing to your life as you come to know the true nature of Christ’s sacrifice. **GT**

Endnotes:

1. See Ephesians 1:3,20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12.
2. The Greek New Testament uses two different words. The one is linked with grace and emphasizes that forgiveness is undeserved, the other that God has “let go” all charges against us.
3. Romans deals with the matter of God’s righteousness and how He declares the repentant sinner to be “just.” This epistle contains various words that are related to the same basic Greek root word. Counted together, we find 77 such references in Romans.

The Nature Of Christ's Sacrifice: Reconciliation

by David Anderson

What is reconciliation? The Oxford Dictionary definition is “the restoration of friendly relations” – the act of making peace again after estrangement or disagreements; or to make someone accept a disagreeable thing or situation. In industrial, national or political disputes, reconciliation usually involves both sides accepting a degree of compromise to pacify the situation and restore working relationships on the basis of some jointly ratified agreement or peace treaty.

The idea of reconciliation in Scripture goes much further than this, and it certainly does not involve any compromise by God. It means that God righteously

accepts back to Himself those who have wronged Him. God, in His great love for the world, has never been indifferent about man's fallen condition. From the very moment Adam and Eve sinned, God has been working out His plan of salvation. Their sin took mankind far away from God. Therefore, *they* needed to be reconciled, *not* God! To remove the mighty gulf between Himself and lost people, God made His Son a sin offering on the cross. God's grace provides for people to be reconciled to Himself on the righteous basis of Christ's propitiatory/expiatory¹ sacrifice. Paul wrote: “And you, who once were alienated and

hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him” (Col. 1:21-22 ESV). God is unchanging in His holiness and therefore He will only accept people who repent – change their hearts/attitudes about their sin – and believe in the Savior.

Everyone who believes is immediately reconciled. Spiritually they have been brought from being far away from Him into a close relationship with Him. They are holy, without blame and irreproachable – without even a single fault remaining! They stand in a righteous relationship with the holy God. They are at peace with Him, when formerly they “were enemies” (Rom. 5:10).

Reconciliation Is All About What God Has Done (2 Corinthians 5:18-6:2)

“All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” —2 Corinthians 5:18

Paul’s motivation to serve God arose out of his knowledge of the terror of the Lord (5:11) and his love for Christ (v.14). The Lord Jesus showed the grace of God in His life and service, as He was

sent “in order that the world might be saved through Him” (Jn. 3:17). “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing [reckoning, or counting] their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19 NKJV). But those to whom the grace of God was manifested crucified His Sent One. It was then that God’s reconciling mercy triumphed, because in Christ’s sacrifice God “made [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (v.21). Christ was our Substitute. He bore the judgment of God in place of us. The distance that our sins brought in has been completely and permanently removed, and we are accepted in the Beloved! Although God’s stance against sin is unchanging, yet in His grace He has come to us “in Christ.” Even more wonderful, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (v.17).

God has committed to Christ’s disciples the task of spreading this message, “the word of reconciliation” (v.19). Paul calls believers “ambassadors” and “workers together with Him” (v.20, 6:1) – a great privilege and a solemn responsibility – in an alien world that is hostile to Christ and to God.

Reconciliation Is Rooted In The Love Of God (Romans 5:1-11)

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” —Romans 5:11 ESV

Romans 1:16 to 5:11 is like a court in session, with the last 11 verses being the outcome of the case. With respect to reconciliation, the predominant thought in Romans 5 is that believers have received every blessing from God “through,” or “by,” the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 1 begins, “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith.” “Therefore” is used at various points throughout the book of Romans to state a conclusion. In Romans 5:1-11, the past, present and future results of the gospel for Christian believers are reviewed.

The past is outlined in verses 6 to 10. Consider three points presented there:

- We were “weak” and “ungodly” (v.6) without any strength to help ourselves, or any desire either to live for God or to ask for His help.
- We were “sinners” (v.8) without any relationship with a holy God.
- We were “enemies” of God (v.10) in active rebellion against Him and His declared will.

It is in this context that we discover for the first time in Romans the real secret of recon-

ciliation. The gospel proclaims that God is light and God is love. Amazingly, He offers His own love to us in our lost condition, holding it out, having manifested it in the death of His only Son. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (v.8 NKJV).

But as to the present, verse 10 also states we have been reconciled to God, That is, we have been brought back from the distance of enmity and death. This is illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, when he returned from the far country to his father’s house. Reconciliation places us before God with no distance between Him and us. It is a present position of grace, His unmerited favor, in which we possess the wonderful spiritual blessings listed in Romans 5:1-11. Among these blessings are things which everyone in the world would like to possess:

- “Peace with God” (v.1) – no outstanding issues remain!
- “Access by faith” (v.2) – the continuous ability to avail ourselves of God’s favor. There are no barriers now!
- The gift of His Holy Spirit (v.5) – through whom we know God’s love. It is not just a taste, but it is a deluge flooding our hearts so we can appreciate all He has

done, all that He is doing, and all that He will do for us!

- The priestly intercession of Christ at God's right hand in heaven – we are being saved by His endless life (v.10)!

- Best of all, being reconciled we can worship God in a living and true way – we joy, or boast, in God (v.11)!

Reconciliation also has a future meaning concerning the end times, when God will display His pleasure in and through Christ. The gospel is not just a great escape, although verse 9 verifies that “we shall be saved from [God's] wrath through Him.” It, the gospel, is about a bright future: “the hope of the glory of God” (v.2). These truths are additional causes of rejoicing.

Reconciliation Is Far-reaching In Its Effects (Colossians 1:18-23)

“Through [Christ, God reconciles] to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.”

—Colossians 1:20

Colossians 1:21 describes the depths of sinful man's condition and position before God as being “alienated and enemies in ... mind by wicked works” (NKJV). Note well that the world is at enmity with God in their minds as

well as by their wicked works. Romans 1 states that this is a direct consequence of their willful decisions not to acknowledge Him as Creator. Today, their philosophies and scientific hypotheses continue to exclude Him from their minds, as they persist in defiantly practicing ungodliness and immorality. It is no wonder that God has given them over to vile lusts, vulgar passions and debased minds.

