"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah (Christ) to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He (Jesus) explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:25-27). Discover the master theme of the Bible with these meditations centered around Jesus Christ.

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Introduction to Christ in the Old Testament

Over thirty years ago I discovered the supreme joy of the two men walking with their unknown guest along the road from Jerusalem to Emaus. That "stranger" said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah (Christ) to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:25-27). The two travelers invited Jesus into their home for a meal that evening. As He took the bread and blessed it, He began giving it to them, "And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight" (v. 31). I pray that your response will be like mine and the two men when they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us when He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" My desire is this will be a fresh new beginning of an intimate journey with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is the key to our understanding the Scriptures. The entire Bible finds its meaning and explanation in the redemption provided by Jesus Christ. It progressively unfolds the theme of redemption from Genesis to Revelation. Shadows, types, and foregleams of the great doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Christ are revealed from the opening pages. The meaning of any single passage of Scripture is always determined and governed by the larger context of redemption through Jesus Christ.

When Jesus Christ went to the cross, died for our sins, and rose from the dead, He provided eternal salvation for all who would accept Him by faith. Each individual in the Old Testament who was saved, was saved by trusting in the provision that God would make when Christ came and died as their substitute. The ceremonies and sacrifices pointed to a future day when God would make sure all His promises in that one person. In the fullness of time we know that person was God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Those who were saved were saved by faith in the coming of His death as their sacrifice.

We need to read the Old Testament with the expectation that we will encounter Jesus Christ there. The Old Testament is Christ centric. Christ is predicted and anticipated in the Old and proclaimed in the New.

There is continuity between the two testaments. The New Testament is full of references to the Old. The Old lays a foundation for the New. Even a casual reading of the Scriptures reveals God's progressive revelation of the message of redemption that culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Ultimately the Old must be read through the light of the New. The Old Testament reaches its fulfillment in the New. We can understand the Old Testament more clearly through the light of the New Testament.

It is imperative that we first consider the teaching of the Old Testament in its historical and grammatical context. What was the author saying to his original audience, and how did they understand the message? What we must not do is read into the Old Testament what was never intended by the Holy Spirit as the
author of all Scripture. At the same time, we must not over look the clear New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament passages.

We also need to keep in mind the institutions and ceremonies of the Old Testament were powerless to save the souls of men. They were devised as types of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. They pictured the work Christ would do in His death for our sins. Jesus is the one and only perfect priest who dealt with our sins in His perfect sacrifice of Himself. The Tabernacle and later the Temple typified the place and manner in which the LORD God met with His people and dealt with their need of a redeemer. Each of the sacrifices and offerings, feasts and festivals dealt with redemption of God's people and how they should live as redeemed people. Thus, the entire Bible is the story of God's redeeming love.

Just like on the road to Emaus, Jesus comes to our aid to help us understand the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our problem is in the heart, not the head. We have the evidence. It's all there. Jesus rose from the dead. He's alive! When we participate in the learning process, He opens the eyes of our minds to recognize Him and causes our hearts to continue to burn within us. Even so, let our hearts burn with conviction of who You are and joyful submission to your sovereignty, Lord Jesus!

Later on the same day, Jesus rose from the dead. He told His disciples, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Again Luke tells us, "Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things'" (Luke 24:44-48). Now we are, too!

Dr. John R. Sampey observed, "A type may properly be defined as a person, institution, or event in the old dispensation which was designed to prefigure a corresponding person, institution, or event in the new." In these devotions and meditations, we will keep our focus on the coming of Jesus Christ as the redeemer of lost mankind.

Here are some basics principles to keep in mind as we think through some of these great pictures of Christ in the Old Testament.

○ In typology, the physical object or person is often used to represent a spiritual truth.

○ Look for the consistent use of the specific symbol or type in the Old Testament. It must be an illustration of and consistent with New Testament truth. It cannot represent one thing in the Old and something unrelated in the New.

○ Keep in mind that the Old Testament teaches the same truth as the New Testament. It is a fuller unfolding of the truth in the New.
o Limit the topic under consideration to the context of the Scripture passage. Don't expect the type to cover every subject of theology.

o Seek to discover the meaning of the details in the passage, but don't expect every detail to fit. Every analogy, by its very nature, falls short of the full reality. Don't force details to emerge from a passage that aren't there.

o Set aside the superficial speculative interpretations and look for the basic meaning of the symbol. What does the passage say, not what do you want it to say.

o Determine an accurate definition of any type or symbol by identifying interpretational constants that fit all the uses of that type in Scripture. For example, "lion" symbolizes power, whether applied to Satan as "a roaring lion" or to Christ as the "lion of the tribe of Judah."

Keep your heart tender toward God and humbly respect and submit to the teaching of His Word.

Like the apostle Paul, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:8-11).
Genesis 1:1

In the Beginning . . .

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us," wrote Tozer. "Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, 'What comes into your mind when you think about God?' we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man" (A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy, p. 9).

"In the beginning . . . " Those are the most sublime words in the Bible. Imagine with me for a few moments Moses telling the story of creation to the Israelites. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." He knew it because of the self-revelation of God to him. "The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness" (vv. 2-4).

Those opening words in the book of Genesis tells us about Moses' view of creation and the sovereignty of the Creator over all of His creation. The God who created Israel also created the entire world and everything in it. Since God is before all things and created all things, there can be no idols or false gods. They don't exist. The LORD God of Israel is the only God. There is none other. Not only is He the Creator of all life, but He is also the God who redeems fallen man and enters into covenants with him.

The apostle John contemplated creation and wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:1-5).

Substitute the name "Christ" in the place of "Word" in the above paragraph and you get to the very heart of John's believe about God. In the beginning was the second person of the God-head, Christ, and the Christ, was with God, and the Christ, was God. Christ was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John takes us back to a time before the time of "in the beginning" of Moses. He is speaking of eternity before time was created. John takes us into the mind of the eternal Triune God. He begins by telling us that Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. God came to us in the incarnation. The words and works of Jesus, the Logos, are those of the God-Man. Christ, the Logos did not at some point in the past come into being. God the Father and the Son have always been in existence and were not created. God the Father and God the Son have existed eternally in fellowship with one another.

The term logos is applied to Christ exclusively in John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13 and I John 1:1. There is a possible personification of "the Word of God" in Hebrews 4:12.
Years later, the Apostle Paul expressed his convictions about the Creator when he wrote to the philosophers at Colossae. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:15-20). Not only did Jesus create all things, but also He is the super-glue that holds all things together. The personal pre-existence of Christ is taught by the apostle Paul (II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6f; Col. 1:17). These words of Paul are parallel to the logos passage in John 1:1–18 and to Hebrews 1:1–4 as well as Philippians 2:5–11.

Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). A. T. Robertson observed, "Jesus is the very stamp of God the Father as He was before the Incarnation (John 17:5) and is now (Phil. 2:5–11; Heb. 1:3) . . . the one who sees Jesus has seen God (John 14:9)."

Paul tells us something else about his thoughts on God incarnate. "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority . . ." (Col. 2:8-10). Lightfoot said, "In Christ dwells the whole pleroma (fullness, plenitude), the entire fullness of the Godhead . . . " Kenneth Wuest captures the pregnant idea of verse seven when he translates, "Because in Him there is continuously and permanently at home all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily fashion."

Again John would say, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:14, 18).

Perhaps a quote from the old Christian mystic A. W. Tozer can bring together the convictions of these three Bible saints. Tozer writes in The Knowledge of the Holy, page 31:

. . . God cannot so divide Himself that one Person works while another is inactive. In the Scriptures the three Persons are shown to act in harmonious unity in all the mighty works that are wrought throughout the universe.

In the Holy Scriptures the work of creation is attributed to the Father (Gen. 1:1), to the Son (Col. 1:16), and to the Holy Spirit (Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30). The incarnation is shown to have been accomplished by the three Persons in full accord (Luke 1:35), though only the Son became flesh to dwell among us. At Christ's baptism the Son came up out of the water, the Spirit descended upon Him and the Father's voice spoke from heaven (Matt. 3:16, 17). Probably the most beautiful description of the work of atonement is found in Hebrews 9:14, where it is stated that Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God; and there we behold the three Persons operating together.

The resurrection of Christ is likewise attributed variously to the Father (Acts 2:32), to the Son (John 10:17, 18), and to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:4). The salvation of the individual man is shown by the apostle
Peter to be the work of all three Persons of the Godhead (1 Peter 1:2), and the *indwelling* of the Christian man's soul is said to be by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-23).
The Last Adam

The significance of Adam as a type doesn't become apparent to us until we see him contrasted with the Last Adam.

Jesus is never called second, third or fourth Adam. In the Bible, He is always the Last Adam because there could never be another one like Him. He is the only one of a unique kind.

"God after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . . " (Hebrews 1:1–3).

Even though he was the head of God's creation, Adam failed. With his disobedience he brought depravity on his whole family and to every descendent down through the ages. We inherited sin and death from old Adam. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . " (Romans 5:12).

In old Adam we all die; however, in the Last Adam, we have eternal life so that we will never die. Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26).

The Apostle Paul brings out the contrast vividly when he wrote, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:20). "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many" (Romans 5:15). "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

Then he adds, "through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men" (5:18).

The first Adam was tempted and failed the test, and in him, we all continue to sin and die. The Last Adam was tempted as was the first, but remained sinless, and lived a perfect life of righteousness. Jesus Christ is the only " . . . One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15b).

The first Adam began with everything provided for him in the Garden of Eden and he lost everything. The Last Adam began with nothing in a stable and ended with everything. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).
The first Adam was commissioned to "be fruitful" replenish the earth. The Last Adam came to "bring many sons to glory" and to fill heaven with redeemed people known as His Bride.

The first Adam lived a long fruitful life to accomplish his destiny. The Last Adam was born to die to accomplish God's eternal purpose.

The first Adam was given a bride as a helpmate. The Last Adam had to purchase His Bride, at the cost of His very life. The bride of the first Adam was painless since he was placed in a deep sleep. However, the Bride of the Last Adam was purchased through the deep sleep of His death on the cross of Calvary.

The first Adam lost his bride through age, disease and death. The Last Adam will never be separated from His Bride.

Through the first Adam's disobedience all mankind were all made to be sinners, however, through the Last Adam "many were made righteous" (Romans 5:19). That righteousness that we have received as believers is His gift to us. It is not because we merited it, or earned it. It is ours because He has adopted us and placed us into His family. He is now the head of our family, not old Adam.

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed the Garden of Eden as a perfect paradise; however; as God's redeemed children, we have been made to sit with Christ in heavenly places.

Claim your inheritance today by faith in Jesus Christ. Adam is no longer the head of your family; now Jesus is the head of your family. Therefore, live like you are a member of the family. Don't forget to whose family you belong!
The Seed of the Woman

The salvation of every soul begins with God. As soon as Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, we hear the Shepherd's voice calling out for His lost sheep, "Adam, where are you?" It is the Father searching for the prodigal (Genesis 3:8–13).

It is in the context of judgment after the Fall that the LORD God curses the serpent. Adam and Eve hear God speaking to the "shining one." It is not a direct promise to Adam and Eve, but a word of judgment to Satan (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). He says to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Gen. 3:15).

There will be an undying opposition between Satan and the generations to follow. No doubt Adam and Eve were so impressed with the message of hope that they reinforced it in the minds of their children and their children passed it own from generation to generation. Then came the day centuries later when Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit penned this great promise against the darkest day in human history.

The promise of salvation was given before anyone died physically. Here is the first word of grace in the Bible.

At the time of the giving of this promise no child had been born to Adam and Eve. Probably with the birth of every male child there was the hope that he would be the one who would overthrow the evil that had been unleashed on the new world.

The promised one will "bruise you on the head." There will be a head wound. The idea is there will be a deathblow. Satan would have this eternal dread hanging over him that with the birth of every male child this could be the very one who would be his end.

In the battle, Satan would "bruise him on the heel." The promised seed would suffer, but he would not suffer a destructive blow.

It is true that we do not have a great deal of information at the on set of this promise in Genesis. Hindsight is great for the sincere student! We have the advantage of looking back over time and seeing the One person who fulfilled this growing hope in the heart of sinful man.

Jesus Christ went to the cross and died on our behalf to crush Satan (Hebrews 2:9–15).

Satan was crushed at Calvary. He was defeated when Jesus rose from the dead. The final blow will be the submission of Satan to Jesus Christ when Jesus returns in glory (Revelation 20:1–15).

The Apostle Paul saw this great promise being fulfilled in the salvation and sanctification of God's people. He alludes to this promise in Romans 16:20, "And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." The word for "crush" is literally to rub together and so
to shatter, to crush, to trample underfoot, break in pieces by crushing, "to grind," "to crush," "to smash," "to break," "to destroy." Paul reminds believers to draw daily strength from the blessed promise of final victory over Satan. We are not on the loosing team! The image of smashing Satan in Romans 16:20 (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 91:13) suggests both present victory over the powers of darkness and the imminent eschatological destruction of Satan.

God uses some strange words when He pronounced the undying opposition between Satan and the woman. He describes it as "between your seed and her seed . . ." (Gen. 3:15).

It is impossible to see the fulfillment of this promise without reflecting on and seriously considering Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 1:30–35. It is completely impossible without a miracle from God. Ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve, the sin nature has been transmitted from parent to child from generation to generation. We are all born in sin, and this included Joseph and Mary. As King David reflected on his sin nature he concluded, we are all "shapen in iniquity" (Psalm 51:5). We sin because we are sinners by nature. Mary was a sinner born to sinful parents who came form sinful parents. If Jesus had received a corrupt sinful nature from either Joseph or Mary, He could not have been our sinless substitute dying for our sins. He would have been in the need of a redeemer like all other sinful men.

How did Jesus then have a sinless nature? Mary's hymen was broken from within. She was a virgin. Mary knew this when she questioned, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (Luke 1:34; cf. Matt. 1:23; Gal. 4:4; I Tim. 2:15). The angel explained, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary. Luke uses the figure of a cloud, the symbol of divine presence coming upon Mary. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and overshadowed her with His power, through which she became pregnant. The overshadowing presence of God causes Mary to become pregnant. It was a miracle.

Jesus was born of God, not by humans. The entire operation from the creation in the fetus, the daily development in the womb for nine normal months was the work of the Holy Spirit.

Because He was the "seed of the woman," Jesus was God Incarnate. He was God–man. He was human just like you and me, but he was not fallen sinful humanity. His humanity and divinity were so woven together that you could not have seen the difference except when His deity shown forth at the Transfiguration. The Apostle Paul said, great is the mystery of the incarnation. I Timothy 3:16.

The virgin birth points back to the promise in the protoevangelium or the first glimmer of the gospel of redemption.

For further study spend some time reflecting on Christ as the fulfillment of the promise of the "seed of the woman" in Matthew 1:18; Galatians 3:16, 19; 4:4; Genesis 12:7; II Samuel 7:8, 12; Romans 1:1, 3; 16:20

The undying opposition is further seen in the bruising or crushing of Satan's head in Genesis 3:21; Luke 1:26–35; John 8:44; Matthew 1:18; Isaiah 53; Galatians 3:16, 19; John 19:30; Revelation 20:10.

Dr. Stigers writes, "Genesis is the record of God's work of deliverance from the corruption of original sin resulting from the Fall . . .. God's redemptive work began with Gen. 3:15."
Dr. Merill C. Tenny says, "It may be believed that resurrection faith is at the center of the paradox of the Savior-man. In the crushing of the head of the serpent, deliverance was promised: and in order to effect that deliverance, the redeemer had to be able to conquer death." He adds, "How could Christ (the seed of the woman) take upon Himself the consequences of the serpent's sting and yet live? Resurrection seems to be the answer."

Death symbolized the wounding of the heel by Satan and takes place before the smashing of the head of Satan by the seed of the woman. The wounding appears to be the death on the cross, since Christ identified His executioners as the seed of the serpent. Jesus said, "You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him . . . " (Jn. 8:44).

This preceding death makes mandatory the resurrection of the seed of the woman to perform the smashing of the serpent's head.

This promise was no doubt the cause of Abraham greeting the "day of Christ" with glad assurance in John 8:54).

Genesis 3:15 is the first shining light on the horizon of eternal life. It is the root of Abraham's obedience to the Lord to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Why else would he make such a sacrifice if he did not have the hope before him that God would raise the son of the promise from the dead? Abe probably believed the seed of the woman was the promise of a seed through Isaac. Hebrews 11:19, Abraham "considered that God is able to raise men even from the dead; from which he also received him back as a type." Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad."

Genesis is more than a story. It is the record of God's work on behalf of the redeemed. It is the history of God's redemptive work.

Rom. 16:20, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." That crushing certainly includes all the labor of Jesus the Messiah. The hope of the resurrection is as old as sinful men and is mighty to support them in all their pilgrimages to heaven. Dr. Harold Stigers, "Gen. 3:15 has become the most important verse in all the Bible." The central message of the whole Bible, old and new covenants, are the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The greatest commentary on Gen. 3:15 is John 3:16.

No doubt, the "seed of the woman" is referring to the virgin birth of Christ. The virgin born conquers death, hell and the grave. Christ will give the deathblow to Satan when He returns.
The tragic story of man's disobedience is told in Genesis chapter three. Adam and Eve were warned out of the loving heart of the LORD God. Immediately after they disobeyed God's command, they both realized they were guilty. Adam and Eve tried to cover their guilt and shame from God, but they chose a poor cover up.

God, however, chose skins to cover Adam and Eve (3:21). "And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them."

Throughout the Scriptures, Garments are symbols of righteousness; either God's all sufficient righteousness or man's self-made righteousness. The prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 61:10,

I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

The prophet also speaks of self–righteousness in the following statement. "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6). " I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was like a robe and a turban" (Job 29:14).

The coats of skin with which the Lord clothed Adam and Eve represent righteousness provided by Him in which they could stand in His holy presence. These coats of skin are a type of what God provided for us in the imputation of His righteousness through Jesus Christ. Behind those garments, that God made for Adam and Eve has been sacrifice and death. No doubt, God had given instructions of some kind about sacrifice. We do not have any exact word regarding this instruction; however, from the context of chapters three and four in comparison with the book of Hebrews I thank we can accept here an incipient idea of the sacrifices which will follow in the Hebrew Scriptures. Since a life had to be sacrificed before Adam and Eve could have been clothed with "coats of sins", there was a substitutionary death. God must always provide adequate covering for man to stand before Him clothed in righteousness. Only in Christ is man ever properly clothed.

E. J. Young, a Hebrew scholar writes, "It would also appear that this act of God in the taking of animal life laid the foundation for animal sacrifice." In this passage we see the pattern for all salvation history. God
took a sacrificial animal (probably a lamb), slew it before the eyes of Adam and Eve and wrapped the skins about their naked bodies. No doubt, at that time, God gave them instructions about sacrifice and covering of sins. God laid down an eternal, divine principle from which there is no deviation.

Salvation is of grace. The animal was God's gift and not the work of man. The Lord furnished the skins to cover Adam and Eve. They did nothing, absolutely nothing to satisfactorily cover themselves. The only sacrifice God will accept will be His work and His gift. "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." God did it all! That is the way grace operates.

The animal would be an innocent substitute. It was an innocent victim. God could not obtain the skins of the substitute without putting it to death and shedding its blood. The Hebrew word for "garments" or coats of skins signifies a complete covering from head to foot. The same word is used for the high priestly robe, which covered the whole body. Adam's leaf covering was sufficient only to cover his loins. God's provision was sufficient to cover his whole body.

In the fullness of time, God provided His own perfect sacrifice to cover our sins and provide us His righteousness. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are clothed with His perfect righteousness. How tragic that we go around trusting in inadequate coverings for our sins, when only the perfect all sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ will do.

Genesis 4:4 describes the first worship service and God's acceptance of a sacrifice in worship.

The theme of the lamb begins in this passage and is developed throughout the Scriptures until the grand climax in Revelation. The great crimson thread is woven throughout the following passages: Genesis 22:8; Exodus 12; Leviticus 16; Isaiah 53; John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:26ff; I Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 5:9, 12; 6:15-17; 7:9-17; 17:14; 19:11-21; 21:7-9, 22, to name just a few.

The ultimate fulfillment is found in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Abel's offering involved the sacrifice of a lamb and with it the shedding of its blood.

God accepted Abel's offering. He rejected Cain's.

Abel brought his offering "of firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions." It was a sacrificial lamb. Cain's offering was far more attractive than Abel's was, but Abel's was what God wanted. Cain offered sacrifices that were the labor of his own hands. Abel's offering anticipated the coming of the Lamb of God. There is only one way for a sinner to approach a holy God and that is through shed blood. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). It is an echo of Leviticus 17:11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." If you have a problem with Abel's sacrifice, read what the same Jewish writer says a little later, "... Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel" (12:24). While the blood of Abel was prophetic and pointed forward to that which was to be, the blood of Jesus, on the other hand, declares the whole work of salvation is finished. The blood of Abel asked for atonement to be made, the blood of Jesus declared that the atonement had been made (Genesis 4:9–10). Abel's testimony is recorded for us in Hebrews 11:4. It says, "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks."
In the fullness of time, the LORD God sent His Son Jesus Christ to make atonement for sin once for all. What begins as a small ray of light in Genesis shins forth in full noonday sun in the Gospels. Jesus died for our sins, yours and mine. God made Him sin for us in order that we might become the righteous in God's sight. Read I Corinthians 5:21 and I Peter 1:18–21.

How did Abel know about animal sacrifices? God made Adam and Eve "coats of skin" (3:21). We cannot read that without seeing behind those coats there had been sacrifice and death. In addition, behind that fact some instruction had been given, some method declared some way indicated by which they were told to worship Him. Worship demands the approach based upon sacrifice. We can never come to God to worship save by way of the Cross. God accepted Christ's offering of Himself for our sins. There is no other way for us to come to God. Are you clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ?
God's Eternal Purpose:
Redeemed by the Lamb

Like a beautiful piece of crimson thread woven through a tapestry is the theme of the Lamb of God in the Bible.

The message of redemption begins in the heart of a loving God even before the first couple was created. The cross was there in the heart of God before human history began. The cross of Christ was no afterthought in God's plan of redemption.

The Prospect of a Lamb for Redemption begins as an incipient idea in Genesis 4:3–7 and grows through the remainder of the Bible. The concept of a required lamb is planted in the account of the first act of worship. Abel evidently brought a lamb because of previously given divine instruction.

So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.

The New Testament commentary on Abel is found in Hebrews 11:4. "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks." True Cain had an attitude problem, but it may have included his ideas on worship and way of approaching God apart from His revelation. When we worship God, we always come by the Lamb of God slain as propitiation. Clearly after Abel's sacrifice, man is always seen bringing the animal as a sacrifice.


Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

The dominant idea in the whole experience is summed up in the words, "God will provide Himself the lamb." After seeing God provide the required lamb, Abraham named the place Yahweh-jireh, "Yahweh will provide." The LORD God did just that at a Calvary.

The Protection Provided by the Redeeming Lamb is evident in the Passover lamb. The lamb had to be appropriated by faith. It had to be slain and the blood applied to each home. The father of each household was required to take an unblemished one-year-old lamb and kill it. "Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (Exodus 12:7). Moses explains the reason for the sacrifice. "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will
strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (vv. 12–13). With the application of the blood of the lamb to the lintel and doorposts, the household was protected. "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you" (v. 23). In order to receive the protection, the lamb had to be slain and appropriated by faith.

God still comes our way and says in effect, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (v. 13). The lamb had to be slain, and man had to trust in God's provision of that lamb.

**The Perfect Lamb for Redemption** is emphasized throughout the book of Leviticus. The lamb must always be a lamb "without blemish." It must be perfect in its character to remove sin and guilt. The priestly handbook made it clear, "it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it" (Leviticus 22:21b).

Every sacrifice in the Old Testament anticipated the true and perfect sacrifice which the Lamb of God would one day offer. They were shadows of the coming perfect sacrifice for sin. Christ is the end of all these sacrifices. These sacrifices were a witness to the people that they were sinners and could be saved only by substitutionary death offered in their behalf. The worshipper testified that he lived only by virtue of the slain victim in his stead. The continual sacrifice of animals testified that the blood of animals could not take away sin. It was a promise, prophecy and pledge that God would accomplish it with His own Lamb. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22) is a commentary on Leviticus 17:11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."

All sacrifices were mere shadows of the sacrifice of Christ and looked forward to it. These Old Testament sacrifices were worthless in their own right, but were accepted for the time as tokens of the future sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Hebrews 10:10–14). Once that sacrifice was offered, all other sacrifices lost their meaning and ceased to be. The infinite value of the savior's death was enough to pay the penalty for the sins of all men for all time. Hebrews 10:19–20, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh . . ."

**The Perfect Redeeming Lamb God will Provided is a Person** who was "wounded for our transgressions . . . Yahweh has laid on Him the iniquity of us all . . . He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter." Isaiah 52:13–53:12 tells us the lamb will be a person of God's choosing who will die a substitutionary death for our sins. You can find almost all of Isaiah 53 quoted somewhere in the New Testament.

**The Lamb of God is Identified as the Person Jesus Christ** by John the Baptist. All of the Old Testament lambs typified the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. John saw Jesus and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The next day John saw Him again and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (v. 36). Our sins are removed only by the sacrifice of the Lamb.

**The Lamb of God is Proclaimed as our Redeemer** in Acts 8. An Ethiopian government official was speeding his way home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. In his lap was a copy of the book of
Isaiah. As he rode along, he pondered "He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearsers is silent, so He does not open His mouth. In humiliation His judgment was taken away; who shall relate His generation? For His life is removed from the earth" (Acts 8:32–33, quoting Isaiah 53:7, 8). God sent Philip the evangelist to interpret and expound the passage for him. "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (v. 35). The Ethiopian man appropriated the provision of the Lamb of God by believing on Christ. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" was his response.

The Proof of the Precious Redeeming Lamb of God is seen in His resurrection from the dead. The apostle Peter sums up the whole message of the Lamb with these words: "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (I Peter 1:18–21).

The Preeminence of the Lamb of God as our Redeemer is the message of the book of Revelation. He will receive everlasting worship. The Lamb of God is the Lion of the tribe of Judah who reigns as the sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords for all eternity. The whole book focuses our attention on the "Lamb standing, as if slain" at the throne of God. The elders fell down before the Lamb and worshipped Him singing a new song, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth . . . saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever'" (Rev. 5:9–10, 1213). Talk about worship! The book ends in the presence of the throne of God and the Lamb. The Lamb is the Shekinah glory of God that illuminates heaven. Please don't miss the message. It is clearly taught "only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" are present in heaven worshiping Him (21:22).
Genesis 6-9

The Ark of Salvation

Depravity of the world in Noah's time (Genesis 6:1–12) is summarized for us by Moses with these words: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth" (vv. 5, 11–12).

God took the initiative to save Noah and his family (v. 13). "Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.'"

God planned the ark as a means of safety for Noah and his family. There is no hint that Noah anticipated the flood. Things were going along as normal before God spoke to him. The ark was planned by God alone to save the elect family (Genesis 6:14–22). Our salvation is no accident. Sin did not catch God off guard. Ephesians 1:4, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him." The names of the redeemed have been "written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain" (Revelation 13:8).

Salvation for Noah and his family was by grace alone. Noah was also a sinner, however he found grace in God's sight. Relative to his generation he was a righteous man. II Peter 2:5, God "did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly . . ." God in His wondrous grace took the initiative to save us "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (I Peter 1:19–21).

We, too, live in an evil day that could be described with the same words of the days preceding the deluge in Genesis 6:5, 7–8, 11–12. God in His grace had reached down to us and saved us because it was the desire of His heart. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4–7).

Christ is our ark of safety from the wrath of God.

God revealed to Noah the coming judgment (6:13). "God said." Hebrews 11:7 tells us Noah believed God's word. "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Faith comes from the Word of God. We must heed God's
warning in His Word. We must take God at His word and believe what He says about His Son, Jesus Christ. I John 5:9–10

The ark was the only means of escape and there was only one door to enter the ark (6:16). Jesus used the analogy of the door to stress the fact that He is the only entrance into the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9). Again He stressed, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (14:6). The Apostle Peter proclaimed, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). All may come, but they have to come through the only door of salvation.

Once Noah and his family got into the ark they were perfectly safe. They were the only ones to escape (Genesis 7:1). God was in the ark with them. There were no causalities. They were all perfectly safe—Noah, his family and the animals. A year later we are told in 8:18–19, "So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark." Regarding our own salvation Jesus said to his disciples, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one" (John 10:27–30). Jesus is in the ark and it can not sink. When we are in the ship with Jesus, we will never sink.

Many interpreters have noted the Hebrew word in Genesis 6:14 is not the common one for "pitch, (zettet)," but kapher meaning "to cover." No where else in the Old Testament is it rendered "pitch." Every where else it is translated "to make atonement." By covering it inside and out with "pitch" the ark was waterproofed. We have been protected from the wrath of God by the perfect covering that comes from Jesus Christ. Our shelter from God's wrath is found only beneath the blood of Jesus. I John 1:7 says, "if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." "Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14).

There is urgency for us to enter the ark now. Once the door is shut, no one else can enter in. "Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the Lord closed it behind him" (Genesis7:16).

We have been redeemed "with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:19). That is the only covering that will protect us from the wrath of God.
Genesis 12:1–3

Count Your Blessings, Abraham

When God called Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, he received several promises. The final element of the blessing is found in these words: "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 4:12b). It reaches back into the families being divided by sin in Adam's fall (Genesis 3), the deluge and the confusion of the languages at Babel. The curse of sin will be replaced by blessings. It will be a blessing so great that its effect will extend to "all the families of the earth."

This blessing can be thought of only in connection with the promised Savior. This promise to Abraham is definitely messianic and determines that the Messiah is to emerge from the line of Abraham. Only in the idea of the Messiah does the depth of the thought adequately display itself: All of the promises that followed in the Hebrew Scriptures were merely expansions, closer definitions and identifications of the salvation held out to the whole human race in this promise.

The Gospel writer Matthew, writing to Jewish people, began with these words from "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1).

When the Messiah arrived He declared to a group of teachers of the Law, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and He saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). Abraham was overjoyed to see the fullness of time when the Messiah would indeed be a spiritual blessing. That day came when He died on the cross to take away the sins of every individual who will believe on Him as their personal Savior. Have you received the joy of our father Abraham? The LORD God of Abraham is ready to bless you right now.

Abraham was the first of a great remnant who believed God's promises regarding the coming of the Messiah. The writer of Hebrews says, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13).

You can't find a better summary than the following by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:6–9:

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as Righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.

Paul's whole point to the Jewish people is that the real spiritual sons of Abraham are those who believe as he did, "they which be of faith" (Rom. 3:26; 4:16; 14:23). The are not God's people out of blood ties with Judaism. "Abraham believed and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Our father Abraham was justified by faith alone. God chose him out of His rich grace. Abraham did not earn it. He did not merit it. Yahweh reached down to Abraham and called him to be the father of His chosen people. Abraham believed the promise. He took God at His word and God reckoned Abraham as righteous.
We who have come to know Christ by faith are blessed with Abraham. God's blessings are limitless, and they are ours just like they were Abraham's. This is part of Paul's whole argument of justification by faith. Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. God reckons us as righteous by our faith in Christ.

The physical seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is Christ, and the spiritual seed of Abraham includes every true child of God who receives Jesus Christ by faith. Abraham's blessings have become our blessings. "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

While preaching in the Temple complex Peter brought a message to a dramatic conclusion with these powerful words: "And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days. It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 3:24–26). There weren't any questions in the mind of the Apostles as to who this person was.

The most astounding mystery in the Bible is found in Colossians 1:26–27. Paul writes of "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." A Jewish God residing in a Gentile heart! That was revolutionary to Peter and Paul. It is still the most revolutionary message in the entire universe.

That is how much the Lord God loves you and me. "For God so loved the world" (the families of the earth), that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:16–18, italics mine).

If you have never put your trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please do so right now. The very moment that you believed on Christ you fulfill the great promise God gave to our father Abraham centuries ago!

Isn't it wonderful being a part of God's history? If you are a completed Hebrew, you have a double blessing! However, God's blessings are not just for our Jewish friends, it includes us non–Jews, too. "And in you" Abraham, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed!" Oh, praise the LORD God!
Genesis 14:18–20

Priest of the Order of Melchizedek

A strange Priest–King of Salem by the name of Melchizedek met Abraham after he fought with kings in the valley to rescue his nephew Lot.

Salem is called Jerusalem in latter days in the Old Testament. The old name Salem is referred to in the Psalms and means, "founding of peace, or "possession of peace," "the peaceful," hence city of peace.

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said,

'Blessed be Abram of God Most High,

Possessor of heaven and earth;

And blessed be God Most High,

Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.'

He gave him a tenth of all" (Genesis 14:18–20).

Melchizedek brought bread and wine from Salem to supply the exhausted warrior. For obtaining peace, freedom and prosperity for him Melchizedek expressed his gratitude to Abraham. "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, the founder of heaven and earth: and blessed be God, the Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand."

Abraham reciprocated this priestly blessing by giving to Melchizedek a tenth of all of the booty taken from the enemies. By giving the tenth, Abraham acknowledged the divine priesthood of Melchizedek whose God reaches beyond a local deity; He is the "Most High God, founder of heaven and earth," the God of "all the families of the earth."

Keep in mind Abraham would not keep the property belonging to the king of Sodom because he would have nothing in common with him. However, he accepted from the king of Salem not only bread and wine for the invigoration of the exhausted warriors, but a priestly blessing as well. In return, he gave a tenth of all his booty. This was a definite sign that Abraham recognized his God and submitted to the royal priesthood of Melchizedek.

Moreover, this self–subordination to Melchizedek was the practical benediction of a royal priesthood that is higher than the priesthood entrusted to Abraham's descendents.

Melchizedek's name means, "king of righteousness." No doubt, he was a king who ruled his people in righteousness. He was characterized by righteousness.
Our Lord Jesus Christ "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:20). By faith in Him we are pronounced righteous. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1; cf. 3:21–26). Paul goes on to say, "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). The Hebrew prophet Jeremiah said of Him, "He shall be called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5–6).

Moreover, Melchizedek is also described in the Scriptures as having no known genealogy. There is no account of his descent, or of the beginning and end of his life. He is "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life" (Hebrews 7:3).

In noble form this priest-king was a type of the God–King and eternal high priest Jesus Christ. It was King David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who said regarding the coming Messiah, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Psalm 110:4). David wrote these words a thousand years after Melchizedek lived and served as priest of the Most High God. David declared that the ultimate priest should be one like Melchizedek, without father, without mother, without genealogy.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, was after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:5–6, 10; 6:19–20; 7:1–3, 17, 20–28; 8:1–3, etc., etc). The Son of God entered within the veil as a forerunner, and there abides, exercising His priestly function. All of the mystical qualities revealed in the historic account of this priestly king came to their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Please remember that it is not the type that determines the antitype, but the antitype determines the type. Jesus is not portrayed after the pattern of Melchizedek, but Melchizedek is "made like unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3). Indeed, many scholars see this passage and others as a Christophany. This is the first mention of the angel of the Lord in the Bible. He was probably the Second Person of the God-head. Cf. Genesis 32:30; Exodus 3:2; 14:19; 23:20; Joshua 5:13-15; Judges 13:22; Isaiah 63:9.

The Scriptures record nothing of Melchizedek's ancestry, or progeny, nothing is said of his birth or death. He appears as a living man, king of Salem, and as such he disappears. The eternal being of the Son of God is in view here. This is the eternal priestly side of the Messiah. We are not looking at the human perspective of Christ in this passage.

In His eternal being the Son of God has reality, as Melchizedek has typically, "neither beginning of days nor end of life." He is exalted at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He "abides a priest continually." Melchizedek remained a priest continually for the duration of his appearance in the biblical narrative. However, the antitype Jesus Christ remains a priest continually without qualification forever.

The divine commentary on this great passage in Genesis makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest of whom Melchizedek was a type. Hebrews chapters five through ten explains how the priesthood of Jesus is superior to Aaron and the Levites. The whole emphasis of Hebrews is on a better priest, a better covenant, a better sanctuary, a better sacrifice and consequently better promises. Jesus is acclaimed the perpetual High Priest "after the order of Melchizedek."

Now, if Melchizedek was greater than Abraham, his priesthood must be greater than a priesthood, which traces its descent from Abraham. Abraham recognized Melchizedek's superiority by giving Melchizedek tithes and receiving his blessings. The priesthood of Melchizedek enjoys higher status than the Levitical
priesthood in Hebrews. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, not from Levi. He could never serve as a Levitical priest. Moreover, no Levite could ever serve as the Messiah King.

The perpetual priesthood of the Messiah was confirmed by a divine oath: "The LORD has sworn, and will not change His mind: Thou art a priest forever." The order of Levi had many priests in number, because they continued to die off. "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:23–25). Jesus' eternal priesthood is similar to Melchizedek who had no descendents, and there were no priests to follow him.

Moreover, our Great High Priest "does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (vv. 27–28). He is the Great High Priest who voluntarily offered up the perfect sinless sacrifice of Himself as a substitute for sinful people.

Generation after generation of High Priest's of Israel died and the office passed to another until in all, Josephus reckons that 83 high priests officiated from Aaron to the fall of the Second Temple in A. D. 70. However, the priesthood that Jesus Christ holds is perpetual, because "He remains forever." Our eternal High Priest Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father ever ready to make intercession for us today. He will never have to hand it over to someone else. Those who have Him as their high priest and mediator with God have in Him a savior whose saving power is available without end. He lives eternally always engaged to bless and protect those who have put their eternal trust in Him.

The way of approach to God through Jesus Christ is always open, because He is forever in the presence of God. He represents His people forever. He is living to plead your case before the Father in heaven right now. He is willing to be your merciful and faithful high priest. Call upon His name and He will save you.

Jesus is not only our Great High Priest, but He is also the Divine Melchizedek, King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Oh come and worship Him who is the sovereign king whose "name is above every name." "For this reason also," writes the Apostle Paul, "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 1:9–11).

In the person of Jesus Christ, the Son God and our blessed Savior,

Lovingkindness and truth have met together;

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Psalm 85:10).
Genesis 16:7–13

The Angel of the Lord

God made a promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2; 15:1–6). Abraham has been walking by faith and he is now in the Promised Land (Gen. 15:7; 16:3). However, he has still not seen the birth of the promised son.

Abraham listened to Sarah and got into deep trouble. When left to human ingenuity we often fail. God, however, wants it to be clearly understood by everyone involved that the child is in every sense to be a child of promise. Abraham and Sarah are now advanced in years. Man can contribute nothing. Only the God of grace can provide the son of the promise.

Abe and Sarah have waited long enough, or so they think.

Hagar is Sarah's maid, and she is the innocent party. She is just a family maid who is loyal to her master, and a believer in the God of Abraham. Abraham got Hagar pregnant and strife broke out in the home (16:5–6). In despair, Hagar ran away. "Sarah treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence" (16:6).

It is while Hagar was in the wilderness, alone and fearful that "the angel of the LORD found her" and revealed Himself to her (16:7).

Who is this "angel of Yahweh"? What makes him different from other angels who appear in the Old Testament?

I agree with Hengstenberg in Christology of the Old Testament, the German scholars Keil and Delitzch, H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, among other scholars as to the identification of this special person. Probably Leupold summarizes this position better than anyone does (pp. 500–501).

Several things stand out about this angel in various passages of Scripture.

The angel of the LORD" was a divine personage and "He is to be regarded as a kind of pre–incarnation of the Messiah." The identity of "the angel of the LORD" with Yahweh is fully established in v. 13. "Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are a God who sees'; for she said, 'Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?'" The angel of the LORD is not a created being, but the divine being Himself. He is "in a class by Himself and recognized as a superior being by the writers of the Old Testament."

The angel of the LORD definitely identifies Himself with Yahweh on various occasions. In verse ten, "Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.'" This is no ordinary messenger of God. He doesn't say, "God will." He says, "I will greatly multiply your descendents." Examine Genesis 18:19–21 and note who is speaking and who is making the promises to Abraham. "The angel of the LORD" in chapter seventeen is "God" in chapter eighteen. The angel of the LORD is God Himself.
The angel of the LORD reveals Himself to people and they understand Him to be a divine person (16:13).

The writers of the Old Testament call Him Yahweh (LORD). In a time of crisis the angel of the LORD visited Gideon to give encouragement (Judges 6:11–24). It climaxes with worship in verse 20–21, "The angel of God said to him, 'Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth.' And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight." Note carefully what happens next. "When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, 'Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.' The Lord said to him, 'Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die.' Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites" (vv. 2–24).

The doctrine of the trinity of the Godhead is here implied. This theophany is in perfect accordance with the earlier foreshadowing. He is perfectly equal with God—essentially one with God, yet a distinct person from Yahweh (cf. 16:10; 17:20). Judges 2:1 has an interesting observation about the exodus. "Now the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, 'I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you, and as for you, you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed Me; what is this you have done?"

The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah and his wife promising them a son (Judges 13:2–23). The passage reaches its climax in verses 19–22. Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God" (v. 22). The angel of the LORD is God.

Several scholars have observed "the organic unity of Scripture would be broken if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation was a creature angel, while that of the New Testament is the incarnation of the God-Man" (Leupold, p. 501).

A theophany is a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form before the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The theophanies are chiefly appearances of the angel of the LORD, who is clearly distinct from angelic beings. They are actual occurrences, not imaginary, not hallucinatory experiences. They take place in historical settings initiated only by God.

Who is this angel of the LORD? The earliest church fathers and most conservative evangelical Bible scholars agree that the angel of the LORD is no one other than Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the second person of the God–head. These theophanies are preincarnate appearances of God the Son in human form. The angel of the LORD appeared only in the Old Testament. Theophanies are unknown in the New Testament after the permanent incarnation of Christ.

In the fullness of time, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:14, 18). When you look
into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, you see the face of God. In Him, we have the perfect vision of what God is like. Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father."
Genesis 22:1–19

Isaac's Substitute Lamb

Abraham waited a long time for the son of the promise. When he was finally born, Isaac was nothing short of a miracle. He was born to Abraham and Sarah when it was humanly impossible for them to have children because of their age. Abraham was one hundred years old, and Sarah wasn't too far behind!

Moreover, all of the great promises God had given Abraham were linked to the son of promise. God would make Abraham into a great nation and "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Could Abraham's love for that son crowd aside his love for the LORD God? As Isaac grew into manhood, Abraham would have been increasingly attached to this special son.

H. C. Leupold observes, "Abraham was in extreme danger of coming by slow degrees and in a manner hardly observed by himself to the point where he would have loved his son more than his God."

When Abraham was 115 years old and Isaac was a mature young man, Ha Elohim, "the One true personal God" tested his servant. He said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you" (Genesis 22:2).

God's message was specific. There was no doubt as to whom God meant when He said, "Your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac." Not Ishmael, but Isaac.

I doubt if Abraham slept much that night. He had a personal intimate walk with God by faith. He had claimed the great promises God had made to him. This was an agonizing decision. The Hebrews always considered human sacrifice wrong. Neither Abraham nor his community practiced human sacrifices.

We ask why this test? He must give back to his son without reservation of any kind.

Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, woke up Isaac and two of his servants. They piled wood on the donkey for a burnt offering and began their slow three-day walk.

When they arrived at the foot of the mountain God had chosen, Abraham parted company with the servants. By faith, he told the servants, "stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; "and we shall worship and we shall return to you" (v. 5). Then he and Isaac walked on alone.

"Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (vv. 6–7).
Abraham responded, "'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together" (v. 8).

"God will provide." "God will provide for Himself." "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Faith talks. I think it was talking a lot as they walked together. Abraham is confident that the LORD God knows what He is doing. He will provide His own lamb in due time.

When they arrived at the place for the sacrifice Abraham built the altar, arranged the wood, and bound his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood (v. 9). Have you ever noted the complete confidence and submission of Isaac in his father? It echoes with the confidence of another son who prayed, "Not my will, Thy will be done." "God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering my son" must have echoed in the minds and hearts of both father and son.

Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the long sharp knife and raised it slowly above his head. Just as his arm began the downward descent in a swift movement toward Isaac there was a shout from "the angel of the LORD" saying, "Abraham, Abraham!" (vv. 10–11). The urgency restrained him on the spot. There had been complete surrender and submission to the will of God. Abraham was obedient and had walked by faith trusting God completely.

The angel of the Lord said to him, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me. Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son" (v. 12–13).

Abraham called the place, Yahweh–jireh. Yahweh sees, or Yahweh provides, it shall be provided. Yahweh sees and provides. "The LORD will provide" (v. 14). That mountain became a testimony. Every time someone passed by it he said, "In the mount of the LORD it will be seen and provided."

This mountain later became the site of the Temple and the center of Israel's sacrificial worship. The very heart of Israel's religion centered in the Temple on Mt. Moriah. However, these animal sacrifices were only a shadow of something to come.

Another son of the promise came to that mountain two thousand years later but there was no substitute lamb for Him because He was the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

God's own Son was also lifted up on "the mount of the LORD" and became our substitute. "They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between" (John 19:17–18).

Indeed, Jesus said, "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:17–18).

The only sacrifice God accepts for our sin is the sacrifice that He has provided.
That day the lamb became Isaac's substitute. God rescued Isaac with a substitute ram. Our substitute saved us from the penalty of the wages of sin. The Apostle Paul wrote, "He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). That is also the way Peter understood it. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (II Peter 2:24). See also John 3:16; Romans 3:21-26; 4:4, 25; 5:6, 8, 15; 6:8-10; 8:32; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10.

"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called. " He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type" (Hebrews 11:17–19).

From that experience, Abraham had a clearer understanding of God's eternal plan of redemption. In the substitutionary ram was prefigured the work of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world.

Perhaps Abraham understood better than we realize the wonder of the Lord's provision when he said, "in the mount of the LORD, He will appear." Jesus told the Pharisees gathered about him, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." And we are, too!
When I think of the patriarch Jacob, I think of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Jacob was a deceiver. His many-sided personality was filled with guile, meanness, craftiness and deceit. He's probably not the person you would like to have as your best friend or son-in-law.

In fact, when we meet up with him he is fleeing because he and his mother have deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him a spiritual blessing that had been destined to his older brother Esau. His own wrongdoing had driven him out of the home. When his father sent him away to Paddan-aram to seek a wife, he met his match in uncle Laban. They served deceit and guile up to one another for fourteen years.

It is on this long journey that Jacob, weary from the travel, spends the night in the open. He found a stone to "put under his head, and lay down in that place" (Genesis 28:11). It isn't strange to lay the head on a pillow of rock, or a board, or a book, or a straw mat, etc. I've done it many times in my travels. Hard heads and hard rocks probably fit together.

Here is a man who is alone, just he and God.

Weary and exhausted from the hard day of walking Jacob went into a deep sleep and began to dream. His dream was profound. "He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." (28:12).

"And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants" (v. 13).

Yahweh got Jacob's attention at Bethel. He demonstrated that He cared about Jacob and his miserable condition.

In that dream God rehearsed the great promises He had given to his grandfather, Abraham and his father Isaac. It is obvious he will find his mate because his "descendents shall also be like the dust of the earth" (v. 14). Moreover, "in you and in your descendents shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Yes, you read it correctly. God will bless and use a descendent of this deceiver for His eternal purpose. Remember, Yahweh is the God of grace. He will continue to pursue Jacob and work in him until He has Jacob to the place where he can bring glory to the His name.

The LORD makes another promise to Jacob. "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you" (v. 15).

"Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.' He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the
gate of heaven." (vv. 16-17). He got up poured oil on the stone and named the place Bethel, "the house of God."

Jacob learned that when you are walking with the Lord any place becomes your resting place. Wherever you are Yahweh is there. Jacob just happened to be at Luz. Before He ascended into heaven Jesus told His followers, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We have His abiding presence regardless of where we are. We are always with Him because He is the ladder into the presence of God. There is no place in this universe where our Lord is not with us. He is our dwelling place.

Not only that, there isn't anything that can separate us from Him. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

This event in Jacob's life takes on special importance because Jesus appropriated it for Himself while talking to Nathanael.

How do men get to heaven? Jesus used this vision of Jacob in His conversation with Nathanael. Jesus had never met this man before. He saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" (John 1:47). The word Jesus used for "guile" means to "catch with bait, beguile, deceit." He is not going to be like Jacob and make use of double dealings of deceit.

This took Nathanael completely by surprise. Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

What was he doing under the fig tree? Wouldn't we love to know? He was under the cover of the fig tree. No one knew he was there. No one saw him but God! Whatever it was Jesus saw him, and Nathanael was now conscious of His supernatural knowledge of that fact.

Perhaps this is the passage of Scripture Nathanael was sitting under the fig tree at home reading. There is also good reason to think he was praying, seeking God's forgiveness, and deliverance from his own deceit. He was confessing his sins, and when he met Jesus there rang out in his ears the same response he had received in private with God! No one could have know that he had been alone seeking God's presence under that fig tree. But it was known to Jesus! This is God speaking. He alone knows what is happening in a person's heart. He is the only one who can lead us to heaven. He is the doorkeeper. He is the ladder to heaven.

Suddenly, Nathanael responds, "'Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel' (John 1:49).

"Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (vv. 50-51). Jesus can do more than read the heart. He opens the door to heaven. Jesus was in unending and unbroken communion with the Father. Nathanael and the other disciples saw the glory of God come down to man. God and man met in Jesus Christ.
The words "heavens opened" is the idea of remaining open, or "standing open." Something has occurred in the past and it continues into the future. Heaven stands wide open and now the grace of God is available for every person who believe in the Son of Man. You can come into God's presence. He has forgiven you. The one standing there talking to Nathanael is the "door." He has bridged the gap between heaven and earth. He provides a means for us to enter into God's presence. Sin shut the door. However, Christ has removed the sin bearer that separates us through His death and resurrection. He is the only entrance into heaven because He is "the lamb slain from the before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). (Cf. Rev. 4:1; 19:11).

F. F. Bruce writes, "In this application of Jacob's vision, . . . the union between earth and heaven is effected by the Son of Man: He is the mediator between God and the human race. Not only so: the occasion to which the words of Jesus point is none other than His crucifixion. On a later occasion, speaking to a Jerusalem audience, he said, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall know that I am He' (John 8:28). His being 'lifted up' is His exaltation, though His enemies intended it for degradation; the cross is the supreme manifestation of His glory. By the cross heaven is thrown wide open, God draws near to man, and man is reconciled to God" (The Gospel of John, Eerdmans, 1983, pp. 62-63).

In both of these passages the main thought is "communication between heaven and earth." In Jesus Christ we have the continuing presence of God. He says to you and me, "I will never leave you, and I will never forsake you."

There is no ladder as Jesus uses the story because He is the ladder. The angels in their movement show the divine activity and identify Jesus with the ladder. Jesus is the link between heaven and earth. Jesus told Nicodemus, "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man" (John 3:13). Jesus communicates the realities of heaven to men on this earth. If you want communion with heaven here is the only person who can do it for you. He is the only mediator between God and man.

It is interesting to observe that there was tremendous angelic activity when Jesus rose from the dead (cf. Matthew 28:5; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12; Acts 1:11).

Jacob's ladder pointed to Jesus Christ who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6). Only Jesus Christ can make that statement because He is the Son of God.
Joseph was the first born son of Rachael, Jacob's favorite wife. Jacob loved Rachael, but married Leah through the deception of her father (Genesis 29).

There was already a house of siblings by the time Joseph arrived, sons of Jacob and Leah. The antagonism of being the favored son grew into outright hate by the time he was a teenager. One day Joseph suggested the idea that in a dream he saw them along with his father and mother bowing down to him! When he was seventeen Jacob sent Joseph to the fields to check on his brothers. They saw him coming and determined to kill him. His oldest brother Reuben interceded and threw him in a pit hoping to rescue him later. While he was gone the other brothers saw an Ishmaelite caravan passing by and sold Joseph as slave to them. They killed a goat, dipped Joseph's coat in blood and told their father that they had found the blood-soaked coat. They let him conclude that a wild animal had killed his favorite son.

Ancient rabbis saw in Joseph a type of the coming of the Messiah. They distinguished the difference between the reigning sovereign king Messiah and the suffering Messiah. The future sovereign king they called Messiah ben David, and the suffering Messiah they called Messiah ben Joseph. Many noted scholars have drawn the comparisons between the life of Joseph and Jesus the Messiah. Without getting fanciful and flighty let's examine some highlights and comparisons of these two outstanding men.

**Joseph and Jesus were both loved by their fathers.**

Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons . . ." Jacob's love for Joseph is demonstrated overwhelming in his grieving of his "dead" son.

On three occasions in the life of Jesus there was the clear testimony of the Heavenly Father's love for His Son. The Father declares Jesus to be His Son. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus testified to that love saying, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). In John 5:20 Jesus said, "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and the Father will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel."

**Joseph and Jesus were both hated by their brothers.**

Regarding Joseph Moses wrote, "And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms" (Genesis 37:4). This hatred provoked their evil plan to kill him.

Jesus came unto His own and His own rejected Him. Jesus observed the following behavior toward him by the members of His own nation. He said, "He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law,
‘They hated Me without a cause’” (John 15:23-25). On another occasion, while Jesus was teaching, someone said, "Look, your brothers and sisters and mother have come for you." Jesus responded with a gesture by saying those who were His true mother, brothers and sisters were those who listened to Him and believed His words. His own brothers in the flesh did not believe in Him until after He was raised from the dead.

Joseph and Jesus were both conspired upon by their enemies to be put to death.

The brothers of Joseph saw him approaching from a distance and "before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death" (Genesis 37:18).

You don't read very long into the Gospel accounts until you encounter the enemies of Jesus seeking to put Him to death. After watching Jesus heal on the Sabbath his enemies, "the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6).

Although Joseph was not put to death, he was accounted for dead by his father. He was presumed dead based upon the news from his brothers and the blood stained robe. They told their father, "We have found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." Joseph examined it, and said, "It is my son's tunic." Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. It was taken for granted by his father that Joseph was dead.

Joseph, on the other hand, actually died and was buried. History proves this fact. The historian wrote: "And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. . . At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left" (Matthew 27:35, 37). Roman soldiers certified to Pilate that Jesus was actually dead before he would release the body for proper burial (Mark 15:44-45). Roman soldiers guarded the entrance to the tomb. No man, dead or alive, could have entered or left that tomb without their knowledge of it.

Jesus and Joseph were both recognized after their deaths.

Joseph was understood to be dead for 21 years, and when Joseph's brothers went to Egypt looking for food, he was waiting for them. However, he was not waiting for vengeance, but in anticipation to give them food and deliver them from their famine. He was their savior after 21 years of being assumed dead.

Jesus' own brothers, and members of the family of Israel recognized Him, after His resurrection from the dead. "They saw Him and worshiped Him." Two of His disciples recognized Him on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24). Thomas emphatically declared that he would not believe in the resurrection until he saw Jesus with his own eyes, and put his hands into the nail prints and reached into His side. That very same Thomas stood in the physical presence of Jesus and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:24-31).

Another agnostic gave his testimony after seeing Jesus. "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until
now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also" (I Corinthians 15:3-8). The implication is, if you don't believe me, ask these witnesses. Most of them were still alive at the time Paul was writing his letter to the Corinthians.

Many more comparisons can be made, but hopefully these will whet your spiritual appetite. With the Apostle Peter we can proclaim, "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
Jacob gave a "prophetic blessing" to his sons that pictures in grand outlines the future history of a nation yet to come into existence. In his blessing, he viewed how each son and their descendents would be a part of the "redemptive" nation. The blessing embraces the whole history of Israel from Jacob's time until its ultimate completion.

Before him is a large canvas. What will he paint? The patriarch Jacob first sketched his eldest son, Ruben, who should have been the natural leader and recipient of a double share of the inheritance. However, Ruben was morally bankrupt and unworthy of becoming the leader of the new nation. He was reckless, even characterized by a seething lust, and "unbridled license."

Judah is the son to whom the role of national leadership falls. His name means, "He for whom Yahweh is praised" (Genesis 49:8). The people of Israel will praise the LORD God for what He shall bring about through the tribe of Judah.

This blessing to Judah emphasized the superior leadership ability and triumph over his enemies (v. 8). "Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s sons shall bow down to you." Friend and foe will recognize his effectiveness as a leader.

The emblem of the lion symbolizes the strength of this tribe's leaders. "Judah is a lion's whelp" (v. 9). Revelation 5:5 sees the resurrected and ascended Lord Jesus Christ as the "lion of the tribe of Judah." One of the elders in John's vision of heaven said, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals." The sovereign messianic king will rule with the roar of a strong powerful lion.

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet" (v. 10). The "scepter" is the symbol of royal authority, rule and dominion. It symbolizes his capacity for rule. Originally it was a long staff, then it became a short rod. The idea is that no one will be able to remove Judah's sovereignty, or dominion.

In fact, the dominion of the earthly rulers of Judah will be protected until a certain climax is achieved. It is established by the expressions, "until Shiloh comes," and by the obedience of the "peoples." These "peoples" are the non-Jews who submit to His rule.

Later in history, the tribes of Israel went to David and expressed their recognition of him as the person God had chosen as king. They said, "Previously, when Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel out and in. And the Lord said to you, ‘You will shepherd My people Israel, and you will be a ruler over Israel.’ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them before the Lord at Hebron; then they anointed David king over Israel" (II Samuel 5:1-3).

In the person of king David, Judah grew strong and became a conquering lion. He received the promise that the "lion of the tribe of Judah" would fulfil the greatest aspirations of the prophecy. (II Samuel 5:10-
The people made the wrong choice when they chose Saul from the tribe of Benjamin. God's will was for them to wait until David, from the tribe of Judah, was crowned king. The royal family tribe of Israel was Judah (Hebrews 7:14; Luke 3:33; I Chronicles 28:4).

The important emphasis is the reign of the tribe of Judah would be extended out into eternity through the rule of the Messiah. In II Samuel 7:13 Yahweh explains to David that He will set up one of David's descendents as king. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." It would attain eternal duration and sovereignty over all nations only by reaching beyond earthly rulers in the tribe of Judah to Shiloh-Messiah. The dominion of Judah was to be perfectly fulfilled in the appearance of Shiloh.

The fulfillment of the promise to Judah is when Shiloh comes (Genesis 49:10c-12). Shiloh is the man of rest, the giver of rest or "rest-bringer." The word Shiloh comes from shalahl, "to have rest."

The earliest interpretation of this passage was messianic. The ancient Jewish Targum of Onkelos reads: "Until Messiah comes, whose is the kingdom." There are "very strongly messianic implications" from the time of the Septuagint onward.

Judah will continue to hold rule over Israel "until rest comes." It is best to regard Shiloh as a proper name of a person. Judah's capacity to rule will come to a climax in a ruler so competent that He shall be able to achieve perfect rest and He shall be called, "rest," or "rest-giver. The Messiah is the bearer of rest. He is the giver of peace and rest. Therefore, the sovereignty of Judah's rule reaches its highest point in the Messiah.

Who is this giver of rest? The Scriptures are consistent in their emphasis on the Prince of Peace who gives His people rest. He is the "Prince of Peace" in Isaiah 9:6. Joshua couldn't lead the people into the Sabbath rest, the perfect peace. "So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:9-11). Salvation through Jesus Christ is God's perfect rest. He can give us His perfect peace. Because we have "been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

A multitude of angels greeted His birth singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14).

The Giver of rest stands before every hurting person today and says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). He gives his perfect peace, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27). Cf. John 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26).

Remember the promise to Abraham? "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Jacob says, "and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Genesis 49:10d). Again, it is the plural form referring to the non-Jews. The nations of the world shall willingly submit to His rule (Isaiah 2:2-5). "Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream..."
to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war. Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord."

The emphasis is on Shiloh, the giver of rest. He shall be such an effective leader that men will readily yield Him obedience. A day is coming when men from all over the world are going to bow with cheerful, tender willing inner submission to the Messiah. Many have made a personal decision to do just that by giving their lives to Jesus Christ in simple child like faith.

Moreover, there is another side to this great prophetic blessing. Genesis 49:11-12 refers to the judgment and salvation at the Second Coming of Christ. The Prince of Peace will reign as King of Kings for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15; 5:5-14; Ezekiel 21:27).

"He ties his foal to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, and his robes in the blood of grapes. "His eyes are dull from wine, and his teeth white from milk" (Gen. 49:11-12).

We have the choice of humbling ourselves and bowing to His reign today. There is coming a day, however, when everyone regardless of their desires will bow and worship Him. "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world is also the lion of tribe of Judah who reigns as King of Kings.
Something really strange happened. The bush started talking to Moses!

Moses was tending his father-in-law's sheep in the wilderness when: "The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed" (Exodus 3:2).

That would grab your attention on a cold, dark night in the wilderness! The thorny bush just kept on burning and burning. How long we don't know. But when it stopped burning it was not consumed. You guessed it. There probably wasn't even any ashes and smut on it.

Moses said to himself, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up" (v. 3).

That is when the bush started talking to Moses! "When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am" (v. 4).

Moses was then told to take his sandals off because the ground upon which he was standing was rendered holy by God's presence (v. 5).

This was a manifestation of God Himself. Verse two says, "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a burning fire from the midst of a bush. . . " Verse four tells us, "When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush. . . " In verse six he tells us the one speaking says, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses moves us in his writing from the angel of the LORD to the LORD (Yahweh) Himself and further identifies Him as the God of Israel.

What would you have done? "Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (v. 6b). He bowed and worshipped.

The same angel of the LORD had appeared to Sarah, Hagar, Abraham and Isaac four hundred years earlier. Now He appears to Moses as the burning bush and reveals Himself as the "I AM THAT I AM." The identity of the angel is not left in doubt. He clearly declares Himself as Yahweh.

Let's pull together some observations of this angel in other Old Testament passages.

He can refer to Himself as being sent of God and at the same time speak as God. In every instance the phrase must be translated "the angel of the LORD." He guides and protects (Ex. 14:19), is a companion to Israel in the wilderness (23:20-33; Num. 20:16), He punishes (II Sam. 24:15-17), He is seen ministering (I Kin. 19:7) and wins at war (II Kings 19:35; II Chron. 32:21).
The angel of the LORD is always dependent upon the LORD and subordinate to His commands (I Chron. 21:27), yet He is addressed as the LORD (Ex. 23:23).

The angel of the LORD exercises the prerogatives of Yahweh in forgiving sin and commanding obedience. His deity is never left in doubt. In Exodus 23:20-33 He is the Angel of the Covenant. People consistently recognize Him as deity and respond to Him in that way. In Joshua 5:13-6:2 He possesses the full character and authority of God.

He bears the titles of deity. He is called Yahweh, Elohim, and Yahweh's Messenger. He is the object of worship. Yahweh is never applied to anyone other than the God of Israel (Isaiah 42:8).

Alongside these appearances of the angel of the LORD are manifestations of Yahweh Himself in Theophanies. He is seen with His people talking, walking and eating. The inner life of deity is laid open. At the same time, He speaks of the LORD God in the third person. People recognize that He is God and they pray to Him, pay divine honor, offer sacrifices which He accepts and they worship Him. This angel of the LORD is essentially one with God (Ex. 33:20; Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Ex. 33:1). He is deity, regardless of His appearance or the service He renders. The angel of the LORD is one of the persons of the eternal Godhead.

The angel of the LORD is not a created being, but a divine being Himself. He is in a class by Himself. The old Jewish synagogues regarded Him as the Shekinah. He is an "angel" only by his office.

Here in the desert at the burning bush "the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of the bush . . . " (v. 2). There is no question about who He is. He identifies Himself clearly. He is the eternal "I AM." The One who is speaking from the burning bush is the same, yesterday, today and forever. The angel of the LORD announces that He is Elohim, the self-existent One and beside Him there is none else. He is the Absolute I. He told Moses, "I AM THAT I AM."

Probably the outstanding observation is the angel of the LORD was a form in which the LORD Himself appeared to men. He revealed Himself in a mode, which was more easily discernible by our human senses. The only difference was the method of appearing. It reminds us of the post resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ in the Gospels and His appearing to the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. Our Lord Jesus was "transfigured" before Peter, James and John and "appeared" with Moses and Elijah on the mountain side. (Matthew 17:1-8). The invisible God made Himself visible so human being could know Him. He is the manifestation of God (John 1:18).

We can summarize these observations in the following way:

The angel of the LORD is distinct from Yahweh, yet identical with Yahweh as revealed in Genesis, Exodus and Joshua.
The angel of the LORD seems completely interchangeable with Yahweh. Yahweh's "name" is equivalent to saying Yahweh's being is in His special angel (Ex. 23:20, 21).

The presence of the angel of the LORD is the same as the presence of Yahweh (Ex. 32:30, 34; 33:14).

In the angel of the LORD we find the pre-existent "Word of God," the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity functioning in the Old Testament. The apostle John knew Him best of all. He said, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:18). No one had seen God's essential nature before Jesus came. God is Spirit. "The only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him." Jesus is the exegesis of God. God has revealed Himself to man in a personal intimate way.

The presence of the angel of the LORD is the same as the presence of Yahweh (Ex. 32:30, 34; 33:14).

The apostle Paul is referring to Jesus Christ when he says, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him. . . For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 1:15; 2:9).

Ever since the first recorded Theophany of the Bible God appears many times to individuals until finally He appears in the Man Jesus Christ to atone for all sin (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3).

The angel of the LORD was none other than the Logos, who not only was "with God," but "was God", and in the person of Jesus Christ "was made flesh" and "came unto His own." The only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, was sent by the Father into the world as the angel of the LORD before He became incarnate and dwelt among us. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was at once a new manifestation and the appearance of One who was not a newcomer on the earthly scene. The prophet Mica spoke of Him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (5:2). The resurrected, ascended glorified Son of Man was seen by the apostle John in his vision walking in the midst of the seven church of Asia Minor (Revelation 1).

The veiled angel of the LORD in the Old Testament is revealed perfectly in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ when He took upon Himself human flesh. God manifest Himself fully in visible form in the person of our Lord and Savior. The angel no longer appears after the coming of Jesus Christ to the earth.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah saw the LORD sitting on a throne in his vision. "In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1). He heard the seraphim sing the song of the holiness of God, the temple filled with smoke, the foundations trembled and Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

Who was it that Isaiah saw on the throne? He saw the preincarnate Son of God. The apostle John wrote, "These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him" (John 12:41). He saw Christ in His preincarnate glory on the throne.

The angel of the LORD in the Old Testament is the Messiah of the New Testament. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not only deity, but He existed as such from all eternity.
The apostle John who observed Jesus Christ daily for three years explained it this way in I John 1:1-3.

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.
Exodus 3:14

What is Your Name?

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob revealed Himself to Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush.

The LORD God (Yahweh) spoke to Moses and said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey . . . Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel out of Egypt" (Exodus 3:7-8, 10).

Moses reaction was, "Lord, I tried once and I failed. Send someone else." Moses was timid, hesitant, fearful, unbelieving, and rebellious and yet God used him.

It was while Moses was putting up his arguments with God for not obeying Him that God revealed who He is in His personal name. God's chosen people were living with Egyptians who were the most polytheistic race of antiquity. We have records containing the names of more than 2200 different Egyptian gods and goddesses whom they worshipped. The people of Israel had become addicted to these gods. The ten plagues would be a contest of the gods of Egypt and the LORD God. Therefore, Moses asked God, "Which God shall I tell them sent me?" What is Your name? (3:13).

God replied to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM" (v. 14).

This is the most solemn and sublime of all the divine names. Various expressions are used to distinguish Him such as "the Name," "the great and terrible Name," "the unutterable Name," "the ineffable Name," "the peculiar name," "the incommunicate Name," "the Holy Name," "the separate Name," "the distinguished Name." All of these expressions are attempts to communicate the Tetragrammaton YHWH or JHVH (Yahweh or Jehovah). It is a substitute for the ineffable name of God. It was also known as "the name of four letters" because from the Hebrew it is transliterated JHVH into English.

The original pronunciation has long been lost because of superstition among the Jewish people. It was an attempt at misguided reverence. Jehovah is an artificial English word put together from the four Hebrew consonants JHVH and the vowels of the Hebrew word for God Aonai, or Lord. Before the coming of Jesus Christ the Jewish people would pronounce Adonai when they read JHVH. Later the vowels of Adonai were written into the manuscripts. In modern times we have been saying Jehovah or LORD (in small capital letters). The original pronunciation was probably Yahweh.

Girdleston in his Old Testament Synonyms writes, "It is everywhere a proper name denoting the person of God and Him only . . . The Hebrew may say the Elohim, the true God, in opposition to all false gods; but he never says the Jehovah, for Jehovah is the name of the true God only. He says again and again, my God or my Elohim, but never my Jehovah, for when he says my God he means Jehovah. He speaks of the God
(Elohim) of Israel, but never of the Jehovah of Israel, for there is no other Jehovah. He speaks of the living God, but never of the living Jehovah, for he cannot conceive of Jehovah as other than living."

JHVH is a Hebrew term that is not brought forward into the New Testament because the New Testament was written in Greek. The equivalent term for JHVH in Greek is Kurios, Lord. It is applied to all three persons of the Trinity. It is justifiable to treat the name JHVH of the Hebrew Scriptures as continued in its specific meaning into the New Testament by the name Lord or Kurios. It is applicable in this sense to none but deity.

Over the past forty years, I have pulled together from many highly respected scholars information for the following paragraph. It is a humble attempt to try to understand the Infinite. It is impossible, of course. Only as we look into the face of Jesus do we understand the LORD God.

"I AM THAT I AM" contains each tense of the verb "to be." We can translate it "I was, I am, I shall always continue to be." He is the eternal "I AM." He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He announced that Elohim is self-existent, beside whom there is none else. He is without beginning, without ending from everlasting to everlasting He is. Yahweh is the Absolute I. Acting with self-dependence, the Absolute God of the fathers, He is the divine Being moving, pervading history, manifesting Himself in the world. He is the self-determining One, Absolute independence, in harmony with Himself, remaining consistent, the absolute I, moving with unlimited freedom. He is the Absolute personality. He is the personal God in His historic manifestation unfolding (revealing) Himself. He is the God of redemption. By this name He is eternal, uncaused, unconditioned, independent and self-sufficient. As the God of grace He becomes whatever is needed to meet the needs of those who are His. He is "the Becoming One." There is the promise of continuing self-manifestation in His name, "I will be that I will be." (I told you it was impossible!)

The Pharisees were accusing Jesus of blasphemy because He was forgiving sins. Only God can forgive sins. Their complaint was, Who are you to do only what God can do? (John chapter eight).

In response to their accusations Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I AM" (John 8:58). They knew exactly what He meant. There wasn't any question in their minds because they picked up stone to stone Him to death (v. 59). Jesus Christ names Himself the "I AM." They understood Him to be claiming identity with the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

In assuming the name "I AM" Jesus was assuming to Himself the attributes and authorities of the LORD God of Israel. Jesus assumed the name of Yahweh, or Jehovah. Jesus Christ is Yahweh and Yahweh is Jesus. Jesus was assuming the holiest word for absolute deity in the Hebrew language. He is a person in the Trinity. On another occasion Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." The response: "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:30-31).

Jesus uses the "I am" formula to communicate the essential attributes of the LORD God. In each saying below Jesus places the "I am" is in the emphatic position. It is God speaking when Jesus says:

- I am the bread of life: he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst (John 6:35).
- I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life (John 8:12).

- I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9).

- I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

- I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this? (John 11:25-26).

- I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6).

- I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1).

The personal God who cuts the covenant in the Old Testament is the same person as Jesus, the Messiah in the New Testament. Our Savior is God's last word to man. When you reject Jesus Christ you reject the only one and true God and Savior.

This is why He can say to the woman caught in adultery and to every other person trapped in sin, "Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you: go your way; from now on sin no more." He is ready to forgive you and me right now. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). There is no other name to call upon. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

C. S. Lewis made this observation:

Either Jesus Christ was what He claimed or He was a liar, and we should repudiate Him. Or if He was not what He claimed to be, and not a liar, He was a madman and we should treat Him as such. Or He was what He claimed to be and we should worship Him."

Those were the only options He gave us. The ultimate question is always, "What will you do with Jesus?" The apostle Paul gave the best invitation. He wrote, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).
Exodus 12:1-51

Christ Our Passover is Slain for Us

The word "Passover" (pasach) means "to pass over; to spread the wings over, to spare; preserve; protecting." It refers to a specific time and place in the history of Israel when God's judgment passed over and the Lord stood guard protecting those who trusted in Him. The Jewish Passover is a beautiful type of the salvation God has provided. It was a profession of faith in Yahweh to save His people from the avenging angel of death.

In Christ's day, as in ours, two days were required to celebrate the Passover. Jesus, with His disciples, observed the Passover the first night, and was Himself the Passover Lamb the second night.

If "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians" what would a lamb in the sacrifice at the Passover make them do? (Genesis 46:34). This subject is still an abomination to many people.

Let's compare the original Passover lamb with the God's Passover Lamb who came to take away the sin of the world.

The Passover Lamb must be a choice male lamb in the prime of his life. "Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats" (Exodus 12:5). Jesus Christ began His ministry in the prime of life, around 30 years of age. We are told of the beginning of His ministry that "when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.' When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:21-23a). Here is a lamb who is in the prime of His life and He is God's choice.

The Passover Lamb had to be without blemish. The Passover Lamb must be perfect without any blemish or fault of any kind (Ex. 12:5). The apostle Peter knew the perfect Lamb in life and he wrote, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (I Peter 1:18-19). The word for "unblemished," "without blemish" is used of a sacrifice without spot or blemish and morally of a person who is without blemish, faultless, unblameable. Cf. Matthew 27:4, 19, 24; John 18:38; Luke 23:41; Mark 15:39.

The Passover Lamb must be kept under scrutiny. "You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight" (Ex. 12:6). Luke 11:53-54 tells us the scribes and Pharisees grew very hostile toward Jesus and were "plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say." Daily the Jewish leaders scrutinized Jesus' teaching in the Temple and local synagogues. What can we say about Jesus after all that intense observation for three years? He "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to
righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (I Peter 2:22-24; cf. Isaiah 5:9). Jesus "committed no sin," either before or during His suffering (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 John 3:5). He was completely innocent in both deed and word because "no deceit was found in His mouth."

**The Passover Lamb Must Be Slain.** "The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight" (12:6). The lambs were slain between 3 and 5 PM of the afternoon before the Passover which began when the first ray of starlight could be seen in the sky. Jesus’ scourging and death accomplished spiritual "healing" or salvation of every individual who trusts Him as His Savior. "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22). Cf. Mark 15:6-15; John 1:29, 36; 12:24.

"Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (I Corinthians 5:7b). The death of Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins. The sacrifice of Himself turns away the wrath of God. It is God who is propitiated by His own provision made in the vicarious, substitutionary, expiatory sacrifice of Christ. Man sinned. Christ annuls the power of sin to separate God and man. Our Passover not only covers our sins, but He turns back the wrath of God which we deserve and God can look upon with His favor. Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for our sins. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The word "redeemed" means "to set free by the payment of a ransom." It is a ransom for life as of a slave, (Matt. 20:28), and therefore, to set free by payment of ransom. The ransom is the blood of Jesus. Kenneth Wuest observed, "The blood of Christ is costly, essentially and intrinsically precious because it is God’s blood (Acts 20:28), for Deity became incarnate in humanity." More literally, we are redeemed "with costly blood, highly honored, blood as of a lamb that is without blemish and spotless, the blood of Christ." It was by the blood of Christ that we are redeemed from sin. It is an ugly picture of blood spilt because sin is ugly. We are totally depraved and in the need of God's perfect sacrifice for sin. "Redemption" is a purchasing from the marketplace of sin with the priceless blood of a perfect lamb. Cf. Hebrews 10:1-7, 10-14, 19-22, 29; 1 John 1:7; Luke 22:19-22.

**The Bones of the Passover Lamb Must Not Be Broken.** "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it" (Ex. 12:46). Of Jesus it is written," but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken. " (John 19:33-36) Cf. Psalm 34:20 "He keeps all His bones; not one of them is broken."

**The Blood of the Passover Lamb Had to Be Applied in the Correct Manner.** "Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it" (Ex. 12:7). We have to appropriate the death of Jesus for our sins by faith. John 3:36 says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Cf. Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13-14; Hebrews 11:28.

**The Meat of the Passover Lamb Must Be Eaten in the Home.** "They shall eat the flesh that same night, roasted with fire, and they shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled at all with water, but rather roasted with fire, both its head and its legs along with its entrails. And you shall not leave any of it over until morning, but whatever is left of it until morning, you shall burn with fire. Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord’s Passover" (Ex. 12:8-11; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
Not only did God provide for their salvation from the death angel, but He also provided nourishment for their travel. Jesus not only saves us from sin, but He also provides daily bread for our spiritual lives. We must come to Him for our nourishment every day. What we ate for spiritual food yesterday will not carry over for today or tomorrow. It is a daily feasting on Christ. Change the metaphor and the need for daily sustenance becomes perfectly clear. "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

The Passover Lamb of God provides perfect protection from judgment of God. "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12-13). The apostle John recognized this great truth when He wrote that Christ "Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Romans 3:25 speaks of Christ "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith." Christ is the means whereby our sin is covered and remitted. Properly propitiation is "the turning away of wrath by an offering" (Leon Morris). God's wrath is His settled, controlled, holy antagonism against all sin. Propitiation is the appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God's own sacrifice. Christ is the Priest and the Sacrifice for our sin (Romans 3:25). The initiative is taken by God Himself in sheer unmerited love. He turns His own wrath away by His own blood. God's justice has now been satisfied. Our sin debt has been paid. His holiness is satisfied and God's wrath is turned away. John the Baptizer saw Jesus and he declared, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, 36). "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). "He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:12-14). Cf. Heb. 9:27.

The Passover meal was a memorial supper. It was to be celebrated every year as a remembrance of what Yahweh had done in delivering Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 12:42). Every year, every family would concentrate on this meal and the meaning of each of the elements of the meal. At least once a year every family in Israel knew what God did at the Passover in Egypt. Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples (Matthew 26:26-32; I Corinthians 11:23-34). That night of the last Passover the transition was made to the memorial supper of the Lamb of God who took away our sins. Properly officiated the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a reminder of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf. It is a message of the salvation of the family of God. "Do this in memory of Me."

The Passover Lamb's blood must not be trampled on. "For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to come in to your houses to smite you" (Ex. 12:23; cf. V. 7). The blood of the lamb is not to be put on the threshold. It is not to be trampled upon. Do not trample on the blood of the Lamb of God. How tragic when men demean the blood of God. The beloved Greek scholar A. T. Robertson writing on I John 1:7 enunciated: "Walking in the light with God makes possible fellowship with one another and is made possible also by the blood of Jesus (real blood and no mere phantom, atoning
blood of the sinless Son of God for our sins). John is not ashamed to use this word. It is not the mere 'example' of Jesus that 'cleanses' us from sin. It does cleanse the conscience and life and nothing else does (Heb. 9:13; Tit. 2:14). See in verse 9 both forgiveness and cleansing. Cf. I John 3:3" (Word Pictures in the New Testament).
Exodus 13:21-22

The Pillar of Fire

"The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13:21-22). The cloud symbolized God's presence. It guided the people of Israel during their wilderness experience. It changed from a cloud by day to a pillar of fire at night.

Two noted Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch made the following observation about the pillar of cloud:

The cloud had a miraculous origin and supernatural character. . . We can imagine the cloud as the covering of the fire, so that by day it appeared as a dark cloud in contrast with the light of the sun, but by night as a fiery splendor. . . When this cloud went before the army of Israel, it assumed the form of a column; so that by day it resembled a dark column of smoke rising up towards heaven, and by night a column of fire, to show the whole army what direction to take. But when it stood still above the tabernacle, or came down upon it, it most probably took the form of a round globe of cloud. . . The fire in the pillar of the cloud was the same as that in which the Lord revealed Himself to Moses out of the bush, and afterwards descended upon Sinai amidst thunder and lightening in a thick cloud. It was a symbol of the "zeal of the Lord," . . . This sign of the presence of God did not depart from Israel so long as the people continued in the wilderness."

We find examples of the LORD guiding and protecting the people with the cloud in Exodus 14:13-25. "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night" (14:19-20). When the cloud moved, the people followed it. When it stopped, everybody stopped. In the night time the cloud was a great column of brilliant light, and all night long the radiance form that cloud brightly illuminated the entire camp so that no night ever touched them for forty years. As soon as the sun rose, the fire became a white cloud. If an enemy was pursuing them that cloud moved around, got in between them, and turned a hot, fiery face to the adversary. If it were daytime, the cloud turned a dark impenetrable darkness over them. The cloud of glory hovered over the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-38. The Tabernacle in the wilderness was God's dwelling place on the earth among His people. When Israel entered the Promised Land the cloud became the Shekinah on the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple. In Solomon's Temple the cloud symbolized the LORD's presence (2 Chronicles 7:1-3).

The prophets spoke of the light that radiated from the cloud (Isaiah 60:1, 19; 9:2; Psalm 27:1). The ancient rabbis said, "Light is the name of the Messiah."

The closing of the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles had arrived and Jesus was teaching in the Temple in the Court of the Women. Four great candelabra, with four great golden bowls of oil, were
prepared for the celebration. As the evening approached a great crowd of people arrived for the lighting of the candelabra. When darkness fell four youths of priestly lineage climbed on ladders and lit the great torches. There was such a blaze of light that suddenly the darkness was pierced with such a light that it is said to have illuminated every street and square in the city of Jerusalem. The light could be seen for miles around Jerusalem. It is in this very court, at possibly the very moment of the lighting, that Jesus cried out: "I am the light of the world." In effect, Jesus was saying, "You have seen the blaze of the Temple illumination piercing the darkness of the night. I am the Light of the world. The light in the Temple is a brilliant light, but in the end it flickers and dies. I am the Light that lasts forever." He declared, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12).

The people listening knew that Jesus was referring to the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day that had guided their forefathers. They called to mind the Shekinah glory in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple. It was a reminder of the glory of God, dwelling among His people. Jesus used the "I AM" formula of Exodus 3:12; John 8:56-59. It was a supreme claim to Deity and the Messiah. G. Campbell Morgan said, "These are the worlds of the most impudent blasphemer that ever spoke, or the words of God incarnate."

Just before healing the blind man Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world" (John 9:5). Later Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness" (John 12:44-46).

The word "light" is a metaphor for spiritual illumination. When Jesus claimed to be the Light, He was claiming to be the possessor and bearer of the divine truth of salvation. He was the final and complete revelation of God to man. In Him, we find divine instruction. He was claiming to be the only one who gives everlasting salvation. He is the active light that conquers all spiritual darkness.

The Apostle John saw Jesus as the Light. "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:4-5). John the Baptist "came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (vv. 7-9).

Jesus Christ promised spiritual life to all who will believe in His light. He promises that we will "not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." No one could make that promise but God. He illuminates the spirit and soul of men who are in a state of spiritual blindness. He brings conviction by the light He gives. The light of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals our spiritual darkness and spiritual blindness.

Jesus said, "He who follows Me," i.e., trusts and obeys Him receives spiritual life. As the Light of the world Jesus must be followed like the pillar of fire in the desert. When we follow Jesus we enter into a permanent spiritual relationship with Him. The Apostle John testified to this fact: "This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7).
When we receive Jesus as the Light He comes into our lives and makes available to us a life that radiates from the life in communion with Him. We are the light of the world because of our intimate love relationship with Him. He gives a radiated light. Jesus told His disciples: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Mathew 5:14-16). You can not live the Christian life without the inner light that He gives the believer. He is our source of spiritual light. Our witness is a reflected light that comes from Christ. We give Him our darkness and He gives us His light. He is the Light that ignites the oil of the Spirit in our lives.

If that were not enough to light our soul and set it on fire, there is a day coming when we will look at the heavenly city all bathed in the translucent light of the glory of the Lamb of God. "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life" (Revelation 21:22-27).

That is not all. John went on to describe the New Heaven: "And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever" (22:5). Indeed He is the "bright and morning star" (v. 16).
Exodus 14:31

Servant of the Lord

The Hebrew word for servant, eber, denotes "God given authority as the accredited messengers of the Lord." The servant of the LORD was one who was chosen by Yahweh. The origin implies the position of a slave.

The highest title of tribute you could give a person in the Old Testament was to call him "the servant of Yahweh." Moses is called "the servant of the LORD," and "Moses My servant" (Joshua 1:1, 2, 13, 15; Numbers 14:31). Joshua, Moses "servant," who led Israel into the Promised Land was also called "the servant of the LORD" at the end of his life (Joshua 24:29). "Moses the servant of Yahweh" is almost the official title of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5; cf. Numbers 12:7-8). The author of Hebrews describes Moses as a servant in God's house when he writes, "Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant" (Hebrews 13:5).

The LORD speaks of His prophets saying, "I have sent you all My servants the prophets" (Jeremiah 7:25). Even Neuchadnezzar, king of Babylon is called "My servant" (25:9; cf. 27:6). "Nebud" thought he was king of the hill, but in reality, he was only an instrument in the hands of God. The redeemed are His servants, as we would expect according to Psalm 34:22. "The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, and none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."

The angel of the LORD called the coming Messiah a "Servant." "Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8). The LORD declares to Isaiah the coming of this same person when he says: "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isaiah 42:1).

As God's servant Jesus did what Israel could not do. Jesus quotes Isaiah 42:1-4 and says the prophecy is fulfilled in Him. Jesus, the Servant of Yahweh, does the will of His Father perfectly. He is in perfect harmony with the Father's intent and will. His first recorded words reveal His divine sonship and His mission in life. Even as a youth He said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49). Again He said, "I came to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38). The climax of His servanthood is declared in His own words: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The apostle Paul referred to the humble attitude of Jesus saying: "although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). Jesus Christ is the very essence of God, and in His incarnation was perfect humanity. In the person of Jesus Christ God became a humble house hold servant. Remember Jesus bowed down and washed the feet of Judas. What exalted humility! "Not My, Thy will be done!" It was by His own choice that He became obedient and died as our substitute on the cross.
In praise to Jesus the early church called Him, "Thy holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:27, 30; 3:13). We are immediately reminded of the title "Servant of Yahweh" in Isaiah (42:1; 49:6-7; 52:13; 53:11). Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Isaiah 53:11 is fulfilled in the death of Jesus on the Cross bearing our sins and iniquities.

As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

Adam plunged the whole human race into sin. We are all guilty of failing to be what God wants us to be. We fall short of bringing glory to God. However, the perfect Servant of Yahweh suffered and died bearing our iniquities on the cross. He is the Righteous One of Isaiah fifty-three. The LORD saw the anguish of His soul and was satisfied. Therefore, we believing sinners are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26). The LORD God applied the substitutionary death of Jesus to believing sinners and declared us justified by faith. The Suffering Servant of God accomplished our salvation. He has declared us right with God.

Jesus said that if we are to enter into the kingdom of God we must humble ourselves and become like helpless children. We enter God’s kingdom by faith. We come to Him helpless, unable to save ourselves, totally dependent on the mercy and grace of God. The Righteous Servant declares the unrighteous sinner just in God's sight.

Jesus' glory is closely associated with His death. After Judas left the upper room Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately" (John 13:31-32). God the Father was glorified in the death of His Son.

This lowly Servant was exalted and given a name above every name (cf. Phil. 2:6-8). The word "glorify" is used frequently in John’s Gospel (John 7:39; 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31-32; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4-5, 10). Jesus is exalted and glorified by God the Father because He humbled Himself by becoming a servant and died for the ungodly (Acts 2:33; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 1:3-4, 8).

What will He do with us if we humble ourselves in His sight? It is the only attitude God will use. He despises the arrogant. Let's come before Him with a contrite heart, humble and ready to serve Him.
Exodus 15:22-27

Sweet Water of Life

The LORD delivered the children of Israel out the bondage in Egypt with His mighty hand. What a demonstration of His sovereign power as Israel walked on dry land across the Dead Sea with the waters held back like a wall on either side. When the walls of water came back together on the Egyptian soldiers, it was total disaster. Israel looked back and saw the dead soldiers on the seashore. "When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses" (Exodus 14:31). After they had crossed the Red Sea, they broke forth singing the first recorded song in the Bible (Exodus 15). Compare it with the last song in the Bible, the victory song of redemption (Revelation 15). The result of God's deliverance was fear of the Yahweh and great rejoicing in Him. "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation . . . " (Exodus 15:2). "Sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted; The horse and his rider He has hurled into the sea" (v. 21).

Three days later in the wilderness "the people grumbled at Moses" (v. 24). How sad. They went from the bondage of slavery in a foreign land to the thrill and excitement of freedom and praise to the LORD God. Then they were overcome by their old way as slaves looking at life. They allowed their circumstances to dictate their attitude toward their leader.

Three days into the wilderness they found no water. And when they came to Marah, the water was so bitter that they couldn't drink it (v. 22-23).

Sin also makes our waters in life become bitter as gall. What makes your experiences so bitter and distasteful, blasted and filled with broken promises? Do you experience wounds that ache, and injuries that fester and infect the memory? Do you find yourself in the midst of a hot desert and the bitter waters of Marah will not sooth your parched life?

The people in the wilderness of Sin grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (v. 24). They failed to reason that if Yahweh can hold back the walls of water in the Red Sea can He not provide water.

Moses "cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them." God said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer. Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters" (vv. 26–27). It was nothing short of a miracle. God answered Moses prayer (v. 25). The wood thrown into the water was symbolic of God working a miracle in the water. There was nothing magic in the tree limb. God sweetened the bitter waters. Again, Moses and the people could say, "I saw God do it!"

God revealed Himself at Marah as YAHWEH ROPECHA, "I the LORD, am your healer." The word for "healer" means "to restore, to heal, to cure, or a physician." He not only heals physically, but morally and
spiritually. "The LORD your God heals." The word means "to mend," like the mending of a torn garment. It has the idea of repairing as being reconstructed and to cure as a diseased person is restored to health. "The LORD is the physician."

We all come to life with a need of healing. Our waters become bitter as gall. "Where will you be stricken again, As you continue in your rebellion? The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil" (Isaiah 1:5, 6).

Is there one who can bring healing to our broken lives? Have we learned how to make the bitter waters in our lives sweet? What changes the bitter experiences of your life in to the sweet fragrance of life?

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus opened the scroll to Isaiah 61 and read Himself into His messianic office. He read aloud in the synagogue at Nazareth, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18–19).

What did Jesus do for over three years? The disciples of John the Baptizer asked that question. They reported back to John, "the blind receive sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew 11:5). The Gospel writer Matthew said, "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them" (4:23–24).

Jesus treated all men as spiritual in essence. One day some men tore a roof up where Jesus was teaching in the room below, and let their friend down on a pallet attached to ropes. Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). The Pharisees hopped on it and said, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (v. 7). They were correct! "The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (v. 10). Jesus saw men as sinners in need of spiritual healing. As the God of grace He reaches down to us and brings us to the tree of healing. He knows the human heart just as He knows us individually. He deals with us as spiritual in essence, and He has never met a hopeless case.

Jesus is both the tree and the waters. "He (Christ) bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). Jesus alone brings spiritual healing to our broken lives. The tree of the cross is the only balm that can soothe our broken hearts and cleanse us from our sins. The cross of Christ sweetens the Marah's of life. He turns the cross into the tree that gives life.

One hot day in Samaria a woman met Jesus at Jacob's well. Jesus asked her for a drink of water since she had come with a rope on her bucket. In the conversations that ensued, Jesus offered her His living waters. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?" (John 4:10–11). Jesus responded, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him
shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (vv. 13–14).

The LORD who heals in the Old Testament is Jesus, the great Physician in the New.

When we get to heaven there will be no more crying there. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away... Then He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost’” (Revelation 21:4, 6). Come to Him and drink of the sweet waters of eternal life while there is still time. The last invitation in the Bible closes with these words: "The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost” (22:17). Will you not come and drink from His fountain?
Exodus 16:4-21

Bread from Heaven

"When the Lord's hand is in your mouth you're fed generously." That ancient saying from the Middle East is wonderfully true.

When we are hungry, we grumble. We gripe even if we think we might miss a single meal.

We are not the only ones who get spoiled. The "whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled . . . in the wilderness" (Exodus 16:2). Two million people were grumbling at Moses and Aaron because they were afraid they would miss a meal. Grumbling is serious business and has dire consequences. It is found six times in next few verses. "Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD" (v. 8).

What they really missed were their "pots of meat" (v. 3). They were so attached to their pots of flesh that they haggled Moses saying, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

The LORD wanted the people to trust Him. All they had to do was trust Him and walk in obedience. We think that it is so much easier and wiser to walk by sight. Then the Lord has an amazing way of knocking our false securities out from under us so we are made to trust Him. He makes us see that He alone provides our every need.

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction'" (v. 4).

Moses didn't provide the manna; God did. The LORD provided meat at night and manna in the morning for the next forty years, or until they crossed over the Jordan (vv. 13-21, 35). All of chapter sixteen gives instructions on gathering and eating manna. Every day for forty years they saw God provide! It should have produced a song of praise every morning and evening. "I saw God do it!" It was His supernatural gift. They did not work for it. They did not earn it. It was without money and without price. It was a free gift from God. All they could do was appropriate it. Every morning each individual bent over, picked it up and ate it!

However, the manna met only a temporal need of the body for a short period. The Israelites came to loathe the manna. They were forever grumbling and complaining about it. Everyone one of them who ate it, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness because of unbelief and disobedience!

The message is clear. When you love Him, you don't have any problem obeying Him. "If you love Me you will keep My commandments," Jesus said.

Jesus Christ is the true manna. He is the Bread from heaven.
Jesus tells us about bread that gives life. It is not the commodity, but a Person who gives life that begins the moment someone believes on him and it satisfies throughout eternity. The life He gives is eternal because He is eternal. The person who believes on Jesus receives eternal life. He is the giver of life for all who will believe on Him. Just as the Yahweh provided manna in the wilderness of Sin, Jesus is the heavenly provider of the bread of heaven that issues in eternal life. A person who eats His bread will never die.

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.' " Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe" (John 6:29–36).

Jesus used a figure of speech that means to believe on Him. We must appropriate the bread He gives. We do so by faith in Him. Jesus is not referring to the Lord's Supper or the "sacraments." The Lord's Supper came a year later. Jesus would not have used the symbolism of the Lord's Supper while speaking to the Jews who were arguing with Him. They wouldn't be able to understand Him. "Eating" and "drinking" is simple faith in Him and the provision of eternal life He has made for us. We "eat" and "drink" Jesus by believing on Him as our personal Savior. Note how often in the context Jesus refers to believing on Him (vv. 29, 35, 40, 47, 69). His death gives life to all who believe on Him. The only possible meaning is the spiritual appropriation of Jesus Christ by faith. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (v. 47). Read Galatians 2:16, 20 for Paul's clear teaching on this subject.

"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." (John 6:48–51).

Jesus is our manna. We can have all of Him that we desire, and we can never desire too much of Him. We definitely will never be disappointed in Him. May the Lord cure us of our spiritual anemia and cause our hearts to feast daily at His table.

Jesus went on to stress that He came from the Father in heaven and we can have fellowship with Him. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever" (6:56–58).

Jesus has the last word on manna. He said, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it" (Revelation 2:17). Jesus Christ is our Bread from heaven. Come, let's feast on Him daily! We have life–sustaining fellowship
as we abide in Him. He alone gives us grace and strength for each day. Could it be that we are now enjoying the heavenly food that we shall partake of in Christ for all eternity?
Exodus 17:1–7

The Rock

Israel's wandering in the desert was a trial of faith. Yahweh was teaching them to trust Him alone for all their needs. It was a slow and painful learning process.

Exodus chapter seventeen is another of those hard learning experiences. Israel was camped at Rephidim, "and there was no water for the people to drink" (v. 1). God had already miraculously provided them with meat, manna and sweet water. Could He not provide in a marvelous way again? Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" (v. 2). They kept it up: "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (v. 3). It got so bad that the people were getting ready to stone Moses when he prayed to Yahweh (v. 4). Moses was desperate. He "cried out to the LORD."

"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink. ' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel" (vv. 5–6).

This "staff of God" is the one Moses used to strike the waters of the Nile and turned the water to blood (7:20). The staff was a symbol of power. By holding it in his hand Moses was demonstrating dependence and trust in God. There was no magic in Moses staff. The power lay in God's presence with His chosen leaders. God provided the water.

The apostle Paul used this powerful story of God providing water in the wilderness as an illustration in the Christian's life. Just as the Israelites had all experienced guidance, protection and the presence of God under the Shekinah cloud of glory, the believer in Christ has also been blessed. This mystic cloud was the symbol of the presence of the Lord with the people. The Corinthian believers too, were miraculously delivered by God's grace, and were baptized into the body of Christ. Israel received the manna and the Christians have received the bread of heaven and the water of life. God is generous with His saving grace.

All of these spiritual privileges did not keep Israel from falling into sin. Not all of the great spiritual blessings we have received from Christ keep us from drifting into sin. Just like Israel, we have a responsibility to obey Christ.
In 1 Corinthians 10:1–6, Paul tells us the Israelites had continual access to the supernatural source of supply of water and food. A. T. Robertson says, "The rabbis had a legend that the water actually followed the Israelites for forty years, in one form a fragment of rock fifteen feet high that followed the people and gushed out water."

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved" (1 Corinthians 10:1-6).

Paul calls the water a "spiritual drink" enjoyed by Israel in the desert. He definitely states here the preexistence of Christ in symbolic form. The apostle makes it clear that Christ was the source of this supernatural water that saved the Israelites from perishing at Rephidim. The provision of water from the rock is seen at the beginning of the wilderness journey (17:1-7) and again near the ending of their wanderings when Moses sinned in a fit of anger by hitting the rock twice (Num. 20:1-13). Paul drew the conclusion that Christ had "followed them" around in the wilderness providing water. All of the Israelites in the wilderness ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink. They were drinking from a spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was the Christ.