By contrast, believers have been reconciled, brought from the depths of depravity to be “holy, and blameless, and above reproach in [God's] sight” (v.22). These changes were effected for us by Christ's sacrifice – “in the body of [Christ's] flesh through death” (v.22) and “through the blood of His cross” (v.20). The Lord Jesus in His grace identified Himself with us by becoming Man so that He could lay down His life and take it up again in resurrection. Of His own will He offered His body as a sacrifice for sin. At the cross, God acted to condemn sin, and Christ triumphed over every enemy. Through His Son's death on the cross, where the extreme violence of men was seen, God is now able to reconcile any who believe. This reconciliation is *from* their repugnant, sinful condition and position; it is *through* Jesus' resurrection, and it *places* them “in Christ.” What

they were is completely done away. Some of these far reaching effects of the reconciliation of believers are described in Colossians 2:11-14.

But God, through Christ, will do more in the future – in the world to come and throughout the eternal state. He has already started anew with the One who is the beginning of His new creation (1:18). Christ’s sacrifice, the value of His precious blood, provides a righteous foundation for God “to reconcile all things to Himself ... whether things on earth or things in heaven” (v.20). However, there is no reconciliation of “things under the earth.” In Philippians 2:10, “those under the earth” are all of the unbelievers and fallen spiritual beings who follow Satan. They will be forced to confess and bow the knee to Jesus the Lord by God the Father’s command.

Colossians 1:20 means that whatever sin has spoiled, and

everywhere sin has entered, will be purged. When God decrees, all who are evil will be consigned to the place of eternal judgment to suffer God’s wrath. Then, when all things in heaven and earth have been reconciled to Him, God’s pleasure and glory will fill the new heavens and the new earth through Christ, His pre-eminent One. The far-reaching effects of reconciliation will bring believers into new creation blessings, where God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28)! **GT**

Endnote:

1. Propitiation represents in Scripture that aspect of the death of Christ by which the holy and righteous character of God has been vindicated, and in virtue of which He is enabled to be propitious, or merciful, to the whole world. Expiation is more the satisfaction which is made. One takes the wrath, is devoted, made the curse, and is substituted for the offender so he goes free. (Concise Bible Dictionary, adapted.)

Christ Himself, as known after the flesh, is known no more. Rather, He is the Head of a new creation, where all things are of God, and in which we have been made in Him the righteousness of God. God has manifested Himself in the second Man and wrought atonement in His death; now we are the righteousness of God in Him. In the first creation we see man and his responsibility. In the new creation all things are of God, and man is reconciled by Jesus Christ unto Himself. We want to have the power of this in our souls to live as belonging to the new creation, as reconciled by God to Himself. All that belonged to the old creation is to be forever gone by faith. “Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17 KJV).

—John N. Darby (adapted).

THE PIVOTAL POINTS AROUND WHICH ALL SCRIPTURE REVOLVES are the sufferings of Christ and the glories that will follow. There is nothing else that so lifts the heart above the trials and circumstances that we face on our pathway of faith. May the following thoughts about His blood, His death and His cross warm our hearts and cause them to burn for Him.

The Blood, The Death And The Cross Of Christ

by Jacob Redekop

The Blood Of Christ

“You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

—1 Peter 1:18-19 NKJV

The apostle Peter emphasized the great cost of our redemption. He compared the blood of Christ with things that the world esteems most valuable, such as silver and gold, and called them “corruptible.” Psalm 49 confirms that “those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother” (vv.6-7). The redemption of our souls is far too costly. Only

God could provide the ransom, and He has done so by giving His only Son, His well beloved One.

These comparisons help us understand and appreciate the infinite value of what Christ has accomplished by shedding His blood on the cross. In Hebrews we read, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” (9:22). There is nothing else that could pay the debt we owed except the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Adapting what Ellis Crum wrote in his chorus, “We owed a debt we could not pay; He paid the debt He did not owe.”

We may wonder what moved the Lord forward, going steadfastly to Jerusalem while knowing all that was before Him there? Jesus

gave the answer: “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God” (10:9). It was His delight to do the Father’s will and to finish the work. By that “one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (v.14). He endured the cross because of His love to the Father and to all who put their trust in Him. “Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5:2).

God has exalted this lowly Man of Nazareth and made Him both Lord and Christ. Now He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and all who have been redeemed by His precious blood are accepted in the Beloved One according to God’s eternal purpose (see Eph. 1:3-6).

The Death Of Christ

“He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”.

—Philippians 2:8

We are living in a scene where death reigns as the king of terrors. The newspapers regularly list the obituaries, and no matter where you travel you will always find cemeteries. None can escape. Disobedience has brought on us the sentence of death and judgment, and that sentence remains

because unbelief wilfully refuses God’s remedy. “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9: 27).

What is the remedy? It is the grace of God that has brought salvation and has appeared to all men (see Ti. 2:11). The law given by Moses required that something be brought to God in order to be accepted, but we are helpless, without strength, and have nothing good to bring to a holy God. God’s remedy is found in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who “humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death.”

These words require our careful attention. “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). Death came upon all of us by the disobedience of one man – Adam. But the Lord from heaven, the sinless Man, stooped down in obedience to do God’s will, even though it required His going into death – the death of the cross. There, He bore in His own body the penalty of sin, which we deserved. Christ’s obedience brought Him down to where sin and disobedience had taken us.

This is grace! It is the sovereign grace that came by Jesus Christ – the One who ever dwelled in the bosom of the Father. He came to earth to die,

that through His death we might enter into the joys of heaven. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

The Cross Of Christ

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I unto the world.” —Galatians 6:14

In the beginning of Galatians, the apostle Paul established that the gospel he preached was not after man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil age. It is by this gospel that we have been called and separated, setting us apart from the principles and practices of this world.