He is also the source of supernatural water for Christians (cf. John 4:10-14). Jesus told the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." He is the constant source of supply of spiritual drink and spiritual food for believers today. However, it was provided only after Jesus was struck by the fiery wrath of God on the cross. The Holy Spirit came from that smitten Rock to dwell in all believers.

At the last day of the feast of the Tabernacles Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39).

Perhaps the apostle Paul had these words of Jesus in mind when he wrote to the Corinthian believers: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The reference is to a definite act in the past, the inward experience of the Holy Spirit when we were baptized into the body of Christ. Water baptism is a beautiful symbol of what has already taken place in the believer when he was born again. The baptism of the Spirit occurs at conversion when the Spirit enters the believing sinner, gives him new life, and makes his body the temple of God. All believers have experienced this once-for-all baptism. It took place at the same time you were born again. The moment you believed on Christ you were baptized in the Spirit.

The "filling of the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18ff) has to do with the Spirit’s control of our lives. To be filled by something means "to be controlled by" it. Believers are commanded to be filled, and we can be if we confess known sin, yield all to Christ and ask Him for the Spirit’s filling. This is a repeated experience, for we constantly need to be filled with spiritual power if we are to overcome sin and glorify Christ. We belong
to the body of Christ from the moment we were baptized by the Spirit. We were placed in the body of Christ, and now our bodies belong to Christ by the filling or control of the Spirit.

The evidence of the Spirit’s baptism at conversion is the inner witness of the Spirit (Romans 8:14–16). All of the believers in the Corinthian church had been baptized by the Spirit, but not all of them spoke in tongues or performed miraculous signs (1 Cor. 12:30). The evidences of the Spirit’s filling are power for witnessing (Acts 1:8; Eph. 5:19ff) and Christ-likeness (Galatians 5:22–26).

Because of the gift of the Spirit, which is received at conversion, we are all members of the body of Christ. We have received the spiritual water that flows from the Rock. Let us constantly draw from that spiritual life He gives.
Exodus 25; Leviticus 1-16

Sacrifices of the Covenant

The most fundamental thing we can say about God is His holiness. He is just and He must punish sin. The flip side of that same coin is His love in which He provides atonement for the sinner. How can a holy and righteous God be just and at the same time the justifier of the believing sinner?

The Law of the Covenant revealed the holiness of Yahweh and therefore exposed the sinfulness of sin. We can conclude with the apostle Paul, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Every individual the world over comes up short of the glory of God. We do not live up to His expectations for humanity (Romans 3:23).

The Law could not save anyone. It was never intended to save anyone. The Law was given to redeemed people. Ever since the Passover night in Egypt Israel was a redeemed people. They belonged to Yahweh. He purchased them. Therefore, the Law revealed how a redeemed people should live. A holy God must have a holy people and this holiness must embrace the whole life of the redemptive nation. Law never was and is still not a means of salvation. It was never meant to be a means of salvation for anyone.

God's purpose in redeeming Israel was for her to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6). Therefore, in the words of the apostle Paul the Law was a schoolmaster or tutor to lead Israel to Christ (Galatians 3:23-26). 1 Peter 2:5, 9 tells us now that we have come to Christ all believers share in the priesthood of the believer. The priesthood belongs to all with Christ the High Priest. All believers are priests and all priests need to function in His kingdom.

The Covenant with Israel and the Law were ratified with a sacrifice (Ex. 24:3, 7-8). Various sacrifices are introduced to the new nation in Exodus and Leviticus. God came and met with His people on the Mercy Seat over the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 25:17, 21-22; 26:34). Sin was removed by means of the propitiatory sacrifice on the lid or covering of the Ark. The blood of the sin offering was sprinkled and atonement was made on the lid or covering of the Mercy Seat. Justice and mercy met there. It was the Old Testament throne of grace.

All of these various sacrifices and blood rituals were prophetic types or prefigurements of the great sacrifice Christ would later make when He offered up Himself for the sins of His people. Every sacrifice anticipated the true and perfect sacrifice that Christ would offer. These were shadows of the coming perfect sacrifice for sin in His death. Therefore, Christ is the end of the sacrifices in the Old Testament. The Romans in A. D. 70 destroyed the Temple and there were no more sacrifices for sin by the Jewish people.

The Bible is imperatively clear in its message in both the Old and New Testaments that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). "The wages of sin is death…” (Romans 6:23a). Someone has to pay the debt for the penalty of sin. Who will pay it? This "shedding of blood" is the
payment of the prescribed death penalty. Without it, there is no covering for our sins. Therefore, "… the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (6:23b).

All of these sacrifices in the Old Testament were signs and a token pointing to the real atonement which was to come later. Every Old Testament saint gained entrance into heaven on credit.

A. H. Strong boldly expressed it when he wrote, "Before Christ's sacrifice, God's administration was a scandal—it needed vindication. The Atonement is God's answer to the charge of freeing the guilty." Therefore, God can be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus . . . For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Romans 3:26, 28).

Every sacrifice anticipated some aspect of the true and perfect sacrifice, which Christ would offer. These were shadows of the coming perfect sacrifice for sin. The Hebrew sacrifices came to an end when Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead. The sacrifices taught that the people could only be saved by a substitutionary death, offered on their behalf. All of these sacrifices of the Covenant were mere shadows of the perfect vicarious substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. Cf. Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Zechariah 9:11.

Jesus Christ is the "ransom" for our sins. Jesus said the Son of Man came "to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This "ransom" is the payment in order to deliver someone from captivity or bondage. Therefore, we are redeemed from the captivity of the bondage of our sin by the ransom payment of Christ. The ransom payment is the blood of Jesus Christ. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us" (Ephesians 1:7). Our redemption depends solely on the price paid in the blood of Jesus. Jesus paid it in full! You can not add one thing to the finished payment.

The LORD has written a new covenant of forgiveness upon the heart of believers which issues in forgiveness. The prophet Jeremiah in 31:33-34 clearly states, "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." The blood of Jesus is the fulfillment of this new covenant and we celebrate that covenant in His blood every time we come to the table for the Lord's Supper. His body is broken and His blood is poured out for many. In the vicarious shedding of His blood, an offering has been offered up for our benefit.

The apostle Paul wrote, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). Therefore, we have a perfect righteous standing before the LORD based on faith in Christ. Now "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

Here are some more Scriptures for you to ponder regarding this grand ransom by Christ. Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Mark 10:45; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; the whole book of Hebrews, especially 9:1-10:39; Romans 3:24-25; 5:9; 1 Corinthians 10:16; Colossians 1:19-20; 1 John 1:7; 4:10; Revelation 1:5; 5:9.
Exodus 25

God Dwelling with Man

The LORD God is pursuing an intimate love relationship with you. He will not end that pursuit until He has accomplished His eternal purpose in your life.

From Genesis to Revelation, we can see God progressively moving closer and closer to the heart of man.

We hear God walking with Adam in the late afternoon in Genesis. He also walked with Enoch, talked to Abraham, communed with Moses and the prophets.

In the Tabernacle, we find Him dwelling among His chosen people. "Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it" (Exodus 25:8-9). The Tabernacle symbolized the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people. "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel" (v. 25).

The Tabernacle moved about the wilderness with the people. Yahweh became a pilgrim with His pilgrim people. He occupied a tent with tent dwellers. The tent of meeting symbolized God in the midst of His people dwelling among them leading, guiding, providing and protecting. Moses tells us "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34-35).

This Tabernacle in the wilderness was a copy of the real one in heaven. "Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own" (Hebrews 9:23-25).

In Solomon's Temple God came and dwelt in a permanent dwelling place with His people in the Promised Land.

"It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:11-12).

However, when the people of Israel turned to idols, the LORD destroyed Solomon's Temple and gave His people over to Babylonian captivity for seventy years. King Nebuchadnezzar was only an instrument in the hands of Yahweh.
The Temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:12; 6:15, 16). It seems that God did not dwell in Herod's Temple that replaced Zerubbabel's. There was no Ark of the Covenant and Shekinah glory in it. By Jesus' day, the Temple had become a den of thieves. The Roman General Titus in A.D. 70 destroyed Herod's Temple.

The key to our understanding of the Tabernacle is Christ. It was a symbol, or picture and prophecy of the man in whom God would become incarnate and dwell with His people. He will be the final and eternal dwelling place (Hebrews 2:14-18). Hebrews contrast the pattern in heaven and the copy in Jerusalem. In summary the author of Hebrews said, "the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (Hebrews 8:1-2).

Moreover, God came even nearer to man in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. He is God with us. The apostle John describes God coming near to His people in these words. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. . . No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:14, 18). Paul wrote, "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus began His ministry by cleansing Herod's Temple and the religious leaders wanted an explanation. Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21). The LORD God tabernacled Himself in the person of His Son Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the incarnation is stated by the apostle Paul, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Furthermore, Jesus Christ rose from the dead to live within you. Probably the greatest and most thrilling mystery revealed to Paul was this marvelous truth. It is "the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:26-27). Imagine that. A Jewish God taking up residence in a bunch of Gentiles! Cf. Eph. 2:21-22; 1 John 4:4).

You are the Temple of God! "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). From the moment you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior He came by His Holy Spirit to dwell within your heart. He now wants to settle down and make Himself at home (Ephesians 3:14-19). The apostle Paul uses a word for "dwell" meaning to settle down in a dwelling, to dwell firmly in a place. The idea is to live in a home. To settle down and feel completely at home as a permanent residence. Where does He have His residence? It is "through His Spirit in the inner man" (v. 16). It is that part of the believer that has experienced spiritual renewal by the Spirit of God. This took place at the new birth when the Holy Spirit regenerated us. Our bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit where Christ dwells because Christ purchased us at the price of His own blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom
you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

All of these earthly tabernacles and temples were short lived in time. All were destroyed. Even these old frail bodies will turn to dust one day. However, there is an eternal Temple, that shall not be corrupted by death. It is eternal, "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ sets us free from the power of sin and death. The only condition for us to have that eternal dwelling place for Him is to believe on Christ as our Savior.

We are part of something even greater in God's eternal plan of redemption. Ephesians 2:19-22 tells us God is building His Temple and it involves you, me, and every believer down through the history of the church. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." The New Testament church is a living, growing organism and new believers are included in God's Temple (cf. 1 Peter 2:5). Both Jewish and Gentile believers are being "joined together" into this "holy temple." Here the word for temple is naos which always refers to the sanctuary or holy of holies as is true in John 2; 1 Cor. 3; 6). Paul is not referring to the entire Temple area with its open courts (hieron).

God chooses and places individual believers into His Temple. He builds it. What is His purpose? It is to "become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."

God came down and met with His people in the Shekinah glory over the Temple. Now He dwells in His new temple which is constructed of spiritually living regenerated believers in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer who is His temple (John 14:17; Romans 5:5; 8:9, 11). His corporate dwelling place is composed of all believers both Jewish and non-Jewish.

When is the last time we read of the Tabernacle in the Bible? Revelation 21:3 is a picture of the new heaven, new hearth and the New Jerusalem. The apostle John says he heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them."

He goes on to tell us, "I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22-23).

Are you ready for that great and wonderful day when He shall come with trumpet sound?
**Exodus 25:17-22**

**God's Throne of Grace**

Many scholars have observed that almost all expressions employed in describing the significance of the tabernacle are also used in reference to heaven. Perhaps, it is because the earthly tabernacle was patterned after the one in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers 8:4; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:11-12).

Nothing was left to chance in something as serious as a holy and righteous God meeting with sinful man. This was serious business. The Tabernacle symbolized the only way in which a guilty sinner could approach God.

God revealed the way of approach for man in the books of Exodus and Leviticus. Man can come to God only through the shedding of blood. We have observed incipient teaching on this subject in Genesis 3:21; 4:4; 8:20-21; 15:12ff, and clearly in 22:8ff.

The clear teaching in the Tabernacle symbolism is the atonement for the guilty sinner on the Mercy Seat. God declared His holiness and revealed the purpose of redemption. He declared how He could be a just God and at the same time justify the guilty sinner (Romans 3:26-30).

The Tabernacle vividly pictured the place of sacrifice in the flowing and sprinkling of the blood and the coming of the perfect Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. Inwardly it symbolized the place where God met with sinful man on the Mercy Seat.

The Tabernacle was composed of two rooms separated by a thick veil or woven curtain. The first room was entered from the outside and was called the Holy Place. The second room was entered through the Holy Place and was called the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. There was only one piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies and it was the Ark of the Covenant with the Mercy Seat on top of it.

The Ark of the Covenant was a chest about 23 inches wide, 39 inches long, and 23 inches high, made of wood and covered inside and out on all sides with gold. Inside this chest was a golden jar containing manna, the two tablets of the Law and Aaron's budded rod. The chest was mounted on four legs and had four rings for two gold-covered poles by which the ark was carried. King David called the Ark "the footstool of our God" (1 Chronicles 28:2).

The lid on top of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat or kapporeth. It was the cover, and signified the covering or removal of sins by means of expiatory sacrifice. The Mercy Seat signifies the place of propitiation. It is the place where justice and mercy meet. The blood of the innocent victim on the Mercy Seat met the holy demands of God's Law. The Old Testament throne of grace was the place where God exhibited His presence, and met man in His grace.

The chest lid of solid pure gold was 23 inches x 39 inches. It had two cherubim (pl. of "cherub") facing each other molded onto the lid. These golden cherubim probably resembled winged angels in God's presence symbolizing His holiness.

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat. Make one cherub at one end and one cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim of one piece with the mercy seat at its two ends. The cherubim shall have their wings spread upward, covering the mercy seat with their wings and facing one another; the faces of the cherubim are to be turned toward the mercy seat. You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

The Tabernacle made it clear that the sinner could not approach God in his own merit. He stood condemned in the eyes of God. "The soul that sins will surely die." "The wages of sin is death." That is not the figment of the imagination or the paranoia of a sick mind. It is the objective truth. Sin separates man from God. A holy God shut sinful man out of the Tabernacle by the walls and the veils. Our sins shut us out from the presence of a thrice holy God.

Within the Holy of Holies was the Shekinah glory, which symbolized in visible representation God's presence between the cherubim over the Mercy Seat. In the sprinkling of the blood, a holy God met sinful man on the Mercy Seat.

Only on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, once a year, did a sole person enter the veil of the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat (Leviticus 16:13-16). It foretold in picture form the day when our Great High Priest would enter the veil and make atonement for our sins.

Upon His throne of grace, the LORD God met sinful man at Calvary. Jesus Christ shed His pure holy blood for our sins once-for-all turning away the wrath of God and tearing down the wall that separates us. At the cross God judged and dealt with our sin. Cf. Hebrews 10:10-14, 19-31; Romans 5:8-10; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:13.

Christ is our Mercy Seat (Romans 3:24-25). He is our "propitiatory sacrifice." The believing sinner is "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed . . ."

"He (Christ) had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).

Jesus Christ entered a Tabernacle not made with hands. "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer" (Hebrews 8:1-3). "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to
come, *He entered* through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Jesus Christ is our propitiatory sacrifice. He is the only means of turning away the righteous wrath of God toward the offending sinner. The pagan idea of propitiation is not found in the New Testament concept of propitiation. Man in his sinful nature can not change the disposition of a holy and righteous God. Sinful man can not bring a holy God into a favorable attitude. God is propitiated by His own provision made in the vicarious, substitutionary expiatory sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ at Calvary. Man sinned and brought upon himself the wrath of God. Jesus annuls the power of sin to separate God and man. Jesus Christ is our covering for sin. His one sacrifice embodies all of the symbolic sacrifices in the teachings of the Tabernacle.

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

God's wrath is His settled, controlled, holy antagonism against all sin. The propitiation is the appeasement of the wrath of God by the love of God through the gift of God. Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest and at the same time the sacrifice for our sins. God took the initiative in His sheer unmerited love and turned His own wrath away by His own blood. God's perfect justice has now been satisfied. Our sin debt has been dealt with in full payment. The holiness of God is now satisfied. Therefore God's wrath has been turned away. Thank God! If we choose to go to hell it is because of our own choice. God has made perfect covering of our sins on His Mercy Seat.

The apostle Paul summarized beautifully what God was doing. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

God came to where man was to meet him in fellowship. When the sinner could not go to heaven because of his coming short of the glory of God, God in the person of His Son came from heaven to earth "that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). God issues an invitation for each of us to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Let's "keep on drawing near" with confidence to the place where God meets us in Christ.
The Tabernacle of Israel was divided into two rooms by a thick veil of blue, purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen. On it was woven the cherubim. In the Holy Place was located the Altar of Incense, the lampstand, and the table for the bread of Presence. In the second room, the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies were the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, which was a solid gold lid placed on top of the Ark. It was also the place of propitiation where sins were covered by the sprinkled blood of the innocent sacrifice. The Jewish historian Josephus said the veil was four inches thick, and that horses tied to each side could not pull the veil apart.

The purpose of the veil was to bar everyone from entering the symbolic presence of God except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. The only way the High Priest could stand alive on the other side of the veil was by sprinkling on the veil the blood of his substitute. The purpose of the veil was to keep people out of the Holy of Holies. It told sinful man that he could not approach God except by His prescribed means. It stood in the way to God's presence. It was a closed door. The only person who could enter the Holy of Holies and remain alive was the High Priest with the blood of the substitute sacrifice (Exodus 26:31-35; Leviticus 16).

Moreover, Aaron's sacrifice foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of our Great High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary. As long as the veil in the Temple was unrent the true sacrifice had not yet been provided. However, when the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom it meant the true sacrifice had been offered up to the LORD God and accepted by Him as the perfect offering for sin.

The body of Jesus was a "veil" that hid the inner glory of His deity. With the exception of Jesus Christ all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Only in Christ dwelt the glory of God. Only that which was sinless and perfect could enter the presence of the LORD God. "In Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness of Deity to dwell in Him" (Colossians 1:19).

The apostle Peter referred to the day when he saw that inner glory burst through the veil on the Mt. of Transfiguration. Peter wrote: "... we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitneses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased'—and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Matthew tells us on that occasion Jesus took with Him Peter, James and John up to a high mountain by themselves. "He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him ..." Moses and Elijah appeared with Him talking about His coming death. Matthew then writes, "... a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, 'This is My beloved Son, with whom I am
well-pleased; listen to Him!" (17:2-3, 5). Here was the Shekinah glory in the face of Jesus! The veil of His flesh could contain Him no longer. The glory of His deity burst forth. (Cf. Philippians 2:5-11).

The veil is symbolic of the incarnate life of Jesus, and the tearing of the veil was His death on the cross. The death of Christ opened a new and living way into the presence of God. At the same time, the purpose of the physical Temple in Jerusalem ended. Since Jesus had offered up to God the Father the perfect sacrifice for sin, it was no longer needed.

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Something happened in the Temple in the very moment that Christ died on the cross. Mark 15:37-38 tells us when He died, "Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed His last. And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (cf. Matthew 27:51). Only God could do that because the top of the veil was beyond man's reach. A way was opened into the presence of God, who no longer occupied the Holy of Holies in the Temple, but heaven, itself. There was nothing behind the veil in the Holy of Holies in Herod's Temple! The Ark had been destroyed when the Babylonians destroyed Solomon's Temple. The death of Christ takes us into the presence of the LORD Himself. The shadows and types of the Tabernacle and Temple were turned into substance.

It is as if God the Father did, as any Jewish father would have done at the deathbed of his only son. It was customary for Jewish mourners to take hold of their outer garment with both hands and tear it. The "hands" of God tore the thick veil of the Temple from top to bottom.

Jesus Christ is our all-sufficient propitiation. His blood on the Mercy Seat that turned away the wrath of God, and opened the way into the presence of God for all men who will believe on Him. We now have free full entrance into the presence of God the Father through His Son. The only way in was through the blood of atonement. The rent veil changed at once form a barrier to an open way into the Holy of Holies. The writer of Hebrews explains:

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Jesus said to His disciple Thomas, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

A few moments later Jesus said to another disciple, Philip:

Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe
that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves (John 14:9-11).

With outstretched arms, He invites us to come and join Him in the Holy of Holies in the eternal heavenly Sanctuary. Will you join me there?
Exodus 27:1-8

The Altar of Burnt Offering

The L ORD God is a holy God and He must have a holy people.

The sacrifices of Hebrew worship vividly pictured the sinfulness of man and the holiness of the L ORD God.

Why the need for all these bloody sacrifices we encounter in Hebrew worship? Sin. Sin is ugly. Sin is just as bloody as the sacrifice. If you think the bloody sacrifices are repulsive to sensitive people, think how repulsive our sin is to a holy and righteous God. Sacrifices and offerings were essential to worship offered to God from the time of Abel. God gave Moses specific instructions governing these offerings at Mt. Sinai.

The mizbeach or "slaughter place" was the brazen altar (Exodus 27:1-8). It stood at the entrance to man's approach to Yahweh. It was the first thing the worshipper saw as he approached the Tabernacle. It was just within the gate, easily accessible, unavoidable and unmistakable. Every man who passed through the courtyard had to pass by the bloodstained altar for animal sacrifices, or he could not enter. Man can approach God only by means of the sacrifice.

Every sacrifice was that of a life standing in the place of another. The priest made "atonement" for the people by offering the sacrifice. The word "atonement" means, "to expiate," from "to cover, to cover it over before God." It took away the power of sin to come in between God and man. Neither does it mean to cause a sin not to have occurred, nor to treat it as not existing. That would be impossible, because of the reality of sin. The fact is "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The object expiated is the soul of the sinner. The blood covered the soul of the sinner from the holiness of God. The power to make atonement was in the blood of the sacrifice. Each of these sacrifices in the Old Testament anticipated the substitutionary atonement or sacrifice of Christ.

Sinful man has no access to God except as a sinner atoned for by blood. Because Yahweh is holy we can say, "all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Hebrew 9:22). Sin is a deadly serious spiritual disease. We live in a day when people take sin lightly as if it is a case of flue. It is not in the eyes of God. "The wags of sin is death" (Romans 6:23. "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). It is serious business.

The fire that burned continually on the brazen altar completely consumed the sacrifices. It was a bloodstained reminder of sin. The continually smoking sacrifices were a constant daily reminder of just how bad our sins are in the sight of God. It is ugly and distasteful because our sins are ugly in His sight. "He (God the Father) who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). That is how repulsive our sin is to God.

Jesus Christ is the brazen altar, the offering for sin and the Great High Priest all at the same time. The cross was an altar for the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.
Jesus is our all-sufficient Savior. He gave His all upon the altar of sacrifice for you and me. He held back nothing. The fires of the holy wrath of God burned against Christ as our substitute for sin. The Divine wrath was being wrought out against Him. He was receiving the judgment of sin, not for His own sins, but ours.

Christ became our representative for sin and died in our place. "He [God the Father] made Him [Christ the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus died on the cross, all of our sins were imputed to Him. Our sins were charged to His account. Christ had no personal experience with sin. It is just like the Jewish worshiper who placed his hands on the head of the animal and confessed his sins. God treated Christ as though He had actually committed those sins. He didn't die for His own sins; He died for my sins. Jesus died as my representative in my place on the cross. "The wages of sin is death." He died my death. Christ has paid for all of my sins and your sins. Because we have trusted Christ as our Savior the LORD God no longer holds our sins and trespasses against us. Moreover, God has put to our account the very righteousness of Christ!

It reminds us of Isaiah 53:4-5, 10, 12.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed. . . .

But the Lord was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring,  
He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. . . .

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.

The guilty sinner had forfeited his life by sinning. He would either have to die to pay his sin debt or find an acceptable substitute. The innocent must die for the guilty party. Christ went to the cross and bore the intense fire of the judgment of God against sin. Sin was judged and the wages of sin was paid in full.

The writer of Hebrews asked, "how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).
If the Israelite rejected the sacrifice at the brazen altar he shut himself off from the mercy and grace of God and suffered his own death for sin. Whoever rejects Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice for his sins is forever cut off from God and suffers eternal punishment for his own sins. However, every sinner who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).
Leviticus 1:1-17

The Whole Burnt Offering

Five principal sacrifices and offerings were essential to the Tabernacle and Temple worship.

The tribe of Levi was set apart as priests and officers of the state. Those who were not descendents of Aaron assisted the priests, guarded the Tabernacle, and moved it about the wilderness. There were choirs in King David's time and instructors of the people. Tithes supported the Tabernacle and Temple, the Levites and the poor.

The Jewish religion absolutely forbids human sacrifices. Normally the animal sacrifices were made in the front of the Tabernacle or Temple. The bloody sacrifices were from the animal kingdom and were without blemish and not less than eight days old and not older than three years of age.

The worshiper legally purified himself, and brought to the priest the animal with which he had identified himself and his sins by laying his hands on its head (Leviticus 1:4). The word for "to lay the hands on" has the idea of leaning or resting by supporting oneself on the animal. The worshiper was symbolically identifying himself with the animal as his substitute by pressing heavily on it with his hands. The worshiper was personally involved in the slaughtering, skinning and preparing the sacrifice. The priest performed the rituals in the sacrifice.

The Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1:3-17), olah is "that which goes up," and is probably referring to the smoke of the totally consumed sacrifice going up to God. It consisted of a male animal of cattle, sheep or fowl and was entirely consumed, except for the hide, by the altar fire. The skin was given to the priest and the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled around the altar. This daily offering was made for the nation and for individuals to secure atonement (v. 4). A guilt or sin offering often preceded it.

The central idea of the burnt offering was entire consecration to God since the fire consumed the animal. It symbolized self-surrender of the whole person to the Yahweh. Because of personal sin, it was necessary for the individual to die spiritually. There was no reservation since the sacrifice was yielded to the LORD on behalf of the individual.

Jesus Christ came to do the will of His father. What greater demonstration of that fact can we find than in the totally consumed offering of Himself on the cross? Jesus said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). He came to bring to completion that work (4:34). He was completely dedicated to the will of God. He prayed, "Not my will; Thy will be done." It totally consumed Him. He set His face toward the cross and did not waver. It was all or nothing.

All of the animal sacrifices pointed to the death of Christ. Christ our consecration was wholly consumed on the altar by the fiery judgment of God. He was totally consumed by the will of God in order to obtain our justification.

Hebrews chapter ten places the emphasis on the one sufficient sacrifice of Christ to atone for sin.
By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:10-12).

This was a once-for-all sacrifice, never to be repeated like the animal sacrifices that could only point to and teach about the coming of the perfect sacrifice for sin. They couldn't make any one perfect in the sight of God (10:1-3). Every sacrifice was a constant reminder of the sins of the people. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (v. 4). However, "for by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (v. 14).

Jesus Christ came and paid our sin debt in full. Every believer is covered by His sacrifice.

Not only do we have a perfect sacrifice in the Lamb of God, but we also have a perfect High Priest "who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, but because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself" (9:27).

Christ did not offer His perfect sacrifice in the Temple made with hands, "but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. . . . How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (9:12, 14).

There was no reservation on the part of Christ. There was complete yieldedness to the will of the Father on our behalf. As the writer of Hebrews makes very clear, His perfect sacrifice makes it possible for the believer to consecrate himself as a living sacrifice to God. We now belong to Him. He purchased us. "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20). We now become living sacrifices. Because of Christ's sacrifice we can now be what God originally intended us to be. We can live to righteousness. Paul expressed it this way:

Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:1-2).

He changes us from the inside out. Now that we have a righteous standing before God we are to live righteous lives before Him. Paul uses a technical term for offering a Levitical sacrifice. Our whole person becomes a sacrifice of worship through our daily experiences. Let us make a once-for-all presentation by placing our bodies at the disposal of God. We can now be a holy, living sacrifice that is well pleasing to Him. Our sacrifice is living in contrast to the slain sacrifices in the Temple. Paul admonishes us to "walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma" (Ephesians 5:2). Now that I have been redeemed my whole life is worship. It is now my lifestyle. This transforms the way we view our lives and God's purpose for us on this earth. Our lives can now be a "fragrant aroma" to God rather than the stench of sin and death. Let the sweet fragrance of Jesus rub off on you. We, too, can now be consumed by the will of God. We have become a whole burnt offering to God.
The desire of the believer in Christ is, "Not my will, but thy will be done." God's grace transforms us from selfishness to a lifestyle that is consecrated to God. We yield to Him as the Lord and Master of our lives. In that submission to the will of God we find joy, peace and abundant life. A living sacrifice produces the fruit of the Spirit in the believer's daily life.

If you have never done so will you make that once-and-for-all commitment of yourself to Jesus Christ right now?
Leviticus 2:1-16

The Grain Offering

The grain offering (*minhah*) consisted of fine flower, baked goods, or grain from the ear (Leviticus 2:4, 5, 7, 14). This offering was also called meal, meat, food and thanksgiving offering.

The fine flower was mixed with oil and incense (v. 1). Because the only difference between the daily meal and the offering was the addition of the incense, the grain offering was a constant reminder to the people of Israel that God gave them their food and they in turn owed Him their lives. Their economy and livelihood depended upon the agriculture. The pagan Canaanites worshiped Baal who was the god of fertility in agriculture and life. They thought he determined the rains and the drought and fertility. However, Yahweh reminded His people that He was sovereign over the environment. A handful of the fine flower and oil was burned on the altar. It was sweet fragrance to Yahweh. This was the worshipers way of saying "thank you" for all the provisions of life. The rest of the grain offering was given to the priest for his food. This was part of God's provision for the priest as he served Him. The leftovers were also part of the fellowship meal of the worshipper and his family. The variety in the offering made it possible for all worshipers, regardless of their social and economic means, to bring an offering of thanksgiving to God.

This offering signified thanksgiving to Yahweh for their daily bread. Yahweh provided their crops and flocks, not Baal. It was offered in relation to the blood offerings, and usually followed the burnt offering.

The grain offering prefigured the perfect life of Christ lived in obedience to the Father.

Jesus used the illustration of the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying to bring forth fruit. Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23-24). Jesus looked beyond His death to His glory that would follow. The grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, but it comes alive again as a sprout and bears much fruit. Jesus was always reminding His disciples that He would die and rise again. There can be no glory without the sacrifice of the whole burnt offering. Jesus Christ died as our substitute. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 5:6-8. The death and resurrection of Jesus produced a sweet smelling aroma to the Father. It was the aroma of obedience. Jesus told His disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34).

His whole life was a sweet aroma to the Father who said with deep pleasure, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." His life was a perfect life lived in perfect obedience to the Father. The fine flower in the offering may speak of His life of perfect intimate fellowship with the Father. He never experienced sin. His whole life was a sweet fragrance in perfect tune with the Holy Spirit, the oil that is mixed with the perfect life.

The life of Christ is to those who are being saved a sweet fragrance of eternal life, however, to those who are perishing it is the stench of death and eternal punishment. There is nothing so sweet, pure and wonderful as the sweet smell of Jesus in our lives.
The grain offering is a beautiful picture of the believer in Christ who has appropriated the burnt offering of Christ by faith. The person who has been justified by faith in Christ is filled with eternal praise to Him. We receive our spiritual nourishment, our daily bread from Christ. It is a privilege to offer back to Him a portion of what He has so graciously given to us.

The apostle Paul reminded the believers at Philippi that their faithful ministry was an offering to God. He looked on their gift to him as a spiritual sacrifice that they laid on the altar to the glory of God. Paul wrote in His thank you letter to them for their missionary support these words of encouragement. "I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen" (Philippians 4:18-20). What a privilege to be involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now! In service, we offer back up to him a small gift that says "thank you. " Even He provides that which we offer back up to Him. That's grace!

Do we pause daily and thank Him for the jobs He has provided for us? Do we offer up thanksgiving to Him for His daily provisions in our lives? He is a great provider, not only of our physical needs, but our spiritual as well.
Leviticus 3:1-17

Peace Offerings

The Peace Offering or zebach is also called the "fellowship offering." It is literally a "sacrifice of happiness."

It consisted of an ox, lamb or goat, male or female. The priest sprinkled the blood on the altar, while the liver, kidneys and fat were burned on the altar. God claimed the richest part of the animal. The priest was given the breast and right thigh. The worshiper was to eat what remained. It is the only sacrifice, which the worshiper shared by eating a portion of the sacrifice (7:15).

The peace offering was symbolic of the peace that already existed between the worshiper and Yahweh because of the atonement. Therefore, it was time to celebrate. It was never offered to obtain peace, but as a celebration of its existence. It is a picture of the fellowship between God and the believing sinner based on the blood sacrifices. This offering pictures the blessings and powers which salvation has secured in the death of Christ. It is a thanksgiving praise offering.

Christ is our peace. "Now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Ephesians 2:13-14). Sin has separated man from a thrice holy God, and only the sacrifice of Christ on the cross can reconcile us to God. It takes Christ's atonement to remove the barrier. The blood of Jesus Christ has brought us near who were far off because of our sin and unbelief. The word for "peace" that Paul uses is eiro and means to join together. The blood of Jesus has brought together that which was separated by sin and enmity. This peace is dependent upon Christ alone.

We sinners are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith" (Romans 2:24-25). Each person who believes on Christ is justified. He is declared righteous, not made righteous. It is a judicial act whereby God justifies those who believe on Christ as a free gift. It is out of His grace, based upon Christ's death, that God declares us righteous. God could not declare anyone righteous without having a solid basis for doing it. God can make that declaration because of the propitiation in the blood of Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 9:5 the word for propitiation is used of the Mercy Seat, or the place of atonement on top of the Ark of the Covenant. The penalty for our sins has been paid in full by the death of Jesus. On that basis, God can declare us justified. Therefore, Christ is our peace. He has made peace for us through His death. We can now celebrate with thanksgiving for His bountiful blessing.

"For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:19-20). In this full statement of the Deity of Jesus Christ Paul says God has reconciled people to Himself through Christ. Christ was equal to the task because of His deity. His blood satisfied the just demands of the law that sinful man had broken. By His death our Lord Jesus bound together again a holy God and sinful man. By God's grace and reconciling power, our attitude toward God has changed.
"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-19). God removed our enmity and changed our hearts. God took the initiative to reconcile us to Himself. God did not need to be reconciled. He is not the problem. We sinners have the problem, and God reached down through His Son Jesus Christ to bring us to Himself. He did this by turning away His own holy wrath toward sin and making it possible for us to come into His presence by means of the blood of Jesus.

The apostle John opened his first epistle telling us, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ . . . . if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:3, 7). A. T. Robertson observed,

Walking in the light with God makes possible fellowship with one another and is made possible also by the blood of Jesus (real blood and no mere phantom, atoning blood of the sinless Son of God for our sins). John is not ashamed to use this word. It is not the mere "example" of Jesus that "cleanses" us from sin. It does cleanse the conscience and life and nothing else does (Heb. 9:13; Tit. 2:14) (Word Pictures, 1 John 1:7).

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Is this not what the writer of Hebrews has in mind as he concludes his book with these words? "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Hebrews 13:15).

The person who has been justified by faith in Jesus Christ breaks forth spontaneously in praise to God. We enjoy fellowship and peace with God and our fellowman because of the peace that has been established through the perfect sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. These peace offerings were always preceded by the daily burnt offering in the Tabernacle and Temple worship. Therefore, it was a thanksgiving offering for salvation completed. It was a time of joyful celebration and thanksgiving for God's blessings of fellowship.

What better way to close than with one of Paul's doxologies?

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).
Leviticus 4:1-5:13; Leviticus 5:14-6:7

Sin & Guilt Offerings

The Sin Offering (chatta'ah) (Leviticus 4:1-5:13) was a compulsory offering for the covering of sin. It could be an ox, ram, kid, doves, or pigeon or even fine flour depending on the nature of the case. This offering covered sins committed out of weakness or waywardness, unintentionally. It did not cover sins of presumption in defiance of God, or open sins of rebellion. It did not deal with sins in general, but particular sins.

Numbers 15:30-31 reminds us that there was no propitiation for the defiant person. The idea is that of shaking the fist raised up against God. Highhanded sins were not covered, and only the judgment of God could be expected for such acts.

The worshiper brought his animal to the Tabernacle, and in the presence of the priest, he placed his hands on the head of the victim thus identifying himself with his sacrifice. The animal was slain and the blood was sprinkled either on the horns of the great altar or in the Holy Place toward the veil. The fire on the brazen altar consumed the fat. In some instances, the flesh was given to the priests. Unconsumed parts were burned outside the camp.

The Guilt Offering (asam) was similar to the sin offering. The procedure and purpose was much the same, however the guilt offering was a special kind of sin offering. The life of the suffering victim was accepted as a substitute for the life and guilt of the offender. It would appear that the common thread running through the guilt offering was an offense that caused loss to either God or man. The animal made expiation before God for the individual. Restitution was in addition to the sacrifice of the animal. Not only did the offerer have to make restitution, but he had to pay a penalty equal to a fifth part of the value. The worshiper made a personal confession of specific sin that he had committed (5:5). This knowledge brought about a deep sense of guilt and humiliation. Because of his personal knowledge of sin he must obtain forgiveness and make restitution.

Jesus Christ's death on the cross was the full and final sin offering.

Our sinless Savior voluntarily took upon Himself all our sins that we might have God's perfect righteousness. He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), "holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (7:26). The apostle Paul declared, "He [God] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). No wonder Jesus cried, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" (Matthew 27:46).

Christ is our propitiation and our expiation. As our propitiation God's wrath toward sin has been satisfied and turned back by the death of Christ (Romans 5:25; 1 John 2:2; Romans 3:23). As our expiation He covers all our sins and restores the relationship between God and the believer. He removes our sin by the sacrifice of Himself that satisfies God.

Christ "offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27). He did this once and for all, never to be repeated like the Aaronic priesthood. His was an all-sufficient sacrifice. No daily sacrifices were needed after He went to the
Jesus Christ "committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:22-24). He was the sinless Lamb of God bearing the sins of others. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." Peter tells us the same thing Paul was teaching.

In fact, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah preached the same prophetic message in Isaiah 53:4-6, 10.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Him.

But the Lord was pleased  
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;  
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,  
He will see His offspring,  
He will prolong His days,  
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.

"You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5). The totally pure sinless Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, came and died as our sin offering. Christ covers all our sins. Every sin we have committed or ever shall commit is under His blood. His sacrifice on the cross for our sins is all-sufficient. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). Every sin must be covered in order for us to stand before a holy God. Sins of open rebellion as well as unintentional weakness of the flesh must be atoned for because God is holy. "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2).

The death of Jesus is a satisfactory substitutionary sacrifice to provide forgiveness of all our sins.

However, the appropriation of His death is not universal and not automatic. It is the responsibility of every individual to put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ to save him. God has done everything He can possibly do in order to save you. Christ went to the cross and died for your sins. The Holy Spirit is tugging
in your heart, perhaps causing a terrible uneasiness as you read this. He is preparing your heart and mind to receive Christ as your Savior. Take a few moments right now, turn from your sins and unbelief, and believe on Jesus Christ as your Savior. Confess to Him that you need His provision on the cross, that Jesus died for you and trust in His death and resurrection to save you right now. Go ahead, take a few moments now, and thank the LORD God for the perfect sin offering of Jesus Christ Himself on your behalf. Ask Jesus Christ to be your Savior.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) was a rich man who came to Jesus and not only believed on Christ, but also made restitution for his deliberate sinful acts. He stood up and did something which the rich young ruler refused to do in Luke 18:22. Zacchaeus from his own personal volition chose to give half of what he owned to the poor, and repay fourfold all that he had wronged. Here was the evidence that Christ had changed his life. The restitution is always based upon the substitutionary sacrifice for the sinner. Atonement came first, then the restitution. All of the offerings begin with the vicarious sacrifice. A substitute died in the place of another. Because of the atoning sacrifice restitution could then be offered, just as the peace offering demonstrated that peace had already been accomplished through the atonement.
Leviticus 16
Hebrews 9-10

The Day of Atonement

What is the most important day of the year? It has been called, "The Sabbath of Sabbaths."

The Hebrew annual fast day was the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). It came on the 10th of Tisri, roughly around our October. On this most solemn day the people confessed their sins. After prescribed ceremonies with offerings, the high priest only on this day of the year entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant. It was a day of humiliation and awful reminder of the holiness of God and sinfulness of man. The veil in the Holy of Holies separated the two. The people fasted from the evening on the 9th to the evening on the 10th. This helped to insure a proper heart attitude of penitence and faith.

This was the most important day on the Hebrew calendar because of the significance of this fast. By a special sacrifice, the sins of a whole year were covered. Atonement was made for all the sins of the entire nation (vv. 16, 21, 30, 33), and the sanctuary (vv. 16-19, 33). The high priest made an offering first for himself and the priests' (v. 3), and then two goats as a sin offering were sacrificed for the people (vv. 5-10). Aaron washed and put his regular high priest clothing on and offered his own and the people's burnt offering and sin offering (vv. 23-28). The remains of the animals were carried outside the camp and burned.

Even the Day of Atonement was a temporary provision. It had to be observed year after year until Christ came as the Lamb of God to take away sins. It could not produce perfection in the heart of man. An imperfect man cannot be a perfect priest. An imperfect sacrifice can not produce a perfectly clean conscience.

The Book of Hebrews is the best commentary on the fulfillment of the typical sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. It demonstrates for us that Christ’s sacrifice for the people’s sins, when He died on the cross, was not an annual Day of Atonement fast to be repeated each year, but a once for all complete and final sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-26; 10:12).

On this special day two goats were selected and lots were cast to determine which one was to be slain as a sacrifice and which one would be the scapegoat (vv. 7-10).

The high priest took the blood of the slain goat (vv. 15-19) into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the Mercy Seat. It symbolized a perfect acceptance with God through the sprinkled blood. He then sprinkled blood seven times before the Ark of the Covenant. This signified a perfect standing before God by means of the shed blood.

The slain goat (v. 8, 15-19) is a beautiful type of Christ's death as a covering for sin (Romans 3:24-26). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Jesus paid the price for our sin debt. It vindicates the holiness and justice of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Our sin bearer died in our place (Isa. 53:4; Gal. 3:13). Keil and Delitzsch note the reason for making use of the two goats is that it was physically impossible to combine all the features that needed to be set forth in the sin offering of one animal. Cf. Heb. 10:4, 12-14; 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24; Jn. 1:29. The blood of Jesus cleanses us of every sin (1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:14; 7:25).
Jesus not only paid our sin debt by dying on the cross for us, but He also carried our sins far away. The live goat on Yom Kippur was the goat of removal, symbolizing the removal of Israel's sins (Lev. 16:8-10, 15, 20-22). Our Great High Priest Jesus Christ needed no sacrifice for Himself because He was sinless. Therefore, He alone could carry away our sins.

"Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Lev. 16:21-22). The live goat or scapegoat is a type of Christ's death as putting away our sins before God (Heb. 9:26; Rom. 4:25; 5:1; 8:33-34). He lifts up and carries our sins away never to return! The fate of the scapegoat is eventual death. He is released into the wilderness to eventually wander around and die. He is taken out into a solitary place where he can not find his way back to the camp. The disappearing goat is placed in an area where it was impossible for him to come back. The live goat suffered just what the sinner without Christ would suffer (Isa. 53:6, 12; 1 Peter 2:24).

By faith we laid our sins on Jesus and He bore them in His own body in His death on the cross. It is a visible symbol of our sins being further and further removed and carried away. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). The sins on the animal were utterly lost, as though they had never been. What a picture of God removing our sins and remembering them no more.

Charles Simeon was reading about the high priest laying his hands on the head of the goat and confessing his sins thereby transferring them to the head of his offering. "The thought came to my mind," he said. "What, may I transfer all my guilt to another? Has God provided an offering for me, that I may lay my sins on His head? Then, God willing, I will not bear them on my own soul one moment longer. Accordingly I sought to lay my sins upon the sacred head of Jesus" (H. C. G. Moule, Charles Simeon. London, 1948, p. 25f).

During the Old Testament times, no final offering for sin was made because each year the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and sprinkled the blood. Only Christ offered the complete and perfect sacrifice for sin. It was His death that effected the New Covenant. His sinless life qualified Him to make the perfect sacrifice for sin and pay our sin debt. The death of Christ to pay our sin debt was all-sufficient because He only had to die once. His sacrifice was final and complete. He dealt with our sin once and for all. We do not have to bring supplemental offerings and sacrifices for our sins because Christ is sufficient and final.

F. F. Bruce observed, in Christ "the shadows have given way to the perfect and abiding reality." It is "a pale copy of the reality," wrote William Barclay, "a ghostly pattern of the one true sacrifice—the sacrifice of Christ... The only priest and the only sacrifice which can open the way to God for all men is Jesus Christ."

It is "not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption... For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own" (Hebrews 9:12, 24-25).
Moreover, because of the supreme importance of Christ's sacrifice for sin all who reject His sacrifice can only bring eternal damnation upon themselves. It is unforgivable. There is no other way to come to God (Acts 4:12).

The blood of Jesus Christ obtained our "eternal redemption." Its value was far more significant and greater than any animal sacrifice. We have a greater high priest, a greater temple, a better covenant with better promises, and an immeasurably greater sacrifice than the Levitical priesthood. This sacrifice accomplished a "one for all" perfect redemption (Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:10). The word for redemption in the New Testament is the idea of a release on receipt of the ransom payment. The death of Christ has liberated us by the payment of a ransom. Thus, He has redeemed us from the penalty of sin. He purchased us while we were in sin's slave market and He set us free. He liberated us by the payment of the ransom, which is His blood.

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement" (Lev. 17:11). "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of our sins." The Talmud said, "There is no atonement except with blood." The only blood that will work is the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7; Heb. 9:11-22; 13:20; 10:4, 19-20).

The Old Testament saints came every year to this most solemn day and in the back of their minds was the question what if there is just one sin that is not covered? What if my priest or I didn't perform the ritual just right; will I escape the wrath of God? What if . . . ? In every case redemption, or releasing on the payment of a ransom, is the deliverance from a situation from which the individual is powerless to liberate himself, or a penalty which he could never have paid. What if there is just one sin that is not covered? You could never do enough to cover that one sin because God is holy. He can not and will not look upon sin.

Moreover, the sacrifice of Christ relieves us of our load of guilt. Animals couldn't do that.

The people quietly waited outside of the tabernacle for the high priest to come out. As he approached them he raised his hands in blessing and cried out: "You are clean from all your sins!"

To everyone who is washed in the precious blood of Jesus He comes from within the veil and announces: "It is finished!" "You are clean from all your sins!"

It takes all of the Old Testament sacrifices, offerings, feasts and fast put together to help us to comprehend something of the magnitude of what Christ accomplished for us in His death and the shedding of His blood. No one offering, not even the Day of Atonement, could completely explain what He did for us on the cross.

The sacrifice of Christ doesn't have to be offered again, nor does anything need to be added to it. It has been paid in full. It is sufficient. It is eternal. All you need to do is receive it as God's gift to you. There are no additions, no come ons, no service charges, no rebates, no sales charges, no taxes, no handling charges, no hidden small fine print or fast talking salesman will call. It is paid in full! Just receive it, enjoy it, and rejoice in Him. Believe on Christ right now. Ask Him to save you.

The writer of Hebrews gives us the perfect invitation. "Inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will
appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him" (Hebrews 9:27-28).
Leviticus 17:11

**Blood of Atonement**

The only way God deals with our sin is through the blood of the Lamb of God.

The very thought that the LORD God and sinful man are brought together in an intimate love relationship is expressed in the word "at–one–ment." Behind this word is the presupposition that alienation and hostility have been overcome. Reconciliation and forgiveness are also associated with atonement (Romans 5:11).

Atonement is needed because of the depravity of man (Romans 1-3). The LORD God is a holy God and He can not look upon sin. The word "atone" has the idea of "to wipe out," "to erase," "to cover." It is often translated "to make atonement," "forgive," "pardon," "purge," and "reconcile."

In the Scriptures, the means of atonement was the offering of a bloody sacrifice. God is seen providing the sacrifice and man performing the rite. Man is not seen initiating the relationship, but God. God made the provision for sin in an act of grace. The shedding of blood is the central action in making atonement for sin. This theme is developed through out the Scriptures.

Leviticus is a bloody book. You read only a few verses and you are into blood, sacrifices and offerings. There is the shedding of blood and sprinkling of blood on altars and veils. You can't escape it. It is not beautiful, but it was never meant to be beautiful. It fully meant to paint a picture of the awfulness of sin. Sin is not so beautiful as portrayed every night on our TV. It is ugly and it is deadly. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sins will surely die."

Sin is always sinful. God has never treated it lightly. It outrages the holiness of God. The "wrath of God" is God's opposition to all sin (Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28; Ephesians 2:3).

When the Hebrew heard the word "blood", he most likely thought of a violent death and in particular to denote the blood of sacrifices. There was a close connection between life and blood in Hebrew thought. No reference is found to blood as indicating life distinct from death. Leviticus 17:11 is not referring to life as existent after the blood has been poured out, but to death. It is a life given up in death. The life ceases to exist when the blood is poured out. The shedding of blood stands for the bringing to an end of a life in the flesh. It is referring to physical death. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement."

In the Old Testament, the shedding of blood in sacrifices has a special significance. The sprinkled blood is a "covering" for sin. The life of the animal was poured out in death as a substitute for the people. The animal's life was given up on behalf of the life of the people. Judgment was carried out by transferring the sin of the people to the animal sacrifice. The Passover lamb and the scapegoat are substitutes for the offerer. The animal sacrifice was a sign that death had already taken place. Therefore, the death angel passed over that individual. It is the termination of life, the infliction of death that atones. Death had violently taken place as a substitute in the Passover sacrifice (Exodus 12:13).
The shedding of blood signifies a violent death, killing or murder. Life is associated with blood that flows through our veins. Life was given up in the pouring out of its precious blood. Death occurred. The dominant thought of the Old Testament is the infliction of death rather than the release of life. The natural interpretation when we think of blood and shedding of blood is death. The "blood of Christ" is a clear expression for the death of Christ. Blood is the symbol of sacrificial death; a life poured out in death. It is not the releasing of life, but the end of the life, death. Redemption is only possible by blood life poured out. Hebrews 9:22 summarizes the whole Old Testament teaching on sacrifice. "And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

The whole Old Testament sacrifices find their fulfillment in the blood of Christ in His sacrificial death (Hebrews 9:7-28; 13:11-12). God achieved our full complete comprehensive redemption through the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:20; 9:26). The substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross is all–sufficient and perfect to deal with all our sin and guilt.

The Old Testament saints anticipated the death of Christ for their sins by offering animal sacrifices. Jesus Christ is the substitute that has met the holy demands against the sinner. The sinner was forgiven only after the priest offered the bloody sacrifice anticipating the death of Christ for sin (Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7; 19:22; Numbers 15:22-28). Paul said, "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us" (Ephesians 1:7-8).

By offering the sacrificial blood, the worshiper was acknowledging his own guilt and the just penalty of death. By the atonement, God was "passing over," "overlooking" and "covering" sins until Christ came. When Christ came and died He did not pass over or cover it, but took it away (John 1:29; 1 Peter 2:24). God's infinite holiness was satisfied in the death of Christ (John 19:30). The sacrifices in the Old Testament anticipated the efficacious blood of the perfect Lamb of God. The atoning blood of the animal sacrifices, by symbolizing the shed blood of Christ, served to cover (atone) sin until the day when Christ would actually deal with the sin. The death of Christ proved that God was righteous in passing over the sins for which the animal sacrifices had been shed before His coming. God had forgiven sin based on the promise of a sufficient Lamb. The death of Christ proved God to be righteous in all that He promised to the Old Testament saints.

Peter had the sacrificial system of the Old Testament in mind when he wrote 1 Peter 1:18-19. So did Paul in Romans 3:24-25 and John in Revelation 5:6-9. Jesus is clearly reminiscent of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 when He speaks of the "ransom" in Mark 10:45.

The expression "blood" and "cross" are synonyms for the substitutionary death of Christ. The expression "blood of Christ" is used more frequently in the New Testament than either the death of Christ or the cross of Christ. Christ made an atoning sacrifice by the offering up of His blood (Romans 3:25). We have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:2). The only remedy for sin is the shed blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ (John 1:29). The blood of Christ refers to the violent, voluntary, substitutionary death upon the cross for men. The "blood of Christ" reveals the significance which His death bears for sinful men (Rom. 5:9). It is a once-for-all accomplishment. We have been "sprinkled" by His blood (Heb. 9:14; 10:19-23; 12:24; 13:20; 1 Pet. 1:2, 7). We have "redemption" through His blood (Rom. 3:24), "propitiation in His blood through faith" (3:25; 1 John 4:10), "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9), "peace through the blood of the cross" (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, 22). The death of Christ has effected our reconciliation with God.
The blood of Jesus removes from the believing sinner the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9). God is the one who removes His own wrath by the sacrifice He provides. To "propitiate" signifies "the turning away of anger," usually by an offering. Christ is that offering provided by God.

The life of the sinner was under the sentence of death until Christ by the shedding of His blood in the death on the cross released and cleansed us of all sin (Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; 5:9). Christ bore the divine penalty and God is now free to forgive all sin and declare the believing sinner just in His sight (1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

The physical application of His blood occurred only on the cross of Calvary. However, the benefits of the finished work of Christ continue to be applied to the believer today (1 John 1:7). Those who "drink" His blood and "eat" His flesh appropriate by faith the benefits of His death and find shelter from the wrath of God (John 6:53-56).

The blood of the Passover lamb sprinkled on the doorposts stood between the firstborn and death when the death angel passed through Egypt. God wrought His wrath on the firstborn of Egypt. Only the blood of the Passover lamb saved the firstborn that night. However, the only begotten Son of God gave Himself as a "propitiation" for the sins of the world. His blood covers all our sins if we will only believe on Him. It was a reminder that the children of Israel were saved from death by the blood of the lamb.

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:25). The New Testament makes the teaching clear that the death of Christ on the cross provides atonement. The language of the Old Testament is expressed in the world "blood" in the New Testament. The "new covenant" of Christ is sealed by His blood, once-for-all.

The death of Christ is the fulfillment of all that was prefigured by the sacrifices in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 5:7; John 1:29, 36; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The blood of Jesus saves us from the death of sin and eternal condemnation. It is by His blood we are cleansed and forgiven. The Passover and the Lord's Supper proclaims "the message of the Cross" (1:18, 23; 2:2, 8).

1 John 1:7 reminds us that "blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all [every] sin." The blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse from all sin. It purges the guilty conscience form dead works and removes the sense of guilt by perfect forgiveness. God has made a covenant with the believer in the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:25). The shed blood of Christ consummates our redemption. Moreover, "we have confidence to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Hebrews 10:19).

The blood of bulls and goats was incapable of taking away our sins (Heb. 10:4). Christ has taken away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:24-28). Hebrews 9-10 interprets the cross of Jesus in terms of a sacrificial system, particularly the Day of Atonement. What the Temple sacrifices were unable to accomplish, Christ actually did on the cross. The Law and its sacrifices were "a shadow of the good things to come" (Hebrews 10:1). We now have boldness to enter into the Holy of Holies "by the blood of Jesus" (10:19). Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood to make atonement for us (9:24). By His dying He broke the veil of His flesh and sprinkled His own blood upon the mercy seat in the heavenly tabernacle in the presence of God. Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (9:25f).
In Hebrews 10:19 "blood" stands for all that is implied in the sacrifice of Christ. This sacrifice provides "a new and living way" for all believers. "Blood" in Hebrews refers to the death of Christ (9:14f; 12:24; 13:11ff). Christ presented His offering in a heavenly and perfect sanctuary (9:12). Something is done in the death of Christ, which enables God to justify the ungodly who believe on Christ, and at the same time enables God to remain a righteous God. "The wages of sin is death," and Christ died the sinner's death.

Christ was represented a sacrifice for sin in the same sense in which the sin offerings in the Old Testament were sacrifices. The New Testament teaching on Christ's death makes it clear that Christ's blood was shed as a sacrifice which God Himself provided to meet His holy demands against sin. Jesus was the substitute for sinners, who bore our guilt, suffered the penalty of the law in our stead, and reconciled us to God. Christ is the sacrifice that perfectly fulfills all that is foreshadowed in the Levitical system. He is the one sacrifice that removes all sin. All that the sacrifices dimly foreshadowed is perfectly fulfilled in Christ. He did what the animal sacrifices could never do. The blood of Christ cleans the soul from guilt.

Blood is associated with the covenant (Heb. 9; 13:20); remission (Matt. 26:29; Mk. 14:24; Heb. 9:22b; Isa. 53; Heb. 13:12); sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 2:10-11; 9:13-15); redemption (Eph. 1:7; Jn. 1:29; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9; Acts 20:28); propitiation (Rom. 3:25); peace (Eph. 2:13; Col. 1:20); reconciliation (Col. 1:20-22; Rom. 5:10ff); victory (Rev. 12:11); justification (Rom. 5:9); and through it entrance into the Holy of Holies (Heb. 10:19-20).

Now that Christ has died for sin the only requirement, regardless of the degree of guilt, is to believe on Him as your Savior. The death of Christ on the cross answered the divine judgment against every sin. God is uncompromised in His holiness. God justifies the sinner who does nothing more than believe in Jesus. He can remain just and righteous because of the substitutionary death of Christ who paid the debt for the believing sinner.

The resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit are proof that God is satisfied with the death of Christ for our sins (Rom. 4:25; 1 John 2:2; Romans 8:16; Galatians 4:5f).

"In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).
God claims the first fruits of everything. He has first claim on our lives.

The feast of the first fruits is closely associated with the Passover and the unleavened bread. They were held consecutively on the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth days of the first month of the Jewish calendar.

Although the Passover was established the night Israel left Egypt, it was not celebrated until forty years later in the Promised Land. The feast of first fruits was not observed until the nation entered the Promised Land. The feast of first fruits was a celebration of God's provision in the Land. For forty years they had eaten manna, the food of the wilderness journey. Now it was time to celebrate the promise of God's abundant harvest in the land of provision.

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest'" (Leviticus 23:9–10). Barley would be the first grain to ripen in Israel. After the barley came the fruit, olives, grapes and finally wheat.

The Jewish people at the time of the sowing of seed would mark off certain barley in the field. When the time the harvest season arrived, men would carry a sickle and basket and on command reap the specially designated grain. The men would march to the Tabernacle bringing a sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest to the priest. The priest would wave the sheaf accompanied by burnt and meal offerings. "He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord" (vv. 11–12).

This first fruits offering represented the whole harvest yet in the field. Men gave thanks for the harvest while it still stood in the field. God still claims first fruits of everything. It belongs to Him, even before it is harvested.

Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb who shed His blood to redeem us. The apostle Paul saw the resurrection of Christ as the first fruits of a greater resurrection day in 1 Corinthians 15:20–25.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Jesus described Himself as the grain of wheat that fell into ground and died, that it might spring to life and bring much fruit. Jesus said to His disciples, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."
Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23–24). The hour of His glorification was His crucifixion and resurrection.

The feast of first fruits was the third day after Passover. Christ rose from the dead as the first fruits of the resurrection on the third day from His death.

Christ is the first representative of the whole resurrection harvest that will take place when He returns. On the day in which He rose from the dead Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’ Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and that He had said these things to her" (John 20:17–18). Our Great High Priest was waving the first fruits of the resurrection harvest!

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the presence of the Father in heaven as the representative of the whole church that is still in the field waiting the harvest. The first fruits is a living testimony to God's sovereignty and says to a watching world, "Because I live, you shall live also."

The tomb is empty! Jesus rose from the dead! He is alive. He is the first to rise from the dead in expectation of a greater harvest.

Jesus is the first fruits designated by God the Father until the day when He shall come again to gather in His redeemed. One great resurrection day He will gather the harvest from the grave of those who have been laid to rest in the grave, and gather all who are alive and remain in one grand harvest of all the redeemed of all ages.

The apostle Paul declared the next great even with these words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

And if that great expectation weren't enough Paul tells us another great "first fruits" that we have already experienced. He wrote to the Roman Christians, "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). We have received the down payment, the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. There is more to follow! Can you imagine what it is going to be like in heaven in the presence of the LORD God for all eternity? We have only tasted what it is going to be like when He comes for us. The presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees the promise.

The apostle John was permitted to see what is taking place in heaven, about the throne of God. He heard the new song they are singing about the throne. He saw the Lamb, and those who follow Him wherever He
goes. "These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4). He goes forth with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:29–31).

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Even today.
Leviticus 25:25;  
Ruth 1-4

Our Kinsman Redeemer

The "nearest kinsman" or "kinsman redeemer" is a Goel. The word means to redeem, receive or buy back.

Provision was made in the Law of Moses for the poor person who was forced to sell part of his property or himself into slavery. His nearest of kin could step in and "buy back" what his relative was forced to sell (Leviticus 25:48f). The kinsman redeemer was a rich benefactor, or person who frees the debtor by paying the ransom price. "If a fellow countryman of yours becomes so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold" (Leviticus 25:25; cf. Ruth 4:4, 6).

The nearest of kin had the responsibility of redeeming his kinsman's lost opportunities. If a person was forced into slavery, his redeemer purchased his freedom. When debt threatened to overwhelm him, the kinsman stepped in to redeem his homestead and let the family live. If a family member died without an heir the kinsman gave his name by marrying the widow and rearing a son to hand down his name (Deuteronomy 25:5; Genesis 38:8; Ruth 3-4). When death came at the hands of another man the redeemer acted as the avenger of blood and pursued the killer (Numbers 35:12-34; Deuteronomy 19:1-3).

Goel was used of things consecrated to God (Leviticus 27:13–31), of God as redeeming man (Exodus 6:6; Isaiah 43:1; 44:22; 48:20; 49:7), and those redeemed by God (Isaiah 35:9; 51:10; Job 19:25). The right of redemption and the office belonged to the nearest kinsman, or "near of kin, near relative" (Leviticus 25:25; Ruth 3:12; 4:1, 6, 8, etc.). Yahweh is the great Kinsman of His people. When their liberty was lost in Egypt, He rescued them from bondage. "I am the LORD . . . I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Exodus 6:6).

The ancient patriarch Job complained that no one came to redeem him! His faith is seen reaching out and proclaiming that Yahweh will provide His Goel! "As for me, I know that my redeemer (kinsman) lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth" (Job 19:25). Job's hope looked to the coming Messiah. He affirmed his faith that his redeemer will come to the earth.

One of the most beautiful passages where the word Goel is found is in the life of Naomi in the book of Ruth. The book of Ruth is a story about Naomi's Goel. Naomi was the poorest person in Israel, but her kinsman was the richest man in Israel. Because of the death of her husband and two sons, she and her daughter-in-laws lost all income and their homestead. Naomi was living in a foreign land and sensed the loss of her homeland and relatives. She became bitter. The secret of all her daughter-in-law Ruth had was in union with Boaz. The nearer kinsman had the first right to the property and Boaz came next after him. If Ruth’s closer relative would not redeem or purchase it, Boaz was prepared to do so. The man who was nearest of kin agreed to redeem the piece of land until he found out there was a young widow involved. He graciously backed out! That left Boaz as the rightful nearest of kin who had the privilege of redeeming her land and her with it. The Moabitess and the Jew became one. Boaz was nearest of kin to her deceased husband (Ruth 2:1). He was able to redeem by paying the price of redemption (2:1), and he was willing to redeem the land (4:4). That is what makes this epic so beautiful.
Four things were required in order for a kinsman to redeem:

- He must be near of kin. (Leviticus 25:48; 25:25 Ruth 3:12–13)

- He must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:4–6). He must be free of any calamity or need of redemption himself.

- He must be willing to redeem (Ruth 4:6ff)

Redemption was completed when the price was completely paid (Leviticus 25:27; Ruth 4:7-11).

**Jesus Christ is my Goel.**

*Jesus is my nearest kinsman through the incarnation.* "For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). He was like us in every way except that He never experienced sin. "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). In order to identify Himself with us He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). "Jesus you are my kinsman redeemer. You had the right to redeem me." Thank God, He has the right to redeem all that I have lost.

*Jesus has the power to redeem me.* "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). He assumed our debt and paid it with His life. Cf. Hebrews 1:2–3).

*Jesus is willing to redeem me.* Jesus Christ "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14; cf. 1 John 1:7; 2:2; Hebrews 10:12; 4:16; 2:17). Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Jesus is referring to His voluntary, sacrificial, vicarious, and obedient payment to effect the release of slaves or captives from bondage. "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:17-18).

*Jesus has paid the price in full and I have received my redemption.* "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The invitation is still open. Jesus is the sinner's nearest kinsman. It is our responsibility to lie at the feel of our Goel, and say, "Cover me with your blood and grace" (cf. Ruth 3:9). "For this reason I also
suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). Kenneth Wuest observed, "I have believed," is in the perfect tense in the Greek text. It is in its full meaning, "I have believed with the present result that my faith is a firmly settled one." God is keeping guard over him. "Persuaded" is perfect in tense. Paul had come to a settled persuasion regarding the matter and was fixed in an immovable position. You could not budge him (Wuest Word Studies). There are some things of which I am absolutely sure.

Our redemption is precious. Our salvation has been purchased at a great and personal cost because the Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins in order to deliver us from them. Our forgiveness is based on the ransom price of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us" (Ephesians 1:7). The redemption work of Jesus Christ delivers believers from the slavery to sin. The means of redemption is the substitutionary death of Christ as a sacrifice for our sin. It is "through His blood" which is the ransom payment (cf. Eph. 2:13; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Only the death of Christ completely satisfied God's justice (Rom. 3:24-25).

Go back to ancient Israel in the time of the Judges. Can't you see Naomi holding her grandson in her arms? Her neighbors said, "A son has been born to Naomi!" They named him Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of King David (4:17), of the lineage of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:5). God had redeemed her.

The words of Naomi's friends are a fitting reminder of God's grace in our lives. "Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer (or closest relative) today, and may his name become famous in Israel" (Ruth 4:14).

Do you need help is believing on Jesus Christ as your kinsman redeemer?
In John chapter three Jesus used a historical illustration to teach Nicodemus about the importance of believing in His coming death. Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole as a cure for a punishment after the people sinned (cf. Num. 21:4-9). Jesus used the same imagery to teach that He will be lifted up on a cross as a cure for people’s sin. Faith in Him alone gives eternal life to those who are doomed to die because of their sin.

The historical situation was the last of a number of "apostasies" in the wilderness wanderings. Four things characterize those events: the people of Israel complained against God, He sent judgment upon them, they repented of their sin and He forgave them and delivered them.

The people of Israel became impatient in their journey in the wilderness. The griped about the "miserable food" God provided for them (Numbers 21:4–5). The people "spoke against God and Moses." God takes our mouthing and complaining about Him seriously! "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" they asked. "For there is no food and no water, and we loathe this miserable food." God was keeping two million people from starving to death in a wilderness and they were grumbling at Him. The "miserable food" they were eating was the manna God was providing for them daily. True, it wasn't stake and ale, but it kept them alive and healthy.

God sent poisonous snakes as a judgment because the people were grumbling against God and Moses. "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died" (Numbers 21:6). "The wages of sin is death." That fact is still true. "The soul that sins will surely die." That truth won't go away. It is a law of life.

The people seeing the seriousness of their sin urged Moses to intercede on their behalf (v. 7). "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the LORD and you." They confessed to God their evil attitude and behavior. Then Moses prayed that the LORD would remove the serpents from them.

The LORD then instructed Moses to, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live" (v. 8). This "look" involved a look of faith in God to save them.

"And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived" (v. 9).

The stress in this passage is not on some magical healing, but on a bronze serpent as a symbol of salvation that God offered to all who would look to Him and live.
Jesus borrowed the object lesson from history. He said, just like Moses raised the serpent up in the wilderness, He, too, must be lifted up so that whoever believes on Him may have eternal life.

This "lifting up" of the Son of Man is a definite statement of Jesus' coming death on the cross. He was telling Nicodemus that in His death God would provide salvation. There is a divine imperative in the death of Jesus. The Son of Man "must" be lifted up. Peter preached the necessity of His death saying, "this Man, was delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death; since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:23–24). It was God's deliberate choice and purpose to crucify Jesus. It was no accident, or the martyrdom of a good religious teacher. He died as an act of God. His death was necessary for our salvation.

The death of Jesus is exalted in New Testament preaching. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). There is something about the message of the cross that throbs, it acts, it produces results. We glory in the uplifted cross of Jesus because it is the power of God to bring healing to our sin sick souls. "We preach Christ crucified" was the theme of apostolic preaching in the New Testament (1:23). Without that cross, we die an eternal death.

Why is the uplifted cross so important? The apostle Paul wrote, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In fact, Christ died just at the right time for us while we were helpless sinners (5:6). He "died for us;" He "died for the ungodly." He died "on our behalf," or "instead of us." The atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the foundation for the kingdom of God. There is simply no other way to be saved. "The wages of sin is death," the apostle Paul wrote. Then he went on to say, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). A look of faith gives eternal life to those doomed to die.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The emphasis Jesus is making is that salvation comes through believing. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Salvation doesn't come through some magical formula. It comes by simple faith, looking up to the cross of Jesus and believing that He died in your place on the cross. There is no other way of salvation. "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There is no other name that you can call upon to be saved. No other person anywhere in this world will give you a right relationship with God. Be careful what name for God someone whispers in your ear. Any other name or person will send you to hell.

Salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. How tragic, but in the history of Israel the bronze serpent became an idolatrous object of worship (2 Kings 18:4) and had to be destroyed in King Hezekiah's reforms. Salvation came not through the serpent on the pole, but through God's sovereign provision. They were not saved by what they saw, but by the Savior.
We live in a day in which men take sacred objects and icons and turn them into idolatrous objects of worship and belief. The object of our faith must always be the Lord Jesus Christ.
Man has a deep desire to know the unknown, and to seek out the forbidden.

Wouldn't it be great to know what the stock market will do over the next ten years? What companies will excel in growth and profits? Which ones will fail and would be poor investments? Wouldn't it be helpful to know when and how you will die and how to plan for it? What will be the greatest opportunity of your life and how could you maximize it to your greatest advantage? If you had a magic genie in a bottle, what would you ask for today?

How many people, like the children of Israel, seek to communicate with the supernatural world through forbidden methods? Deuteronomy 18:10-12 describes some forbidden methods of seeking to know the unknown. These were on the same level with child sacrifices. They were divination, the practice of witchcraft, those who interpret omens, sorcerers, or one who casts a spell, mediums, spiritists and those who call up the dead (vv. 10-11). Some of the pagan soothsayers read the entrails of slaughtered animals; others studied the planets, stars and comets. Some read tealeaves, studied the handprints of the wealthy and gazed into crystal rocks.

Why was it forbidden? Israel was God's chosen people. "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). As His chosen people they would receive their understanding of spiritual things from the God who spoke directly to His appointed prophet. The pagan methodologies led only to self-centered, "do your own thing" and follow your own star manipulation of the gods. It ended in debased self-worship.

The LORD God has a better way for His people. He knows and wants what is best for them. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. . . And the LORD said . . . I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (18:15, 18).

Because God spoke His word directly to the prophet, to ignore that word would lead to divine judgment (v. 19). "And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him." Those who hear as well as those who choose not to hear the words are held responsible.

How would the people be able to distinguish between the true and the false prophets? Moses gave them, and us, a simple test in 18:20-22. "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (v. 22).

The words of the prophet must be in accord with what God has already revealed. True prophetic word will not contradict what God has already spoken. This is why the Scripture is its own best commentary. The false prophet would be discovered by the fact that his message did not follow what God had already
revealed in the past. The second test is true prophecy will come to pass. The truth of the spoken and written word would lie in its historical fulfillment. Over the course of time in a prophet's ministry, the character of the prophet as a true spokesman of God would clearly emerge. False prophets would be discovered by their own unfulfilled predictions (vv. 21-22).

After the death of Moses, great changes would take place in Israel. Knowing the will of God was imperative for God's people to sustain their fellowship with Him. It was reassuring that Moses promised that God would send a prophet (18:15-18). The people would discern between true and false prophets (vv. 19-22), and have no need of superficial and false sayings. The people will find in Israel a sure word from Yahweh. The LORD said He would send a prophet "like unto Moses." He would resemble Moses in respect and leadership. He would act as a mediator between Yahweh and His people. He would make known the will of the LORD.

The expectation of the Messiah was not unknown to Moses and Israel in his time. This ideal prophet would be as perfectly equal to His calling as Moses was to his. He would carry out His prophetic office in the manner of Moses.

None of the Hebrew prophets was equal to Moses. Each of them built upon the foundation of Moses and the Law.

It has been satisfactorily proven that the messianic interpretation of Deuteronomy eighteen was the prevailing one among older Jews, and it was predominant during the time before the New Testament. Even if the modern interpreter sees a plurality of prophets in the passage, it is still the ideal Prophet who comes in to view. By the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Moses knew that at some future time a real person, in a sense, the only Prophet would appear. That Prophet is Jesus Christ. Indeed, all of the Hebrew prophets looked forward to the coming of the day of Christ. An individual, a Second Moses would be the representative of all the prophets par excellence.

What makes Jesus Christ the prophet like unto Moses?

**Like Moses He will teach God's people how to know God's will.** Moses "taught" the people "statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me" (Deuteronomy 4:5). Jesus spoke "hidden things from old." He was filled with the Spirit of the LORD with "wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge" to show His people how to "walk in His paths" (Psalm 78:2; Isaiah 11:1-2; 2:3). At the very beginning of His ministry Jesus visited the synagogue in His home town of Nazareth. The scroll containing Isaiah 61:1-2 was handed to Him and He read Himself into His prophetic office. "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:16-19). Jesus spoke in parables and the people recognized Him as a man of integrity who had come from God (John 3:2). Just like Moses, Jesus gave the law again as He proclaimed the great manifesto of the Kingdom of God, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Peter asked, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68-69). Yes, more than a prophet was among His people teaching them His Word.

**Like Moses, Jesus predicted future events accurately.** His predictions bear a striking similarity to Moses foretelling the future. Moses spoke of grave consequences to disobedience (Deuteronomy 28-29)
when the people would turn to "other gods and serve them" because he knew the intent of their hearts (31:20-21). Jesus prophesied of grave consequences to the Temple because of the apostasy of the people.

"Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here shall be left upon another, which will not be torn down" (Matthew 24:2; cf. Luke 19:41-44; 21:24). This prophecy of Jesus was literally fulfilled in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the Temple. To this very day the ruins of the Temple are a witness to the veracity of Jesus as the Prophet of Yahweh. He was consistent, complete and final in His revelation. Everything previously announced led up to His coming and dying for our sins and rising from the dead. Jesus repeatedly taught in the Temple and synagogues, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day" (Luke 9:22).

**Moreover, just as Moses judged the people, Jesus will return as our judge.** Moses was the Lawgiver and judge (Exodus 18). He stressed to those he delegated with the responsibility of discerning cases, "You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:17). Jesus said, "For not even the Father judges any one, but He has given all judgment to the Son, in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:22-23; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). Yes, the judge may soon appear. Are we ready to stand before His bar?

Contemporaries observed Jesus and concluded that He was the Prophet sent from God. Philip was one of the early witnesses. He said to Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (John 1:45). Even the despised Samaritans found their expectations of the Messiah in these words of Moses. "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare [announce fully, through out, from bottom to top] all things to us" because He is the Prophet (4:25). After Jesus fed 5,000 people they agreed, "This is of a truth the Prophet who is to come into the world" (6:14). The common people were expecting the Prophet like unto Moses. Jesus told the Jews who were persecuting Him; "the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me" (5:45-46). Stephen recognized Jesus as the Prophet spoken of by Moses (Acts 7:37). The apostle Peter closed a great sermon by quoting Deuteronomy 18:15, 19. He reminded the people that Jesus is the Prophet like unto Moses, "and it shall be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:22-23).

Furthermore, God the Father spoke from the cloud at the transfiguration of Jesus and said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5). Do we dare listen to the many strident voices in our day? You, oh Lord Jesus alone have the words of eternal life.
Joshua 5:13–6:5

Captain of the Host of the LORD

God had led the people of Israel across the Jordan into the Promised Land (Joshua 3–4). It was a miraculous crossing. Imagine two million people, including women and children, crossing a swollen river at flood stages.

Joshua was out surveying the city of Jericho and planning his battle strategy. How would he take this tightly shut, fortified city with its king and valiant warriors?

Suddenly there was a dramatic, unexpected appearance of a mysterious man with a drawn sword in combat readiness. Joshua immediately went over and asked him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" (v. 13). Joshua had been waiting forty years; he was ready to fight.

Joshua asked the wrong question. The man replied, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord" (v. 14). How often do we go in to God asking the wrong questions?

Who was this "captain of the host of the LORD"? A "host" in the Bible is an unseen army, invisible to the human eye that surrounds the throne of God. It is an angelic host. Cf. 2 Kings 6:17ff; Psalm 148:2; 103:21. Christ said twelve legions of angels were ready to defend Him.

Joshua immediately recognized the supernatural character of this visitor. Joshua was in the presence of God. "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, 'What has my lord to say to his servant?'" (v. 14b). Joshua fell on his face and worshiped. The worship paid to this messenger of the LORD is directed to Yahweh Himself. Who is this person? It is sin to worship angels and men (Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5-8; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9). The total impact of the context of the passage indicates that a superhuman person is present. He is in the presence of Deity. The commander of the army of the LORD is God Himself. Yahweh has come to lead and fight for His people. All distinctions between the messenger of the covenant and the LORD Himself evaporate in the context.

Verse fifteen removes any doubt as to who this "captain of the army of Yahweh" was. "The captain of the Lord’s host said to Joshua, 'Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so." In the Bible only things, places and people can be called holy because they are set aside for God or claimed by Him.

Joshua did not have any problem with obedience. Jesus said, "If you love Me you will keep My commandments." If you love Him, you will obey Him. You don't turn 18 and no longer have a need to obey Him. It is a question of love and Joshua obeyed.

This is a theophany, or more correctly a Christophany. This "captain" is the angel of the covenant appearing in human form to take command of the armies of Israel. Our Joshua was under His command! Israel's deliverance comes from only one source just as our deliverance comes from only one source—God for us in Christ.
This is "a preliminary manifestation of the Eternal Word of God, who, in the fullness of time, 'became flesh and dwelt among us,'" declared Alexander Maclaren. It is a preincarnate appearing of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. We always find Him revealing God. In the Bible the Triune God is alone seen or manifested in Christ. Cf. John 1:18; 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3).

Yahweh had come to lead His people to victory. Yahweh is our salvation. The captain of the LORD's host is none other than the Great Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. The angel of the covenant of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He is Immanuel—God with us. Moreover, the captain's army is nothing short that the LORD Himself.

We cannot help but make the comparison between Moses and the burning bush that would not burn, and Joshua and the Captain of the host of the LORD (cf. Exodus 3:1ff). I believe it is there on purpose for the people of Israel and Joshua. "Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5).

This is the same person we meet in other theophanic manifestations by God the Son in the Old Testament. Sometimes we meet Him in the form of the angel of the LORD and at other times in the form of a man. He is called "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," "the God of Israel" and "the Angel of the covenant."

It was God the Son who thus appeared in human form to Hagar (Gen. 16:7), Abraham (Gen. 18:1), Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30), Israel (Judges 2:1), Gideon (Judges 6:12-18), Manoah (Judges 13:21). He is also called "the Messenger" or "Angel of the Covenant" and "Lord of His temple" (Malachi 3:1).

A promise of God's personal presence always carries with it the assurance of God's personal care and provision. God is not our personal genie. The battle, Joshua is reminded, is the LORD's. We are here to serve Him in His battle for righteousness. We are here to do His will. He is not here to serve us. Christ is our victorious Savior.

It was a humbling experience for Joshua, and a reminder that most of us are too big for God to use. He has to show us who is in charge and bring us to our knees to worship. "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." Where ever God is there is holy ground. Let's humble ourselves and walk in His ways.
The LORD God knew King David as "a man after His own heart." He made a promise to David that when he died one of his descendants would sit in his place on the throne (2 Samuel 7:12). The LORD didn't allow David to build the Temple, but his son, Solomon was permitted after his father's death. David made preparations and gathered materials for the project before his death. God said to David, "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . And your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever; your throne shall be established forever" (vv. 13, 16).

Long ago Hengstenberg observed, "The building of the house of the LORD goes hand in hand with the eternity of the kingdom." Therefore, "as the kingdom endures for ever, so the house built for the dwelling-place of the Lord must also endure for ever. . ." (Keil and Delitzsch).

Many scholars have observed that it is not just the earthly form that the LORD God is referring to, but the essential characteristic of the Temple. It is the place where God meets with man. The earthly form is perishable, but the essence is eternal. The very essence of the Temple of God was His presence with man. That never perishes. His essence and character did not cease with the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC.

Of course, the Temple was not necessary because of God's nature (Acts 7:46-50). God is Spirit. The Temple was an accommodation to the limitations and needs of His people (1 Kings 8:27ff).

It is when the Word became flesh and tabernacled Himself among men that we see the true essence of the Temple of the Lord. His Temple culminated in the appearance of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Only in Him was there the full revelation of God's presence with man. In Him, we see the full manifestation of the LORD God. Yahweh came to dwell with His people in person. One who knew Him best wrote, "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). A little later he wrote, "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (v. 18). The LORD pitched His tent on the earth in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

The Messiah was in the Temple building one day and He saw the religious leaders selling oxen and sheep for "official" sacrifices. The moneychangers were seated bargaining with the people. Jesus picked up pieces of rope that had been used to tie the animals and platted a whip. With passion burning in His soul, He ran the merchants out of the Temple. He was approached a little later by angry officials demanding, "What sign do you show to us, seeing that you do these things?" The Messiah answered: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They responded to Jesus saying, "It took forty-six years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days?" Jesus spoke of the temple of His body.

The play on words is clear in the original language. Jesus cleansed the hieron, the standing temple with its various precincts. He chased the merchants out of the physical Temple building and outer courts. However, Jesus spoke of the naos, the inner shrine, the holy of holies. "Destroy this naos, the holy of holies, and in three days I will raise it up." He spoke of the naos, the holy of holies of His body. In the person of the Messiah God's promise to David of building an eternal house is fulfilled.
The temple of His body was destroyed. It was placed on the cross and He bore in His body the marks of the penalty of sin for every individual. He was made sin for us so that He could put away our sin. However, the Temple endures forever through His resurrected body, the Temple of the Messiah.

The apostle Peter spoke of the temple God is now building in 1 Peter 2:4-5.

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul also speaks of this temple in Ephesians 2:20-22. "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Every individual believer, both Jewish and Gentile, becomes a part of the glorious temple of His body. "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). This is only true of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Every believer is a part of that body, or temple of Christ.

The apostle Paul reminds us why we are the temple of God. "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Later he wrote, "What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (2 Corinthians 6:16).

The complete and essential fulfillment of God's promise to David begins with this building up of the temple destroyed by dying on the cross, and being raised through the resurrection from the dead. The body of Christ is built up through the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers. This is the construction of the spiritual house of God. It is composed of living stones. The temple of the LORD God will be perfected in the completion of the kingdom of God when the New Jerusalem and new heaven come down on the new earth.

The millennium will see a temple raised to God, the refuge of all nations. This will be primarily memorial, however. When the millennium is complete and the new age of perfection is established, there will be no temple. The Lord God and the Lamb will be in the midst of the people (Revelation 21:22).

One wonderful glorious day He will descend and manifest Himself in full glory in the New Jerusalem and we will experience eternal communion with God.

The apostle John on the island of Patmos saw in a vision the tabernacle of God among men. The ultimate fulfillment of all God's promises in space and time will come in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). He wrote in Revelation 21:2-4:
And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

Even so, come Lord Jesus!
After David had settled down in his reign as king of Israel and built his own home, he had the desire to build a permanent dwelling place for the LORD God. Until this time in the history of Israel Yahweh dwelt among His people in the tent of meeting called the Tabernacle. David was ultimately forbidden the opportunity to build the Temple because he was "a man of war, and had shed blood" (1 Chronicles 22:8; 28:3). However, David built the Temple through his son Solomon. He is the only man in the Scriptures who is called "a man after God's own heart."

God made a covenant with David that when he died his descendents shall occupy the throne and be established in the kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12). Note how closely the Temple and the kingdom are related to one another (vv. 13-14). The building of the Temple goes hand in hand with the eternity of the kingdom. Moreover, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of David are inseparably linked. Here is the promise God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-16).

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.

God's covenant with David is "forever." It is a promise that the establishment of the kingdom and the throne of David are "forever." It points beyond the time of his son Solomon and to the eternal continuance of the David's descendents. The word "seed" refers to the posterity of a person, or line of persons of successive generations. The promise includes a number of descendents who would be transmitted from father to son over many generations.

Moreover, the promise was that the throne of the kingdom of David would continue "to eternity." The house and the kingdom exist side by side for an eternal duration. The word "eternity" must be taken in its absolute sense. This is the way the Psalmist understood it in the royal Psalm 89:28-29. "My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. So I will establish his descendants forever and his throne as the days of heaven."

The prophet Isaiah saw the coming of a child with four names who would rule as Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:7). He said,

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

Other Hebrew prophets at various times prophesied of the coming of this same person (cf. Daniel 2:44; 4:3, 34; 6:26; 7:13-14). Ezekiel wrote, "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever" (Ezekiel 37:24-25; cf. 34:23-24).

It is obvious that no earthly kingdom has eternal duration. Earthly kingdoms perish, one by one, and other kingdoms take their place. This was true in Israel. After 350 years, the kingdom of David came to a physical end. Once the dynasty had fallen in 586 BC, devout Jews continued to treasure the divine promises made to David. They were confident that Yahweh would again fulfill them in a very special son of David they called the Messiah (translated "Christ"). So how then could it last for eternity?

The Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch have an excellent observation on this passage.

The posterity of David, therefore, could only last forever by running out in a person who lives forever; i.e. by culminating in the Messiah, who lives forever, and of whose kingdom there is no end. The promise consequently refers to the posterity of David, commencing with Solomon and closing with Christ . . . "

The promise to Solomon and his descendants is not fully exhausted in them. The promise that the "seed" of David should endure forever is attained only in the ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Just as the promise of building the house of God finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ, the promise, "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" (v. 14a) is fully realized in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the heavenly Father (Hebrews 1:5). In the Old Testament, the relationship between the father and son signifies the "deepest intimacy of love." Jesus experienced this intimacy with His Father in heaven. He said, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35). Of course, Jesus did not disobey His Father and was never in any need of chastisement.

We know from history that David's son Solomon built the Temple (1 Kings 5:19; 8:15ff), but later sinned against the Lord by serving other gods. Because of his sin the kingdom was divided by civil war when his son became king. The southern kingdom remained loyal to David's dynasty (1 Kings 11:9ff). The LORD did just as He had promised and chastised Solomon with the rods of men, but He did not withdraw His hesed, steadfast love.

The seed of David turned against the Lord and the kingdom was taken away from its earthly descendents. Jesus was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, after the house of David had fallen into decay. Jesus raised up the throne of His father David again to reign forever as its king. Dr. Luke carefully observed this when he documented this fact in Luke 1:32-33:

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
Literally, "of His kingdom there will be no end." We must take those words at face value.

In fulfillment of this prophecy in 2 Samuel 7:11-13 the Lord God will give Jesus "the throne of His father David." The promise Yahweh gave to King David found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ. His descent from David, according to human nature, is definitely confirmed. The official genealogy of the Jewish people was carefully kept until the destruction of the Jerusalem in AD 70. Matthew presents the legal pedigree, according to Jewish custom, and quotes the genealogy table of Jesus Christ. He wrote, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Then he goes on to trace Jesus' descent through the line of the kings of the house of David, who alone are recognized as legitimate sovereigns of Israel.

The Jewish rabbi Paul wrote of Jesus after believing the evidence he had gathered. He described Him as one, "who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:3-4). The common people, like the blind man, acknowledge who He was saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18:38). The priest Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied saying, God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant" (Luke 1:69).

This descendent of David will last forever. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end. It is not an earthly or political kingdom that is in view here, but the kingdom or rule of grace and truth established in the heart and lives of all who believe on Him as their savior. Jesus said to Pilate at His trial,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore, Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:36-37).

The kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the son of David, is a kingdom of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).
Job 9:31-32; 19:23-27

Job's Umpire

Thomas Carlyle made this observation on the book of Job: "There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit."

Some of the probing words that flash through our minds when we reflect on this book has to do with suffering, innocent, righteousness, judgment, reward, etc. Questions come to mind like, Why do the righteous suffer, and the sinful go free? Doesn't God care for His people? Does suffering and adversity prove that the one suffering is wicked? Does God really care and can He show mercy? Can there be any goodness without reward?

In his conflict and pain Job answered Bildad and said in Job 9:32-33 that he needed an umpire between he and God.

> He is not a man as I am that I may answer Him,  
> That we may go to court together.  
> There is no umpire between us,  
> Who may lay his hand upon us both.

With bold faith Job takes up his plea in 16:18-21,

> O earth, do not cover my blood,  
> And let there be no resting place for my cry.  
> Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven,  
> And my advocate is on high. My friends are my scoffers;  
> My eye weeps to God.  
> O that a man might plead with God  
> As a man with his neighbor!

The need for one to intercede is heard again in 31:35.

> Oh that I had one to hear me!  
> Behold, here is my signature;  
> Let the Almighty answer me!

Clearly, Job needs an umpire, a mediator. An "Umpire" is one able to act as an arbitrator at an appointed day. The original word means "to act as umpire," or "mediator." The term implies one who hears two parties in a dispute and decides the merits of the case.

Job continues with his plea for one to stand before God on his behalf. In 19:23-27 he makes a bold statement of faith regarding his Goel. His nearest of kin can be that umpire!
Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
That with an iron stylus and lead
They were engraved in the rock forever!
And as for me, I know that my redeemer lives,
And at last He will take His stand on the earth.
Even after my skin is flayed,
Yet without my flesh I shall see God;
Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes shall see and not another.
My heart faints within me.

"I know that my Redeemer lives" (v. 25). He is speaking of his Goel, who is his nearest of kin. The kinsman had the responsibility of redeeming his kinsman's lost opportunities. It is as if Job is saying everyone else has a kinsman. The person who is forced to become a slave because of financial disaster has a kinsman. When debts overwhelm him, a redeemer buys his homestead for him so that his family can live. When a family member dies without an heir the kinsman redeems his name by marrying his widow and rearing a son in his name. If another man kills a man, the redeemer has the responsibility to avenge the blood of the victim by pursuing the killer. Why, Job had lost everything! (Job 1-2). Job's complaint is that no one has come to redeem him. However, Job's faith launches out and declares that Yahweh will provide his Goel!

He speaks of his kinsman saying, "at last He will take His stand on the earth" (v. 25b). His kinsman redeemer will come to the earth. After his death, "Even after my skin is flayed, Yet without my flesh I shall see God" (v. 26). After his body is destroyed in death, in the future life he will see the One he worships and adores. He will see Eloah, "the Adorable One, the Worshipful One." "Whom my eyes shall see and not another" (v. 27b). Job expects to see God in the future life. It is simple faith from a sincere heart.

Job's Kinsman told the apostle John on the island of Patmos, "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys to death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17-18).

Jesus answered Job's cry. He has ideally fulfilled this need of an umpire. The perfect mediator is Emmanuel. The "daysman" (KJV) is the one who sets the date for the arbitration. There can be only two options: Either God became man, or a third party must mediate. God became man to bring about our reconciliation with God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). The umpire got one hand on man and one on God and brought them together.

Because of our depravity in sin, we are estranged from God. Our Savior and mediator Jesus Christ stepped in and made us one with God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Old Testament did not have an intercessor as we know Him in Christ. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us . . . (9:24).
In the New Testament, Christ is the one true mediator between man and God. "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time" (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

The "mediator" (mesites) is "a go-between" (from "middle," and "to go"), "in the middle," "middleman." He is the person who stands in the middle and brings the two estranged parties together. He is one who mediates between two parties to bring peace or fellowship. He must equally represent both parties.

In His incarnation Jesus Christ perfectly represented both parties. He is the perfect God–man. He perfectly represents God to man, and is man's representative to God. In order to bring salvation he had to possess the attributes of God and the nature of man.

Through His incarnation the gulf between God and man has been decisively and finally crossed. Christ bridged the gulf and united God and man by becoming the God-man. The Word of God mediates God's mind, message and righteousness. No man had seen God at anytime, but Jesus. He is the exegesis of God. Those who see Jesus see and hear the Father. Moreover, as man Jesus became what God expected of every man in perfect obedience. He was obedient to the point of death by giving His life as an unblemished sacrifice for our sin. Jesus mediated the new covenant which brings about a perfect relationship with God. As the "one mediator" Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all.

The writer of Hebrews saw Christ as the One who "is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). Cf. Rom. 5:10.

The writer of the book of Hebrews stresses that Christ was superior in every way to the old covenant. He surpasses all mediators—angels, Moses, Aaronic priesthood, etc.

Christ our mediator is clearly seen in John 14:6 and Acts 4:12. Neither is salvation found in anyone else, nor can anyone come to the Father but through Him.
Psalm 2:1-12

The Reign of the Sovereign Son

Down through the silent passing of time you can hear the faint chant growing louder and louder, "Crucify Him!" "Crucify Him!" "Crucify Him!"

Psalm 2 opens with the enemies of the LORD God in open rebellion against Him and His Anointed One. It also describes the ultimate victory of the Lord's anointed over His rebellious enemies. It reaches beyond King David to the glorious reign of the one who can fulfill every aspect of the eternal kingdom as promised to David in 2 Samuel 7:13, 16. "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever. . . and your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever: your throne shall be established forever."

It is only when the Davidic family is viewed as centering in Christ, that the words can acquire their full truth. In this Psalm the Lord's Anointed comes forward with the divine power and glory that is attributed to the Messiah in the writings of the prophets. It reaches its climax in verse 11, "Worship the LORD with reverence, and rejoice with trembling."

There is no internal evidence in this Psalm to tells us who the author is. However, Acts 4:25 tells us that King David under the power of the Holy Spirit was the author of the Psalm.

The Psalm has four speakers. The first voices we hear are the enemies speaking against the LORD God and His Anointed One. The second strophe records the calm words of assurance of Adonai, the Sovereign Lord of all in the thick of the opposition. Then the Anointed King speaks. Finally, the Psalmist speaks with exultation because the Lord's anointed comes forth with divine power and glory.

Our Psalm opens with the Gentiles in an uproar. Perhaps 2 Samuel 8 or 10 would fit the occasion under the reign of King David. The hostility of neighboring nations had displayed itself. However, the rebellion is not just against David. "Nations" and "peoples" refers to Gentile nations who are in an "uproar" against the Lord God and His Anointed One (v. 1). It is a "noisy riot that seethes in antagonism" against God. The common bond among the nations is hatred against the Lord. They meditate on how they might overthrow God (2:1, 2).

History is full of opposition to God. However, the plot to overthrow God is empty. Adam first tired it in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Before the Deluge the man's heart was only continuously full of rebellion (Genesis 6:5). Even after the flood men plotted in their selfishness (Genesis 11:4). Pharaoh tried genocide and infanticide. Finally, "Jesus came to His own and His own received Him not." Cf. Matthew 21:33-42. The pulsating chant gets louder and louder. "Crucify Him!" "Crucify Him!" The vain thing was the crucifixion of Christ (Matthew 26:3-5; 27:1).

Their goal had come to nothing. Peter stood and preached his finest sermon using passages from the Old Testament including Psalm two.
"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. And God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power (Acts 2:22-24).

Man is still in his rebellion (2 Peter 3:3-4; Isaiah 1:18; Romans 3:23; 6:23). He still toots the same horn, and sing the same song, "Let us tear their fetters apart, and cast away their cords from us!" (Psalm 2:3).

The Lord God is sovereign and He is in complete control. The Lord "laughs" (v. 4) in unbelief at their powerless threats. He "scoffs" at them. Someone said, "He who sits is the Sitter in the heavens." All attitudes toward Him are absurd and ridiculous.

However, God will not always be patient with their rebellion. "Anger" in vv. 5, 12 describes God's righteous indignation.

God's plan will not be defeated. Listen to the emphatic firm voice of God (v. 6). "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." The anointed King is set firmly in place (Cf. 2 Samuel 7:13, 16). Cf. Hebrews 1:3-5. Zion is the hill of God's holiness. He holds his office by direct appointment of God. History makes no mention of a king of Israel being anointed on Zion. Zion is mentioned as the royal seat of the Anointed One. It is there He will be installed, and He may reign and rule from there.

The Sonship implies world dominion (v. 7). These words find their full truth only when the Davidic family is viewed as centering in Christ. The Lord's Anointed comes forward with the divine power and glory, with which the messiah appears in the prophets. The Old Testament knows no other kingship to which is promised the dominion of world power. Revelation 19:15 describes Christ when He returns. Only with the words of Revelation 11:15-18 does it find resolution. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Messiah); and He will reign forever and ever."

Where is the evidence that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this passage?

On three occasions, the Gospel records these words from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It is not "one of my sons," but "My Son, My only one."

The proof of that declaration is the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Hebrews 1:5; cf. Acts 13:33-37; Romans 1:3-4).

Psalm two is cited more frequently in the New Testament than any other. The Apostles saw it as fulfilled in Jesus Christ and in no other person. Jesus appears exactly as this Psalm presents Him.

The LORD God has appointed the dominion of the world to His Son (v. 9). No other king has been promised world dominion. It is fulfilled only in Christ.

At His Second Coming of Christ will manifest His sovereign authority and power. At a point in time in the future He will demonstrate His sovereign control for the entire world to see. He will return in judgment and will establish righteousness in the earth. Cf. Revelation 11:15-17; 19:11-16. He will return and reign as
King of Kings. Calvin said: "The meaning is that the Father denies the Son nothing that bears upon the extension of His kingdom even unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Jesus came the first time as the suffering servant of God, He will return as the sovereign God to reign in triumph over His enemies (Philippians 2:10, 11). Luther reminds us, "For He slays our will in order to establish His own will in us. He puts to death the flesh and its lusts in order to make alive in us the Spirit and the things that He desires."