Death by crucifixion is an excruciatingly painful and cruel method of capital punishment. It was used by the Romans, not for a citizen but only for those considered outcasts or unwanted criminals. The rulers of this world crucified the Lord of Glory, nailing Him to the cross. Pilate

inscribed on the cross, “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,” while Herod and his men of war treated Him with utmost contempt and cruelty. It is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). To this treatment our Lord Jesus willingly submitted – the One who is the Creator and Redeemer.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) captured the sentiments of Calvary when he wrote these words:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the cross of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

Nothing can be compared to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It has revealed the depths of His love and exposed the true character of this world in its hatred of Christ and His followers. Paul identified with Him as crucified with Christ. The world found nothing attractive in Christ, nor in Paul, and Paul found no attraction in this world. What about us? **GT**

The Offerings Of Numbers 28-29

by L.M. Grant (adapted)



Daily Offerings (Numbers 28:1-8)

As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, there were matters of serious importance raised by the Lord. Their recognition of God's rights was to come first. He spoke therefore of "My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me ... at their appointed time" (v.2 NKJV). Jacob, in going out from Beersheba, expected God to give him food to eat (Gen. 28:20), but he forgot that *he ought to give* God food to eat. Likewise, we often think of our rights and forget God's rights. May we think more deeply of giving God some true refreshment, for He is ignored by most people today. God has created us in such a way that we appreciate food. Therefore, is it not fully understandable to us that God should desire food from us?

The offerings that Israel was to consider as God's food are detailed for us in Numbers 28-29. Every day

two young lambs were to be offered, one in the morning and one in the evening (vv.3-4). These were burnt offerings, emphasizing the honor that is to be wholly given to God because of the value of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. With them, one tenth of an ephah¹ of fine flour was included as a grain offering, mixed with one fourth of a hin² of pressed oil (v.5). This grain offering speaks of the perfection of the humanity of the Lord Jesus expressed in all His life on earth, energized by the Spirit of God, as pictured in the oil. As we keep Him in affectionate memory before God, we are truly offering the grain offering. Verse 6 speaks of this in total as one offering of a sweet aroma, for there is perfect unity in the sacrifice of Christ.

Offerings On The Sabbath (Numbers 28:9-10)

On the Sabbath days there were two lambs added to the daily offer-

ing, with both grain offerings and drink offerings as in the daily offerings. The Sabbath speaks of the eternal rest of God, and in that day our appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ will not diminish, but increase.

Monthly Offerings (Numbers 28:11-15)

There would be no lack of work to keep the priests occupied. At each month's beginning a special burnt offering was to be made "to the LORD: two young bulls, one ram, and seven lambs in their first year, without blemish" (v.11). With this was included three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for each bull, two tenths of the same for the ram and one tenth for each lamb. The total of this was called "a burnt offering of sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD" (v.13). Thus, special occasions called for special observance by Israel, and a drink offering of varying proportions for each animal was added.

But every month a kid of the goats was also to be sacrificed as a sin offering (v.15). This was not a trespass offering, for the trespass offering was for specific cases of trespass, while the sin offering applied to the root principle of sin as being hateful to God. Therefore, it was a reminder that the scourge of sin was present in every Israelite,

as it is in us, and only by the sacrifice of Christ is it properly judged.

Offerings At The Feast Of The Passover (Numbers 28:16-25)

The Passover was to be kept yearly, on the 14th day of the first month. It was attended by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was kept from the 15th day for seven days. The two feasts are often viewed as one and called "the Feast of the Passover" (Ex. 34:25; Lk. 2:41; Jn. 13:1). Unleavened bread was to be eaten seven days, for the Passover speaks both of sins forgiven by the blood of the sacrifice and of sin condemned by the death of Christ. Leaven is a symbol of sin, and the seven days speak of its complete judgment by the death of the Lord Jesus.

There was to be a holy convocation, or calling together, on the first day. It was a gathering of the people to give honor to the LORD; no work was to be done for they were celebrating God's work (Num. 28:17-18). A burnt offering was to be presented consisting of two young bulls, one ram and seven lambs in their first year. All being typical of Christ, they were to be carefully inspected to see that they had no blemish. The young bulls speak of the strength of the offering of Christ; the ram speaks of His devotion to God,

and the lambs picture His lowly obedience in submission to the will of His Father.

The burnt offering was to be accompanied by a grain offering of fine flour mixed with oil: three tenths of an ephah for each bull, two tenths for the ram and one tenth for each of the seven lambs (vv.20-21). The grain offering again speaks of the person of the Lord Jesus in lowly humanity, and being mixed with oil implies that the Spirit of God permeated His every action from birth.

Added to these there was to be offered one goat as a sin offering (v.22). The goat was regarded as a substitute for the people, with its reminder again of the sin that dwelt within the people that must be judged by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, our Substitute.

Verse 24 indicates that the food of the offering was to be offered each day for the seven days, as a sweet aroma to the LORD. It does not seem that the sin offering was included for the six days following the first, for the sin offering is not “a sweet aroma” as was the burnt offering. The seventh day called also for a holy convocation (v.25), with no work being done.

Offerings Of The Feast Of Weeks (Numbers 28:26-31)

The Feast of Weeks was 50 days –

seven weeks – after the Passover, when a new grain offering was to be brought as the firstfruits of Israel’s harvest. On this day was another holy convocation when no work was to be done. This pictures the birth of the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2), when the Spirit of God came to begin the forming of one body composed of both Jewish and, a little later, Gentile believers. “A new grain offering” implies that the Lord Jesus is seen as identified with His saints in the new dispensation of God, the Church period.

The burnt offering was to be identical to that offered on Passover: two young bulls, one ram and seven lambs in the first year. The grain offering was also the same: three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for each bull, two tenths for the ram and one tenth for each lamb (vv.27-28). These were for a sweet aroma to the LORD, while a kid of the goats was again offered “to make atonement” as a sin offering (v.30).