Applications in the Psalm go beyond David or possibly Solomon. Verses 7, 8, 12 can not possibly be fulfilled by an earthly king and must refer to the Messiah King, Jesus Christ. King David looks to one who is greater than himself.

"Show discernment" (v. 10). "Take warning" is the highest form of wisdom. Turn from your self-will and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Rejoice with trembling" (v. 11) is the exulting shouts of jubilation in worship. It is rapturous manifestation of joy at the happiness and honor of being permitted to be the servants of Yahweh. Do you get excited about the prospect of His coming? Oh, Lord Jesus will I see you today? Even so, come Lord Jesus come!

"Do homage to the Son" is literally, "kiss." Cf. Hebrews 10:12, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:25. "Blessed are they that put their trust in Him." That is the true kiss. It is the kiss of reconciliation. It is no kiss of Judas. We were all by nature rebels of God. The message of the Gospel is the message of reconciliation. Cast down your weapons of rebellion and trust Him, rely upon Him, depend upon Him. Trust in the finished work of Jesus. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." There is no other way.

However, there is also a serious warning in v. 12. The office of the Messiah is not only that of the Savior, but also of divine Judge. Our God is also "a consuming fire." (Cf. Revelation 6:16-17).

Moreover, there is also the greater picture of people gathered from all over the world worshipping the Son of God in Revelation 7:9-12. Oh to be a part of that great throng who bow in humble submission to the King of Kings!
Psalm 8:1-9

God’s Glory Perfectly Revealed in the Son

Perhaps it was while David was attending sheep on a clear night with the stars brightly shining that he picks up his Gittith, a stringed instrument in the shape of a wine press, and begins to strum and chant these amazing words of the Psalm he had written. What a tremendous God! How marvelous is His name! How majestic is our God! David's Psalm reflects on God’s glory and the amazing fact that it is entirely under His control.

THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CREATION OF MAN (8:1-2)

All of creation reflects His glory.

The stars display the glory of God. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."

The earth is full of God's glory if we will but examine it.

God is sovereign over His creation (v. 1)

"O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth, Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens!" (Psalm 8:1).

One of the dominant messages of the Scriptures is that the Lord God is sovereign over His creation. The creation reflects His glory because it is His handiwork. It is perfectly under His control. No "big bang" could produce such a magnificent piece of clockwork as our universe. The more universes and galaxies the scientists discover only emphasizes the glory of the Lord God.

An increasing number of scientists are preferring to opt for the seeming intelligent "design" of biological systems, inferring that a creator–God is at work over against an evolutionary process. There is a Master designer behind the immense universe. The intelligent design is becoming increasingly evident to the skilled scientist.

The glory of God is magnified in His creation. The exalted position of man is the capstone of the entire universe.

Wonder of wonders is the fact the Lord God can hold the Milky Way in one hand and take infinite interest in me.

The beauty of God's glory is expressed by infants (v. 2).

God’s ways are not our ways. Modern man emphasizes beauty, intellect, wealth, family heritage and position. In contrast, God emphasizes the weak and foolish in the eyes of the world. In the humility and innocence of a child, He has established strength.
"From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou hast established strength, Because of Thine adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease" (Psalm 8:2).

God can reveal Himself in such marvelous ways that children, and babes can grasp what He means. God is so secure in His honor and majesty that He can leave the defense of His name to babes.

Uncorrupted and unbiased minds recognize God without any difficulty. The praise of little children is a symphony in the ears of God. Jesus cared for the little children (Mark 10:16; Matthew 18:2-10). We have to become as little children before we can enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 21:16). What had impressed this man was the fact that the transcendent glory of God could still be grasped and expressed by a child. His greatness that was far above all the heavens could still be comprehended and appreciated by a child.

What the Psalmist teaches is confirmed by an incident from the New Testament. In Matthew 21:16 the Lord Jesus quotes the words of this psalm on a certain occasion. Matthew tells us:

"And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they became indignant, and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read, 'OUT OF THE MOUTH OF INFANTS AND NURSING BABES THOU HAST PREPARED PRAISE FOR THYSELF'?” (Matt 21:14-16).

This was not a children's choir, trained by the temple leaders. This was a band of ordinary children in the streets of Jerusalem who happened to be there at the time Jesus healed the blind and the lame. However, when these children saw these wonderful things they began to cry out, "Praise be to the Son of David! Hosanna to the Son of David!" The scribes and chief priests were indignant. They thought Jesus ought to silence these children. Instead, He said, "They are the ones who have caught the truth. They are the ones who comprehend. They understand that here is being manifested the healing power of God. This is the prediction of David in the eighth Psalm that God's marvelous simplicity can be conveyed to a child much more easily than it can to an adult."

Jesus said on another occasion, "I thank Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them unto babes," (Matt 11:25). God has ordained, has chosen, the weak things and the things that are not to set at naught the things that are—to show them up, to expose them—and to convey messages through weak, foolish and obscure things. He has the ability to convey himself to the childlike, humble mind. The reason for this, of course, is that children (and those who are childlike) are filled with humility.

Jesus said, "Except you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven," (Matt 18:3).

Even though the universe is a marvelous handiwork of God, man is the greatest expression of God’s thought. How much greater is he than the stars. The destiny of the redeemed man is eternity in fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the destiny of the stars is fire (II Peter 3:12). Not only do we see the glory of God in His creative handiwork, but we also see it in the highest form of His creation. We see God's glory in the consideration of man.
THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CONSIDERATION OF MAN (8:3-5)

When you spend time gazing into the starry heavens you can begin to wander about the value of man. "When I have gazed into these stars," wrote Carlyle, "have they not looked down upon me, as if with pity, from their serene spaces, like eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man?"

The Psalmist writes: "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?" (8:3-4).

Some wag has added, "If God so cares for the stars, will He not much more care for our souls?" It reminds us of the words Jesus said to His disciples, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?" (Matthew 6:26).

The Westminster Catechism reminds us, "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." It pleased God to make a people for Himself. God created all things for His glory. God has so invested man with a position and dignity that is second only to the Godhead. He created man for a divine purpose.

"What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?" (Psalm 8:4a). The word for man here is Enosh, frail man, mortal man, and puny man. It describes man from his impotence, frailty, mortality, and inability to fulfill God’s purpose because of sin. Yet, he is still the crown of creation. Man is God-made, not self-made. We bear upon us the fingerprints of the infinite. Man is not the pla
t

"And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?" (v. 4b). The word of man here is Ben Adam. God visits the "son of man." He is the special object of God’s love. Man in sin and shame can not visit God. However, God in His mercy chose to visit man. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The "Word" was none other than the second person of the God–head, Jesus Christ. He chose to redeem us. "We do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone," (Hebrews 2:9).

The apostle Paul wrote: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Romans 5:8).

**Because of his creation, man has a unique relationship to God (v. 5).**

Verse five forcefully declares: "Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God (Elohim), and dost crown him with glory and majesty!"
God made man to be a little less than God is (8:5). Some perhaps are startled by that translation, for the King James Version says, "a little lower than the angels." However, it was the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which used the phrase "the angels." The Hebrew actually says "little less than Elohim," i.e., a little lower than God.

There is no place in the Old Testament where *Elohim* means angels. The Septuagint *LXX* has passed from them into the New Testament at Hebrews 2:7. Genesis 1:26, 27 man is made in the image of God, not angels.

What is included in that remarkable expression is the revelation of God's purpose for man. According to the Bible, angels were created as ministering spirits, but man was created in the image of God. No where are we told in the Bible that angels were created in the image of God.

**The Primordial Man (Genesis 1:23-24; 2)**

"The reference is obviously to the primordial man, the first Adam before the fall, in the fullness of his power and attributes, the very reflection of the majesty of the Almighty, who had patterned man after Himself. . . ." (H. C. Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 104).

Again Leupold writes, "No where is man’s dignity asserted more clearly and boldly than in this passage. " He adds, "The statement is so bold that the early translators, beginning with the *LXX* and continuing up to the Authorized Version, have substituted the word ‘angels’ for God." The reference is to man before the Fall, to primordial man. *Elohim* should be translated in its plain, simple, and regular meaning "God." "Angels" is a very dubious translation. The New Testament quotes from the *LXX*. "We are strongly of the opinion that ‘elohim should here be translated in its plain and regular meaning ‘God,’ a meaning which it has almost without exception" (Leupold, p. 107).

**The God-Man (Hebrews 2:7-9)**

The Psalmist is thinking of primordial man, first Adam before the Fall and the position of the redeemed in Christ the ideal man. Hebrews 2:7, 9 helps us to understand the correct interpretation of these words of the Psalmist.

"THOU HAST MADE HIM FOR A LITTLE WHILE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS; THOU HAST CROWNED HIM WITH GLORY AND HONOR, AND HAST APPOINTED HIM OVER THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; THOU HAST PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.' For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone."

In Philippians 2:8-9 the apostle Paul contrasts the extreme humiliation of Christ and the high exaltation of Him by God the Father because of His obedience.

The fullest realization of man’s dignity and excellencies find their fulfillment only in the person of Christ Jesus. Man originally created sinless is a clear foreshadowing of Christ. "So also it is written, ‘The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the
spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual" (I Corinthians 15:45–46). The "first Adam" prefigures much of that which becomes vital in the life of the "last Adam." Leupold notes, "The true character and essence of the original Adam are manifested most effectively in the life of Jesus Christ. Therefore, if the true dignity of the first Adam is strongly set forth, the whole description obviously finds its fullest realization in Jesus Christ" (p. 101). Adam prefigures Jesus Christ as a type. He is a clear foreshadowing of all the excellencies of Jesus Christ. What was said of Adam may well be claimed for Christ, but in a far more perfect manner. The glory of God is perfectly revealed in the Son of Man’s dignity.

If you see Adam only as a glorified ape, you will never see the beauty of God’s handiwork. The "first Adam" prefigures the "last Adam." The first Adam prefigures what Christ is. What is seen in the first Adam is perfected in the last Adam. Each time I read the gospels I marvel at the perfect Man manifesting so perfectly the image and glory of God.

The New Testament offers over fifty different titles that people gave to Jesus. However, there is one title that no one gave him, that of Son of Man. He alone called Himself by that title. No one else did. He is the one Son, par excellence. He does what the Father does. He creates a new humanity, and a new heaven and a new earth.

**This Psalm helps us to understand our present position in Christ.**

No where else do we find such high dignity of man than in the Scriptures. God has placed man at the height of creation. Even if fallen and depraved man, sinful and undone is the apex of creation, what is the unique position of redeemed man? The glory of God is seen in the dignity of man because man is made in the image and likeness of God. We are kin to God. He is our next of kin. Man reaches his fullest realization only in Christ.

Thus, redeemed humanity has been elevated by means of the new birth to highest rank of all created beings. We are elevated to the most sublime height possible short of becoming members of the trinity itself. Salvation is a restoration to what God intended when He made man in the first place. When we see Jesus, we see how far we have fallen and what God intended man to be. Now that we have been redeemed, God sees us in Christ. He is the pattern of normal humanity.

True greatness of man can only be manifested as the Holy Spirit renews him, and as he comes to grow up in Him in all things who is the head, even Christ.

Note to what heights the child of God is raised. God has exalted redeemed humanity to such a sublime height that it is impossible for Him to elevate them further without breaching the Godhead. See how much God loves you! See what He has done for you in His grace. He has invested man with a dignity that is second only to His own and made him ruler over the world that He has created.

Do you wake up every morning and say to yourself, "I am a child of God. I have been forgiven of my sins. I am accepted in God’s family. He has marked me out as His own. He has put His Spirit within me, releasing to me the full–life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every power that Jesus Himself had to perform His life upon earth, I have in Him. I am equipped to handle whatever comes today. I can take whatever life throws at me because I have Him and all the fullness of His life." This is where you find identity, security, significance and sufficiency for your spiritual life. We are His handiwork! You are made in Christ!


THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CONSUMMATION OF MAN (8:6-9)

*God’s original intent for man was to have dominion over the earth.*

Man was created to have dominion over God’s creation (see Genesis 2:6–9). However, man has perverted it by trying to have dominion over his fellow men.

Man has not tamed the wild life. We see attempts at it in the circus and zoo. The child does not play with the adder. The lion and the lamb do not lie down together.

*This perfect dominion is true only in Christ. He alone is Lord of all creation.*

Psalm 8:6-7 can be ultimately true only in the God–Man, Jesus Christ.

"Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas." What awesome power!

I can think of a few examples from the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

- Remember how Jesus changed water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2).
- He quieted the winds and the waves of a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee with the words, "Peace, be still" (Mark 4:39).
- At the trial of Jesus a rooster crowed at the precise moment just as He had predicted to Peter (Matthew 26:34, 74–75).
- At the command of Jesus, Peter cast his net into the sea and caught a certain fish with a coin in its mouth. That coin in the mouth of the fish was of the exact amount needed to pay the Temple tax for the two of them (Matthew 17:27).

Everything is under the sovereign dominion of Christ. Mark 1:13 tells us that while being tempted in the wilderness for forty days by Satan Jesus "was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him." One scholar notes the verb suggests companionship between them and Jesus. It foreshadows the day when all creation is under his dominion in Isaiah 11:6–9; 65:25.
We shall be like Him (I John 3:2)

The dominion of Christ is not limited to the animal creation. Christ is the head of His church. Am I dominated by a spirit of worldliness or by the Lord Jesus? Am I overcoming the world and dominating it by the Holy Spirit? Is He Lord and Master of my life? Am I obedient to Him?

The apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:25-28, quoting Psalm 8:6 in v. 27 the following verses: "The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all." Did you notice that the last enemy to be conquered is death?

When Christ comes a second time we shall be just like Him. I John 3:2 says, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is."

In Philippians 2:9-11 the Apostle Paul declares this great exaltation of Christ at His Second Coming.

"Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

With the Psalmist we can only conclude:

"O LORD, our Lord,

How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:9).
Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-36

Christ is Alive!

"He is Alive! He is Alive! Jesus of Nazareth is alive!"

Women were the first to see Jesus of Nazareth alive after his death by crucifixion. Early on the first Easter morning they arrived at the tomb to continue the embalming process used by the Jewish people of the first century. They found the tomb empty and ran to tell the disciples of Jesus. The plain truth is no one would believe that Jesus was alive until he saw Him with his own eyes. No one was expecting Him to be alive. They went expecting to find a dead man, a corpse, in the tomb.

Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. When she recognized Jesus she reached out and grabbed Him. Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me; for I have not ascended to the Father; but go and tell My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:11–17). She went and announced it to the disciples saying, "I have seen the Lord" (v. 18). Mary ran and told the disciples and "they refused to believe it" (Mark 16:9–11). "These words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them" (Luke 24:11).

Jesus greeted other women who had arrived soon after Mary Magdalene. "And they came and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him." Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me" (Matthew 28:9–10).

In the afternoon two of the disciples were walking to the town of Emaus discussing the events of the weekend. Their hopes were dashed to pieces because of the death of Jesus. A stranger joined them as they walked. They invited Him in for a meal. As Jesus broke the bread and blessed it "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight." They hurried back to Jerusalem and went to the house where the eleven disciples were staying and told them their experience how they recognized Him. The disciples also told them, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon."

While the two travelers were relating the story how they recognized Him in the breaking the bread, "Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace with you.'" "He showed them both His hands and His side" (John 20:19–20). They were "startled and frightened." Jesus said, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." Jesus showed them His hands and His feet. They gave Him a piece of boiled fish and He took it and ate it in their sight (Luke 24:33–43).

Another disciple Thomas was not present that night. He refused to believe until he saw the feet and the hands of his crucified Lord. "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." With that attitude, Jesus let Thomas wait eight days. "After eight days again His disciples were inside a closed room, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!" (John 20:24–29).
There was an occasion when all of the disciples were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias. Jesus after He was risen from the dead appeared one morning and taught the disciples (John 21).

On separate occasions, Jesus appeared to Peter, to His half brother James, and to more than 500 people at one time, most who were still alive when Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians. Paul then says that he saw the resurrected body of Jesus when Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. Paul saw a real resurrected and glorified body.

In Galilee Jesus again appeared to the eleven, "and when they saw Him, they worshipped Him." Jesus then commissioned them to be His witnesses to all nations. "And after He said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." They were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing.

R. W. Dale, pastor of Carr's Chapel in London, while studying these great passages of Scripture rose from his desk and began to pace back and forth in his study shouting out loud, "He's alive! He's alive! Jesus is alive! O, I want my people to know He is alive!"

For forty days, Jesus demonstrated Himself alive in Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. Ten days later something astounding happened in an upper room in Jerusalem not far from the Temple. There was a sound like a violent, rushing wind that filled the house. There was no wind. It was just the sound like a tornado that they heard. Tongues like fire were distributing itself on them and resting on each one of them. The Holy Spirit filled them and they spoke spontaneously in other languages they had never learned. The sound brought people in Jerusalem out into the streets. The people heard the 120 speaking in their native dialects the mighty deeds of God (Acts 2). Some of the rabble mocked them thinking they had drank too much sweet wine. Then Peter stood and preached his greatest sermon. He explained that what was happening was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Hebrew prophet Joel. Then he told them about Jesus.

**GOD APPROVED THE LIFE OF JESUS (2:22)**

*Jesus was a man "approved of God."*

With boldness Peter says, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

If what Peter said that day was not true, his listeners would have been ready to contradict and correct him. They would have put him to shame if he were not able to prove what he said.

He tells us about Jesus of Nazareth. He was a real man. He was not a superman, nor a phantom. He was a normal man, authenticated and approved by God to be what God wanted in man.

*God authenticated Jesus by performing through Him "miracles, wonders and signs."*

Journey through the Gospels and you see Jesus changing water to wine, saying "Peace be still" and calming the winds and the waves on a lake. You see Him multiplying loaves of bread and fish and feeding 5,000 men. Watch Him casting out demons and raising the dead. God was at work in Jesus authenticating Him. The word "attested" (NASB), or "accredited," (NIV), "approved" in the KJV suggest the idea of
demonstration, appointment, accreditation. Jesus did these things by the power of God that resided in Him. Here is God at work in Him.

**GOD APPROVED THE DEATH OF JESUS (2:23)**

*You murdered Him.*

Peter continues "this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (v. 23).

The Roman executioner certified Jesus dead. Mark informs us Pilate refused to give the body up until he was certified dead by the Centurion (Mark 15:44-47). The Jewish religious leaders used the Roman Gentiles to kill Jesus.

In the March 21, 1986, issue of *JAMA*, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* had an article on "The Physical Death of Jesus Christ." The article concluded:

"Thus it remains unsettled whether Jesus died of cardiac rupture, or of cardiorespiratory failure, however the important feature may not be how he died, but whether he died. Clearly the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted, and supports the traditional view that the spear thrust between his right ribs probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and the heart, and thereby insured his death. Accordingly interpretations based upon the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge."

*Jesus was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."*

The death of Jesus was part of the eternal plan of God for our redemption. It was the will of God. The cross was no accident in the plan of God. It was an essential event, programmed by God the Father before the beginning of time. Sin could be dealt with only by the death of Jesus.

Romans 6:23 tells us: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, you say, but Jesus was not a sinner! This is the reason why Jesus went to the cross. "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6–8). Hebrews 9:22, "with out the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The Apostle Paul reminds us, "He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

**GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD (2:24–35)**

"God raised him up again" (v. 24a).

Only the resurrection power of God can raise the dead. Jesus rose from the dead in all the fullness and vitality of His person. God released Him from death's agony. He "put an end to the agony of death."
Impossible for death to hold Him in its power (v. 24b)

"God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (v. 24). The imagery is that of a hunter catching and binding his victims with nooses and cords. Christ broke the cords of death. He rose victoriously from the grave.

At least 3,000 people were listening to Peter give witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Not a single voice was raised in protest to what he was saying. Remember that it has been only 50 days since these people had seen Jesus of Nazareth crucified in this city. Not a single person challenged Peter's testimony. They knew the tomb was empty. They knew the authorities could not produce the body of Jesus. They had heard the rumors that Jesus had appeared alive before groups of people. Now they stand in mute silence as they listen to the testimony of one of those eyewitnesses.

Peter quotes Psalm 16.


"For David says of Him, 'I WAS ALWAYS BEHOLDING THE LORD IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, THAT I MAY NOT BE SHAKEN. THE THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL ABIDE IN HOPE; BECAUSE THOU WILT NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW THY HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH THY PRESENCE.'"

Peter makes it very clear that David was not referring to himself. "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day" (v. 29). These words of David cannot possibly refer to David, for he died and his tomb is in Jerusalem. Israel's great king was a prophet and was referring to one greater than David. Only in the resurrection of Jesus can these words be fulfilled. David foresaw Jesus as saying, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken." He lived His life continually in dependence on the power and authority of His Father. In Psalm 16:8 the idea is "I am keeping Him always before my mind's eye" (Leupold).

The indispensable thing Peter says is the resurrection was absolutely essential in view of the kind of life Jesus lived. Verse 25 tells us how he lived. "I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken." In verse 26, we have the results. "Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will abide in hope; because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay." Death could have no power over Jesus because of the kind of life He lived.

Only the Lord Jesus has ever been able to say that in the sense in which He said it. He was sinless. No angel is like Him. No man is like him. He is the sovereign Lord. He was tempted as other men, but without falling. There was perfect fellowship between God the Father and Jesus of Nazareth until the moment He cried out from the cross, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In that moment, the perfect intimacy was broken. Until then Jesus could say, "I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken."
Peter did not quote the exact words of the Psalm in the Hebrew. However, he did not alter the sense or meaning of the Psalm. Peter quotes the Septuagint (LXX) or Greek translation of the Hebrew Psalm.

*David's "hope" is in the resurrection.*

Verse 27 says "because Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades, nor allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay." "Hell" in the King James Version translates a word that denotes "Hades." It is literally, "the unseen world." Here it refers either to death itself or to the abode of the dead. Goodspeeed translates it "death," and Moffatt and the NIV translate "the grave." The word is not Gehenna, which is always translated "hell" in the New Testament. It is the place of eternal separation from God and eternal punishment.

Peter is quoting David in Psalm 16:10. "For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay." Is there any relationship more intimate between Jesus and His Father? "Is there any power stronger than this bond whereby he is tied to God, or the strength wherewith God holds him? The answer is a definite no. Death and the grave are being thought of in particular. Though 'Sheol' generally refers to the afterlife as such, to the realm into which one passes as he leaves his present form of existence, it can in a practical way be equated with the grave. Or it may simply be thought of as what we call the hereafter" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, page 151).

"Sheol is commonly pictured as a huge, relentless monster, standing with mouth wide open, ready to swallow all the children of men as they are swept along toward it. Though the psalmist has never seen a man escape the fate of being swallowed by death, yet the writer is sure that the power of the living God to whom he stands closely bound in faith is such that, as long as he retains his hold on Him, Sheol will not obtain the mastery. God will prevent his passing into Sheol's power" (Leupold).

This great statement of faith of David was never fulfilled in regard to him. It was fulfilled in Christ. David "foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:31). Hengstenberg in his book, *Christology of the Old Testament* says, "David in Christ could very properly speak as he here does." The Holy Spirit guided the spirit of David so that he gave shape and form to his utterance in such a way that what he concluded in the logic of faith reached a marvelous fulfillment in the resurrection of Christ. "Christ's resurrection has vindicated David's bold assertions of faith, and though to all intents and purposes he died, yet he did not die but lives forever. This result was not accidental but the outcome of the work of the Spirit, whose modes of working are marvelous and wonderful. For sheer boldness, few passages in Holy Writ can equal this utterance. It ranks on a par with Romans 8:31ff" (Leupold, p. 153).

Moreover, verse 28 quotes David when it speaks of the resurrection life. "THOU HAST MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; THOU WILT MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH THY PRESENCE." Someone has said correctly, "Those who are 'in Christ' do most assuredly share in the fruits of His resurrection."

Keil and Delitzsch in their commentary on the Psalms observes, "The words of the Psalm are a prophecy of David concerning Jesus, the Christ, who was promised as the heir to his throne, and whom by reason of the promise, he had prophetically before his mind . . . . David stands to his seed, the Christ and Holy One of God, who appeared in the person of Jesus. David, the anointed of God, looking upon himself as in Jahve, the God who has given the promise, becomes the prophet of Christ; but this is only indirectly, for he speaks of himself, and what he says has also been fulfilled in his own person" (p. 1003).
In the great plan of redemption, "the hope which he cherishes for himself personally has found a fulfillment which far exceeds this. After his hope was found in Christ its full realization in accordance with the history of the plan of redemption, it receives through Christ its personal realization of himself also. For what he says, extends on the one hand far beyond himself, and therefore refers prophetically to Christ" (Keil and Delitzsch, p. 1003).

Verse 31 tells us death had no effect whatever upon Jesus Christ. "He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY." Jesus did not go to Hades; He did not go to hell. He said when He died, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). Death had no power over Him—none at all. It could touch neither His soul nor His body.

Peter and the 120 people with him could say we are witnesses to His resurrection. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses" (v. 32).

*Jesus is Lord (vv. 33–36).*

Peter turns the whole audience into witnesses of his claim. You are witnessing the proof of what David predicted would happen. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the crowning proof that Christ has been raised from the dead and enthroned in heaven as the exalted Messiah (v. 33).

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

Peter quotes Psalm 110:1. King David didn't ascend up into heaven, but listen to what he said. "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'"

The only conclusion you can come to is "God has made Him both Lord and Christ (the Messiah)—this Jesus whom you crucified" (v. 36).

Everything was of God. God demonstrated His perfection through His works. God delivered Him to death. God raised Him from the dead. God exalted Him to the throne. God gave Him the Spirit for those he represented and for all humanity.

Sin put Him on the cross. God gave Him to the world. Grace delivered Him to the cross. Grace raised Him from the dead. Grace exalted Him. Grace gives Him the Spirit for the very people who had rejected Him. Moreover, He, in His grace, gives His Spirit to us.

*Visualize the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven.*

Take a few moments and try to visualize the ascension of our Lord, not from the earthly side merely, but from the heavenly side. Try to see the ascension, not as they saw it who lost Him to sense and sight, but as they saw it who saw Him arrive in Heaven.

Jesus led the disciples out of the city, and then uttered these words, "You shall be My witnesses ..." Then Luke says, "as they were looking, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." That is all. Now, quietly, for a moment or two, follow Him. Remember that He did not cease to be Jesus then—
He was still Jesus of Nazareth. He was not dissipated into thin air. Jesus of Nazareth was lost to sight to those watchers on the hillside. As they saw Him moving away from the earth in bodily form, and the cloud receiving Him. Can you follow Him?

To what place Jesus ascended, and how He moved to it—all these are entirely beyond us. We do know from God's Word that He went to be with His Heavenly Father. It is a place, and to that place Jesus of Nazareth ascended. He is there now. He has not lost His human form and never will, for God has taken humanity in Jesus into eternal being and relationship with Himself.

The risen Jesus of Nazareth has ascended to that central place of Divine manifestation at the right hand of God. I like to imagine that I am there when He arrived. There were spirits of men there. Moses, and Elijah, and Abel, and Abraham were there. There is David, and Jeremiah, and Isaiah, and a great host of others. All of humanity that had arrived before He came was there by the mercy and grace of God. He did not come by the mercy of God. He came in the inherent right of His own sinlessness. He alone was righteous in the sight of God. Morgan suggests, "If there had not been other higher work on hand for Him to do, He might have gone there from the Mount of Transfiguration . . . Now there came to Heaven a Man, God's exalted Man." I believe the watching angels were filled with rapture when He came. Now they see this Jesus of Nazareth come, and all the hosts of those who were there by the mercy of God see Him come. In my thoughts, I am in that company. I look at Him and say, "Praise and glory be to our great God. Oh, thank you Jesus for being obedient to your Father. Thank you for dying for me. Thank you for being my sacrifice for sin. Thank you Jesus who lives for ever more."

But why are there wound–prints visible in the hands and feet of this Man? He comes having accomplished on His Cross the exodus. Remember His talking to Moses and Elijah at His transfiguration about His exodus that was about to be accomplished?

If He had failed, all of these Old Testament saints who were in heaven on credit must have left the heavenly places. For the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world in a Divine purpose. Now the deed is done. One great shout came form His lips. In a loud voice came one word—tetelesti! We need three to translate it in English. "It is finished!" Done! Complete! In His hands and feet, are the scars representing all of my sins and your sins. At the right hand of God exalted is the Man of Nazareth.

It was "through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself to God." Moreover, it was an official act of God when He, the Man of Nazareth, passed into the heaven of heavens in the perfection of His humanity. He was wounded for you and me. There in heaven is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, representing us.

The conclusion to Peter's sermon is brief but powerful.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Messiah)—this Jesus whom you crucified" (v. 36). In the original language, you crucified are the last words of the sermon. Those two words must have echoed in their hearts.

Please observe the title given to Jesus. "Lord" means sovereign ruler of all things, King over all men and nations. He holds the key to life and death, heaven and hell. "Jesus" is His personal name. "Christ" is a title. It means the Messiah, the Promised Deliverer, the Anointed of God to deliver His people. This resurrected Jesus of Nazareth is the sovereign God.
**Now what will you do with Jesus (v. 37–38)?**

The response of the people is given in verse 37. They were "pierced to the heart." They cried out to Peter, "Brethren, what shall we do?" It is a very strong word expressing emotional stress of various kings. It suggests deep conviction. The literal meaning is "to pierce," "to stun," "to smite." It was used of horses pounding the earth with their hoofs. They were "broken in heart." They felt crushed. They became broken and stunned by the atrociousness of their sin and they cried out, "What must we do?" Like David they cried out, "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned."

The only solution is to "repent" (v. 38). Baptism is a symbolic act by which they expressed their repentance, confessed their faith in Christ and identified themselves publicly with Christ. When you are baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ," you are acknowledging Him as your savior. Only He can take away your sins and give you forgiveness.

It is as G. Campbell Morgan said many years ago, "There are some things you have to put in the first person singular. He loved *me*; He gave Himself up for *me*; for *me* He rose, for *me* He ascended, for *me* He received the Spirit, for *me* He poured that Spirit forth. There is the great and wonderful procession."
Psalm 22:1-32

The Song of the Cross

In your imagination go with me back a thousand years ago. The date is A. D. 963. Most of Europe was only sparsely inhabited by barbarian tribes. The discovery of America would not be for another 500 years. Let's suppose there existed a document prepared a thousand years before the event predicted of a time when a man of great prominence, would be the head of a great nation. He would be riding a street in a large metropolitan city in a metal chariot not drawn by horses. Then this man suddenly and violently would die from the penetration of his brain by a little piece of metal hurled by a weapon made of wood and iron. Within hours, his death would have world-wide effect and world-wide mourning. Can you imagine with what awe that document written in A. D. 963 predicting the death of President John Kennedy on November 22, 1963 would be held today? That hypothetical prediction would have been made even before the invention of the automobile, or guns or tall buildings radio and television.

Now that is exactly what we have in reality in Psalm 22. The Psalmist described a capital punishment by crucifixion before it had even been invented. It was unheard of in Jewish minds. It was written many centuries before depraved minds invented this horrible cruel form of punishment. No one had ever been put to death by crucifixion in King David's time. The Jewish method of execution was by stoning someone to death. Romans borrowed the crucifixion from the Carthaginians who invented it in order to make death as painful and cruel as possible.

Apart from the Gospel records themselves Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 describes the crucifixion of Jesus Christ more accurately and in greater detail than any other portion of Scripture. Only in Christ can we find One whose experience perfectly fulfills that revealed in this Hebrew song. Whatever may have been the experience of David, the suffering and the triumph described here transcends mere human suffering. There are meanings here far beyond the experiences of any human being.

In Psalm 22, we have a picture of the crucifixion and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, painted by King David one thousand years before Jesus was born. He describes at least nine specific events or aspects of the crucifixion in minute detail a thousand years before it actually happened in history. All of them fulfilled during the six hours Jesus hung on the cross.

The first section of this Hebrew poem (22:1–21) describes the problem of being forsaken of God. The second part (22:22-31) is filled with praise for God's deliverance. The positive note of assurance comes at the end of the poem after wave after wave of wretchedness and trust in God. The mood of abandonment and trust is constantly alternating.

THE PROBLEM OF BEING FORSAKEN OF GOD (22:1–21)

The problem of the suffering Messiah (22:1-5)

The Psalmist gives a "cry of dereliction" (vv. 1–2). "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but Thou dost not answer; And by night, but I have no rest."
It is a cry of abandonment, as the sufferer becomes aware of his being forsaken by his God. "Forsaken" literally means loosen, or relinquish or let me go. The Gospels uses a word made up of three words "to leave, down, in" — meaning to abandon or forsaking of someone in a state of defeat or helplessness in the midst of hostile circumstances.

You can feel the pain in his soul. Why is God so far from helping me? Why are my groanings so far from obtaining help for me?

Matthew 27:45 describes a strange, weird darkness that settled down over the world, obscuring the sun until it could be seen no more. The three-hour darkness was not due to an eclipse because it was time for the full moon at Passover week. A supernatural darkness came over the land of Israel from 12 noon until 3 p.m. It was a supernatural manifestation in nature. Jesus Christ cried out these words at the end of the strange period of darkness. No one has ever explained it. It lasted three hours. Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me!" In that strange sense of abandonment God the Father was rejecting God the Son! This God–forsakenness was real. No human being has ever experienced so great a suffering.

John W. Shepherd writing in *The Christ of the Gospels* made this keen observation:

When the darkness, like a heavy curtain, fell over the scene of the tragedy, silence reigned and a feeling of awe and horror crept over all. It was doubtless a period during Jesus suffered extreme anguish of spirit. The increasing nameless agonies of the crucifixion were deepening more and more with every moment into death. Almost at the close of the three hours of darkness, feeling Himself God-forsaken, He cried out words of anguish in the awful stillness of the darkness. The words echoed through eternity and reverberated down the centuries of time: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!*

Martin Luther sat contemplating these words. After a long time he rose from his chair and exclaimed, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand that?"

That darkness meant judgment. It was the coming judgment of God against sin. It was the wrath of God burning itself out in the very heart of Jesus as our substitute. In those dark hours, hell came to Calvary that day. Our Savior descended into it and bore its horrors in our stead. The Apostle Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:21, "God made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The Psalmist tells us the sufferer who screams at God still believes in God. There is also an awareness of the faithfulness of God (verses 3–5). "Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In Thee our fathers trusted; They trusted, and Thou didst deliver them. To Thee they cried out, and were delivered; In Thee they trusted, and were not disappointed."

He thinks back on the history of Israel and remembers God's faithfulness. Although they were sinners God was faithful. "My God, My God" is the name of the mighty God of the covenant. He uses the word *Eli*, My Strong One. In verse 2 he uses the most common designation of God, *'elohay* the One to be feared by me. He used word "trust" three times in verses 3–5 meaning to give God one's full weight, literally to collapse on God. He recalls Yahweh's holy character. There is no one like God. He is sinless, complete in Himself, He is perfect, He is awesome. He is worthy of our praise.

*The passionate cry of the suffering Messiah (22:6-8)*
For some strange reason, God is treating him differently. "But I am a worm, and no man." The pain of his suffering is dehumanizing. He experiences utter helplessness and frailty. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah wrote of him who is suffering, "His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14). They beat Him to a pulp. In His dying Jesus is treated like a common criminal, despised, hated by society.

"But I am a worm, and not a man, A reproach of men, and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying, 'Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him'" (Psalm 22:6–8).

Matthew records the crowd in Jerusalem during the crucifixion of Jesus. The unthinking multitude passed by wagging their heads in mockery and shouting, "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now." This crowd could not have been controlled. They had no idea they were fulfilling prophecy a thousand years old. Here is the way Matthew described the actual events at the foot of the cross in Matthew 27:39–43. Listen as they attack His faith in God.

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him, and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we shall believe in Him. 'HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET HIM DELIVER Him now, IF HE TAKES PLEASURE IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

**The pain of utter abandonment of the Messiah (22:9–11)**

"Yet Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breasts. Upon Thee I was cast from birth; Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb. Be not far from me, for trouble is near; For there is none to help" (22:9–11).

The disciples, friends and family all abandoned Jesus (Matthew 26:56). Only God is left and now He senses that God Himself is forsaking Him. Jesus had been in an intimate holy relationship with the Father all through eternity and for 30 years in the flesh while on the earth until this very hour. He was the perfect, sinless Son of God. He was always the delight of His Father. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17b). There was nothing in Jesus' life and character to merit abandonment. However, on the cross He is utterly forsaken of God the Father. That eternal fellowship is broken.

Why? He was dying as our substitute. He was being made an offering for the sins of the world. Isaiah 53:5–6 says, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

**The panic of the cross is described (22:12–13).**

The onlookers are described as strong powerful bulls. They seem like lions, fierce, ravening, threatening, their fangs dripping with rage to tear him apart. "Many bulls have surrounded me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, As a ravening and a roaring lion."
The enemies of Jesus surrounded Him like a pack of wild animals shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" (Matthew 27:22–26). It became so bad a riot was ensuing and Pilate caved in to their demands for His blood.

**The reaction of the victim is felt (22:14–15).**

King David writes, "I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death."

A feeling of utter helplessness and weakness overwhelms him. His physical pain is so severe it is like all his bones are being pulled apart. H. C. Leupold suggests, "The distorted position into which the body of a crucified person was thrust may have brought about something analogous to this." His courage has left him. He is all but dead.

The Apostle John described this terrible ravaging thirst of Jesus. With His body dehydrated in the hot Judean sun, and with the suffering from a raging fever He cried, "I thirst" (19:28b).

God is the one who lays Him down in death (v. 15). It is a judicial death. Isaiah 53:4, 6, 10.

**Picturesque vivid details of the crucifixion are described (22:16–18; Matthew 27:33-50).**

Note the exacting details of the execution. David never suffered like this one. "Dogs" is a derogatory term for Gentiles. The fulfillment in the nailing of the hands and of the feet of the Crucified One to the cross is clear. The prophet Isaiah also saw this clearly and wrote, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed" (53:5).

"For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots."

He can count His bones because He is forcibly stretched out making all His bones stand out as He tries to breath. People mingle about the cross mocking Him.

Our poet is prophetically standing at the foot of the cross. This Psalm is written as if the author were standing beneath the cross! Who but God could have written these words? The historian writes, "And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves, casting lots" (Matthew 27:35; compare Luke 23:34; John 19:24). It is impossible that this could have been fulfilled by the collusion of the pagan Roman soldiers. Yet, here it is described 1000 years before Jesus' death by crucifixion.

**A final prayer of commitment to the Father (22:19–21).**

The Psalmist is committing himself to God. "But Thou, O LORD, be not far off; O Thou my help, hasten to my assistance. Deliver my soul from the sword, My only life from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; And from the horns of the wild oxen Thou dost answer me."
Matthew 26:39-45 describes Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not My will, Thy will be done."

Just before He died Jesus cried, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46b).

It is impossible for us to understand this cry of our Savior. Russell B. Jones wrote in Gold from Golgotha: "One would need to go to hell itself, and go free from the taint of personal sin, and go as the holy Son of God, to understand it. No one ever will be in hell in that condition. Therefore, no man on earth, no victim in hell, can approach the experience that will enable him to understand the significance of Jesus' terrible cry." Jones continues,

Think of gathering all the sin of humanity into one heap. What a seething mass of wickedness! Jesus came down to represent that seething mass that God might blot it out in one sufficient comprehensive condemnation! And let it never be forgotten that it was not His, but your and my seething mass of corruption that He identified Himself with and suffered for. No wonder there rose such a cry of God–forsakenness from that sacrifice! He didn't have to do it. He did it only because of His love for us!

The remarkable thing is this song of dereliction merges into a note of jubilation. The moment of death is revealed in this broken verse, twenty–one, and then the singer is heard again, no longer expressing abandonment, but a paean of victory in the following verses. The tone now becomes jubilant praise.

**THE PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE BY GOD (22:22-31)**

*The praise to the suffering Messiah (22:22-26)*

Something transpired between verses 21 and 22. In the first part of this Psalm, we heard the voice of one person in statements, which are shorter, like gasps of air, breathed in distress. He is a lone sufferer. In the second section of our Psalm, we hear many voices including the Psalmist. The verses are longer because the speaker is delivered from pain. The lone warrior won the victory. The Messianic work has been accomplished through suffering. The people can now enter the possession gained through suffering and the triumph of the Redeemer. The suffering Messiah ben Joseph is also the triumphant Messiah ben David! The sovereign LORD God reigns!

Just as the first section coincides exactly with the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, the second part gives the results that came because of His resurrection. The Psalmist' vision is so clear of the salvation of the world arising out of His resurrection seems more like history than prophecy.

Now He will declare to His brethren what God has done for Him. Jesus called His disciples His brethren. Our poet writes:

I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise Thee. You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel. For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Neither has He hidden His face from him; But when he cried to Him for help, He heard. From Thee comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him. The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied; Those who seek Him will praise the LORD. Let your heart live forever! (22:22–26).
Hebrews 2:11–12 applies these words of the Psalmist to Jesus Christ.

But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, "I WILL PROCLAIM THY NAME TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING THY PRAISE."

The same one who has just suffered and died is now in the midst of the company whom he calls his brethren. He is calling out the people of God to praise God in v. 23. The first words of the risen Lord Jesus were to women. He said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me" (Matthew 28:10). He said to Mary Magdalen who stood there hugging the daylights out of Him, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."" (John 20:17). For the next forty days Jesus declared to His brethren what God had done. He calls His disciples brethren.

The resurrection is the evidence and proof that Jesus was the suffering servant of God dying as the Lamb of God who takes away all our sins. Verse 24 sees the one who was forsaken just in the eyes of God. Read Hebrews 13:20–21a. We worship a living Lord who has been raised from the dead and who now shares His life with us. Our life belongs to Him. He is risen! He is alive! Not only does He give praise to His Father, but we too have ample reason to give Him praise! Our Savior has risen from the dead after dying in our place.

We can praise Him because He has provided all that we need to please God (vv. 25–26). Out of His resurrection power, He gives us everything we need. Everything we need has been made available to us to live the Christian life (Hebrews 7:25). He made the provision through His death and resurrection.

The proclamation of the suffering Messiah (22:27-31)

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will worship before Thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S, and He rules over the nations. All the prospering of the earth will eat and worship, All those who go down to the dust will bow before Him, Even he who cannot keep his soul alive. Posterity will serve Him; it will be told of the LORD to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it.

The poet speaks of generations yet to be born who will hear of the sufferer's triumph and rejoice in His victory. One group shall declare it to the next because the truth is worth proclaiming to every generation. The Great Commission is to preach the Good News of salvation to the ends of the earth (vv. 27–28). Every tribe and nation will hear the message of God's grace. Just before ascending into heaven Jesus said to His disciples, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).
All the peoples of the earth will be in subjection to Him (22:29–31). Remember, these words were written a thousand years before Philippians 2:9–11 and Revelation 4 and 5. The remotest corners of the earth will hear the message of salvation. We the recipients of His grace are fulfilling these very words of the ancient poet!

Every time we take the gospel out of the realm of self–edification and share it with others we are fulfilling these words. Members of our church were part of a team who saw 143 people saved on a recent medical–dental mission trip to a remote coffee growing area of Honduras. God is at work bringing praise to His name.

The last words of this Hebrew poem are utterly amazing. They read literally, "It is finished." We can paraphrase it "there shall be proclaimed deliverance to a people yet unborn, that it is finished!"

Our Psalm opens and closes with a word of Jesus from the cross. "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). Jesus cried with a loud voice and said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). There was nothing left to do. It was done, complete, finished for you.
Psalm 23

The LORD is My Shepherd

The twenty-third Psalm has been called "the pearl of the Psalms," and the "nightingale" singing in the dark night of loneliness.

The key idea in this great Psalm is because the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not lack anything. It pictures God in love with His people as a kind, loving and caring shepherd. Because the LORD is my Shepherd, He provides rest and guidance, protection, food and fellowship. He provides for all of my basic needs in life.

Our Psalm easily falls into two halves with both having the general thought of God's secure care, but with different illustrations and applications. In the first half (verses 1–3), Jehovah is our Shepherd and we are the sheep of His pasture. In the second part Jehovah is our Host, and we are the guest at His table and residents in His home.

There is no reason to doubt the Hebrew Psalmist David is the author of this majestic poem. Suggestions abound as to what time in David's life he composed it, but it is hard to determine exactly the setting. Some scholars suggest it was when he was a lad tending his father's flock. Others suggest later in life as a mature man who has walked with his Shepherd through many a dark valley.

When I examine this lovely Hebrew song in detail, I have the firm conviction that it reaches a perfect climax in the person and work of Jesus Christ. I see in the character of the Shepherd the sweet fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Psalm may not be strictly Messianic in its prediction of the coming of Jesus the Messiah, but to use H. C. Leupold's words, "it suggests thoughts that point in the direction of the Messiah." Let's ponder together the beauty of the Psalm and the life and work of the Good Shepherd, who is also the Great Shepherd resurrected and dwelling in heaven and the Chief Shepherd who will return for His sheep.

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah spoke of the coming day when "the Lord God will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs, and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isa. 40:10–11). Another Hebrew prophet Ezekiel in similar vane saw the coming of "one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD have spoken" (Ezekiel 34:23–24). Keep in mind that king David had been dead six hundred years when Ezekiel was writing this prophecy! The prophet is speaking of a greater than David, the Messiah who will come and shepherd His people.

**JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHO LEADS AND GUIDES (23:1–3).**

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1). There is security in the presence of the good shepherd. Our Psalmist dares to reach out and call Jehovah his very own Shepherd. It is intimately personal. His God is a personal, loving Father. He is my Shepherd!
David uses the name *Yahweh* (Jehovah, LORD) who is always seen as absolutely faithful to His people. He has a vibrant, living faith in the LORD God. Therefore he can say just as God is faithful in meeting his present needs God will also meet all his needs in the future. He will never "suffer any want." Just as the good shepherd provides all that his sheep needs, the LORD will provide all that His sheep needs. With the Lord as his Shepherd, he confidently looks to the future. Why if you possess the LORD, who possesses all things, then you lack nothing.

*Because the LORD is my shepherd I shall not lack any provision in the needs of my life.*

Kyle M. Yates expressed it eloquently: "Because He loves me as the good Shepherd, I shall never want for rest, refreshment, nourishment, forgiveness, restoration, fellowship, guidance, deliverance from fear, comfort in sorrow, victory over enemies, security in troublous hours, joy in the Lord, power for service, or a home at the end of the earthly journey. Does He leave out anything in the world that a soul can possibly need? Every material and every spiritual need is provided for helpless, needy creatures who look to the Shepherd for such satisfactions. Only in Him can they be found" (*Preaching from the Psalms*, pp. 66–67).

In the Hebrew Old Testament God the Father is designated as "The Shepherd of Israel." He is the Pastor of the Jewish nation. When Jesus declared Himself "the Good Shepherd" in John 10:11 the Jewish people knew that He was claiming to be Jehovah–in–the–flesh.

The Good Shepherd Jesus Christ has all the shepherd qualities and characteristics described in Psalm 23. He is the great I AM. The Good Shepherd of John 10 is the Jehovah Shepherd of Psalm 23. Jesus of Nazareth is the absolute timeless, eternal, independent, self–sustained, pre–existent One. He is the great I AM. (John 8:58).

One seasoned, veteran missionary in Africa once said, "God always heard the scraping of the bottom of the barrel," and He always provided the necessities of life. That was also true in the Apostle Paul's personal life. He found the LORD faithful and true in his prison cell in Rome. He wrote to a faithful church in Philippi the words of encouragement, "my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

The Apostle Paul reminded the young pastor Timothy to, "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy" (I Timothy 6:17). It does us good to remind ourselves often whom it is that provides us with our job opportunities and earthly goods lest we become arrogant. With the resurrected Christ empowering his daily life Paul knew he could depend on Him. "I can do all things through Him (Christ) who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13).

Have you found Him to be true in your daily life? Can you shout with Paul's great doxology these words in Ephesians 3:20–21? "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

*Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack nourishment.*

The Shepherd can be depended upon to provide nourishment and rest. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters" (v. 2). The imagery is of sheep moving around
growing during the morning hours. They have found enough grass to make them full, and now they are tired and need to rest. The shepherd causes them to lie down in the grassy meadows with a sufficient water supply. When rest becomes imperative for us, He supplies it. The parallel line reinforces the same thought. He finds a safe place for the sheep to rest beside the still waters. What is pictured by the psalmist is nourishment, safety and a peaceful resting place for the sheep.

Do you find yourself needing the "bread of life"? Have you come hungering and thirsting for that which the world can never satisfy? Have you come like the woman at the well in Samaria to the "water of life"? Jesus said to the woman, "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). The "water of life" makes Himself available to us with refreshing rivers that bubble up within us. Again Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). On the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles "Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37–39).

As we feed on Christ in His Word we see Him, eat Him and drink Him. He is our spiritual food.

Not only does He lead me to spiritual nourishment and needed rest, but He forgives me and restores my soul.

**Because the Lord is my Shepherd I shall not lack forgiveness and restoration.**

The shepherd as a guide now appears. "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (v. 3). The emphasis of the verse is on the righteousness of God. God always leads men into His righteousness. His reputation and character are at stake. It is "for His name's sake." His character and reputation must be upheld. Just as the Lord Jesus is a perfect example of the character of God, so we His followers are to become like our model.

The Psalmist uses an interesting word signifying "to bring back the soul that is as it were flown away, so that it comes to itself again, therefore to impart new life" (Keil and Delitzsch, Psalms, p. 1081). "This He does to the soul, by causing it admist the dryness and heat of temptation and trouble, to taste the very essence of life which refreshes and strengthens it."

We are like wayward sheep wandering about aimlessly. Isaiah 53:6 describes us spiritually. " All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

Are you in the need of His restoration and revival? Come to His fountain for cleansing. I John 1:9 is the secret. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God reconciles us to Himself based on the death of Christ. "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:9–11).
The God of hospitality sets before us prodigals the fatted calf! He gives me back my life.

Remember how He restored Peter after He rose from the dead? The Apostle Peter was acutely aware of God's forgiveness and restoration. He wrote, "seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" (II Peter 1:3).

We have a gracious Shepherd who provides forgiveness, peace and reconciliation to God.

**Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack a right relationship with God.**

Do you hunger for righteousness? Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness . . ." He restores my soul. He revives, reinvigorates, brings the soul back to itself. Jesus uses the same analogy in Luke 15:3-7. The Good Shepherd goes in search of the one lost sheep. He puts the ninety-nine sheep in a safe open pasture and continues to go out and look until he has found the one which is lost. "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing." He calls his friends in and says to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" Jesus concluded, "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

This is exactly what the Good Shepherd did for us unrighteous sheep! Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He added, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:11, 14–18).

**The Good Shepherd has in intimate, love relationship with His sheep (John 10:14–15).**

His relationship with His sheep is compared to the relationship with His Father. The "knowledge" is one of intimacy. It is personal first hand experiential knowledge. In verse 15 the Father and Son have an intimate personal knowledge. It is a close relationship. Verse 14 tells us the Good Shepherd has the same kind of relationship with us! It is a mutual relationship "I know My own, and My own know Me."

The Apostle Paul applies this great truth to us when he says, "He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

We have a longing Shepherd who guarantees a right relationship with God.

Not only is the Shepherd the one who leads and guides, but He is also the Shepherd who is our host.

**JESUS IS THE SHEPHERD WHO SERVES AS A GRACIOUS HOST (23:4–6)**

**Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack for a constant companion.**
The abiding presence of the Shepherd is the emphasis in verse four. "Thou art with me." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me" (v. 4).

Ruth Harms Calkin reminds us of Romans 8:31ff with these words:

God, I may fall flat on my face; I may fail until I feel old and beaten and done in. Yet Your love for me is changeless. All the music may go out of my life, my private world may shatter to dust. Even so, You will hold me in the palm of Your steady hand. No turn in the affairs of my fractured life can baffle You. Satan with all his brag will not distract you. Nothing can separate me from Your measureless love—pain can't, disappointment can't, anguish can't. Yesterday, today, tomorrow can't. The loss of my dearest love can't. Death can't. Life can't. Riots, war, insanity, unidentity, hunger, neurosis, disease—none of these things nor all of them heaped together can budge the fact that I am dearly loved, completely forgiven, and forever free through Jesus Christ your beloved Son."

Before ascending into heaven Jesus reassured His disciples, "Surely, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). I shall never lack a constant companion in this life. If our priorities are correct we need not worry, "for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?" (Hebrews 13:5–6).

Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack encouragement and hope.

The "valley of the shadow of death" is literally "valley of deep darkness." H. C. Luepold reminds us, "The Hebrew word used contains no reference to death as such but does refer to all dark and bitter experiences, one of which may be death" (Exposition of the Psalms, p. 213). He adds, "the thought of death need not be excluded, but the reference is certainly much broader." It represents the deepest valleys you go through in life. God’s comfort is with us in all kinds of darkness in life. The psalmist is picturing those experiences in life when sorrow and disease, disappointment and distress, pain and anguish of the soul make the heart break under its heavy load. He abides with us to comfort us in the valley of depression, serious illness, rejection, disloyalty, death of a spouse or loved one, even the experience of death itself.

Jesus reminds us there is no dark valley at death for the believer. Jesus conquered death. Only the one who is the Resurrection and the Life can take us by the hand and lead us into eternal life. Every individual who has put his faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior will "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Jesus said to his friend Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25–26). The Apostle Paul was awaiting word from Nero as to whether he would be set free or be put to death. He expressed his faith in the resurrection of Christ when he wrote from his prison cell in Rome, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). The Good Shepherd is my constant companion in life and death.
Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack guidance and protection.

What are we to do when the heart is breaking and the deep dark shadows of life gather about us, when the sun refuses to shine on us and our tears flow without end? Like the psalmist, we are to remind ourselves, "Thou art with me!"

"Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." What are some of the deep dark valleys you are going through today? Our Shepherd walks through the valley hand in hand with us. He drives away the enemy with His rod, and He guides us with His staff. Talk about security! The Apostle Paul acknowledges this and brought to mind numerous experiences and the Lord's abiding presence in Romans 8:31ff. The Lord who is all knowing can give us guidance.

Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack honor and respect.

The enemies of the Psalmist look on helplessly while he is the honored guest at a magnificent banquet given by a gracious host. His enemies can only look on quietly as the host anoints him with sweet perfume. "Thou preparst a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (v. 5).

In David's day, the banquet table was a large piece of leather on which food was set. His enemies were seated at the same banquet helpless as his host anoints him.

The shepherd carried a flask of oil to anoint the scratched face of the sheep. Our gracious Shepherd comes to us in our dire need and anoints us with His healing touch as the Great Physician. He comes with healing in His wings.

We have been invited to sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb when Christ returns for His bride (Revelation 19:9). What a banquet that will be! His name will be vindicated and He will be glorified.

Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack joy and abundant life.

My cup overflows. Our kind Shepherd spreads a table of abundance before us every day. God provides even to the excess. There is no lack of provision. It runs over the brim. My cup runs over the brim. He fills my cup brimful. There is fullness even to excess. He more than supplies everything I need. What a God we worship!

Haddon Robinson reminds us of God’s blessings in our lives: "With Him the calf is always the fatted calf; the robe is always the best robe; the joy is unspeakable; and the peace passes understanding. There is no grudging in God’s goodness. He does not measure His goodness by drops like a druggist filling a prescription. It comes to us in floods. If only we recognize the lavish abundance of His gifts, what a difference it would make in our lives! If every meal were taken as a gift from His hand, it would be almost a sacrament."

Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). The idea is, "I came that they may keep on having life, and might keep on having it till it overflows in super abundant surplus!"
Because the LORD is my Shepherd I shall not lack contentment.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever" (v. 6).

I am a constant companion with "goodness and lovingkindness." It is not "I shall pursue good," but "they [the goodness and lovingkindness] will pursue me." "They will follow," means, literally, "they will pursue. " Goodness and lovingkindness pursue me like two good sheep dogs that operate all the days of my life. They are unchangeable and constant. Goodness is God's giving what we don't deserve. Mercy is His withholding what we deserve. Goodness supplies our every want; mercy forgives us of every sin. Goodness to provide; mercy to pardon. "The LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting." God is merciful. He acts in mercy toward us. Through the death of Jesus Christ our penalty for all our sins was paid in full. The blood of Jesus covers all our sins. God in mercy forgives and cleanses us. It should cause our hearts to rejoice and overflow with contentment.

Because the LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not lack assurance of eternal life.

"And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Unbroken, eternal fellowship with God! What fellowship! What joy divine!

Heaven is a place where we will be in eternal fellowship with our Shepherd–King Jesus Christ. Jesus promised, "Let not your hearts be troubled . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go . . . I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1–3). "The LORD is my shepherd . . . . I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

No one says it better than Kyle M. Yates. "It is all made possible because of the love of God for us and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who paid it all that we might be ransomed. He died in our place. We received eternal life through faith in Him as our crucified and risen Savior. The condition of our salvation is faith in Him. The real ground of our redemption is the blood of Christ. He died and rose again for us. Now he lives in us. God the Father is the source of our salvation. God the Son is the channel through which it comes to us. God the Holy Spirit is the agent who makes it effective in us. His provision for us is the costliest transaction ever conceived in the heart of God. It took the precious blood of His own Son to pay the debt. We enter into the full realization of this salvation by complete surrender to Him with the certain trust in Him to provide all our wants . . . . We can continue in Him only as the Shepherd continues constantly with us" (Preaching from the Psalms, p. 74).

Indeed, this is the only way we can live the Christian life. Our Shepherd has provided all we ever need. As we hand over to Him our needs, He graciously hands over to us the provision. All we have to do is acknowledge our needs and surrender it to Him. I exchange my need for His abundant provision. Please keep in mind it all begins with a spiritual birth the moment you place your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Though He is in heaven, the Great Shepherd is still seen caring for His sheep (Hebrews 13:20).

"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working
in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

He has risen from the dead and He has "equipped you in every good thing to do His will. He "works in us to do that which is pleasing in His sight." It is all done to glorify Him forever and ever.

**The Chief Shepherd is going to make Himself visible one day.**

"And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (I Peter 5:4)

The word for "appear" means "to make visible, clear, manifest, know, to uncover, to lay bear, reveal." One day He is coming and every eye will see Him. It will be at awards day in heaven. He will honor those who have been "good and faithful." It is another trophy of grace. Undershepherds will "receive the unfading crown of glory." It will not be a bouquet of flowers that will fade and die. It won't be a wreath that will fade away in a day or two. It won't be the applause of men that diminishes. It will be an eternal crown of glory.

The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.

The LORD is my Guide; I shall be led by Him.

The LORD is my King; I shall be a guest in His palace.

The LORD is coming; I shall go to be with Him.

**BECAUSE THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD**

Because *The LORD is my Shepherd,*

I shall not lack any provision of needs in my life.

Because *He makes me lie down in green pastures,*

I shall not lack nourishment.

Because *He leads me beside quiet waters,*

I shall not lack rest.

Because *He restores my soul,*

I shall not lack forgiveness and restoration.

Because *He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake,*
I shall not lack a right relationship with God.

Because *I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil*, and

I shall not lack encouragement and hope.

Because *Thou art with me*,

I shall not lack for a constant companion.

Because *Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me*,

I shall not lack guidance and protection.

Because *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies*,

I shall not lack honor and respect.

Because *Thou hast anointed my head with oil*,

I shall not lack power and authority,

Because *My cup overflows*,

I shall not lack joy, and abundant life.

Because *goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life*,

I shall not lack contentment.

Because *I dwell in the house of the LORD forever*,

I shall not lack assurance of eternal security.
Psalm 45:1-17

Worship the King in all His Beauty

Psalm 45 describes a mystical king, His bride and His marriage. The Bridegroom in Psalm 45 is the Messiah King. The main subject of the Psalm is the King, of course. There is a long-standing tradition in Judaism that this Psalm is prophetic in character and deals with the King Messiah.

The Psalmist is overflowing with a message to teach his recipients. It is a Maskil or a teaching psalm. The word "overflow" in verse 1 is a verb meaning to "bubble up," or "boil." It denotes excited emotion, or lively excitement. Let the tongue overflow with songs of praise. The heart of the poet gushes out with excitement, "No Other Song have I to Sing but Jesus." I can illustrate this enthusiasm with this quote of C. H. Spurgeon on Christ. Listen to the pulse beat of this man.

I believe that whenever our religion if most vital, it is most full of Christ. . . . I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." . . . I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments rich, rate, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only. . . . The sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only. . . . I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that anything which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the region of the perfect, the more completely everything else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be the first and the last. . . . (C. H. Spurgeon, Sermons of C. H. Spurgeon of London, Vol. 9 (N. Y.: Funk & Wagnalls Co., n. d.), pp. 433-434).

With his message bubbling up from an overflowing heart the Hebrew Psalmist wants us to see the

THE BEAUTY OF THE KING (45:1-5).

His person is beyond compare (v. 2). "Thou art fairer than the sons of men."

The song was composed out of love for the king and his bride (v. 1). However, someone greater than king Solomon is before our eyes. Every devout Israelite was forced to think of the ideal Person, the coming King who would be anointed by God, and who would shine through the shadowy form of the earthly king.

The features of the everlasting nature of His throne, and its realm, and the divine character of His being reaches beyond King David and his descendants. This king is called the "Mighty God." He is the child with the four names in Isaiah 9:6. "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government
will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

The words of this psalm can not be verified in any person save in Jesus the Messiah. The Psalmist is struck by the superhuman excellencies. The King possesses sovereign beauty in fullest development. There is unrestrained purity in His character. There is no beauty among men comparable to the beauty of the Messiah. He is the fairest of ten thousand in wisdom, holiness and righteousness. He is the resplendence of His Father's glory which is unaffected by the power and deformity of sin.

The Psalmist writes in verse 2b, "Grace is poured upon Thy lips." The words of Jesus are music to the souls of men. "Words of unmingled graciousness came from His lips," wrote Maclaren. They were words of wisdom, love, pity, grace, gentleness, pardon, forgiveness and assurance. It is the grace of a King. He and His words are altogether lovely and gracious. Luke 4:18-22 records the response to His reading from Isaiah's scroll.

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips.

The beauty of the King is more than skin deep. Leaders in Judaism said, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks" (John 7:46). "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn. 1:14). John the Baptist said, "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things unto His hand" (John 3:34-35).

**The victories of the King (vv. 3–5).**

In Christ we find no vulgar ambition or lust for conquest. He is no Napoleon, or Alexander the Great or Joseph Stalin. There is no self-interest in Him. The enemies spoken of here are not flesh and blood. They are spiritual.

His weapons are "truth, meekness and righteousness" (v. 4). He teaches "awesome things." His method is humility. It is a spiritual kingdom, not political. He conquers Satan with truth. Ephesians 6:12 reads, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." The Apostle Paul is talking about powers destroyed by Christ.

Christ rode into Jerusalem in a triumph of humility. However, this prophecy is not exhausted with Christ's first coming. There will arrive a day when He comes as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Discover this truth for yourself in Revelation chapter 19). He will return as victorious King and we shall shout, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns" (Revelation 19:6).
Not only does the Psalmist' heart bubble forth with this good theme of the beauty of the King, but he declares

THE BLESSINGS OF THE KING (45:6-9).

He is blessed of God forever (v. 6a).

"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. . ."

The Messiah's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (II Samuel 7:12ff). The Psalmist declares the divinity of His person and the eternity of His kingdom. He shall reign as King of kings for all eternity. His throne is everlasting because He is everlasting.

He is characterized as the "Mighty God" ( Isa. 9:6).

Hebrews 1:8, 9 gives us the traditional Jewish interpretation of this Psalm. The New Testament writer is quoting Psalm 45:6, 7 and applying the words to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

But of the Son He says, "THY THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM. "THOU HAST LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, THY GOD, HATH ANOINTED THEE WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE THY COMPANIONS."

He is a righteous ruler (v. 6b).

"A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Thy kingdom."

He is anointed of God (v. 7).

He is both God and man. Emanuel—God with us. Think of the wonder of this Person, who was the mighty God—yet He became flesh. "Great is the mystery of our faith: God was manifested in flesh!" wrote the Apostle Paul.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Thy God, has anointed Thee With the oil of joy above Thy fellows.

He has come to get married (vv. 8–9)
All Thy garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad. Kings' daughters are among Thy noble ladies; At Thy right hand stands the queen in gold from Ophir.

The relationship between God and Israel is constantly represented in the Old Testament under the emblem of a marriage relationship. In the New Testament the church is compared to the queen. She is the bride of Christ. Every true believer in Jesus Christ down through the ages is His bride. He counts this universal, invisible Body as His spouse. The spiritual communion between Christ and His church are compared to a marriage relationship.

He has come for His bride. Ephesians 5:25 reminds us "Christ loved His church and gave His life for her" so He might present to Himself a glorious church, a beautiful bride, without spot and without blemish. He has clothed us in His righteousness. All that belongs to Him belongs to us. "We are made partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4).

He has prepared a place for His Bride (verse 8b). "Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made Thee glad." Jesus tells us in John 14:2–3 that He has gone to prepare a very special place for us. When the time in God's sovereign grace is right He will return for us.

What a powerful message the Psalmist wants to teach his people. Your King is beautiful, and He comes with blessings for His bride. Moreover, he has words for the

**THE BRIDE OF THE KING (45:10-15)**

*The king is lord over His Bride (vv. 10-11).*

To be an excellent bride of this King she must take to heart some wisdom of the palmist.

Verse 10 admonishes her to forget her own father's house, and her own people. "Listen, O daughter, give attention and incline your ear; Forget your people and your father's house." There must be entire surrender of herself to Christ. "Count all things loss for the excellencies of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." Forsake all to follow Him. Forget worldly associations and attachments.

In verse 11 she must be in subordination to her husband. She must be absorbed in the presence of a purer affection. "Then the King will desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, bow down to Him." He becomes the master of our hearts. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." I think it is sad but true that many times He is no longer King of our hearts. Christianity in our day has become shallow because He is not Lord and Master of our lives. When you desire His beauty you worship Him! You crown Him Lord of your life. Moreover, He will respond in the wonder of His love. "We love Him because He first loved us." That love just keeps on growing.

She must be in complete union and in complete dependence upon her husband.

*The splendor of the Bride (v. 13).*
"The King's daughter is all glorious within; Her clothing is interwoven with gold."

The Bride of Christ is dressed in white robes of His righteousness. She is spotless now. We stand before Him in fine linen clothes, clean and white. They are embroidered with Christlike graces. Our self-righteous rags are stripped away and the best robe of heaven is placed in us. Examine Ephesians 5:26, 27 for yourself.

The bride is clothed with adoption, justification, sanctification, righteousness, etc. The clothing is bought without money and without cost. How can that be? The King provides it!

*The marriage ceremony is described (vv. 14-15).*

The queen must have been someone radiant in beauty.

She will be led to the King in embroidered work; The virgins, her companions who follow her, Will be brought to Thee. They will be led forth with gladness and rejoicing; They will enter into the King's palace.

It reminds us of another wedding that will take place when the King comes for His bride. Are you ready for the marriage of the Lamb? Revelation 19:7-9 describes that wedding.

"Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

Remember the parable of the Ten Virgins. "They that were ready went in with Him unto the marriage, and the door was shut." Which side of the door are you on? Are you ready for His coming in glory? He came in grace to save at His first coming. He returns in glory to judge at His Second Coming.

Today if you will believe on Jesus Christ as your personal Savior He will give you a place in His kingdom. Romans 10:9-13 says:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."

The whole church will be together at the King's Second Coming (I Thess. 4:13-18). What a day of rejoicing that will be. Thre will be

*THE BENEDICTION OF THE KING (45:16-17)*
In place of your fathers will be your sons; You shall make them princes in all the earth. I will cause Thy name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the peoples will give Thee thanks forever and ever.

The regal glory of the house of David has reached its climax in Jesus Christ. The Messiah, the Anointed of God, has come in all His beauty. This passage in Revelation 5:10-14 declares the worship He is receiving right now and will through all eternity.

"And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Apostle Paul resounded with eternal praise to the Son of God when he wrote Philippians 2:9-11:

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Read also Psalm 72:17-19.
Psalm 96:1-13

It is wonderful being involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now.

A church soccer team in Uberlandia, Brazil is leading opposing players to Christ. Before the soccer games the team gathers with members of the opposing team at midfield to tell them about their relationship with Jesus Christ. They sing a song about Jesus and hand out New Testaments to each player and referees. At one of the recent games, the entire opposing team and a referee prayed to accept Christ as their personal Savior. One spectator became a Christian after he got tired of waiting for the game to start and came on to the field to find out what was going on.

The great nation of Brazil has 161 million inhabitants and constitutes around half of the population in South America. About 11 percent or 18 million Brazilians consider themselves evangelical Christians. These evangelical Brazilians want to plant 150,000 new churches by the year 2000. Their goal is to plant a local church within the reach of every inhabitant during this generation.

The Hebrew Psalms are filled with this missionary message of outreach to the nations of the world. "Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples" (Psalm 96:3). This isn't just a passing word; it is a dominant theme in the Psalms.

It is interesting that Psalm 96 is found with very few changes in I Chronicles 16:23–33. The occasion was the time when David first moved the ark of the Lord to its resting-place of honor in the city of Jerusalem.

Psalm 96 is "a missionary hymn for all ages." It is filled with a jubilant note of joy, but there is also a declaration of impending judgment. The psalm must originally have been composed for public worship because it is entirely one of worship. It is devoted to praise to God in the context of public worship in the Temple. The LORD God is a wonderful Creator and Ruler and He is coming to judge all men. People are to be reached with the Good News with the goal that eventually all may join in God's praise. It is a great missionary psalm with missionary themes.

Keil and Delitzsch says Psalms 96–98 "are more Messianic than many in the strict sense of the word Messianic; for the central gravitating point of the Old Testament gospel lies not in the Messiah, but in the appearing of JHVH." The LORD God comes to reign. How true this is, especially when we think of the Jesus Christ the Son of God, when He returns to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. The coming reign of God over the nations of the world finds its fulfillment only in the Messiah. "The broad eschatological outlook of this psalm is remarkable," notes Leupold. "It throbs with the hope of the Lord's coming . . ." "The psalm is definitely of a messianic cast and may as many interpreters have remarked have been of great service in keeping Messianic expectation alive."

You will find 25 quotations in various parts of the Old Testament in this beautiful psalm.
THERE IS A CALL TO SING A NEW SONG OF PRAISE UNTO THE LORD (96:1-6)

The Psalmist has a new song to sing (verses 1–3).

Three times the Psalmist says in the first two verses, "Sing to the LORD," "Sing to the LORD," "Sing to the LORD." It is hard to miss his point. He has a new song to sing, and he wants all the earth to hear it. The psalmist can not restrain himself any longer. He is so impressed with the greatness of the Lord and His wondrous works he simply burst forth with praise to God.

"Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day" (Psalm 96:1–3).

It reminds us of Revelation 5:9; 14:3 when the redeemed out of all the nations will sing the new song gathered around the throne of God in eternity. They sing of the great things the Lord has done for them.

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy art Thou to take the book, and to break its seals; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase for God with Thy blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation'" (Revelation 5:9).

"All of the earth" will be gathered there. Representatives from every tribe and village all over the earth will be worshipping Him. Aren’t you glad it is not just the ancient Jewish people, or Americans, or an elite group? It is a message for "all the earth." Those who will be gathered around the throne of grace are all those who have bowed before the Lord God, confessed their need of Him, and believed on name of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. However, let us be very careful if we think it is just for us. Let us not become exclusive in our sectarianism. God will gather before the throne people of every nation, and tribe who have surrendered to Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

This psalm reminds us of the commission of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 28:18–20. "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" On another occasion Jesus said in Matthew 24:14; "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come."

"Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day" (Psalm 96:3).

When you fall in love with the Lord Jesus, you want to tell everyone. It becomes your life style. When you are so full of His presence in your life you can't help but share the Good News you have found of Jesus Christ with others.

Another missionary song tells us the same message. Psalm 67:1-4. "God be gracious to us and bless us, And cause His face to shine upon us — Selah. That Thy way may be known on the earth, Thy salvation among all nations. Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For Thou wilt judge the peoples with uprightness, And guide the nations on the earth. Selah. Let the peoples praise Thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise Thee."
The word "Selah" means to pause and think on this great truth. The author invites us to stop and ponder these words and their implications in our lives.

When you see the words "nations" and "peoples" in the plural form they are referring to non-Jewish people. The Jewish people had received the Good News and it was their responsibility to share it with their non–Jewish neighbors. They were chosen of God to be a great missionary nation.

The message the Psalmist is excited about is found in verse 10. The LORD God reigns! He is the King of all the earth and all that is in it. "Say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved; He will judge the peoples with equity.'"

Who is invited to hear the message of salvation? "All the earth," "the nations," "all the peoples," "all the nations," "all the peoples." The missionary message is so strong it is impossible to miss it.

**He is a great God and He is worthy to be praised (Psalm 96:4–5).**

Look at the incomparable greatness of our God. Verse four notes why He is worthy of our praise. "He is to be feared above all gods" (v. 4) because "all the gods of the people are idols" (v. 5) They are "non-existent things," good for nothings, unreal useless. That which is nothing is powerless. The Hebrew has play on words contrasting the true God and idols. The *elohim* gods of the nations are mere *elilim*. *Elilim* means heathen gods. That which is nothing can make nothing. "But the LORD made the heaven." The LORD is the Creator. This should cause your heart to rejoice and sing. How superior is the LORD who made the heavens and the earth. God's architecture is a constant reminder of His presence. The sky, the lamps in the heavens, the rain that falls on our heads, the dew in our fields, the thunder and the flash of lightening are His voice to every creature. No wonder the Psalmist uses expressions like splendor, majesty, strength and beauty to describe his thoughts of wonder love and praise to our God.

The Apostle Paul had the same idea in mind when he wrote to new Christians who had come out of pagan culture. They were anxious about food that had been sacrificed to idols in pagan temples and then made available commercially for people to purchase and take home and prepared to eat. He said, "we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one" (I Corinthians 8:4).

The idols of the new age pantheism are only a figment of a vivid imagination. They are powerless to effect a living relationship with a holy God.

The Apostle Peter wrote: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Thomas, a disciple of Jesus inquired about the way to heaven. Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6).

**We also sing because of His strength and beauty (verse 6).**

"Splendor and majesty are before Him, Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary," writes the Psalmist.

God is beautiful! Our God is not a grotesque image, or idol, or vain thing. He is a beautiful person full of splendor, majesty, strength and beauty.
Another messianic Psalm calls upon all the nations to praise the LORD. "Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples! For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 117:1–2).

Has God given you a new song to sing? Is it a song of His beauty and grace? God puts that new song in your heart when you come to the deep realization that you have no song to sing without Jesus in your life. God the Holy Spirit reveals the need in your heart to abandon your self-centered ways, turn from your unbelief and put your trust in Jesus Christ as your savior. When you invite Jesus Christ to become your personal savior, He puts a song in your heart of thanksgiving and praise to God.

**THERE IS A CALL TO THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD TO PRAISE THE LORD (96:7-10)**

All the families of the earth are called upon to come and worship the LORD. It is a call saying, "Thank you God that you are who you are."

**Give to the Lord the glory and strength due to Him (verses 7–8a).**

"Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory of His name . . . " (vv. 7–8a). There is only one person who is worthy of our praise. He is the LORD. Who is your most valued person? Please let me encourage you to let Jesus Christ become your most valued person. Give Him the glory that is due His holy name.

**Bring an offering to the Lord (verse 8b).**

"Bring an offering, and come into His courts."

We owe Him our lives. "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

We have a debt we owe. A responsibility goes with grace. You cannot earn your salvation, but because of what God has done for you, you want to glorify Him by the way you live. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the debt we owe in Romans 1:14–17.

**Worship the Lord in the beauty of His holiness (verse 9a).**

The idea of "worship" is to fall down before, prostrate or bow down before. The word for "fear" is to "tremble, trust, wait carefully (patiently)." It reinforces the idea of worship. It is to have humble attitudes before God. We are to approach Him in the spirit of deepest awe, reverence of worship. Do you sometimes tremble in His presence?

"He will judge the peoples with equity" (verse 10c).

C. S. Lewis saw that the Psalmist looked upon divine judgment as an occasion for rejoicing. After pondering it he wrote, "People ask for it, and are glad when He administers it." Psalm 67:4 says, "Let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For Thou wilt judge the people with uprightness, and guide the nations on the earth. (Selah)." Just pause and think of that.
The word "judge" has the idea of to govern and rule. The main idea in the Psalm is the sovereign rule of God over the nations in righteousness. Revelation 19:1–2, 5–6, 11–16 tells us the Lord Jesus Christ reigns. One day the King will come in glory and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. Do you welcome His return? Are you ready if He were to come today?

**THERE IS A CALL TO ALL CREATION TO CELEBRATE (96:11-13)**

*The whole creation is called upon to praise God (verses 11–12)*

All created inanimate objects are called upon to join in the worship of the Creator. He is Lord over the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in it, the field, the crops, the forest. You can hear them rejoicing and shouting. It reminds us of the words of the Apostle Paul when he says the whole creations groans waiting for redemption (Romans 8:18–22). It is beautiful figurative language of all creation bowing and worshipping God. The roar of the ocean waves along a beach is praise to God. The wind rustling through the leaves of a forest is a song of praise to God.

*The Lord is coming to judge (v. 13).*

He is coming to judge the earth in "righteousness." The word means, "what is just and right." It is something God has given His people out of His grace. It is a whole new way of life. It is an act of grace. He is a faithful God and we can rely upon Him. Instead of fearing God's judgment, we can sing for we know He is coming to reign over the world.

It will be a time when He will correct the injustices of the world. He will set right that which is now full of disharmony and disarray, suffering and anguish and violence. Our God reigns! Oh how we need Him to come, soon.

Dr. Donald McGavran tells "The Story of a People Movement to Christ." This an abbreviated form of the story, which illustrates beautifully what our Psalmist has taught us today.

The story presented here is true. . . .

There once was a man named Ditt who lived in the land of the Punjab in India. The Hindus called him an Untouchable. He was short, dark, and lame. He was a laborer in the village and also bought and sold hides. He was in good standing in the Chuhras caste there.

One day Ditt heard about Jesus Christ, the Savior. He heard of how Jesus Christ, the Sinless Incarnation of God, had gone about doing good, had given men wonderful teaching, and had died on the Cross that men might obtain salvation. Ditt said, "I want that kind of Lord, One who loves sinners and saves them from sin and ignorance and teaches them the truth about God. I want a religion in which there is no caste, where we Chuhras will learn that we are men every bit as good as Brahmans and Thakurs." . . .

A few days after his baptism, when his wife was scolding him for becoming a Christian, he said, "Listen to these words of God. Are they not wonderful? Why don't you learn them too?" His wife answered, "I? I cannot learn. I am a woman." Ditt replied, "Christ gives women power to learn. Repeat these words over together with me and you will learn them." They repeated the words of the Lord's Prayer over forty times and Ditt's wife to her surprise found that she too could say the Lord's Prayer. Then she listened with great
attention to the stories of the great and wonderful works of the Lord Jesus, and of His death on the Cross for sinners. She decided to give her heart to Jesus Christ. Ditt's daughter too decided to become a Christian and the man and wife living in the next house learned the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commands and the Creed with the wife and daughter. They too were soon ready to become Christians. Three months from the date of Ditt's baptism these four people walked 25 miles to Sialkot and were baptized and then walked back to their village.

Now the whole village was aroused. Five people had become Christians. People asked Ditt, "What did you get for becoming a Christian? Money, legal help, a loan?" Ditt answered them clearly, saying, "Whoever changes his religion for money is a rascal. I work as I did before. I live in my old home. I have received nothing from the Christians but the true religion, a religion in which there is no idol worship, no worship of the Brahmans, and no castes. I now have a Bible which tells us that there are no high caste and no low caste, but all are equal in the sight of God, and all are brothers here on earth. This is the true religion. I have found the true religion, therefore I have become a Christian." This testimony greatly impressed his relatives. Four men started to come and learn Christian truth from Ditt and his family. Six months from the date of Ditt's baptism he took four men to Sialkot for baptism. There were now nine Christians in Shahabdiike Village. The pastor visited the village now. While the pastor was there Ditt was able to convince many others of the truth of the Christian religion. All these Christians continued to live in their village and to do the work they formerly were doing.

Part of Ditt's work was buying and selling hides. He had to travel around to many villages. Wherever he went he said to the Chuhras, "My friends, we Chuhras must find a way out of our sin and ignorance. Our present religion tells us that we are untouchables. It keeps us ignorant. We have no Savior. The Lord Jesus Christ came to save just such people as we are, save them from sin and from ignorance, and to make it possible for them to live a good life and go to heaven. All Chuhras ought to accept the Lord Jesus Christ." Chuhras would object, saying, "If we become Christians, we shall lose our relatives." Ditt would say to them, "Not at all. Look at me. I became a Christian, and while it is true that for a few weeks people were angry with me, first my wife and then my neighbors and relatives have become Christian. Within a few years all of my relatives will be Christians. Because this is the true religion, everyone will become Christian. You become a Christian and others will follow." Hearing this, many Chuhras in many villages started to become Christians. Eleven years after the conversion of Ditt, 500 Chuhras were received in the church. By 1900 over half of the Chuhras in Sialkot District had become Christian, and by 1915 all except a few hundred of the Chuhras had become Christians.

Thus Ditt's example caused 100,000 people to become Christians. He led them out of darkness into light, out of slavery into freedom.

Hearing of the people who were becoming Christian in Sialkot District, other Chuhras in the Punjab became Christians, so that in the 1930s in the Punjab there were 450,000 Christians and the number is growing rapidly year by year. Recently, all the Chuhras of the Sialkot District have started to raise money to build a great church to the memory of Ditt, the man who was used by God to bring salvation to all the Chuhras. His memory is held sacred.

What is your attitude toward the coming of the King? Do you welcome His coming with joy? Do you sing from your heart, Lord Jesus will I see you today? Will you come and bow in humility before Him and ask Him to become your personal Savior? Pray this simple prayer from your heart: "Lord God I realize that I have failed you, and that I am a sinner. I have come short of your expectations in my life. I believe that
Jesus died for my sins on the cross and He rose from the dead. I am asking Jesus Christ to be my Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me. Amen."
Psalm 118:22–29

Christ the Stone

Psalm 118 opens and closes with the same refrain. "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting."

The first eighteen verses of Psalm 118 are the song of a procession as it winds its way slowly up the hill to the Great Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. It is sung alternately by the two halves of the procession. Verse 19 is the utterance of the leader, in the name of the whole band, on their arrival before the gates. "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall enter through them, I shall give thanks to the LORD." Verse 20 is the reply made to them by those inside the Temple gates. "This is gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter." Then they together join in with songs of praise to the LORD God. The sacrifice takes place at verse 27. The Psalm ends the way it began with resounding praise to God. "Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting."

At the heart of this beautiful Hebrew processional song of worship is one of the earliest messianic testimonies to Jesus Christ. Verse 22 reads, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone." One of the most unusual names for the Lord Jesus Christ in the Bible is the term "stone."

THE STONE OF ISRAEL (118:22)

Israel is a rejected stone

The Jewish people applied this reference to Abraham, David and the Messiah. In the original Old Testament context, the rejected stone is probably Israel. She was small and despised, hated and held in contempt by the Gentile nations. The builders are the empire builders of the day, who enjoyed prominence and who seek to have extraordinary political success.

The Persian Empire was a mighty edifice at one time in history. The stone of captive Israel did not seem to fit into their picture of political plans for world dominion. Therefore, they rejected it. They intentionally passed it by as being of little or no use to their plans. Israel is the stone the nations despised, rejected as of no account in the political plans of those who were trying to shape the destinies of the Eastern nations. The head corner–stone would be the pace of greatest honor.

However, in the purpose of God she was destined to a chief place. God chose Israel out of love for the accomplishment of His eternal purpose.

The purpose of God for Israel finds its fulfillment in the single–handed work of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The rejected stone in this Psalm is fulfilled in the Messiah. Israel prefigures the Messiah by the workings of the overshadowing providence of God. What is relatively true of Israel is found completely true of the Messiah.

The rejected stone becomes the Chief Corner Stone.
This passage reminds us of the occasion of the building of Solomon’s temple. When King Solomon built the temple on the place where the Dome of the Rock now stands in Jerusalem, there was no sound of hammer or saws and or pounding of any kind. The Temple was erected in silence. The rocks that formed the Temple were taken from a quarry underneath where the temple stands. The temple was built from Solomon’s quarries. It was built to such exacting blueprint dimensions that each rock was shaped perfectly before it ever left the quarry. When it arrived at the temple, it would fit perfectly in its proper place.

According to Jewish tradition a huge rock was quarried and shaped to the exacting dimensions and sent to the temple. When it arrived at the temple site the builders could find no place to use it. It didn’t seem to match any of their blueprints, so they placed it to one side. Some time passed and it was always getting in the way so workers pushed it over the cliff and it rolled down into the Kidron Valley and was lost. However, when time came to hoist the cornerstone into place, the great rock that held everything in place, could not be found. The builders sent word to the quarry that they were ready for the cornerstone. The masons sent word back that cornerstone had already been delivered. Then someone remembered the huge "extra" rock that had been pushed over the cliff. When the workers retrieved the stone and hoisted it into place it fit perfectly as the cornerstone of the temple.

Jesus regarded this stone of rejection as reaching its true fulfillment in Himself. It was prophetic of His own triumph, which followed His rejection. The builders are the religious leaders of the Jewish nation, who refused to acknowledge Jewish as their Messiah. The Stone, which they thought nothing of, had now received from God the place of honor as the head–stone of the corner. The rejected stone now sat enthroned at God’s right hand.

In Matthew 21:33–46 Jesus told the parable of the Landowner who planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine–growers, and went on a journey. When harvest time came the vine–growers association took the landowners' slaves and beat one, killed another and stoned a third. He then sent a larger group of slaves to work his vineyards. They did the same things again. Then he sent his son thinking, "They will respect my son." However, the vine–growers association took the heir and killed him. Jesus concluded His parable with these words from Psalm 118:22:

The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the LORD, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Psalm 118:22 became one of the passages most frequently quoted by the early Christian teachers to describe the temporary humiliation and subsequent rejection of Jesus the crucified and risen Messiah. Observe how the Apostle Peter used this verse in Acts 4:8-12:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health. " He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.
Jesus was reviled, insulted, rejected and crucified by the leaders of the nation. However, the ultimate victory and glory belonged only to Him. The rejected stone was the choice stone of Israel.

On another occasion the Apostle Peter wrote these words in I Peter 2:4–8 regarding Jesus as the living stone, rejected by men, but chosen of God to become the stumbling stone of judgment. He said:

And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

For those who refuse to believe in Him, He is a stone of judgment, which rolls over them. William Barclay wrote, "Confrontation with Christ is in itself judgment."

Jesus Christ is the rejected stone of Israel whom God has exalted to the highest position possible. He sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The stone became the salvation of Israel.

The Salvation of Israel (118:23)

Salvation is the Lord's doing.

"This is the LORD’S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

We need what Christ has done for us. Man is lost in sin and unbelief. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He went on to say in 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." We have all gone astray like sheep or cattle wandering off. We have wandered from God. It is impossible for us to save ourselves. We are dead spiritually.

The Good News is Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose from the dead. Christ died as our ransom. Romans 5:6–8 demonstrates God's love for us in the death of Jesus.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Because God has already done everything we need in order to be saved, He is ready to give us His free gift of salvation. Man tries to make it difficult, but this is what God says in Romans 10:9–10.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
No one else can save you. There is only one way to the Father. In John 14:6 Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father but through Me." There is only one door to salvation. Jesus therefore said to them again, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7–9).

No one else has seen the Father. Again, Jesus said in John 6:44–47:

No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. Not that any man has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

The devil says any way will do. "Why preacher we are all trying to get to the same place. It doesn’t really matter what you believe just so you are sincere and try to be a good person." Or as some one recently said, "Be faithful to your religion and I will be faithful to mine. We are all going to the same place!" No we re not! Many are eternally separated from God because they refuse to put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Christ does not give us the option of believing in whoever or whatever religion. C. S. Lewis the great English scholar wrote in his book *Mere Christianity* a response to the idea that you can believe in almost anything about Christ:

I am trying to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else, he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1960, pp. 40–41).

Salvation is in Christ alone. Only in one name will you ever be saved. Any other name will send you to eternal hell.

Let’s suppose for a moment that you died today and stood before the Lord God and he said to you, "Why would I let you into My heaven?" What would you say to Him? What do you think you would say?

Eternal salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Romans 10:13 says, "for ‘WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’"

*The Messiah comes in the name of the Lord (v. 26)*
"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar" (118:26–27).

"It is marvelous is our eyes."

Only God can do it. When it is grace, it is always amazing. Ephesians 2:8–9 gives us this assurance: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah spoke of a testing stone. The people of Israel in his time had made lies their refuge. They had sought falsehood as their shelter. Foolish builders were making their foundations of sand. Isaiah writes, "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed’” (Isaiah 28:16). Jesus alone is the sure foundation upon which to build for eternity.

Will you put your trust in Jesus Christ to save you right now? Acknowledge your need for Jesus Christ and believe that He died for you on the cross and rose from the dead. You will have the assurance that all of your sins are forgiven and He will put a new song in your heart.

The Song of Israel (118:24-29)

*It is a song of praise to the LORD* (v. 24).

"This is the day which the LORD has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone will cause your heart to sing a new song.

*It is a song of thanksgiving to the LORD 118:26–29).*

"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and He has given us light; Bind the festival sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I give thanks to Thee; Thou art my God, I extol Thee. Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting."

Yes, Jesus is the precious stone who was rejected, but to whom belongs the final glory. He is the living stone who confronts men with the choice of a refuge or a stone of judgment. Believe on Him today and He will become your song of rejoicing.

"On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand."
Isaiah 2:1-4

The Holy City

Can you imagine a time when there will be universal peace, with no military conflict or training? Can you visualize a time when there are no war colleges and war machines? Yes, there will be a day when machinery of warfare will be turned into implements of agriculture. It will be a time of worldwide peace.

A glorious future is in store for the city of Jerusalem. Gentile nations will go to Jerusalem to learn from God. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah describes the ideal city in Isaiah 2:1-4, and then goes on to depict the actual city in his day with its sin and depravity (2:5-4:1). Finally, Isaiah described the purified Jerusalem (4:2-6). The opening verses of chapters two and four stand out as high snow capped mountain peaks with the dark valley of judgment running between them far below. The glorious future of Zion the city of God is in the Age of the Messiah. Judah and Jerusalem will be included in that glory. The center of interest is the Kingdom of Judah and its capital Jerusalem.

THE PREFACE TO THE PROPHECY (2:1-2a)

Isaiah uses interesting language in his preface to prophecies regarding the city of Jerusalem. "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (v. 1). Here is the substance of the prophetic vision about the ideal Jerusalem. She is portrayed as God intended her to be. This is a divine communication of the supernatural received by Isaiah. It is a revelation that is impossible for the natural mind to understand, but Isaiah is qualified to behold intelligently what God has to reveal to him. The "inner eyes or eyes of the mind saw what the sovereign God revealed. Isaiah does not hear; he sees the word." It is a "revelation in vision, which was communicated in words" (E. J. Young). He has received a message from God and he speaks with authority.

Isaiah introduces us to the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy on Zion. It will come about "in the last days." This expression "marks the last part of the future into which the prophetic glance penetrates" (H. C. Leupold). The expression is more than a neutral "in days to come." B. F. Skinner says it is, "The final age of the world's history following the establishment of the Kingdom of God." It takes us to "the last days . . . and is always used in an eschatological sense . . ." It "invariably indicates the furthest point in the history of this life—the point which lies on the outermost limits of the speaker's horizon . . . It was therefore the last time in its most literal and purest sense" (Keil and Delitzsch). The prophet is referring to a remote future far beyond his day and age. The phrase "is found only in prophecies and is generally used in an eschatological sense to refer to the messianic era" (James Leo Green). The latter days will reveal the Messiah, who is the fulfillment and goal toward which all previous history has been pointing. In the Old Testament the phrase signifies the age or time of the Messiah. These last days will reach their fulfillment and come to a close when the Lord Jesus returns in His glory.

The context demonstrates that only the Messiah Himself can accomplish these things. The fact is He alone produces such results as described in these verses. This glorious future is messianic. There is no solid basis for an allegorical interpretation of this passage.
The time is no doubt one of two possibilities: Some scholars see it as the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation 21–22. H. C. Leupold thinks Isaiah's prophetic glimpse seems to penetrate down to the time when "old things have passed away, and all things have been made new."

Another view held by many conservative, evangelical Old Testament scholars sees Isaiah 2 as "the glory of the Millennial Kingdom." Isaiah, "Was not specific as to the exact time when they would be fulfilled (perhaps he did not know; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-11). Here he simply said 'in the last days.' Other Bible passages make it clear that these predictions will be fulfilled in the Millennium, Christ's 1,000-year reign on the earth" (John Walvoord and Roy Zuck, The Bible Knowledge commentary). Revelation 20:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28.

The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward with great anticipation to a messianic age here on earth (cf. Isaiah 11:6-9; Ezekiel 36–39). The early church, until the fifth century held, with minor exceptions, to the teaching of an earthly, historical reign of righteousness. "The millennium is a further demonstration of Christ's power in this age before Christ turns over the kingdom to the Father's all–encompassing dominion in the age to come" (John Newport).

At the millennium, Christ will have the opportunity to openly manifest His kingdom in world history. It will be a demonstration of the truthfulness of His claims and the fulfillment of all of God's promises to His people. "Christ is now reigning as Lord and King, but His reign is veiled, unseen, and unrecognized by the world. The glory that is now His is known only by people of faith . . . The millennial kingdom will be the age of the manifestation of Christ's glory. It will be the time when the sovereignty—which He now possesses but does not openly manifest and which He will turn over to the Father in the age to come—will be displayed in the world" (John Newport, The Lion and the Lamb, pp. 296–97). Jesus will ultimately receive universal recognition as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords on this earth where He was rejected and crucified (F. F. Bruce). Newport adds, "The millennium is to be seen as a time of social and political and economic justice when people dwell together under the government of Christ in peace and prosperity." What a different day that will be than the one in which we now live.

**PHYSICAL CHANGES IN ZION (2:2b,c,d)**

The place is "the mountain of the house of the LORD" (v. 2b). This mountain is marked by obvious distinction. "It is the Temple of Yahweh which being thus rendered visible to the nations afar off, exerts such magnetic attraction, and with such success" (Keil and Delitzsch).

Is Isaiah referring to a miraculous physical elevation or to a metaphorical spiritual exaltation?

Zion will have preeminence. It "will be established as the chief of the mountains," or highest in the sense of first in dignity. It could be that the physical and spiritual values so blended into one another as to be inseparable. It will be an imposing attraction to the people of the world.

Isaiah sees a miraculous elevation of Zion in which it "will be raised above the hills." Apparently, the Temple will have a loftier site than formerly. In his vision, he sees Zion towering above all the high places on the earth. Keil and Delitzsch thinks it is referring to "the New Jerusalem of the last days on this side and the New Jerusalem of the new earth on the other, blended as it were together, and did not distinguish the one from the other." Compare the millennial temple in Ezekiel 40-43.
THE PILGRIMAGE OF THE PEOPLE TO ZION (2:2e-3a,b,c).

Isaiah sees all nations streaming to Zion. The "nations" are the non-Jewish nations. The house of Yahweh is attracting Gentiles. In contrast to the nations in confusion at Babylon leaving in a rage to the far ends of the earth, Isaiah sees them streaming or flowing to the "city of peace," Jerusalem. People are streaming like a flowing river in contrast to the former tossing, raging strife of the nations of the world (Psalm 2:1-3).

When God is enthroned in Zion, many people will be attracted to Him because His people accept His sovereignty.

Crowds of Gentiles are seen approaching the Temple (v. 3). In verse 3 "many peoples" is parallel to "all the nations" in verse two. Many nationalities, perhaps all nations, will be represented in this mass-movement. Is this the same time Jeremiah is referring to in 3:17? "At that time they shall call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the LORD,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, for the name of the LORD in Jerusalem; nor shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart." Cf. Zechariah 8:20-22; Haggai 2:6-7; Isaiah 66:22f for similar passages.

You can hear the people in the street excitedly encouraging one another in Isaiah's vision. "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths" (v. 3). Where are they headed? "To the house of the God of Jacob."

THE PURPOSE OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO ZION (2:3e,f,g)

The Gentiles have deep spiritual values and desire to be instructed of the LORD. Their goal is stated in "that He may teach us concerning His ways." Only the Spirit of God can teach man things concerning the LORD God (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Romans 11:34, 35). It is not our human philosophies, but "His ways." These Gentiles are ready to obey God's word. They are ready to "walk in His paths." It is a remarkable picture of love, adoration and reconciliation as opposed to hostility, wars and pride.

The result of the Gentile pilgrimages to Zion will be the steady emanation of the Word of God from Zion to all parts of the earth. "The Law will go forth from Zion" (v. 3f). God's final word of authority will go forth as the norm.

It is not hard to see a partial fulfillment of this prophecy on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:5-8, 11).

However, "these fulfillment's were only preludes to a conclusion which is still to be looked for in the future. For what is promised in the following verse is still altogether unfulfilled" (Keil and Delitzsch).

Verse four is clearly not yet fulfilled. In no way of the imagination can we see this as having been fulfilled in the past two thousand years or at the present day and time.

THE PEACE THAT WILL ISSUE FROM ZION (2:4).

The Messiah is the bringer of peace. Only when the LORD returns will this prophecy be realized in its totality.
Isaiah is describing a time of universal and unending peace. He is not describing a *Pax Romana* or temporary peace treaties that are so popular in our day which look great on the surface and sound good in twenty-second sound bites or TV news. What is promised in this passage is altogether unfulfilled at the present time.