The offerings here were only offered once on the day of firstfruits (v.26), for it was not a week-long feast as was the Passover and Unleavened Bread. It is to be noted that “the Feast of Firstfruits” (Lev. 23:9-14) is distinct from “the day of the firstfruits” in Numbers 28:26. Maybe a little chart would be helpful.

The Feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14)	The day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26)
Followed the Passover	Was 50 days after the Passover
Typical of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 15:20)	Typifies the Church and the firstfruits of Christ work of redemption

In what the *day* of firstfruits typifies, the Church is identified with Him as “a kind of firstfruits” (Jas. 1:18). Does this not remind us that the birth of the Church is the result of the sacrifice of Christ? The Spirit who came at Pentecost will always keep in our memory the reality of which the Passover speaks – the one great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Again it is insisted the offerings must be without blemish (v.31). The perfection of purity in the Lord Jesus must never be compromised.

**Offerings At
The Feast Of Trumpets
(Numbers 29:1-6)**

About four months passed before the Feast of Trumpets took place. This illustrates the long time elapsing following Pentecost, which introduced the extended dispensation of the grace of God while Israel has remained in a state of unbelief.

The Feast of Trumpets itself

symbolizes the regathering of Israel to their land, as noted in Matthew 24:31: “And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” “His elect” in this verse are those elect for earthly blessing. There have already been signs of Israel’s return to their land with at least a relatively small number restored there. However, when the Church is raptured to heaven, then this call by angelic power will have great public effect, for the trumpets speak of a clearly declared testimony.

“The last trumpet” in connection with the rapture (1 Cor. 15:52) will be sounded much before the trumpet to regather Israel; but it is called “the last trumpet” because it will be the last public testimony on earth as to the Church of God. Her being suddenly taken away will be a most striking testimony. But as

regards Israel, there are other trumpets following this great event.

On the day of blowing of trumpets, there was to be a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven lambs in their first year, all unblemished. At Pentecost two young bulls were offered, otherwise the offerings were the same, and the grain offering was the same for each animal. A kid of the goats was again included as a sin offering, “to make atonement” rather than “as a sweet aroma.” These were all added to the regular monthly offerings, as Numbers 29:6 indicates.

Offerings On The Day Of Atonement (Numbers 29:7-11)

The Day of Atonement closely followed the Feast of Trumpets. Only ten days later, it symbolizes the great work of God in Israel when, at the end of the tribulation, “they look upon Him whom they pierced” (Zech. 12:10), and they will be broken down in profound repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. This is why Israel is told, “You shall afflict your souls,” when they gathered in holy convocation, ceasing from any work (Num. 29:7).

A burnt offering was to be presented: one young bull, one ram and seven lambs in their first

year, without blemish. One kid of the goats was offered as a sin offering as well as the grain offering (v.11). These were in addition to the main offerings of the Day of Atonement.

The offerings made on the Day of Atonement as presented in Numbers 29:7-11 are described in more detail in Leviticus 16. There, Aaron was to take the blood of the sin offering into the holiest of all, and the bodies of the animals were burned without the camp. There is much benefit in prayerful comparison of the two passages.

But on that day, though the main focus was on the once yearly sin offering, the burnt offering was not to be forgotten, for in every connection God is to be glorified. This is just as true in His great work of judging sin as in the blessing of sinners.

Offerings At The Feast Of Tabernacles (Numbers 29:12-40)

The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the great blessing of God in the millennial age. Hence, there is much more in the way of offerings prescribed for this feast, which was kept up for eight days.

The feast began only five days after the Day of Atonement, for after Israel has been broken down in true repentance before God,

God cannot delay to fill their hearts with overflowing adoration of His beloved Son. The first day was to be a holy convocation. On this day the number of rams and lambs was doubled above the other feast days and the number of bulls was to be thirteen. The number thirteen falls short of 2×7 – the witness (2) of perfection (7). The reason for falling short is that the millennium is not eternity; the people of God will still have their sinful natures as well as the new nature. The tendency of this is toward decline, just as Ephesus left her first love (Rev. 2:4) and the decline of the Church has continued through her history on earth.

On the eighth day there was to be a solemn assembly with all work ceasing (Num. 29:35), a good reminder that the great blessing of the millennium is not dependent on Israel's work, but it is altogether on the grace of God. The number 8 in Scripture speaks

of a new beginning, and the millennium will indeed be a new beginning for Israel, for their joy will be overflowing in contrast to the centuries of sorrow and trouble they have seen. The offerings made every day for the eight days indicate that Israel will not cease to give honor and praise to God during that period of 1,000 years. The offerings on the eighth day (vv.36-39) were the same as on the day of the Feast of Trumpets and on the Day of Atonement.

Throughout these offerings we repeatedly see points presented as to our Lord Jesus Christ and His work. Let us be careful to give Him the first place in our lives, honoring Him in all we do and say. To Him be the glory! **GT**

Endnotes:

1. As a dry measure, it was short of 6.5 gallons (Concise Bible Dictionary).
2. A liquid measure of just over one gallon (Concise Bible Dictionary).

Numbers 28-29 tell of **Jehovah's portion** which He is to receive in the worship of His people. Needless to say, all speaks of Christ. In Christ, God has found His delight. In Leviticus there is that aspect of the different offerings by which God has met our need in Christ and His blessed work; but here Jehovah speaks of these offerings as being "My bread" (Num. 28:2). The heart of God feeds, humanly speaking, upon Christ.

—Arno C. Gaebelien, *adapted*.

Meditations

On The

Son's

Prayer

In John 17

Part 2: Introduction

by David Anderson

We read in John 17:1-3 that the Lord Jesus Christ knew that the hour¹ had arrived for Him to leave this world and depart to the Father (see 13:1). Therefore He asked for His own glorification, with the objective that He could then glorify² the Father by giving eternal life to Christian believers.