When Yahweh arbitrates, conflicts cease and peace is the issue. When God rules there are no wars. There is no other avenue to a warless world.

Gentile nations from all over the world are seen coming to Zion to a supreme arbitrator (v. 4). The very nations who have an inveterated hate for Israel are coming to Zion to submit to Israel's King Messiah for arbitration! No longer will they settle disputes by force of war. "He will judge between nations." "He will render decisions." What a change of attitude on the part of world leaders toward God! This will be the court of last appeals. Whatever He renders will be unquestionably accepted by the nations. The result of His decisions will be peace like the world has never known.

Can you imagine a day when all the nations will live in a state of perfect peace? This will be a full time, genuine God-given peace among men. What a contrast this will be to the evening world news. There will be no more war colleges, no *Pax Romanas*, no nuclear arms race, no nuclear blackmail or threats. It will be a time of perfect peace.

"They will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war" (v. 4). What a contrast to our day when we are busy beating our plowshares into swords, and our pruning hooks into spears. The wild beast in man will finally be destroyed.

H. C. Leupold says, "Note well the strict sequence of events. The abolition of war cannot come about before the nations have learned to submit to the Word of the LORD."

**THE PLEA TO THE PEOPLE OF ZION (2:5).**

"Come, house of Jacob and let us walk in the light of the LORD."

Yes, there are little islands of peace all over the world composed of men and women and youth who have come to an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ. They know God's everlasting peace in their hearts. This is where true peace begins. He gives us His peace.

However, there is a time in the future coming when the world will know peace in personal relations that effect every nation of the world. Only God can bring this world peace. And one day He will.

The only way to participate in the future city is to turn one's total loyalty to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world now. One day in the future He come to will reign as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.
Isaiah 4:2

The Branch

In his vision of the ideal Jerusalem, the Holy City, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah in chapters two and four describes a glorious future that only the Messiah can achieve.

He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war. . . .

When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, then the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy. There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.
Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den.
They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.

THE TIME OF THE FULFILLMENT (2:2; 4:1)

These are beautiful word pictures of what will take place during the Messianic era. However, the message is delivered during dark turbulent political times. Against this backdrop, God gave Isaiah a message of hope and encouragement. It takes place "in the last days" (2:2), the last part of the future into which the prophetic glance penetrates. In prophetic language, it is the "day of the LORD." It is a day of judgment on sin (2:5–4:1), but it is also a day when God acts in salvation. The grand climax comes at the Second Coming of Christ.

The events will actually take place "in that day" (4:1). It is the one great day of God at the end of time, opening with judgment and issuing in salvation. It will be the time when God will act. Jerusalem is seen as
the center and focus of the great judgment day. Jerusalem will have a remnant that will survive the judgment and will be His redeemed people. The redeemed will be the spiritual centerpiece of the earth.

**THE PERSON OF THE BRANCH**

"The Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious" person (4:2a).

The future ruler will be the "Branch of the LORD" (v. 2). This *tsemach*, a "sprout, shoot, branch," is clearly a designation for the Messiah. It is a "growing thing" full of vitality and abundant life. It always implies something healthy, living and growing.

Israel is not the Branch, but that which comes from her by God's grace. This *tsemach* is the Messiah who is the greatest branch that God has brought forth. The whole saving work in Christ is presented in the Branch. The Jewish Targum on this passage says *tsemah* is the Messiah (cf. also Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). "At that time shall the Messiah of the LORD be for joy and glory." The great King of the future is a shoot springing out of the human, Davidic lineage, which the LORD God has caused to sprout or spring to life from the fallen trunk of Israel.

This growing thing will be beautiful (Matthew 5:5; 11:27–30; Galatians 5:22–23). The gentleness of Christ is easy-going, not impetuous or given to frequent outbursts. He takes life calmly, casual, collected and informal.

The Branch will be glorious. He is the very radiance of the glory of God, the expression of the divine attributes of the God–head (Hebrews 1:1–4). He is the effulgence of the Divine glory.

He will be a shoot springing out of human stock (11:1; cf. v. 10).

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

The prophet Jeremiah also announced the stock of the Branch (23:5). "'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.'" Later he explained, "In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (33:15; cf. Revelation 5:5).

**THE SAVING WORK OF THE BRANCH.**

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah declared the salvation of God's people will be connected with the Branch. "For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground . . . " (Isaiah 53:2a). "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness’" (Jeremiah 23:6). Zechariah saw the day when God would take away the iniquity and clothe His people with festal robes (Zechariah 3:4). That day of cleansing would be at Calvary when God would open up the fountain for cleansing of sin (13:1; cf. Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:10-14).

"'Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that
I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day'" (Zechariah 3:8–9).

The whole saving work of God involves the Branch. "In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel" (Isaiah 4:2). The prophet probably had in mind the remnant returning from Babylonian captivity when he speaks of "the survivors of Israel." However, his message looks to a greater remnant of the redeemed of all ages. It is a remnant of God's saving grace.

The Branch of Yahweh will be fruitful. All the nations will come to Him "that He may teach us concerning His ways" (2:3). He will make Jerusalem holy (4:3–4). Moreover, the whole mountain of the LORD will become a holy of holies (v. 5). "Then the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy."

This remnant will be called "holy." The basic idea is separation. Every believer has been set apart to God. They have been consecrated to the Lord and therefore stand under God's providential care. Divine grace is the source of this holiness. It is not something that man achieves or merits. This holiness is a work of grace. Believers have a standing before God. We are holy because of our special relationship to the Branch. We are a "holy nation" (Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9). Every true Christian is a "holy one," a saint. The moment you believed on Christ as your Savior you were "separated" to Him for His glory. Moreover, in our daily practice we are to be separated, consecrated to God. This is why it is so important to begin every day with a commitment of your life to the Lord. Just a simple prayer that reminds you of your dependence upon Him and asking Him for wisdom, guidance and strength to be all He wants you to be. "Lord Jesus, this is your day. I give it to you. Take my life and do as You please. Live your life through me." A daily reminder of your commitment to Christ will change your life. If your lifestyle is not practically holy then claim the promise of 1 John 1:9 and Ephesians 5:18.

This holy remnant which is the fruit of the Branch includes "everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 4:3). Ancient cities kept citizenship records. "Everyone who is recorded for life" is equivalent to being ordained to life (cf. Acts 13:48; Revelation 3:5; 20:11–15). Do you rejoice that your "name written in the book of life"? (Philippians 4:3). Every born again believer in Jesus Christ has his name inscribed in the Book of Life.

Obviously this remnant consists of cleansed people (Isaiah 4:4). "When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning." The depravity of the daughters of Zion (3:16ff) was hidden under their vain finery. Probably Isaiah is referring to the judicial murders committed by the rulers against the poor people when he says the Branch "purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem" (cf. 3:13–15).

How does the Branch cleanse? He does it "by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning" (v. 4). He brings conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11). The regenerative work of the Holy Spirit is clearly in view. He regenerates and at times destroys. He sifts and refines as in a refiner's fire. His chastening work sifts and destroys all sinful attitudes and behaviors in our lives.

Isaiah uses an unusual expression, "the spirit of burning." Literally, "to burn up," clear away, destroy. He sweeps it clean. John the Baptist said he came baptizing with water because of repentance, "but He who is
coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not even fit to remove His sandals; He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:11–12). Isaiah saw the thrice holiness of God and cried out '"O, woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips . . .' Then the seraphim flew to him with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken off the altar with tongs and touched it to Isaiah's lips and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven'" (Isaiah 6:6-7). Sin and its cleansing are serious business.

The Branch is also the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The Messiah is designated "My servant the Branch" (Zechariah 3:8; Jeremiah 23:5). But He is also described as Him whom the LORD causes to sprout, or Him who has sprouted from the LORD. Clearly, He is the Son of God.

**THE LORD GUIDES AND PROTECTS HIS PEOPLE.**

Isaiah 4:5–6 is a graphic picture that refers us back to the days of the Exodus and Israel's wandering in the wilderness when they were being guided by the pillar of fire and the cloud (Exodus 13:21; 14:19, 24; 33:9, 10; 40:34). The cloud and the fire were to be a reminder of the presence of God with His people. God came near and was there to guide and protect His people. Isaiah tells us on that day it won't be just the Temple itself that is filled with smoke, but the whole Mount Zion would become a holy of holies! The glory of God will fill the city.

Moreover, the creative hand of the LORD is seen at work as in the days of creation. There is divine action and miraculous production by the Branch. There is a fresh manifestation of Yahweh's presence. After the cleaning of Jerusalem, "the Lord will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy" (4:5). At night it will be a fiery splendor or a flaming brightness of real and living fire.

The future glory of Israel is to be found in the LORD God Himself.

The cloud is "over her assemblies" (v. 5). I can not help but reflect upon our Lord Jesus with Peter, James and John at His Transfiguration. "And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light" (Matthew 17:2). That is only a foretaste of what is in store in the future of the Messiah and Jerusalem. The purified city will be bathed in the sunshine of God's holiness and grace. It will be altogether beautiful and lovely. The same judging fire that purged them will be the fire of salvation and protection.

The Lord Jesus Christ in His glorified person is the true Shechinah. He is the true indwelling of God in His body. Furthermore, the indwelling presence of Christ through His Spirit is the highest privilege of every believer.

Isaiah pictures in v. 6 the "shelter" (sukkah), or literally a booth or tabernacle over Zion. It is there for protection. God takes care of His chosen people. Christ is our protection.
Yes, the Branch is altogether lovely and beautiful. We wait for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to see the completion of the fulfillment of His judgment and salvation as promised in Isaiah 2 and 4. We shall see Isaiah develop more fully the person and work of the Branch in chapters seven through twelve.

If you have never put your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please take a few moments to reflect over on these studies. It is our prayer that you will come to know Him as your Savior.
Isaiah 7:14

God with Us

The Hebrew prophets went from one crisis to another. They lived on the heels of political intrigue. One of the greatest statesmen and spokesman for God during that chaotic age was Isaiah.

Scholars suggest that perhaps as much as twenty years rapidly passes between Isaiah chapters six and seven. The sixteen–year reign of Jotham, the son of Uzziah of Judah, has passed without a word from Isaiah. Then we jump from the death of King Uzziah, at the beginning of Jotham's reign to his son, King Ahaz. With a quick stroke of the pen Isaiah takes us from the long righteous reign of Uzziah to his idolatrous grandson who sacrificed his own son to a pagan god of Molech. The kingdom of David had sunk to the condition of faithless, godless pagans.

Politically things were as bad as they were spiritually. Assyria was the superpower who threatened its neighbors. Judah's two neighbors to the north were threatening Ahaz, so he hired the king of Assyria to protect him. Ahaz sacked the Temple in Jerusalem of all the vessels of silver and gold and sent them to the king of Assyria as payment for his protection. He played the superpower against the neighboring states. Ahaz forgot that when you give a mouse a piece of cheese he then wants the whole glass of milk.

The Syro-Ephraimitic war in 735 B.C. involved this coalition with the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria against Assyria. King Jotham of Judah continued his father's policy of independence and steadfastly refused to join in the coalition against Assyria. At this time Egypt tried to make a bid for power. However, in 735 Israel and Syria staged an attack on Judah and were within three days of entering the land of Judah. This sent King Ahaz and his cabinet into panic (Isaiah 7:1–2). Ahaz's heart "and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind." Psychological war had done its trick. The national leadership was in a panic.

What does Yahweh have to say in a time of crisis?

**The LORD God is Sovereign (vv. 3–9)**

The LORD sent His spokesman to King Ahaz (v. 3ff). Isaiah is commanded to take his son Shear-jashub with him out of the city to the water reservoir to meet Ahaz who is inspecting the water supply in preparation for the siege of the city by Israel and Syria. Jerusalem didn't have a natural source of water, so it had to be brought in and stored.

There is a beautiful play on words in Isaiah that reinforces his message. His name means "Yahweh is salvation," or "Salvation of the LORD." Shear–jashub means, "a remnant shall return." The kid doesn't say a word. He just accompanies his father to the end of the conduit at the Fuller's Field. His name says it all. Only "a remnant shall return" if you do not take Yahweh at His word and believe Him for your salvation. Let Yahweh be your salvation and a remnant will return.

God's message to Ahaz and his royal cabinet is you have nothing to fear, therefore trust in the LORD. Take care, and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because these two pieces of sticks have
already burned out and are just a lot of smoke. Syria and Israel are nothing more than two burned out sticks and there is not enough life left in them to flame up again. They are just a trickle of smoke, like burned out stumps. They are literally "fire-stirrers." They are powerless.

Historically, within 65 years the Northern Kingdom of Israel would be taken captive and Syria would be destroyed by Assyria (2 Kings 15:29; 16:9). It took place just as God said it would. Isaiah's sarcasm comes alive when he doesn't even mention the name of Pekah, but the son of Remaliah, "the son of nobody" (v. 4). The name of the puppet king they had planned to install was the son of Tabeel, meaning "good for nothing" (v. 6). Out of disrespect, Isaiah doesn't even mention the guys' names. Don't panic, God is sovereign. Don't waste your time and energy on these idle threats from nobodies.

I think one of the reasons God sent Isaiah to meet Ahaz at the landryman's field was so there would witnesses to the encounter. Since there was plenty of water available in that spot it may have been a gathering place where people in Jerusalem came to wash their clothes. Their ears must have burned, too, as they heard the prophet saying if Judah believed Yahweh, they had a future, if not their doom was sealed. They will endure only if they continue in faith, otherwise they will not be established.

King Ahaz already had his mind made up. He clung to his stubborn unbelief (2 Kings 16:7–8).

Ask for a sign (vv. 10–17)

God told Ahaz to choose a sign as evidence that the message is true. Make it as difficult as you like. "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (v. 11). Ask for a miracle, Ahaz. It will be a pledge of divine certainty. It will prove the Word of God. The king hasn't openly denied the God of his father David at this time. He is even granted the liberty of penetrating as deeply as he wished into the providence of God. Go ahead, Ahaz, ask Him! What will it be? Remember that God is the One who is graciously giving Ahaz the opportunity to ask for anything! What would you have asked for? How would you have responded to the invitation?

Ahaz would not ask, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" (v. 12).

His response is evidence of pious unbelief. The king knows that if he did choose a sign and the LORD demonstrated Himself he would be obligated to believe and obey Him. Ahaz did not want to be accountable to God. Even in our day, God has revealed Himself with undeniable signs and testimonies and still men do not believe because they will not. "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord," is a mask for stubborn unbelief.

Probably by now every person stopped what he was doing and silence fell over the scene. You could have heard Sprint's pin drop in dead silence as the prophet's blood began to boil.

"Listen now, O house of David!" Isaiah shouts. "Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

When God proposes a sign, it is not a test. It is an opportunity and privilege to obey, and when we obey we experience God.

Therefore, since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, God went ahead and gave him one. It was God–sized. It was not a Mickey Mouse sign.
Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (v. 14).

Huh. What did he say? No doubt, Ahaz wishes to this day he had gone ahead and asked something, anything from the LORD.

Almah is the Hebrew word here and it signifies a marriageable young lady of unblemished character. A woman with such a reputation would be classified as a virgin. The best translation for almah is "virgin" with the alternate reading "young woman" or "maiden" in the margin. She is a young woman or maiden with the reputation of being a virgin. She didn't have to blush when the subject came up. She had kept herself pure. Both the usage and context support our translating "virgin" in this passage. In the context of God's message to Ahaz we are led to expect something very unusual. It would not be unusual for a maiden to conceive. However, for a virgin to conceive would fulfill the necessary meaning of the sign in the context of chapter seven. This sign would be a tremendous encouragement to the faith of the remnant of Israel. It would also bring judgment and condemnation to the unfaithful in David's household. Thus, judgment and salvation are evident in the promised sign.

There is another Hebrew word for virgin, bethulah, signifying a young maiden living in seclusion in her parent's house and still a long way from matrimony. However, almah would fit our context better meaning a marriageable young lady of unblemished character or reputation. It is true she is a young woman or maiden, but that is not the comprehensive understanding of the word. She is a young woman of marriageable age who has never known a man sexually.

God with Us

If you have a problem with the "virgin" conceiving and bearing a child that should be nothing in comparison to the thought of Immanuel—God with us in the flesh. That is the greatest feat. How else could the "Word become flesh and dwell among us" than by means of a virgin becoming pregnant and bearing a son? God in the flesh means "God with us." The child to be born will be called Immanuel; therefore, the translation "virgin" is demanded in the sentence. It is nothing short of a miracle, and that is exactly where the problem lies with those who want to reject "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14. If you do not want to believe in miracles then you will have a problem with this sign to Ahaz.

The child called Immanuel will be a special child and will embody the truth, "God with us." This special child born of a virgin will be God among His people. Only as we look into His face, listen to His voice and see Him in action do we know what God is really like (Hebrews 1:1–3).

All of Christianity rests upon the foundation of this prophecy in Isaiah chapter seven. God meant the sign to be earth shaking. God meant it to be such a sign that when it was actually fulfilled in history men would stand back and say, I saw God do it! It is something only God can do.

The sign of Immanuel, "God with us," is the coming of the child of a virgin. That sign was fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Nothing in history approaches the mystery, beauty and glory of the LORD God coming to be with His people.
God sent Gabriel to Mary and said, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him, Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:31–33).

Mary got rather upset with the angel. "How can this be, since I am a virgin," she demanded (Luke 1:34). There is no question about the Greek word she used. The word for "virgin" always means a marriageable young woman who had preserved the purity of her body. She kept herself sexually pure. If the child were illegitimate it could not be a sign. The whole context of the Bible rules it out. If the birth was out of the ordinary, and unusual because she was a virgin then it is of such a magnitude that God has come to be with His people and deal with their sins. There is only one person in history of whom it can be said that He was God incarnate, God with His people, and that is Jesus Christ. The very presence of this child, born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem can not be applied to anyone else. Jesus the Christ is the Son of the Virgin and the Mighty God.

The deity and preexistence of Christ demanded this miraculous conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

"And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. . . For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:35, 37).

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. . . . And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sin. . . . And Joseph . . . kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:18–25, et passim; cf. Luke 2:1–21). They named Him "Jesus." They named Him after His Father! They called Him Joshua. The original full form is Jehoshua, meaning "Yahweh our salvation," "Yahweh saves," Yahweh's salvation."

"God with us." Now we know what He is like. This could only be true when the Word became flesh and dwelt among His people in the person of the Anointed of God. Oh, the wonder of wonder, God in the corporeal self–manifestation to His people. He is a super–human person. He is the incarnation of deity. This coming child would be God among His people. John 1:1–3, 18, 18; 14:14–20; Colossians 2:9–10;

The godly Charles Wesley wrote:

Offspring of a Virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th' incarnate Deity.

If you have never put your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please take a few moments to reflect over on this message. It is our prayer that you will come to know Him as your Savior.
Isaiah 8:14

A Rock of Salvation and a Stumbling Stone

The background for chapter eight of Isaiah is the Assyrian invasion. It is a picture of political intrigue and panic. The prophet is trying to encourage King Ahaz and the people of Judah to trust in the LORD God and not enter political treaties with the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria against the superpower Assyria. The prophet announces coming judgment if King Ahaz does not put his trust in Yahweh.

The nation is so low spiritually under Ahaz's leadership that when the prophet calls for trust in the LORD the politicians and the people accuse him of a "conspiracy." The king accused the prophet of being a troublemaker because he did not go by the polls and the political programs. Ahaz has opted to follow the polls and popular opinion instead of the word of God. The politicians accuse Isaiah of a right wing "conspiracy" because he opposes compromise with the pagan nations (8:11–13). The challenge is to fear the LORD! Put your confidence in Him. If you are going to conspire, conspire with Him. Don't put your faith in the king of Assyria; put your faith in the LORD your God. Because Isaiah sided with Yahweh they saw him in service of the enemy and conspiring to overthrow the government. No one was more loyal to the Lord God and His covenant nation than the prophets. The clarion call was, "You are to fear Yahweh!"

If the king and the people had sanctified Yahweh and feared Him there would be no conspiracy (v. 13). If you give the LORD His proper place in your life then you will fear and dread Him. If you put Him first you will sanctify and honor Him. If you don't regard Him as holy then He will be for you "a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (v. 14).

What is your attitude toward the Lord?

The imagery in verse fourteen is a man fleeing the coming judgment. If the man is a believer and fleeing in time of trouble the altar will be a sanctuary, the place where he meets God in salvation and security. However, if he is an unbeliever who has no time for God, then the altar is only a heap of stones to strike and stumble over. Look how Isaiah reinforced the thought of salvation and judgment in verses 13-15.

It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy.
And He shall be your fear,
And He shall be your dread.

Then He [the LORD of hosts whom you regard as holy] shall become a sanctuary;
But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over,
And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And many will stumble over them,
Then they will fall and be broken;
They will even be snared and caught.

The admonition is clear, sanctify yourselves and the LORD will be to you a sanctuary. If you sanctify Him, He will be a sanctuary for you. He will be your salvation and security.
The Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch observed: "All who sanctified the Lord of lords He surrounded like temple walls: hid them in Himself, whilst death and tribulation reigned without, and comforted, fed, and blessed them in His own gracious fellowship."

However, for those who refuse to trust in Yahweh He will be a stone of stumbling that will crush them in judgment. Verse fifteen says God will set for the people not only a rock to crush them but a spring loaded bird trap to snare them. Because of the stone many will stumble, fall and be crushed. They will be completely destroyed.

Who is this Rock of Salvation and Stone of Stumbling?

The apostle Peter captures this idea and reminds his readers, "You who believe the Lord is precious will not be disappointed in Him. But you who are disobedient and refuse to believe in Him, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is the head stone and a stone of stumbling and rock of offense" (Pounds paraphrase). He combines two verses from Isaiah (28:16; 8:14) with Psalm 118:22 in 1 Peter 2:6–8. The chief corner stone is the stone of stumbling and rock of offence for those who refuse to believe. However, He is the solid rock of salvation to those who choose to believe. The purpose of the "stone, a tried stone, a precious corner–stone" is a foundation that gives stability and security to the believer.

How can the chief corner stone become the stumbling stone and rock of offense? "They stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they are also appointed," writes Peter (1 Peter 2:8).

Who is this rock of offense? Clearly, it is Jesus of Nazareth, God's chosen and choice stone.

Simeon was in the Temple of Jerusalem when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to be dedicated. Simeon was "righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Messiah)" (Luke 2:25–26). Simeon took Jesus in his arms and "blessed God." He recognized that Jesus was the Anointed of God and praised God that he was allowed to see His Son. Simeon blessed Jesus and His parents and praised God. Then he said to Mary, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed" (vv. 34–35). Did you catch it? This Child will be a stumbling block "for the fall and rise of many in Israel."

Later in his Gospel Dr. Luke quotes a parable Jesus gave on the Vine–growers association (Luke 20:9–18). In making His application Jesus asked a question while quoting Psalm 118:22. "What then is this that is written, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone'?" Then He quickly added, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (v. 18). Luke observes, "And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them" (v. 19).

Our attitude toward Him determines our spiritual welfare. He is a sanctuary to those who sanctify Him. He is a place of refuge, peace and security to those who believe. However, to those who reject Him He becomes a stone to trip over. He becomes a crushing stone of judgment to the proud of heart. Many people collide with Him and trip over Him because they try to live as if He didn't exist. Jesus Christ will always be a stumbling stone to those who refuse to trust in Him.
"For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Jewish people were always asking for signs and the Greeks were in search of wisdom. "But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (vv. 22–24).

Peter used the illustration of the rejected stone becoming God's chosen stone in a sermon on the death and resurrection of Jesus. He concluded his message saying, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus and the salvation He offers is a stumbling stone for many.

However, He brings eternal life and inner peace to those who believe on Him. In his great chapters on the sovereignty of God in salvation the apostle Paul draws the conclusion that Gentiles, who did not have any interest in the righteousness of God, have "attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith" (Romans 9:30). They were unconcerned and indifferent pagans. They were not concerned about a right standing with God. Yet, God in His rich grace and mercy chose to save them by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, Israel, who had been pursuing a law of righteousness, never arrived at God's righteousness. Gentiles attained this righteousness, but Israel failed. Why? Paul tells us, "They stumbled over 'the stumbling stone,' just as it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed'" (9:32–33 quoting Isaiah 8:14; 28:16).

The Gentiles obtained a right standing with God which was a "righteousness that is by faith." The problem was in the way the Jews pursued righteousness. They wanted to do it their way, not God's way. They wanted to use the Law as a means of obtaining righteousness. However, by the works of the law they could never attain it because they were sinners. They could never perfectly obey the law. Christ alone has fulfilled the law. Paul saw the law as a means of leading people to Christ and a right relationship with God. Instead of seeking God's righteousness by faith, they stumbled over works righteousness. "The righteousness that answers the demands of the law, is the righteousness of God, which is received by faith. The Jews, then, did not attain to it, because they sought it not by faith, but as of works of law" (Robert Haldane). It is impossible to attain salvation other than by justification by faith. Righteousness is by faith. The Jews refused to come by faith. They sought the right goal in the wrong way, and therefore stumbled over Christ. Paul applies the stone of stumbling and rock that crushes in Isaiah 8:14 to Christ. He had no hesitation in applying to Christ those Old Testament passages that refer to the Lord of hosts.

God's sovereign will does not eliminate human responsibility. The Jewish people's lack of faith prevented them from recognizing Jesus as the Messiah. They had an attitude problem. Instead of begin the cause of great rejoicing in the rich blessings of Yahweh, He became a "stumbling stone" to them.

Christ is the Stone. Is He a stone of offense or a rock of salvation for you? The believer will never be ashamed before God because Christ is his righteousness.
Isaiah 9:1-7

The Child with Many Names

There has probably never has an age been more complicated and confused than the day in which we live. We go searching for wisdom and knowledge and are overwhelmed by the sheer volume we find. We don't know what to believe or who to believe any longer. We play mind games that begin with, "Well, define for me what you mean by . . . " Since when did dictionaries go out of style? Where do you turn for wise counsel this late in the game? Is there a wise counselor who can illumine our way?

There is a sense of pervading gloom and helplessness the world over. Many leaders of the world feel helpless at the rapidly changing political and economic circumstances. Political and economic rules have changed. We feel helpless at bringing about changes in a world gone mad. Is there no one who can give us power and strength to do what we need to do?

There is no sense of security in our world. No one leaves their homes unlocked any more, even in small towns across the nation. We have lost our sense of security. Very few people believe in the justice system. One person with power and money is treated one way, the common man another way. One man lies and commits perjury in a federal court and gets away with it, while thousands of others go to prison. Violence, crime, political intrigue, lack of integrity spell doom to security of the individual. The whole system will break down. Is there not someone who can give us eternal security in a day of insecurity?

We live in a day of restlessness. We have listened to twenty second sound bites, and thirty second commercials so long that we are restless if someone wants to speak to us more than a couple of minutes. We run to another job, a second home, another hobby, another spouse, another toy, etc. We can't stop and enjoy the moment. We get instant boredom because we are restless at the core of our personality. Is there someone who can give us peace? Is there someone to whom we can turn in our crazy mixed up confused, insecure, restless world and find peace?

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah lived in a day of political and spiritual confusion and madness. Gloom and doom filled the air. There was a sense of helplessness as the Assyrians knocked on the front door. Like ours, insecurity and restlessness filled his day. Isaiah chapters seven and eight opens with a faithless king. King Ahaz of the Southern Kingdom of Judah refused to put his trust in the Lord God to save Judah from the hands of the Syro–Ephraimic coalition. Except for the prophets of Yahweh, it was a time of spiritual poverty in Judah.

The prophet Isaiah described the spiritual conditions of his day in 8:19, 21–22. "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? . . . They will pass through the land hard–pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness."

It was a night without end in Judah. Spiritual darkness penetrated the land. It was a night without morning. These were deeply troubling times filled with crisis and panic. The events in this chapter take
place probably after Tiglath-pileser of Assyria invaded Syria and Ephraim in 734–32 B. C. "Gloom" filled the land. The nation was in a state of spiritual darkness and political distress all over the land.

The whole northern region had suffered from the "scorched earth" policy of the invading Assyrians. Northern Galilee which cut across Napthali and Zebulun, especially felt the extreme devastation of the Assyrians.

This spiritual darkness was the result of persistent unbelief. How strange that those who think they are in the light when indeed they dwell in perpetual darkness. Such was the condition of Israel and Judah. Gloom encircled the Promised Land.

Judah had fallen into a night without morning. It was a time of crisis and panic. Darkness fills the land, and now judgement was coming because of unbelief. "They will pass through the land hard-pressed and famished, and it will turn out that when they are hungry, they will be enraged and curse their king and their God as they face upward. Then they will look to the earth, and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be driven away into darkness."

This kind of darkness is a frightening description of sin. The lost person thinks he is in the light when indeed he dwells in perpetual darkness. Spiritual darkness adds to the all–encircling gloom. However, on this background of dark judgment and unbelief is painted a beautiful picture of salvation for a sinful people.

THE GLORIOUS SALVATION FOR A SINFUL PEOPLE (9:1-5)

There is light instead of darkness (v. 1-2).

With poetic beauty in verse two the prophet expands on the first suggestion of the coming of the Messiah in 7:14.

"The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them."

God's presence is equated with light in the Bible. "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5b). The great light that will appear is the Messiah. Seven hundred years later Jesus began His ministry right here in this area of Galilee. Light includes every possible blessing that the age of the Messiah can bring. Jesus stood in the Temple and declared, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Do you find yourself groping in blind, spiritual darkness? Our society is reeling from the effects of unfaithfulness to the LORD God. We worship idolatrous images of materialism, and prostitute ourselves to any deity that will make us feel good and give in to our desires and wants. We have lost our hope in this spiritual darkness. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).
To those who trust in the Lord there is joy instead of gloom (v. 3).

"You shall multiply the nation,  
You shall increase their gladness;  
They will be glad in Your presence  
As with the gladness of harvest,  
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil."

Because of the coming of the Messiah, there will be "gladness" and joy before the Lord. Joy exults in Him, His power and His presence. The Lord is the source of their joy.

Do I speak to someone who is covered with a thick cloud of all pervading gloom? Here is hope in the only one who can lift us from our gloom and doom. Even from a Roman prison cell, the Apostle Paul could "rejoice" in his chains. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

There is freedom instead of oppression (v. 4).

Isaiah addresses the cause of the rejoicing. They rejoice because the Lord has broken their chains. He has set them free.

Do I speak to someone who feels like they are bound with chains? Isaiah said,  
"For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders,  
The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian."


"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.  
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set free those who are oppressed,  
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

There is peace instead of war (v. 5).

Do you wonder when will the inner war in your soul will ever end? Listen to the prophet,

"For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult,  
And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire."

THE SAVIOR OF THE SINFUL PEOPLE (9:6-7)

This is the same child foretold in 7:14.
The birth of this child is a gift of God. He is a Child, but He is also a Son. From early time, the Messiah was recognized as son of David, a legitimate heir to David's throne and the Son of God. He will in some significant way appear on the scene as a child and will "be born" as human beings are. Yet, He will "be given." He is a Son par excellence. He is truly unique.

God incarnate! That is the only way it could be accomplished. This is how the Apostle Paul came to understand it. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation . . . For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him . . . that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:15, 19–20, 26–27). The expected king will be human and divine. He will be God–man. He will have attributes of God and characteristics of man. He is not some grotesque figure of science fiction, but the very perfection of love.

Moreover, this child will occupy a position of dignity—"the government will rest on His shoulders" (Vv. 6b, 7). This child will become a righteous ruler who will fulfil all the expectations of the family of King David (Cf. II Sam. 7:13–16). The Child is to be a King, a Ruler, a Sovereign. However, He will not be merely a human king. Clearly, He is the Messiah, the Anointed of Yahweh. The ancient Jewish Targum explicitly identified this person in Isaiah as the Messiah.

What kind of child is this?

Isaiah describes for us the character of this child.

**WONDERFUL COUNSELOR** — Literally He is "wonder of a counselor." He gives comfort and strength throughout time and eternity. The Messiah is Himself a "Wonder." The word refers to what God has done, not man. He is God Himself. This Child is a Wonder. He will rule with unfailing depth of Wisdom. He will not need counselors or a cabinet; He is Himself Counselor. The emphasis of His name is on teachings, character and life. He will be most efficient in planning, formulating action to carry out His plans. He is one counseling wonderful things.

Do you need wisdom in this hour of need? One wag said, "A wise person seeks much counsel. A fool listens to all of it!" Here is the counselor worthy of the name. He doesn't burnout. He is always on call. He is infinite wisdom. Come and humble your heart and listen to Him. Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, asked, Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). He is worthy of our loyalty because His counsel goes beyond the human limitations.

Jesus issues an invitation to all who are in need of a wonderful counselor to come to Him. "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy–laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

**MIGHTY GOD** — He is full omnipotence; El—the strong One. Literally He is, the "God–hero." He is the Mighty God. El gibbor always refers in the Old Testament to God as Absolute Deity. The Messiah is all–powerful, living, true God, omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Christ is the mighty El. Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). The Messiah is God Himself and He is able to save all who trust in
Him. He has nothing less than the full omnipotence of God at His command. What He devised He is able to achieve. Let Jesus Christ be the "Mighty God" in your life.

**ETERNAL FATHER** — He is everlastingly a Father. He is loving, paternal, concerned, tender, faithful, wise, guardian, provider and protector. Ps. 103:13, "Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him."

For those individuals in our day who struggle for a positive father image here is one who is worthy of the name. You can have perfect security in an intimate love relationship with your heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul admonishes us in Romans 8:15–18 with these words: "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him." Here is a father worthy of the name who will never leave your or forsake you.

**PRINCE OF PEACE** — He rules over His people with peace. The peace He gives is eternal. He is the embodiment of peace, therefore He rules over His redeemed people as a Prince bringing peace. In a post resurrection appearance Jesus said to His disciples, "My peace, I give you." The result of His coming into our hearts by faith is perfect peace. Romans 5:1 reads, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." He gives us His indescribable peace the very moment we put our trust in Him.

**CHRIST THE FULFILLMENT OF THE CHILD WITH FOUR NAMES**

The Child to be born is Jesus.

The physician Luke recorded his investigation, "'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant" (Luke 1:68-69).

Matthew was writing to Jewish people to share with them the good news of the coming of the Messiah. He began his introduction, "The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham . . . Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah." "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him . . . 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; For out of you shall come forth a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Matt. 1:1, 16; 2:1-2, 6).

You can not overlook the powerful conclusion drawn by the rabbi Saul of Tarsus, "a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:1-4).

**SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES**
When you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you have a Wonderful Counselor. Are you looking for someone who will clear up your confusion and give you wisdom? Have you lost the Wonder of Christ? Stir up the coals; restore your love for His wonder. Lord Jesus, will I see you today? Feel like you are going through desolate times of spiritual poverty? You have a Wonder–Counselor. Get into His Word; listen to the wonder of His counsel. There is only one person to turn to when you come with the deepest questions of live.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are trusting in the Mighty God. Do you feel helpless in a confused and angry world? Are carrying a heavy burden which is too heavy for you alone to carry? The Mighty God is your strength. There is nothing, which He cannot carry out. He is able to save all who trust in Him.

When you believe in Jesus Christ, you have an Eternal Father. Do you feel orphaned? Feel like no one cares? Do you feel insecure? You have one who always loves, concerned, committed to what is best for you. One Father will never leave you or forsake you. He gives us eternal security.

When you trust in Jesus Christ, you have the Prince of Peace as your ruler. Is there a storm brewing in your heart? Are you anxious and restless? Here is the only one who can give you deep inner peace. Need a shepherd for stormy days? Let Him be your Prince.
Isaiah 11:1-5

A Shoot from the Stem of Jesse

The message of messianic hope and comfort runs through out the book of Isaiah. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah reminds his readers in numerous ways that the Lord God reigns! He is sovereign and He is in charge of the affairs of the nations of the world. In chapter eleven Isaiah presents a dynamic contrast to the events in chapter ten. The nation of Assyria (chapter 10), which God used to punish the Northern Kingdom of Israel, will suddenly collapse. Assyria is only a tool in God's hands to accomplish His sovereign purpose with Israel. In contrast to the death of the nation of Assyria, God will raise up a king who will sit on the throne of David throughout eternity.

At the time Isaiah is writing (eighth century B.C.) there were only stumps of dead trees that have been mowed down by the invaders from Assyria. The ax of divine judgment had chopped among the trees, and nothing but stumps was left standing. By the time the Messiah will arrive, seven hundred years later, the house of David will be nothing but an insignificant stump in Israel. It will have fallen upon evil days.

THE EPIPHAN Y OF THE MESSIAH (11:1)

We have been carefully observing the progression of the messianic hope in Isaiah 2:1-4; 4:1-6; 7:14; 8:24; 9:1-6, and now it comes to full bloom in chapter eleven. In verse one, a descendent of David will reign in righteousness. He will fulfill all these promises and many more in His character and mission.

The Manifestation of the Divine being.

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). The prophet, no doubt, has in mind 2 Samuel 7:16. The "stem" or "stump," is all that is left of a once mighty tree after it had been cut down. Israel is just a field of burned out stumps on the landscape of world history. Judah and Assyria will fall under the heavy hand of God's judgment. When Assyria fell in 609 B.C. she never budded again. She will always be a lifeless dead stump. God will destroy the destroyer. Assyria is only a tool in the hands of the God of Israel. However, there is a stump with just a twig of life in it. It is the smallest of shoots, but it has a green sprout that will bud and bring forth a righteous ruler in Israel. From this barren, helpless shoot will come the redeemer of Israel (53:1-2). In contrast to the burned out stumps of Assyria, God has brought forth a green "shoot." The lineage of David is not completely dead. God is sovereign. The Messianic branch, David, the eternal King will reign over His people.

There is only one Jesse in the Scriptures and he is King David's father. Although the power of David's lineage will be reduced to its most humble descendents God will raise up a tender branch out of that humility.

The beginnings of the Messiah are exceedingly small. He comes at a time when the descendants of David have reached the deepest humiliation and obscurity. However, this lowly shoot will "bear fruit" which presupposes its growth. Calvin observed: "The Prophet does not mention David; but rather Jesse. For so much was the dignity of that family diminished, that it seemed to be a rustic, ignoble family rather than a royal one." The house of David had become so insignificant and unimportant that it is called "Jesse."
name of David has fallen to the level at which it stood when his father Jesse bore the honor of the family name before David's glory as king. Nothing is left of the family tree, but a root.

**The tree of lowly beginnings is Christ.**

Herod the Great is anything but a descendent of David. He was a political joke, a murderous monster and puppet of Rome. He purchased his political power from the Romans. There is no royal blood of King David in his veins. He is an Idumaean imposter.

The parallel idea to the "shoot" or twig is the "branch" bearing fruit. A netzer is a fresh green shoot from to shine or blossom. The poor despised Nazarene will spring forth and shine. There is fresh new growth in the lineage of David. He is a growing thing. What lay dormant and thought to be dead is alive and full of fruit. (Cf. Luke 3:23-38, v. 32; Matthew 1:1-25; Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

If you were the prophet Isaiah, would not your heart be filled with a fresh new hope for your people?

**The Lineage of the Messiah**

Royalty runs through the veins of Joseph and Mary, who are of the lineage of David. Why Joseph is not a king, but a carpenter. Here are just two descendants of King David preparing for a private life, not a throne or presidential palace. Nathanael sarcastically asked Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Was he expecting the Messiah to come from Jerusalem? Isaiah picks up on those humble origins again in chapter fifty-three. He refers to the Suffering Servant of the LORD, "like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (53:2). He was so despised the religious leaders estimated Him a zero, a nothing. Salvation did not come from the pomp and splendor of the elite royal family of Herod, but from Nazareth.

God will prove Himself faithful and create a royal house from a peasant family in David's lineage. No wonder Herod was so upset when the wise men came telling him that the King of the Jews had been born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-12).

Hengstenberg in his excellent *Christology of the Old Testament* writes: "The figure of a shoot or sprout has become so common as a designation of the Messiah, that the name 'Sprout' has almost become a proper name of the Messiah." The "branch" is clearly a reference to the Messiah (Isaiah 4:2; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15).

**THE EQUIPMENT OF THE MESSIAH (11:2)**

He will not accomplish God's will by human means. This ruler will have the very breath of God upon Him. He will be under the control of "the Spirit of the LORD" (v. 2a). He will not be spiritually barren like the King Ahaz and the Jewish leaders before Him. Unless He is endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh, He will be like the other political leaders. The Old Testament taught the Messiah would be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the baptism of Jesus coincided with the anointing of Jewish kings. The Father's officiating at the coronation affirms His divine rule (Luke 4:1, 14, 18; Psalm 2:6-9). It is not the human spirit that Isaiah is referring to in verse two, but the Spirit of God producing divine character.
The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

With this description, our minds hearken back to the child with the four names in 9:6. Wisdom, counsel, omnipotence, fatherly security, giver of peace characterizes this king.

Alexander Maclaren observed: "There has never been but one manhood capable of receiving and retaining the whole fullness of the Spirit of God." The Spirit of Yahweh brings all these gifts upon Jesus of Nazareth. Christ came not empty-handed. He came with the fullness of God upon Him. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). The complete control of the Holy Spirit is who produces the wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the LORD in His life. Here is one man who was completely at the disposal of God the Spirit every moment of His life on this earth. There was neither taint nor restraint of carnality upon Him. George Adam Smith said, here is "the perfect indwelling of our humanity by the Spirit of God . . . He possessed the Holy Spirit without measure.

He is divinely equipped

All of the equipment comes through the Spirit of Yahweh, perennially and in superlative measure. How did Jesus accomplish the Father's will? He did it like the prophets of old. "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). The gospel writer Luke describes how Jesus began His public ministry in his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus entered the synagogue one Sabbath day, as it was His custom. He stood up to read from the scroll that was handed to Him and He read Himself into His sacred office. The passage for the day was taken from Isaiah 61:1-2. (cf. Luke 4:18-19). It begins, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of the sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." Luke tells us Jesus closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, sat down, and began to teach them in the synagogue. Jesus said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

The writer John made this observation of Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry. He quotes John the Baptistizer, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as [in the manner of] a dove out of heaven; and He remained upon Him. And I did not recognize Him, but he who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33-34).

THE EXCELLENT REIGN OF THE MESSIAH (1:3-5)
And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips he will slay the wicked.
Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

**What characterizes this reign?**

He will "delight in the fear of the LORD" (v. 3). This king will rule with integrity. He will be radically different from all presidents and kings the world has known. The "fear of the LORD" will not be lip service, and political talk with Him. He will be a superhuman righteous king who is faithful to the humble.

He will not conduct His government by popularity polls, personal biases in decision making and enrichment of elite lawyers. He will allow the "fear of the LORD" and "righteousness" to guide Him. He will not lie at every turn of His mouth, but will speak with absolute integrity. His lifestyle and character will be full of integrity.

"For absolute justice, there must be absolute knowledge," writes E. J. Young. "No obstacle can stay the reign of this King; completely He carries through His rule. . . . What characterizes the judgments of this King is their absolute fairness. . . . He is above the earth, a supra-earthly, supra-natural being; and He can do with that earth what He will. The very breath of His mouth, as it were, is a rod, with which He can chastise and smite. . . . What comes forth from His mouth is His Word, and that Word is a judging, smiting Word. How powerful and efficacious is the breath of God's word! By that breath the hosts of heaven were made. The breath which goes out of the mouth of the Messiah accomplishes the end for which it is designed; it slays the wicked. . . . The earth and the wicked are the object of Messiah's wrath" (e. J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. I, p. 385).

With a flash of his pen, in the middle of verse four, the prophet leaps in time, across the centuries to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The prophets bring together the two comings of Jesus as though they were one. Both mountain peaks line up so as to prevent us from seeing the valley between them. The apostle Peter explained this when he wrote of the Holy Spirit "predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:11). These sufferings of the Suffering Servant came at the end of one era in history, and the "glories to follow" will still come at a time in the future. We shall look more at that future in Isaiah 11:6-16.

Righteous and fair judgment will characterize His reign. "At the great last day of judgment, the voice of God will speak and the wicked will perish eternally."

Do you long for a president or sovereign king who will rule with righteousness, integrity and fairness? Even so, come Lord Jesus, come!
Isaiah 11:6-16

Our Blessed Hope

With a flash of his pen, the prophet Isaiah leaps forward in time, across the centuries to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Hebrew prophets bring together the two comings of Jesus as though they were one in time. The two mountain peaks of His coming line up so as to prevent us from seeing the valley between them. With one coming we see the suffering of the Messiah and with the Second Coming we see the "glories to follow" at a time yet in the future. We are now carried in time to when Jesus shall return and reign as King of Kings.

Jesus Christ alone is the hope of mankind. "Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of western culture for twenty centuries. It is from His birth that most of the human race dates its calendars. It is by His name that millions curse, and in His name that missions pray."

Isaiah takes us to the time when the dream of every world statesman will be fulfilled.

EDEN RETURNS WITH THE MESSIAH (11:6-9)

"We pass from the picture of the character and rule of the King over men to that fair vision of Paradise regained, which celebrates the universal restoration of peace between man and the animals. The picture is not to be taken as a mere allegory, as if 'lions' and 'wolves' and 'snakes' mean bad men; but it falls into line with other hints in Scripture, which trace the hostility between man and the lower creatures to sin..." It is "the scene of the future glories of redeemed humanity..." (Alexander Maclaren).

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little boy will lead them.
Also the cow and the bear will graze,
Their young will lie down together,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den.
They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea.

"Everything" says Hengstenberg, "is fulfilled only as to its beginning; and the complete fulfillment still stands out for that future in which, after the fullness of the Gentiles has been brought in, and apostate Israel has been converted, the consequences of the fall shall, in the outward nature also, be removed."

This passage is probably both symbolic and literal. In application, the metaphor speaks of spiritual peace in human hearts today. Christ is the Prince of Peace and He alone brings peace to our sinful hearts. He
alone can tear down the hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Because He has removed the enmity, we can have an intimate love relationship with the LORD God.

However, in this passage there is the fullest manifestation of peace. There is no sin. Therefore, because righteousness reigns there is peace. In the superlative sense the Prince of Peace reigns. With sin removed, hostility is also removed, and there is universal peace.

**There will be a transformation of nature.**

Moreover, there is coming a day when the curse of the Fall will be completely removed from the earth (cf. Romans 8:18-22). The beauty and harmony of the Garden of Eden will be restored. The world will be filled with peace between the wild beast and domesticated animals, nature and man, as well as God and man. The future peace in the millennium is all embracing. B. F. Skinner wrote, "a poetic presentation of the truth that the regeneration of human society is to be attended by a restoration of the harmony of creation."

"All ferocity is gone; nature is no longer red in tooth and claw," observes Leupold. All of nature is in perfect harmony with the will of God. The Messiah will "return the whole earthly creation to its original condition" (Hengstenberg). "All enmity will disappear, not only from among men, but even from among beasts, and even between men and beasts all will be in harmony" (E. J. Young).

**What is the basis of this change? (v. 9)**

"For the earth is full of the knowledge of the LORD . . ."

How will all this take place? "For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." This "knowledge" is an intimate love relationship with Yahweh. It is a first hand, experiential knowledge in the heart of man. The Old Testament uses the word to express sexual relations between a man and his wife. All permanent lasting change begins in the heart of man with a change in his thinking about the Lord. God brings about that radical change. It is like raising the dead.

**When will this change take place?**

Jesus had some interesting words for His disciples regarding the restoration of the kingdom in Acts 1:6–8. We would do well to listen to the Master teacher.

H. C. Leupold reminds us: "Surely we have thus far witnessed nothing of this transformation of nature. Its achievement shall be saved up until the days of the Second Coming of Christ, when there shall be a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness That is where all will be right."

E. J. Young observed: "Wondrous indeed is this Messiah! . . . His kingdom is to be contrasted with all earthly kingdoms. His is the kingdom as that kingdom should be. It will be the very opposite of what now is found in human kingdoms. All enmity will disappear, not only from among men, but even among beasts, and even between men and beasts all will be in harmony . . . Permanent and perpetual is this peace . . . So great is the Messiah's power that even this fundamental enmity will be wiped out."

If this passage sounds strange and difficult for you to accept then remember Jesus rode the unbroken colt, had the rooster crow at the precise moment when Peter denied Him, and had Peter cast a net and catch
a certain fish with a coin in its mouth at a precise place at the exact moment it was needed to pay the Master's tax! This passage is perfectly reasonable if we leave it in God's hands to fulfill His own way at His own timing!

Furthermore, the acceptance of Gentiles into the Messianic Kingdom will not be at the expense of the remnant of Israel (Romans 9-11).

**THE ENSIGN AMONG THE NATIONS (11:10–16)**

Then in that day
The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,
Who will stand as a signal for the peoples;
And His resting place will be glorious.

The Messianic king will bring about the restoration of Israel in vv. 10–16. The Messiah will have a worldwide influence.