Having concluded His talk with His disciples as to His departure, the Lord “lifted up His eyes to heaven” (17:1 ESV). Heaven, His Father’s house, was His destiny out of this world. It is also

the promised dwelling place for His disciples, to which He will take them (14:2-3). The phrase “lifted up His eyes to heaven” gives an indication of His equality with the person He addressed in prayer. The very first word of His prayer was “Father” – that hallowed name of God revealed by the Son. As Son in the Godhead, the Lord Jesus can speak with the Father on equal terms. Therefore He appropriately said, “Father,” without an adjective being necessary.

The hour had come for Him, the Son (but now also as Man), to be glorified by the Father. Several times in this gospel John had already used the concept of “His hour” – the time for the Son to depart from this world to the Father. At the outset of His prayer, the hour had arrived for His and the Father’s glorification.

As always, the Son only seeks the glory of His Father in everything. When He raised Lazarus from the dead, God the Father was glorified, as was the Son – “so that the Son of God may be glorified through it” (11:4). In John

12:23 the Lord said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,” in anticipation of His death (vv.27-33). On that occasion He said, “Father, glorify Your name.” The immediate reply from heaven was, “I have glorified it [when Lazarus was raised from the dead], and I will glorify it again” (v.28).

“I will glorify it again” referred to when God raised His Son from among the dead and gave Him glory (1 Pet. 1:21). The Lord Jesus was raised by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4) and taken up, or received up, in glory (1 Tim. 3:16). There He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven (Heb. 8:1), and there the glory of God shines in His face (2 Cor. 4:6). His glory as the Son of Man will be displayed throughout the millennium (see Ps. 8).

The Father answered His Son’s request to be glorified by placing Him at His own right hand (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 8:1). It is from that exalted position that the Son is able, by the Father’s authority, to give eternal life to believers. In doing this work for the Father, the Son glorifies Him in a new way (Jn. 17:2). The message Mary was given to carry to the disciples on the resurrection morning was, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My

God and your God” (20:17). By the Spirit, they became fully aware of their true relationship with the Father from that time onwards, and they too would be able to bring glory to the Father. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples” (15:8).

John 17:3 defines what eternal life is for believers of our day. With respect to our need, we are relieved to find that eternal life is the opposite of condemnation and of perishing (3:16-18). In John 17:3 it is to know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the Sent One of the Father. So from His side God wants us to share in His life, that is, in the family, or home, life of God in eternity. Life is not only conscious existence, it is also about living relationships, especially family relationships. Ephesians 3:15 states that the Father is the person from whom every family derives its meaning.³

We have been brought to know the preeminent Father – the true Father. In John’s gospel, the adjective “true” means the ultimate reality of a thing. For example, Jesus is the true Bread from heaven (Jn. 6) and the true Vine (Jn. 15). “The true God” conveys the thought of finality in the progressive process of the revelation of God to mankind over the ages.

As the children of God (13:33), believers have a real, living relationship with the true God – the Father – through His Son. This conscious, eternal relationship with the Father and the Son is ultimate reality for us – “the eternal life” (v.3; 1 Jn. 1:2 JND). “We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding so we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and [the] eternal life” (5:20 ESV). Believers therefore live in the love of God in the conscious knowledge of divine persons and with the ability to respond to divine love.

The Lord Jesus continued His prayer to the Father in John 17:4, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave Me to do.”⁴ He was anticipating the next day when He triumphantly said, “It is finished” (19:30). The Lord had already said something like this in John 13:31-32, when He announced that God had been glorified in Himself as the Son of Man. That is, His subjection to the Father’s will, His love for His Father, His personal holiness and all of His perfections shone out at the cross. God was also glorified at the cross in that His holiness, justice and love were manifested in the one

completed sacrifice made for sin. Yes, the Father was glorified in every aspect of Christ’s life on earth – and supremely in His death, resurrection and ascension.

In John 17:6, 8 and 14, the Lord Jesus outlined the ways in which He had glorified His Father:

- He had explained the meaning of the name Father to the disciples, and
- He had given the Father’s word(s) to them.

In verse 6, the Father’s word is the truth, for the Lord said, “Your word is truth” (v.17). The Father’s words are also “the divine communications” and “the word of God in testimony” (JND footnotes, vv.8,14).

The Lord expanded in verse 5 upon His initial request to be glorified as the Son of God: “And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.” As God the Son, He rightly requested to be invested with the uncreated glory of Deity, which He had along with the Father in eternity past. At His incarnation, that glory had been veiled, but not divested (consider Phil. 2:5-8). He received this glory as He is now – the risen, ascended Man in the presence of the Father.

Notice that Jesus spoke in the first person – “Me” and “I” – as an equal. The phrases “in Your own presence” and “with You” mean “together with Yourself” or “alongside You [along with Thee, JND]” in a shared position of equal status and in that unoriginated relationship in which He ever exists, or lives, with the Father. The expression “before the world existed” confirms Jesus is the eternal Son from before the incarnation – even before the ages began!⁵ **GT**

*Look for Part 3
in next month’s edition!*

Endnotes:

1. His hour, or His time, is referred to several times in John’s gospel (2:4, 7:6,8,30, 8:20, 12:23,27, 13:1, 16:32, 17:1). Although each occurrence differs slightly

in emphasis, the overall meaning is the time for the Lord’s glorification, specifically by means of His death, followed by His resurrection and departure from this world to return to His Father (His ascension). Consider John 16:28, which says, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father.”

2. As stated in Part 1, “to glorify” is to cause the excellences of a person to be displayed so they can be seen, understood and appreciated by others.

3. See the ESV footnote on all fatherhood. More accurately, every father reflects the meaning, in some measure, of the name “the Father.”

4. Note the repeated use – ten times – of the expression “I have” (NKJV). In verse 4, the Son referred to the fact that He had glorified the Father throughout His life on earth, and finally through His death, resurrection and ascension. In verses 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 22 and 26, He referred to all that He had done for the Father with respect to the disciples.

5. “Before times eternal” is the literal translation of 2 Timothy 1:9.

He is speaking to His Father, tasting deep that bitter cup,
Yet He takes it, willing rather for our sakes to drink it up.
Oh what love! He loved me! Gave Himself, my soul, for me.

Lord, we joy, Thy toils are ended, Glad Thy suffering time is o’er,
To Thy Father’s throne ascended, there Thou liv’st to die no more.
Yes, my soul! He lives for thee, He who gave Himself for me.

—Josiah J. Hopkins (1786-1862)

THE MYSTERY

In The Death Of Our Lord

by Alan H. Crosby

A mystery scripturally is something that was concealed but is now revealed. It was not at all clear to the Old Testament saints that the Messiah, the Christ, would be the Eternal Son of God become Man, and that He would be condemned to death, crucified and resurrected for our salvation. This truth was revealed to the Lord's disciples when "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He *interpreted* to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Lk. 24:27 ESV). What was a mystery before His resurrection is now clearly revealed to us in the New Testament Scriptures.

He Was The True Prophet

We must not disregard the fact that our Lord Jesus was indeed "a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (v.19). He prophesied that He had to go to Jerusalem ... be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Mt. 16:21). According to Mark, the Lord taught that He, "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and of the scribes, and *be killed*, and after three days rise again. And

He spoke the thing openly" (8:31-32 JND, italics added).

Was the Lord a false prophet? Certainly not! But, He would have been if He were not killed, for that is what He prophesied. He also truthfully said, "I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again" (Jn. 10:17-18 ESV).

Both of these seemingly contradictory statements are true – He was killed, and He let go of His life voluntarily. The physical and spiritual things He endured on the cross were enough to kill Him if He were only a human being, but they could not have killed Him if He, being God the Son, had not allowed them to do so.

He Had A Human Body And He Was God

He was a perfect human being, with all the consequence of having a human spirit, soul and body. He became hungry (Mt. 4:2). He became thirsty (Jn. 19:28). He



became sleepy, and He slept (Mk. 4:38). These were the natural results of lack of food, drink and sleep. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of the Lord as a man, foretold in Isaiah 53 that His body would be wounded, bruised and cut up by stripes during the scourging and the crucifixion (Compare to Mt. 27:26-50).

However, the Lord was also the Creator (Col. 1:16), and thus He had the divine power to remedy any injuries to His body or to prevent them from ever occurring. We see this power being used to prevent the ordinary decomposing of His dead, human body. Regarding this, David prophesied, “For You will not ... let Your Holy One see corruption (Ps. 16:10), and Peter said, “ ... nor [has] His flesh seen corruption” (Acts 2:31 JND).

He Lay Down His Life

Using all their ingenuity, men devised crucifixion to cause a certain, slow and painful death. However, our Lord had the power to nullify all that would ordinarily cause death until He chose to die. Thus His death was entirely voluntary – but it was not suicide.

God had justly decreed that the penalty for sin would be death. Therefore, everyone faces death, “for all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23). But, because of His love for men, women and children, and by

His grace, God willed that the Son “might taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9 ESV). Then, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isa. 53:6 JND), “Jehovah ... laid upon Him the iniquity of us all”!

Our Lord allowed what men did to His body and what God did to His soul-spirit, in bearing our iniquity, to cause His death. Matthew wrote that at the time of His death, He “*yielded up His spirit*” (27:50 ESV, italics added), and John said, “He gave up His spirit” (19:30). By not retaining His human spirit, He died, for “the body apart from the spirit is dead” (Jas. 2:26). He had the power to retain His spirit, but He chose not to use that power. In short, He laid down His life!

Why Did He Choose To Die?

He chose to die, Scripture says, “for the joy that was set before Him [when He] endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). Strange as it may seem, somehow the result of the physical suffering of crucifixion and the spiritual suffering of being separated from God resulted in joy for Him. There is no joy in the God-head in justly condemning unrepentant sinners, but “there is joy in heaven ... over one sinner who repents” (Lk. 15:10). Our Lord had chosen to be “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn.

1:29) – and He takes away all the sin of all who will repent!

An explanation for this mystery may be found in the fact that He has a very special relationship with the believers of this dispensation, or period of time. Figuratively, we are like a wife to Him; we are His body, and He loves us. Scripture says, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her ... so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such

thing ... because we are members of His body” (Eph. 5:25-30).

What Should Be Our Response?

Like Paul, we should tell Jews and Gentiles “that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance” (Acts 26:20). This includes partaking, properly and with understanding, of the bread and wine “in remembrance” of Him in the manner which He instituted for us (Lk. 22:19-20). **GT**



I am using this opportunity to appreciate you for what God has used the ministry to do in my life and family. – *Abuja, Nigeria*

We give thanks to the Lord for your inspired messages which give more and more meditations on Scripture, and we are prayerfully sharing them in weekly Bible study meetings and other meetings. I praise God for the writers who prayerfully prepare the messages. – *Andhra Pradesh, India*

Since late last year we have been using the “Wisdom of Proverbs” Discover series (Dec. ’11-Apr. ’14) for Sunday School in our Ifako assembly, and many are finding it profitable. – *Lagos, Nigeria*

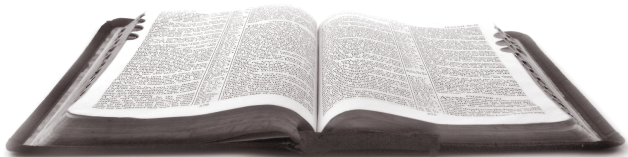
Thanks for the regular dispatch of *Grace & Truth Magazines*. My words fail to describe the worth of each issue. It requires time and seriousness to study each article along with my Bible. The January 2017 *Feature* article “Life With Eternal Worth” appeals to me to meet the challenges I face in life with the Lord’s help and power. – *Bangalore, India*



The purpose of this column is to help you study the Bible on your own. Look up the Bible references and think about them before writing your answers. Do not send this study to us, as this is not a correspondence course.

The Bible – Its Writers

by Alan Groth



Peter, our next writer, lived with the Lord Jesus for over three years and continued to serve Him the rest of his life. Much is written about Simon Peter in the Gospels, Acts, Galatians and 1 and 2 Peter. Let's take a look at some Scriptures about him.

Read John 1:35-42; Luke 4:31,38-39, 5:1-11, 6:12-16

1. Who brought Simon to Jesus? _____
2. What name did Jesus give Simon? _____
3. What do we learn about Simon in Luke 4? _____
4. In Luke 5 whose boat did Jesus get into? _____
5. What was Simon? What was he going to be? _____
6. When Jesus left the boat, who followed Him? _____
7. In Luke 6 what did Jesus call the twelve He chose? _____

Read Matthew 14:22-33

1. To whom did Peter want to go? _____

Read Matthew 16:13-28, 17:1-8

1. Jesus asked the disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" What was Simon Peter's response? _____
2. Did Peter like what Jesus said would happen to Him in Jerusalem? _____

3. What happened to Jesus on the high mountain? _____

4. What did the voice out of the cloud say? _____

Read Matthew 26:31-46,56,58,69-75

1. What did Jesus say Peter would do? _____

2. When Jesus was praying, what were the disciples doing? _____

Read John 21:1-21

1. Who went fishing? _____

2. After breakfast, how many times did Jesus ask Peter if he loved Him? _____

3. What was Peter commissioned to do? _____

Read Acts 1:1-14, 2:1-5,14-39

1. Describe some of the things Peter experienced. _____

Read Acts 10:24-48

1. Who called Peter to his house? _____

2. Where was Peter staying? _____

3. What happened to those who heard Peter? _____

Read Acts 12:1-17

1. Who delivered Peter out of prison? _____

2. Where did he go after he was delivered? _____

Read 1 Peter 5:10-12; 2 Peter 1:12-15, 3:14-18

1. Why did Peter write his first letter? _____

2. Who shared with Peter that he would die? _____

3. What was Peter's final exhortation? _____

In our next study we will learn more about the Bible and its writers.

Galatians

by Leslie M. Grant



“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

—Galatians 6:14 NKJV

Galatians was written to the assemblies in the region of Galatia – a name possibly meaning “milky.” The letter is an earnest rebuke against the evil doctrine that works of the law form the standard for a believer’s walk and conduct. While being saved by grace through faith, the believers there had added law as the principle of maintaining their salvation. This mixture is abominable, or detestable, to God, the God of *all* grace.

The apostle Paul showed that the blessed person of Christ, not law, is the standard of a believer’s walk, and the Spirit of God is the power for a walk with God. The cross of Christ is presented powerfully as cutting off all expectation of *good* coming from man under law. By that cross, the believer is crucified to the world,

cut off therefore from the very realm in which legality is the ruling principle. He is seen now connected with a “new creation” (v.15), walking no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

The death of Christ is seen in chapter 4 as our redemption from the bondage of law, that we should be brought into the dignity and liberty of *sonship* before God. This is a position that could never have been known in the Old Testament, but it is true of all saints in this dispensation of grace. As verses 3-7 show, we are sons of God by *adoption* – by being divinely *placed* in that position.

How needful Galatians is to preserve us from selfishness, from confidence in the flesh and from the innumerable evils that are brought about by a legal attitude. **GT**

This column is taken from the book “The Bible, Its 66 Books In Brief.” It is available for purchase from Believer’s Bookshelf USA (www.bbusa.org) and Believers Bookshelf Canada (www.bbcan.org).

Q&A

What are the differences between paradise, Abraham's bosom, heaven and the Father's house? And what are the differences between sheol, hades, hell and the lake of fire?

These are *not* eight different places or states of being. Instead, they are names for two very different sets of destinations – either one of which every person *will* reach after his death. There is a certain overlap within each set, but the sets are absolutely distinct from each other. Each member of the first set refers to a place or a condition of absolute bliss, while each of the second set is just the opposite: absolute torment. Let's look briefly at these terms.

- **Paradise.** This is a term of Oriental, probably Persian, origin, meaning a park or place of pleasure. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek uses this term in reference to the garden of Eden, the place God made for man's enjoyment. In the New Testament, the Lord used it in speaking to the repentant thief on the cross (Lk. 23:43), Paul used it in describing his amazing experience of being caught up into the

third heaven (2 Cor. 12:4), and the Lord used it in the letter to the angel of the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:7).

- **Abraham's bosom.** This is a term commonly used by the Jews at the time the Lord lived on earth to denote, or indicate, the part of sheol where the souls of the righteous were taken after death. They believed that Abraham, the friend of God, their forefather, was in the highest place of bliss. The Lord used this well-known term for heaven when He spoke of the contrasts between the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. He thus made it clear that while both rich and poor, believers and unbelievers die, their future after death is not the same.

- **Heaven.** In God's Word, heaven is always viewed as the contrast to earth. The heavens are usually viewed in one of three ways:

1. The atmosphere in which birds fly and rain falls;
2. Outer space where are the

sun, moon and stars; and
3. The heaven of heavens, where the throne of God is and from where our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, came down to earth. Heaven in Scripture is regarded as God's dwelling place and the source of all blessing. It is the destination of believers after death or the rapture, though usually other terms are used in describing it.

• **The Father's House.** The Lord Jesus used this expression in John 14 when speaking of heaven to His disciples on the night of His betrayal. This term shows us the intimacy and love connected with our place in heaven. In the Father's house are many dwelling places, He assured His disciples, and He was going to prepare a place there for them – and us. The dwelling places were there, but they were not yet ready. He would prepare them by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, ascending back into heaven and taking His place at God's right hand. Because He is there, we shall be there also. Now we can call God our Father, something believers in the Old Testament were never able to do. Such is the intimacy we now enjoy with God through the work accomplished by our Lord Jesus.

• **Sheol.** Such intimacy was completely unknown to believers in the Old Testament. Some, such as Job in chapter 19:25-27 of the book called by his name and David in 2

Samuel 12:22-23, by faith gave expression to a confidence that went beyond any knowledge they had of what lay beyond death. Ecclesiastes makes plain that even the wisest of men at that time had no real understanding of the future after death. The bodies of the dead were laid in graves, and souls and spirits were spoken of somewhat vaguely as being in sheol. Not having any clear teaching about sheol meant that death was generally faced with a measure of dread. Now that the Lord Jesus has related the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, we have clear teaching that sheol had two compartments – one for the righteous, the other for the unrighteous – with a great gulf that could not be crossed between them. Whether men realize it or not, God has always differentiated between those who are His and those who seek to live independently of Him.

• **Hades.** Hades is the Greek New Testament equivalent of sheol in the Hebrew Old Testament: the place or condition of the soul and spirit after death in contrast to the grave, the place where the dead body was laid. It had unpleasant connotations, or implications. The torment of the unsaved, wicked individual begins immediately after his death even though his soul and spirit are separated from his body. Every part of the wicked person

constantly feels this torment. The person feels he is tormented in flame. He remembers his life, with the good things and opportunities he had to believe God. He is conscious too of the finality of his torment, being eternally separated from God.

• **Hell.** At present, contrary to the thinking of poets and of most people today, hell is still unpopulated. This place of eternal separation from God was not created for mankind to begin with, but for Satan and his angels. Yet, people who reject or neglect the great salvation God freely offers them will have their part with Satan there, eternally separated from God, who is holy. The unsaved dead will be raised after the fiery end of the huge army Satan will muster up after being released from the imprisonment he will experience during the millennium – the coming 1,000-year-long rule of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to Revelation 20, this army of Satan’s will march toward the camp of the saints of that day and the beloved city. But, just as the military force approaches, it will be consumed by fire sent out of heaven from God. This is to be followed by the wicked dead being raised and judged at the great white throne, before they are cast into hell forever.

• **Lake of Fire.** This is one of the descriptions of hell given to us in

Scripture. In fact, this lake is said to burn with fire and brimstone, or sulfur. Sulfur burns with a dark flame that is almost purple in color, and it is most painful if it gets onto one’s skin. Unsaved people sometimes speak jokingly about hell as though they would have a good time there with all their friends. Others will angrily tell someone else to go to hell. The Lord tells us that hell is unquenchable, and it is a place of outer darkness, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. This shows us that there is no such thing as fellowship with others in hell. Worst of all, it is a place of eternal banishment from the presence of God. The Greek word for hell is *Gehenna*, a name derived from the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem where apostate Jews once burned their children as sacrifices to idols, and where later the garbage of Jerusalem was burned in a fire that was kept burning continually.

This lake of fire is a place to avoid by all means! God did not intend for mankind, whom He placed at the head of His creation, to go there. Rather, He gave His only-begotten Son to die for us on Calvary that we might be saved and enjoy the bliss of the Father’s house forever. Choose today. Choose wisely; accept God’s offer of free salvation through His Son Jesus Christ!

—Answered by Eugene P. Vedder Jr.

NO OTHER WAY

There was no other way and no other person by which Almighty God could save you from the just penalty of your sins (Acts 4:12; 1 Jn. 4:9-10).

The Lord Jesus Christ is God and Man in one blessed person. As eternal Son of God He knew God's holy and righteous requirements, which were violated by our sins. As a perfect Man (spirit, soul and body), He was qualified to pay for all man's sins of spirit, soul and body.

GOD'S APPROVAL

God approved of Christ's mighty work on the cross, and He showed it by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His own right hand in heaven (Acts 5:30). Christ Jesus is there now – a living, loving Man, with the scars still in His hands and feet, which He received when He died for our sins (Jn. 20:27).

As you read this, He looks down from heaven at you and He knows the thoughts and motives of your heart. He knows what you think about your sins and about Him. He wants to be your Savior.

WHY DID JESUS DIE?

He died for your sins! You must

realize that your many sins caused Him to die. And just one sin is enough to shut you out of God's perfect heaven forever. But you can receive God's forgiveness simply by confessing your sins to Him and believing on Him as your substitute (Rom. 10:9).

Though you are a stranger to me, you are not a stranger to God; He knows all about you. Has the Lord Jesus Christ personally saved you from the penalty and power of your sins? Are you sure of it, based on the Bible? If you refuse Him now as Savior you will eventually stand before Him as your Judge, but then it will be forever too late (Jn. 5:22; Rev. 20:11-15)!

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Jn. 3:18).

“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin” (1 Jn. 3:5). “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation” (Heb. 2:3). **GT**

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Why Did Jesus Die?

by F. Wurst

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” ~John 3:16 NKJV

WHY WE DIE

You and I die because we are sinners. We have come under God’s righteous sentence of death and judgment (Rom. 3:23, 6:23; Heb. 9:27).

DEATH HAD NO CLAIM ON JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven (Jn. 6:41). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of Mary, a virgin (Mt. 1:18,20,23). He did not have a sinful nature as we have, and He never sinned (1 Jn. 3:5; 1 Pet. 2:22). Therefore, death had no claim on Him.

He willingly let wicked men crucify Him at Calvary (Jn. 6:38, 10:17-18). If He had wanted to come down from the cross, nothing could have prevented Him – not the nails or the power of the Roman Empire. It was love for your precious, undying soul that brought the Lord Jesus Christ down from heaven, took Him to that shameful cross, and held Him there until He had finished the work of redemption (19:30). *—continued on inside back cover*

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