The prophet makes it clear who this individual is. He is "root of Jesse" (v. 10b). This is parallel with "the stem of Jesse" in verse one. The "root of Jesse" is a shoot or "branch" from the "stump of Jesse." The King Messiah comes from this shoot. Like the "branch" this "root" (sores) became a Messianic term among the Jewish interpreters (cf. Isaiah 53:2; Revelation 5:5; 22:16). The coming of the Messiah will restore the house of David, and therefore the root of Jesse. God passed over Jerusalem, the Temple, priests and political leaders and went to the lonely despised Nazareth, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem because that was the residence of the father of the family of David. God was sovereign in the life of Mary and Joseph, and the census of the Roman government! His timing was perfect.

*Jesus will draw all men to Himself.*

The Perfect Ruler, Prince of Peace will draw all men unto Himself. The ensign was the standard, the banner or flag that drew the troops together. Messiah stands as the central rallying point of the remnant and the Gentiles (cf. Philippians 2:9-11; Jeremiah 31:33-34; John 3:14; Matthew 24:31). The remnant gathers around Him. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (John 12:32).

Then it will happen on that day that the Lord
Will again recover the second time with His hand
The remnant of His people, who will remain,
From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath,
And from the islands of the sea.
And He will lift up a standard for the nations
And assemble the banished ones of Israel,
And will gather the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.

There will be a great new exodus. Is the current return of the Jewish people to Israel the one foretold here? It is perhaps a preparation for that day, however it is probably not the fulfillment of these verses. Isaiah is speaking of believers being gathered back by the hand of God. It is a believing "remnant" he has in
mind. Today there is only a handful of believing Jews in Israel. Most of them are non religious Jews. Isaiah pictures Jerusalem restored and the Lord Jesus reigning in person in Jerusalem. He is the banner that draws all nations to Jerusalem to seek Him.

The remnant is envisioned coming from every part of the earth to Jerusalem. John Oswalt says, "... the primary focus of the passage seems to be upon the historical nation of Israel, so that one is led to believe it points to some great final ingathering of the Jewish people such as that referred to by Paul in Romans eleven. If that has begun in the Zionist movement, as many believe, we may look forward with anticipation to its ultimate completion in a turning to God in Christ by the Jewish nation" (The Book of Isaiah, p. 286).

Isaiah "is thinking of a deliverance so great that it can only be performed by God." It will be as in former times when He brought His people out of Egypt.

**ENTHUSIASTIC PRAISE FOR MESSIANIC SALVATION (12:1-6)**

Isaiah reaches a grand climax declaring the LORD God is my salvation, my strength and my song.

Then you will say on that day,  
"I will give thanks to You, O Lord;  
For although You were angry with me,  
Your anger is turned away,  
And You comfort me.  
"Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the Lord God is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation."  
Therefore you will joyously draw water  
From the springs of salvation.  
And in that day you will say,  
"Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name.  
Make known His deeds among the peoples;  
Make them remember that His name is exalted."  
Praise the Lord in song, for He has done excellent things;  
Let this be known throughout the earth.  
Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,  
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

**SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES:**

Only that which is eternal lasts. When we realize our journey through this earth is only passing we then recognize the real thing is yet to come. We are living in two worlds: the now, and the yet to be. The daily world news reminds us that world peace as we know it is only temporary. Perpetual, permanent peace will only come when Jesus returns to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Only that which is done in the Spirit of the LORD is of lasting quality. Anything done in the flesh is temporary and destructive. When we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit we are investing in eternity.
Only when there is a transformation of man's spirit can there be a transformation of man's environment. When the soul of man is radically transformed we will then witness a radical change in our society.

Only when we realize the ultimate victory is in God's hands, not man's, do we have lasting hope. When we recognize the sovereignty of God we can enjoy our everlasting hope.

Only when we are obedient do we bring delight to the Lord. When we are obedient we have a heart that fears the Lord. The Messiah delights in the "fear of the Lord." What is my attitude toward Him?

Who is this Ruler, this Prince of Peace? He is the baby born of a virgin, the child with the four names, the Stump with a Sprout that budded in God's perfect timing. He is Immanuel, God with us. Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:6-9; Phil. 2:8-11 When God is with us we have perfect peace.
It would be easy for us to rush through Isaiah and jump from one majestic snowcapped mountain peak to another and miss some important truths hidden away in short verses that tell about our Savior and the salvation He provides. There are many passages that reinforce the over all message of hope in the coming of the Messiah when brought together as a whole. They may not "stand on their own," but when seen in the context of the whole they are significant and very profound.

**Waters of Salvation**

After presenting the great work of salvation in chapter eleven, Isaiah breaks forth in thanksgiving and praise to Yahweh. The prophet can contain himself no longer. In 12:2-3 Isaiah admonishes his listeners to draw from the springs of salvation God has provided.

Behold, God is my salvation,  
I will trust and not be afraid;  
For the LORD God is my strength and song,  
And He has become my salvation.  
Therefore you will joyously draw water  
From the springs of salvation.

"Waters" (plural in the original) indicates "fullness and all–sufficiency of the blessings which come from these springs," observes E. J. Young.

We enjoy the sweet waters of salvation because of what God accomplished for us on the cross through Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead. Our Lord Jesus spoke of the water of life in His conversation with the woman of Samaria who came to draw water from Jacob's well. "If you knew the gift of God," Jesus told her, "and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10). As the conversation progressed Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks of this water [from Jacob's well] shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (vv. 13-14). Later in His ministry, on the last day of the feast of the Tabernacles Jesus stood in the Temple and cried out,

If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me, and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:37-39).

Compare these words of Jesus with Isaiah 44:3; 55:1; 1 Corinthians 10:4; Rev. 7:16; 21:6; 22:17.

Do you thirst for the waters that only Jesus can give? All other fountains leave you thirsting for more. Only Jesus satisfies! Learn to draw daily, moment by moment from His refreshing waters of salvation.
A Faithful Judge

Judgment came swift on the descendents of Moab who created more havoc to Israel than her bitterest enemies did (Isaiah 16:6-7). Isaiah draws from the context of God's judgment upon the descendents of Lot to remind his people of a faithful judge. "A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, and a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice and be prompt in righteousness" (v. 5). These words reinforce 9:6, 7; 11:1-10; 32:1; 55:4; Amos 9:11; 2 Samuel 7:12-16 etc. The throne of David is superior to a Moabitic dynasty. The "Son of the Most High" will sit on the "throne of His father David and reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom shall have no end" (Luke 1:32-33). The ancient Jewish Targum represents this passage as Messianic. The throne in the tent of David belongs to Christ. Israel has a throne with a future (Jeremiah 33:15-17). When the Lord Jesus returns He will dispense righteousness and justice as "the LORD our righteousness." He will do that which is right. How refreshing this thought is in our evil day of injustice. He is faithful and true. The whole book of Revelation is a reminder of how He will dispense justice on the nations of the world.

A Savior and Champion in Egypt

The Egyptian religion was a complex polytheism. However, in Isaiah chapter nineteen Isaiah sees Egyptians worshiping Yahweh. It is interesting that by the first century A.D. there were over a million Jews living in Egypt, and Onias IV built a Jewish Temple in Egypt in 160 B.C. The Roman emperor Vespasian closed it in A.D. 71. Before the coming of Christ there were Jewish synagogues covering the land of Egypt, and the Old Testament was translated into Greek at Alexandria.

However, the passage as a whole is not talking about Jews worshiping in Egypt, but the Egyptians worshiping Yahweh. "In that day," says Isaiah, "there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD near its border" (Isa. 19:19). "And it will become a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Champion, and He will deliver them. Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it" (vv. 20-21).

This "Savior and Champion," literally "Mighty One," is the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah knows only one Deliverer. This passage is Messianic. Men have carried the message of salvation to Egypt and the people have believed. The good news has been preached there and men have believed on the Lord. The LORD God has made Himself known to the Egyptians. At Pentecost the knowledge of the Lord went out to the land and people believed on the Deliverer, the Mighty One. Before Egypt fell prey to Islam in 640 A.D. there was a flourishing church in Egypt. Will there also be a time in the future when it will again flourish? Let's pray to that end.

A Key for the House of David
Perhaps Isaiah 22:22 may be considered more of a messianic application than a specific messianic prophecy. However, the description of the key to the house or dynasty of David is applied to the risen Christ in Revelation 3:7. Just as the master of the house has a key and complete authority over it, Eliakim has been entrusted with the key to the house of David. The responsibility of the government, security and safety rests on his shoulders. Jesus Christ, as the Anointed of Yahweh, bears the complete responsibility for the Kingdom of God. Christ exercises complete sovereign authority over the Kingdom. He alone is the Head of the house of David.

**A Costly Foundation**

In chapter twenty Isaiah says the nation has misplaced its confidence in the false security of Egypt. The Lord declares that He will provide His chosen foundation for Israel as opposed to the proud drunken kings of Ephraim and the fading flower of her glory.

Therefore thus says the Lord God,
Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed.
He who believes in it will not be disturbed.

The leadership staggers under the influence of existentialism and relativism, which believes in its falsehood and deception. God, however, provides a measuring-line for a sure foundation. In "His counsel wonderful and His wisdom great" the Lord cancels Jerusalem's covenant with death and warns her of coming judgment.

The very names God uses of Himself indicates the seriousness of the situation. The "Lord" (Adonay) LORD (Yahweh) is the one who is speaking.

The costly, tested stone is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the "costly cornerstone for the foundation." The Lord God is the one who has "firmly placed" this foundation stone.

"He who believes in it will not be disturbed." We could replace the italicized words with Him referring to the Lord Jesus. He is the only sure foundation in life. Peter resolutely declared to the religious leaders, "Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead . . . He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDER, but WHICH BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:10-12).

The apostle Paul borrowed Isaiah's idea and declared, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). In Ephesians 2:20-22 he reminds the Ephesian church, "Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Peter uses the same allegory when writing about the church as a living stone. "BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED" (1 Peter 2:6). Cf. Romans 9:33; 10:11; with Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17).
Neither will you be disappointed when you put your faith in Jesus Christ. You can receive Him as your personal Savior right now.
Isaiah 25:8; 26:19

When God Wipes Away the Tears

Isaiah gives a song of praise for God's grace following on the heels of the account of universal judgment in chapter twenty-four. In chapter twenty-five Isaiah pictures the Lord throwing a lavish banquet for the worshippers who have come to Mt. Zion for that purpose (v. 6). It will be a time of full enjoyment in the perfected Kingdom. God will have removed the spiritual blindness of the people and they worship Him (v. 7). The Lord will achieve His eternal purpose in salvation and judgment. He is faithful and true.

The Veil of Unbelief is Removed

The apostle Paul speaks of God removing the veil of blindness and unbelief in Second Corinthians 3:12-18. The Holy Spirit removes the veil so we can "behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord." We are "being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (v. 18). The Lord will swallow up the covering that is over all peoples. He removes the spiritual blindness so we can see Jesus.

Death is Swallowed Up

But He does even more because He gets to the heart of our problem. It is interesting to observe the removal of the spiritual veil of ignorance and unbelief and the swallowing up of death. Isaiah reaches the height of understanding of the resurrection in the Old Testament. "He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 25:8). With boldness Isaiah says, "He will swallow up death for all time." He uses a word for "swallow" that is equivalent to making a thing disappear. He destroys it so thoroughly that there is no trace left of it. God doesn't merely remove it, but completely wipes it out, including all footprints of it. All evidence of it is gone when He removes it.

Paul paraphrases this great promise and adds part of Hosea 13:14 in his great chapter on the resurrection of the believer. He says, "But when this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:53-57, cf. vv. 12-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; Revelation 1:17-18; Daniel 12:2).

Romans 5:12 tells us the source and cause of death is sin. Death entered into the world by sin (Genesis 2:17), and it came to its ignoble end when sin was dealt its final blow at the cross.

The apostle John sees in his vision the same thing Isaiah sees in God's compassion, grace and power over death. He sees God among His people, "and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have
passed away" (Revelation 21:4). God deals with death and the cause of death—sin. The final conqueror is conquered!

No More Tears

Not only do we see His awesome power in dealing with sin and death, but also His tender compassionate touch that removes all traces of sin and death. Just as a tender mother, He removes the tearstains from a child's face.

Isaiah resounds his note in 26:19

Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

H. C. Leupold notes "This new insight, startling and novel in the Old Testament," is like an explosion. Those who have died belong to the Lord; "for that reason they shall live," says Young. God's dead are those who in His Name have actually died physically. Isaiah "clearly introduces the doctrine of the resurrection of the body." The "dead" are "corpses" and these "will rise." This is a rare note in the Old Testament but here it sounds forth clearly.

"We have here an actual indication of the hope of the resurrection. . . . It is as though the Lord had made a major investment in his saints. . . . So, though they were dead, they still were his dead. Being thus related to the Lord of life, it is most reasonable to expect that they will share in his endless life: 'Thy dead shall live'" (H. C. Leupold).

"You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy. . . ." "Dust" of death is a reminder of the dead bodies in the parallel. "For your dew is as the dew of the dawn (lit. "lights"), and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits." The "dew" is figurative of the invigorating life giving dew in a desert. The invigorating life that God alone can give causes the "departed spirits," literally "shades" (shade like existence) to return to full life. God raises the dead. The one true living God sends a refreshing dew to give newness of life to those who have been reduced to the dust of the earth.

Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ gives hope against the Grim Reaper. Death will no longer be a terror for humanity. By His death Jesus Christ swallowed up death in victory. When He returns He will make it disappear. He will abolish it to the extent that there will be no longer any trace of it. Jesus advances the thought when He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. . . Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds, to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:25, 28-29).

Our understanding of this truth effects what we believe about suffering (Romans 8:18-28), the spiritual world (8:31-39), our resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:20-28), our spiritual victory (Hebrews 12:1-2), our faithfulness to Christ (Revelation 2:10-11), rewards in heaven (2:17), etc.
Yes, let your imaginations leap with joy! Jesus is risen from the dead! Death has been defeated once-and-for all in the resurrection of Jesus.
In every age, in every man there is an innate desire for perfect peace and security.

There are times in history when it seems like our beds are too short, and our covers are too narrow. Such a time of crisis was the Syro-Ephramitic War in 735-732 B.C., and the final sacking of Samaria by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Those were turbulent times in the whole Mediterranean world. The people of Judah were filled with panic, and the kings were faithless. The people longed for peace and security. By the late eighth century B.C., many leaders advocated a military and political treaty with Egypt.

The king's cabinet advised going down to Egypt for help against Assyria, relying on their chariots of war, and not looking "to the Holy One of Israel, nor seeking His help." In sharp contrast Isaiah declared, there will be a King whose reign will be characterized as righteous (Isaiah 31:1; 32:1). God will draw a sword, "And the Assyrians will fall by a sword not of man, and a sword not of man will devour him" (31:8). King Sennacherib of Assyria died at his home twenty years after the LORD God destroyed his army. Yahweh is sovereign over Israel and the nations.

In Isaiah chapter thirty-two, the prophet writes, "Behold, a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly." The passage is much debated by scholars as to its messianic value. Many regard its "Messianic implications" as legitimate, however. It may be styled a Messianic prophecy because of the application of the principles of righteousness by the King. Isaiah is not thinking of the person of the Messiah alone as he does in 9:5ff and 11:1ff. However, the King's righteous reign is the very embodiment of God with His people. This ruler will be like a "shade" in a parched land, a "refuge" from the wind, a "shelter from the storm," and "stream of water in a dry country" (vv. 1-2).

The imagery in Isaiah thirty-two is Messianic. Even kings Ahaz and Hezekiah do not rise to the occasion. Isaiah has described judgment and punishment in chapter thirty-one. In sharp contrast, in this chapter he speaks of righteousness issuing in peace.

In chapter thirty-two the government is righteous as opposed to the unrighteousness of the kings of Judah. He is describing the character of a messianic government. No one but the Messiah King can rule in a complete state of righteousness. The Messianic kingdom is in view because of the sharp contrasts with the government in Isaiah's day.

The whole administration of this King will act according to righteousness. Even the "princes" under his administration will "rule justly" (v. 1). They will apply the principles of righteousness to the individual cases. They will be the kind of rulers God wants them to be. In the truest sense of the word it will be a "Davidic government" as described in Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5, and He is a divinely appoint king (2 Samuel 7:13-16).

The emphasis here is not on the personality of the ruler as in previous passages in Isaiah, but the character of His government. It is of such a character that it can belong to no one but the Messiah.
characterizes His perfect righteous rule over His people. His government will be the opposite of what Isaiah has been describing in Judah. Boldly Isaiah says, "Behold the King!"

_This King will be a protection for His people (v. 2)._  

Verse two is full of vivid detail. He writes, "Refuge from the wind," "shelter from the storm," "streams of water" in the desert, "shade of a huge rock in a parched land" (v. 2). This is not a selfish king looking out for his own skin. He cares about His people and watches over them. He provides protection for people.

He is not obsessed about His legacy. He has an eternal future because He is righteous and He rules in righteousness.

_Spiritual hardness will be removed from the people's hearts (v. 3)._  

Verse three is in sharp contrast with 29:10. The time of spiritual hardness and blindness will be over. No longer will their eyes, ears and hearts be hardened as in Isaiah 6:9-10. People will turn to the Lord. They will have the ability to discern spiritual truth (v. 4). "The mind of the hasty will discern the truth." No longer will the teachers stammer, but they will speak clearly the truth. What a contrast this is to governments in our day. "No longer will the fool be called noble, or the rogue be spoken of as generous" (v. 5, cf. vv. 6-8). This king will not look into the eye of the TV camera and lie every time He opens His mouth.  

Look at the negative contrast in verses six and seven. Can you imagine having a fool as a president? When the King comes there will be no more fake, sham or facades (v. 5). We are reminded that "righteousness exalts a nation." However, unrighteous rulers destroy it. "Fools" rule in unrighteousness. Ray Stedman once said, "There are the six Black Holes of life: self-pleasing, religious externalism, self-deceit, wrongly placed confidence, rebellious attitude and cruel attack upon others."

_How will He accomplish such an awesome task?_  

Verses 15-20 tells us it will not be by human means, but by the power of God. Judgment will come first (vv. 9-14). Salvation does not come "until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high . . ." (v. 15). The idea is the Spirit of God will be "poured out" in generous bestowal. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is an index of divine power. Isaiah sees a new flux of divine power upon the ruler. The spirit will achieve great things in the latter days.

There is a progressive understanding of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. "The outpouring of the Holy Spirit became a central facet of the Old Testament," writes Oswalt. "If God's people were ever to share His character, . . . then it would have to come about through an infusion of God's Spirit in human beings. . . God cannot fill where He does not rule. . . It is only when we come to the end of ourselves and acknowledge God's right to rule our lives that we can experience the divine empowerment for righteousness."

It begins, Isaiah says, when "the wilderness becomes a fertile field" (v. 15b). There will be abundance. "The fertile field is considered as a forest" (v. 15c).
Moreover, it also speaks to the moral and social needs (v. 16). The Spirit of God is revolutionary. You cannot remain the same and be under the control of the Holy Spirit. He brings about radical changes from the inside out. He brings blessings to God's people. Isaiah depicts the work of the Spirit as bringing about a new creation (24:18; 31:3; 44:3). The work of the Spirit of God is so revolutionary that He alone can restore what the depravity of sin has destroyed.

The Spirit enables the Messiah to rule with righteousness (v. 16). Justice and righteousness are the gifts of God. Jesus Christ was the perfectly Spirit-controlled man. "The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. . . And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness. . . And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. . . " (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 13). His whole life and ministry was always under the control of the Spirit of God.

What will be the result of this righteousness? Peace, perfect peace. "And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever" (v. 17). The only way we can ever have peace in our world is through God's righteousness. Only when Jesus Christ rules in righteousness do we experience inner peace. Only when He returns as Prince of peace will our world experience everlasting peace.

"Then my people . . . " (v. 18-20). The Holy Spirit produces righteousness and the result is peace. Peace comes through righteousness alone. When the heart is filled with righteousness, there will be peace. A heart full of sin is not full of peace. It is turbulent. When you have that combination, you have perfect, everlasting peace.

Is Isaiah describing God's people as the sheep of His pasture in verse eighteen? He uses a term that denotes a pasture. The Good Shepherd provides for God's sheep. His people dwell in a restful pasture (Psalm 23). "My people will live in a peaceful habitation. And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places" (Isaiah 32:18). God's people will dwell in perfect peace. The imagery is powerful: "peaceful habitation," "secure dwellings," and "undisturbed resting places." What a contrast this is to the "hail" of judgment described in verse nineteen.

Like Israel, we too, are tempted to put our trust in "short beds and narrow sheets" on a cold winter night. We are advised to trust in military alliances, materialism, humanism, scientific advances and technology, a strong central government, paternalism and if you are religious, legalism.

There is only one source of security in an insecure world. It is found in the Prince of peace who reigns in righteousness.

When Jesus Christ, the Righteous King reigns, there is perfect peace.

Even so, come Lord Jesus. Come quickly.
The Vindication of God's Righteousness

A very important question serious Bible students ask is, "How can God be just, holy and righteous in character and overlook, or allow to pass over without notice the sins of Old Testament saints? How could He intentionally overlook their sins?" The apostle Paul wrestles with this problem in Romans 3:25 when he refers to the Old Testament saints who, "in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." Paul looks back to the old covenant and says God passed over the sins in the Old Testament times. God used self-restraint or tolerance as He looked down on sinful man. Since God is a just God, how could He "wink" at the sins committed before Christ came and still be a just and righteous God?

The apostle Paul summarizes the whole Old Testament teaching on the holy and righteous character of God when he declared, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . . " (Romans 1:18). In his grand indictment against all mankind in chapter one he concludes, "those who practice such things are worthy of death" (v. 32). "Therefore you are without excuse . . . And we know that the judgment of God rightfully falls upon those who practice such things" (2:1). "The wages of sin is death" (6:23). The first three chapters sums up the righteous character of God and the fact that we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (3:23).

Paul reminds us of the Hebrew prophet Ezekiel who wrote, "The soul that sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Again he said, "The person who sins will die" (v. 20). "The wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (v. 20). "For his iniquity which he has committed he will die" (v. 26). "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the LORD God. 'Therefore, repent and live'" (v. 32).

Obviously, sin is serious business with God. The Scriptures can be summarized as follows:

God is holy and He hates sin. He can not look upon sin.

Because God is righteous He must punish all guilty sinners.

Unless God can prove that He has punished all sin, He is no longer righteous.

God poured out His wrath on all sin at Calvary.

God has punished all sin, and therefore He is just.

The old covenant sacrifices and offerings were never capable of producing a full forgiveness of sins. They did not expiate sin. Their sins were passed over, covered for the time being and another sacrifice would be made for sin the next day. They could not radically deal with sin. It is clear the blood of animals could not do this. All they did was to point forward to the coming perfect sacrifice that could deal with sin,
cleanse the conscience of dead works, and reconcile man to God. Therefore, how could God pass over their sins? How could He remain righteous and true to Himself?

All of the Old Testament saints were in heaven on credit. Abraham, David, Isaac Jacob, etc. were forgiven because they looked to Christ and the sacrifice He would make in time. They made their offerings by faith. They took God at His word that one day He was going to provide a perfect sacrifice for sin. They believed God. The thrust of Paul's argument in Romans 3:24-25 is, "It was their faith in Christ that saved them, exactly as it is faith in Christ that saves us now."

The apostle Paul's answer to the question of God's righteousness is clear. At the cross God was publicly declaring His own inherent and essential righteous character and justice. Here He is not referring to the imputed righteousness He gives to believers, but His own personal, glorious attributes. He is referring to His own essential moral, holy, just and righteous character. God gave a public demonstration that He is still righteous, just and holy although He has declared all believing sinners just and righteousness in His sight. How did He do it? God set forth Jesus Christ as propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the passing over of sins formerly committed under the old covenant (Romans 3:24-25). Hebrews 9:15 teaches us the same thing.

God explained Himself and declared His holy character when on the cross, His Son died as a sacrifice for all sin. Although God has in patience and forbearance held His judgment back in Old Testament times, He did not hold it back at the cross. He expressed all His holy wrath against sin on Jesus. The cross was a public declaration that God's righteousness was satisfied. He vindicated His own eternal character of righteousness and holiness at the cross. At the cross God vindicated what He had been doing in the past as He overlooked sin under the old covenant. In verse 26 He answered how He could pass over those sins in the past. The answer is still in the cross of Jesus. Every sin was dealt with once and for all at the cross.

At the cross God declared His righteousness for having passed over sins in His time of self-restraint. He can declare His own righteousness then, now and forever in forgiveness of sins because God poured out His entire wrath on His Son. The wrath of God that should have come down upon all sinners in the old dispensation came down upon His Son, Jesus Christ at the cross. That same wrath that should come down upon you and me because of our sins fell upon Jesus in that same historical event at Calvary. Jesus Christ is "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." Because God knew He was going to execute judgment against all sin in due time He could put off that judgment until the right time. Therefore, God can remain just and deal with sin as He says He is going to do, and still justify the believing sinner.

This is "the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). This is how He could pass over, or put off to another day, judgment against the sins in the past.

How does He deal with our sins now? How does He deal with our sins in the future?

The answer is still the same—at the cross of Jesus. Christ is the "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." All sin was dealt with once and for all on the cross of Jesus. The blood of Jesus covers every sin of those who believe—past, present and future.

Christ has dealt with all sins in His own death. It was done once and forever. God laid all sins on the back of Jesus. The sins you and I have not yet committed were laid on Him there. Christ in His death for
sin has already dealt with the sins you have not yet committed. This is the only means whereby God can forgive us of our sins. This is the only justification of God for forgiving all sins whenever committed. All sins are forgiven on these grounds alone. Therefore, God can be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (v. 26). The cross is not just the declaration of God's love; it is also the declaration that He is a just and holy God. He is true to His holy character. At the cross God was declaring that He is "Light and in Him there is no darkness at all." His love must be kept in perfect balance with His righteousness.

The cross is the vindication of God's righteous character. God can remain holy and just because He has punished sins and sinners in His own pure and holy Son. God poured out His wrath upon Christ. The prophet Isaiah said, "He bore our chastisement." "By His stripes we are healed." God punished sin and was therefore true to Himself. He kept His integrity.

Sinners are declared righteous freely by God's grace though the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth as propitiation through faith in His blood. Therefore, God can declare His righteousness for having passed over those sins in the past time of self-restraint. God is righteous in forgiving sin—past, present and future.

Is the apostle Paul teaching universalism? Does that mean everyone is automatically saved because Christ has already died for his sins? No. It means the provision has been made in God's grace by Christ's death to forgive, but only those individuals who personally believe on Christ to save them will receive forgiveness and salvation. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ to save you from the wrath of God? Are you enjoying His peace and assurance that all your sins have been covered by the death of Jesus Christ? Ask Jesus Christ to be your personal savior today.
Isaiah 42-53

The Servant Songs of Isaiah

In our journey through the master theme of the Bible we have arrived at a series of mountain ranges that include the "loftiest peak of Messianic prophecy."

In no passage in the Old Testament is the message of the Lord God's sovereignty over history clearer than here in a series of four Servant poems. Isaiah reveals with a loud piercing trumpet sound, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" No where is this clearer than in our salvation through the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Calvary was no accident (Acts 2:22-24).

In the ever growing clear vision of the Messiah, the Hebrew prophet introduces Yahweh's Servant (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). It is a message of God's saving grace. God's eternal purpose is redemption, and He works out that eternal purpose in history. The climax to these poems and history itself comes in Isaiah's "Rhapsody of Redemption," and "the Song of the Suffering Servant." Isaiah chapter fifty-three has been called "the golden passional" and "the most important text in the Old Testament."

As you proceed through the servant poems, a careful reading reveals the clear image of a person. There is a growing connection and transition between the nation and a person as an innocent, substitutionary sufferer. The ancient Jewish Targum takes the view here that the Servant is the future Messiah. He is an individual, and not the prophet, or a personified collective personality such as the nation of Israel.

Many scholars have noted the comparison between these poems and Jesus' ministry. Jesus began His public ministry by meeting the needs of hurting people and preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. As time passed and he was rejected he concentrated on teaching His disciples. After Peter made his great confession of faith in Christ, he began to make a steady emphasis in His teaching on His coming rejection, death and resurrection. The life of Christ comes to a grand fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy in His vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of Israel and the world and His resurrection. Let's begin our loft climb with the first poem.

The Introduction of the Chosen Servant in (42:1-4)

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one \textit{in whom} My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations (42:1).

Yahweh introduces His Servant. The stress in this introductory poem is on the character, method and mission of the Servant of Yahweh. The Servant is divinely chosen, called, anointed, equipped and commissioned. The LORD sustains Him who is to be a prophet, priest and teacher.
The humble, gentle Servant willingly assumes His responsibilities. He is characterized as gentle, unobtrusive in manner, yet strong and resolved (vv. 2-3). A silent spiritual influence is at work until the mission is accomplished. He will keep at the task until it is finished. "He will not be disheartened or crushed, Until He has established justice in the earth" (v. 4a,b).

Matthew quotes verses 1-4 with slight variation in Matthew 12:18-21 attributing it to Jesus' ministry in Israel. Jesus did the Father's will and obeyed Him fully. He could do something Israel could never do because He was completely under the control of the Holy Spirit all the days of His life. God has placed His Spirit on Him, which is clearly a Messianic characteristic (cf. 61:1; Matthew 3:16; 4:1; Luke 4:14, 18-21; 3:22).

The task of the Servant is to establish "justice in the earth." This is the task of Immanuel, God with us. Only God could accomplish such an awesome responsibility given to the Servant. When Jesus returns at His Second Coming, He will bring justice to all the nations of the earth. Israel's achievements were never at such a high level. Indeed, she was characterized as unrighteous. However, the heavenly Father declared, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). There are sufficient arguments in the New Testament for maintaining that Jesus Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, fulfills these opening verses in the Servant poems.

**The Mission of the Servant (49:1-6)**

In the second poem, the Servant is seen as a prophet addressing His call and commission for the restoration of Israel and the redemption of all mankind.

The "LORD called Me from the womb," before I was born, as He did Jeremiah (v. 1). He has equipped Him with wisdom from God's Word (v. 2), and protected Him. The Rabbis had a saying concerning the names of the six persons who were named before they were born: Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah and the name of the Messiah. Jesus Christ existed long before the angel told Mary that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and bear a son and call His name Jesus (Matthew 1:18-25; John 1:1-3).

Why is the Servant called "Israel" in this passage (v. 3)? We know from the context that the nation is not being referred to because it will be the Servant who will bring the people back to God. The Messiah is called "Israel" here because He fulfills all of God's expectations for the nation. His mission is to restore Israel and to bring light to the Gentiles (v. 6). The Messiah-Servant will receive the worship He deserves when He returns at His Second coming (v. 6; cf. Philippians 2:9-11).

I will make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth (v. 6).

The apostle Paul and Barnabas witnessed the rejection of the gospel by a Jewish audience. Paul said to these individuals, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Then he quoted to them the words of Isaiah 49:6. Furthermore, "when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Paul uses this verse to support his identification of the Servant as the Messiah Jesus Christ. The Servant of the Lord is the "light of the world," and the One who brings salvation to the end of the earth.
People all over the world, Jewish and non-Jewish, walk in darkness until Jesus Christ comes into their lives. He alone is salvation to all who believe on Him (Acts 4:12).

The devout man named Simeon, filled with the Holy Spirit, saw the infant Jesus in the Temple, took Him into his arms, and "blessed God." He said, "For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke 2:30-32). Simeon and Luke understood this poem to be fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

A Steadfast Obedient Servant (50:4-9)

In the third poem, we encounter the suffering of the Servant for the first time in these poems. He experiences unbroken fellowship with God. The desire of His heart is to do the will of God. In spite of suffering, He will remain unfahtering in His faith in God. He is set as a flint to do God's will, although He will be rejected by His people.

The Lord God has opened My ear;  
And I was not disobedient,  
Nor did I turn back.  
I gave My back to those who strike Me  
And My cheeks to those who pluck out the beard;  
I did not cover My face from humiliation and spitting (v. 5-6).

The people of Israel would be rebellious toward God's chosen Servant and treat Him cruelly. This is the consistent treatment of criminals in those days. Is this not the way in which God's Servant was treated before His enemies crucified Him? "Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him . . . Jesus he scourged . . . And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head, . . and they led Him away to crucify Him" (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30). The scourging was terrible torture. They stripped the victim, tied his hands behind him, bent the victim double and tied him to a short post. The lash was a long leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bone and pellets of lead. The body of the victim was reduced to raw, bleeding flesh of inflamed and bleeding welts. Men often died under scourging and lost their reason. Few remained conscious to the end of a scourging. These words of the poet were fulfilled in the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 22:63; John 19:1-3).

How does the Suffering Servant remain faithful? The Lord comforts, sustains and strengthens Him. He is a willing obedient suffer who leans upon Yahweh.

For the Lord God helps Me,  
Therefore, I am not disgraced;  
Therefore, I have set My face like a flint,  
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.  
He who vindicates Me is near. . . (v. 7-8a).  
Behold, the Lord God helps Me;  
Who is he who condemns Me? (v. 9a,b).
The Suffering Servant (52:12-53:13)

These Servant poems reach a climax in the last poem. How can a person possibly miss the vicarious, substitutionary, suffering of this pure and righteous innocent Servant? Isaiah sees Him wounded, bruised, chastised, pierced, plagued and cursed for our sins. The LORD God provides this perfect Substitute as an atonement that results in full redemption of the guilty sinner. When we study this passage in the light of history—the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—it becomes quite evident that He is the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. Verses 4-6 read like an eyewitness account of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ at Calvary.

John R. Sampey well said: "The New Testament application of this great prophecy to Jesus is not an accommodation of words originally spoken of Israel as a nation, but a recognition of the fact that the prophet painted in advance a portrait of which Jesus Christ is the original."

No where else in Hebrew thought do we find the idea emphasized of the innocent suffering vicariously for the guilty sinner. Israel is never said to suffer for others; she only suffers for her own guilt. She suffered captivity and exile because she was guilty. Here we find the innocent suffering for the guilty sinner. The Suffering Servant is the Suffering Savior.

Please allow me to paraphrase this last servant poem by substituting the pronouns in the poem that refer to the divine Sufferer with the name of Jesus of Nazareth. See if you do not agree that this poem comes alive with full meaning of the identity of the Suffering Servant. Please read it aloud to yourself.

Behold, My servant will prosper,
Jesus Christ will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted.
Just as many were astonished at you, My people,
So Christ's appearance was marred more than any man
And His form more than the sons of men.
Thus Christ will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Jesus Christ;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For Jesus grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
Jesus has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
Jesus was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
Jesus was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs Jesus Christ Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Jesus stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But Christ was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Jesus Christ, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Jesus Christ.

Jesus was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet Jesus did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So Jesus Christ did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment Jesus was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? Jesus' grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because Jesus had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

But the Lord was pleased To crush Jesus Christ, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As Jesus will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Jesus Christ a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because Jesus Christ poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet Jesus Christ Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your substitute who died in your place on the cross? Are you enjoying His peace and assurance that all your sins have been covered by the death of Jesus Christ? Ask Jesus Christ to be your personal savior today.
The Divine Servant

The Song of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)

This poem is one of the grandest and most loved passages in the Word of God. "Faith grasps these verities, gratitude feeds on them; hope is nourished by them," writes the Hebrew scholar H. C. Leupold.

Hebrew prophecy rises to its highest pinnacle with the theme of vicarious atonement. In what has been called Isaiah's "Rhapsody of Redemption" the Old Testament reaches a grand climax in its revelation of the Redeemer. All of the inspired movements come together in this symphony on salvation through the vicarious sacrifice of the Suffering Savior. The emphasis of the poem is on the "Messiah victorious and triumphant." It is through the Servant's vicarious suffering that salvation is achieved and He is highly exalted.

With powerful language, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah describes how the grace of God has delivered the people out of the bondage of sin through His Suffering Servant. Who is this magnificent deliverer?

Yahweh Speaks of His Servant (52:13a).

The Song of the Suffering Servant begins in 52:13, not at 53:1. The end of chapter fifty-two is an introduction to the song of the sufferer. "As this poem progresses, or gathers momentum, the verses grow in weight and length," observes Leupold. The song begins on a triumphant note of success. Isaiah assumes his readers know the three previous Servant Songs. Let's reverently and carefully examine "the most important text in the Old Testament."

The Servant has a divine mission to accomplish (42:1-4) through suffering (49:1-7; 50:4-7). He has reserved telling us the reason for the intense suffering until now. The LORD introduces His Servant and the major themes of the poem in the opening verses. The themes and sub-themes will appear and reappear in great sweeping movements.

Behold, My servant will prosper,  
He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.

There is no greater honor in the Old Testament than being called the "servant" of Yahweh.

God the Father introduced His Son at the beginning of His public ministry. At the baptism of Jesus and later at His transfiguration God the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17; 17:5). On occasion Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me" (John 8:28).

The Success of the Divine Servant (v. 13b).
Our song begins on a triumphant note of victory. God's servant will "prosper" in His redemptive work. He will prove to be successful in God's eyes. The verb includes "both intelligent and effective action," notes E. J. Young. "Prosper" means, "to have the insight and ability to carry through to effective conclusion that which one sets out to do" (Leo Green). The result of His prudent dealing will issue in success. He will prosper. It is "a superlative degree of success." He will achieve what He set out to do. The success of the Servant comes as a result of "effective action." This will not be the way men will view Him. They will see him as being punished for His own sins. However, He will accomplish much through His wise dealings because He is God's servant and God is His source of wisdom and blessings. God causes Him to prosper (53:10).

Keil suggests a chain of thought in this extreme humiliation and great exaltation of the Messiah:

He will rise up,
He will raise Himself up still higher,
He will stand on high.

The Amplified Bible reads: "He shall be exalted and extolled, and shall stand very high." It is an ever-increasing exaltation of the Messiah, which leads to an extreme exaltation. Isaiah uses words usually reserved for God. The powerful triad of verbs reads: "He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." Or as Leupold translates, "be high and lifted up and greatly exalted" (Leupold). God gives His Son and A+++ for His work. He did very well.

Leupold asks correctly, "Who ever achieved greater success than the Lord's Christ?" The only place where such a great exaltation has ever been fulfilled is the resurrection, ascension and reign of Jesus Christ. He towers above all other men throughout history. Isaiah says the Servant will receive the very highest exaltation. It will be a "complete and utter exaltation." God will give Him a name that is above every name. "Only One who will Himself be gloriously exalted can bring about the deliverance of the people just depicted" in the previous chapters of Isaiah (Young).

The Scriptures present an ever-increasing exaltation of Christ. "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear" (Acts 2:32-33). "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of your fathers, has glorified His Servant, Jesus . . . " (Acts 3:13, cf. vv. 14-15, 18). "God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways" (v. 26). Acts 1:1-11 gives a historical account of the ascension of Jesus Christ.

He will achieve unusual exaltation, but it comes only after extreme humiliation.

The Supreme Suffering of the Divine Servant (v. 14).

George Adam Smith has observed the "broken, sobbing and recurrent" style of the plaintive and sorrowful song. It is full of strong contrasting bright light and exceedingly dark shadows. The Servant doesn't speak or even appear in the passage, but He "haunts" the song. Of course, the reason for the broad sweep of emotions is the largeness of the theme of the song, which is the vicarious, substitutionary atonement that is provided by this Suffering Servant.
Men will be so astonished at His state when they see how He has been so marred by wounds and stripes. Nevertheless, He will also become so elevated that kings and nations will be struck dumb with astonishment. To "shut their mouths" is to react "with astonishment to a situation that has taken them unaware" (George Knight).

Just as many were astonished at you, My people.
So His appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men.

Isaiah tells us the sufferings of the Servant were to such a depth and degree that they were more than any person has ever endured. Men would be astonished and filled with horror at the sight of His marred appearance. They would be appalled by the agony that was heaped upon Him. His suffering would be so intense and severe that His form would be so distorted that it would lose all likeness of a man. No wonder when these words were actually fulfilled in history they "startled many nations." Men through the ages have been astonished by the spectacle of His cross and His glory through suffering.

It is blank astonishment excited by the spectacle of unparalleled suffering that is in the minds of the beholders. The astonishment means "to be desolate or waste, to be thrown into a desolate or benumbed condition, petrified, or a paralyzing astonishment."

"Just as many were astonished at you" My Jewish people, "so His (the Suffering Servant's) appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men." One's astonishment is as grand as the other. The people will be "astonished," i.e., paralyzed with astonishment, because their views of Him were so distorted. They will look upon Him as one of their own that had leprosy and they would cry, "Unclean!"

Why were they astonished? It is His disfigurement. "So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men" (v. 14b,c). His appearance was so marred that He no longer appeared as a human. It is a strong word. Literally, "so disfigured, his appearance was not human" (Keil and Delitzsch). It was a distortion that destroys all likeness to a man. "His disfigurement was so great that He no longer appeared as a man. . . This is an extremely strong way of saying how great His sufferings were" (Young). He appeared to be disfigured from a cruel disease. It wasn't leprosy. It was the effects of the Roman soldiers beating Him with scourges until His body was like bloody pulp. He was badly mutilated, more than any person could bear. Isaiah has in mind unthinkable suffering. This was an extreme humiliation for the Son of God, the Creator to endure at the hands of pagan creatures.

The crucifixion and scourging were the most cruel inventions of depraved minds to make suffering as horrible and painful as possible. It was so cruel that Roman law forbade its citizens to ever be crucified regardless of the circumstances. .

"The striking correspondence between the thing prophesied and the fulfillment again and again fills us with wonder," writes Leupold. Just as His exaltation and glorification were of the highest, so His degradation will be the deepest (Young).

What makes the scene even more extreme is the fact that His own people regarded His disfigurement as a punishment for His own sins.
"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was exceedingly rich, yet for your sake He became extremely poor, that you through His poverty might become exceedingly rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, this writer's emphasis).

Who were these people who are "astonished" at Him? Probably they are the people of "many nations" and their kings (v. 15). When people see Him at the Second Coming, they will be absolutely astounded.

The humiliation of Christ is seen in many passages of Scripture (Hebrews 9:11-16, 22-28; 10:10-21). Not only did He die for our sins, but He is also our only Mediator between God and sinful men. The ascended Lord is at the right hand of the Father in heaven interceding for us at this time.

**The Supreme Exaltation of the Divine Servant (v. 15).**

Thus He will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

What will be the results this divine sufferer will accomplish? The Suffering Servant will "sprinkle many nations." The image is that of the priest sprinkling of blood of the sacrifice with the tips of the fingers upon the veil in the Temple and upon the Mercy Seat with the purpose of expiation.

The word translated "sprinkle" means "to cause to spring or leap" when applied to fluids, to sprinkle them. The fluid is sprinkled "upon" the person (G. A. Smith). Leviticus 4:6 reads, "and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary" (cf. 8:11; 14:7). Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Peter wrote to Jewish people living outside of Israel saying, "that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood" (1 Peter 1:2).

The religious leaders regarded the Servant as unclean and in the need of purification rites. However, He is the pure and innocent priest who brings cleansing for others. The sprinkling has reference to cleansing from sin (1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 10:22; 12:24; 9:13-14).

Not only will He sprinkle many nations, but He will also "shut their mouths" in speechless astonishment. They will be dumbstruck. The overpowering impression that He will make upon rulers is He will leave them speechless with amazement. They will stand dumb with awe and amazement. We still "stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene." Nations will be astonished. They are electrified by surprise of the over-powering effect of the extreme humiliation and extreme exaltation of the Servant.

They will be dumbstruck because they miscalculated and prejudiced so badly the Servant. There is nothing they can say when they grasp the truth. The One who has been brought so low will be greatly exalted. They have seen nothing like this before and they are left speechless. "Never was man brought so low; never was anyone raised so high" (Leupold).

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven,
and on the earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the
glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:8-11).

He will be exalted to the right hand of God (Philippians 2:9; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12;
12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Peter tells us the ancient Hebrew prophets "predicted the sufferings of Christ and the
glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

The apostle Paul saw this verse as the fulfillment of Christ's commission to take the Gospel to those who
have never heard (Romans 15:21).

Who is this divine servant? The words of this song can only be fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus
Christ. Those who have long held to the theory that the Servant is Israel are losing ground among scholars.
No one else in history has ever gone from the deepest degradation possible to the loftiest glorification in
heaven. It is something unheard of before. Even the most exalted men will stand in awe before Him.
Examine these verses again in the light of the historical fulfillment of Jesus Christ. Let's reverently
paraphrase this passage by changing only the pronouns that refer to the divine Servant with the name of
Jesus Christ.

Behold, My servant will prosper,
Jesus Christ will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.
Just as many were astonished at you, My people.
So Jesus' appearance was marred more than any man,
And His form more than the sons of men.
Thus Jesus Christ will sprinkle many nations,
Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him;
For what had not been told them they will see,
And what they had not heard they will understand.

Have you put your trust in Jesus Christ as your divine substitute who died in your place on the cross?
Are you enjoying His peace and assurance that all your sins have been covered by the death of Jesus
Christ? Ask Jesus Christ to be your personal savior today.
The Divine Sufferer


We have arrived at the "golden passional" of the Old Testament.

The inhuman suffering of the Servant of the LORD and His high exaltation causes utter amazement to all who hear the message. The strongest emotion is the unexpressed emotion. The people and the rulers are caught in unexpressed emotion of extreme amazement and the people tremble and the kings are struck dumb!

Can you imagine anything that could have such consequences on mankind?

In the later part of chapter fifty-two, we saw the broad sweeping strokes of the suffering of the Servant of Yahweh (52:13-15). The Hebrew prophet has saved the grim details of suffering for this chapter. It is filled with pathos and horror. "The wages of sin is death." In deed, the "message" is so horrifying that the response to it is "Who in the world has believed our report?" The message seemed so incomprehensible that no one would believe it when they heard it. The implied answer to the question is "Not I! No one."

The Astonishment to the Message of the Divine Sufferer (53:1)

The truth that is communicated here is beyond anything in the Old Testament and has never been voiced before this passage. That is why this message is so startling to the people. The prophet under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit communicates revelation from God about the Suffering Servant.

Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Isaiah expresses dismay at the response of the people to the announcement of the extreme humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah. It reminds us of Isaiah 6:9 and the hardness of the hearts of his listeners. Nothing much will have changed by the time of the coming of the Servant centuries later.

This verse reminds us of the response of a Jewish rabbi when he spoke of the same message. "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer" at Paul in Athens. "He was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks" in Corinth (Acts 18:4). Paul devoted himself completely to "testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah" (v. 5). "And when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I shall go to the Gentiles!'" (v. 6). That is not an isolated instance of the rejection of the message of the humiliation and exaltation of the Servant of Yahweh. Even Paul had to be wrestled to the ground before he would surrender to Christ (Acts 9).

The message
The "message" is the "thing heard," the "tidings," i.e., the message of the prophet. That which caused the kings to become dumbfounded was what they had not heard. When the truth came out, they couldn't say a word (52:15). The message was the exaltation of the Servant of Yahweh from a deep state of awful humiliation.

God as we shall see accomplishes it by His strong "arm."

The apostle John tells us Isaiah was referring to Christ when he said these words "because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him" (John 12:41). In a context where John tells us Jesus was teaching about His coming death and resurrection he quotes Isaiah 53:1 reminding his readers of the hostility and rejection of the Servant. They rejected the report or message of Christ. He "departed and hid Himself from them" (12:36). He reminds them, "That the words of Isaiah might be fulfilled" (v. 38). Then John quotes Isaiah 6:10 which tells of this hardening of the heart.

No one will believe the report of the strong "arm of the LORD" accomplishing redemption for His people through a Suffering Servant.

The apostle Paul quotes verse one in the context of issuing an invitation to believe on Christ for salvation in Romans 10:16. If you do not believe the report you cannot be saved. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (v. 17).

The report was the prophetic announcement of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ that caught them by surprise. They were over-powered by the message.

Who is the speaker in Isaiah 53:1? Is it the kings in (52:15), or the Israelites speaking in retrospect, the prophet, or the people Jews and Gentiles articulating a confession through the prophet, or the Jewish remnant lamenting the fact that so few will believe?

In John's Gospel the question is introduced, "Lord, who has believed our report?" It was addressed to God. In this case, the prophet was the one asking the question (John 12:38).

H. C. Leupold has a powerful approach to the identity of the speaker worth quoting here.

In these verses we seem to overhear the believing portion of the nation as they discuss the tragic death that occurred in their midst, the death of the Servant of the Lord. Luke's account (24:13ff) where the two disciples on the way to Emmaus discuss recent events would be a good parallel to what our chapter offers. So to speak, here we seem to hear two disciples standing on a street-corner in Jerusalem reviewing the things that happened on Good Friday in the light of the better insight that came after Pentecost. They express especially their amazement at the complete misunderstanding they were guilty of in regard to the remarkable figure that appeared as the great Sufferer in their midst. Who believed what reliable witnesses told about him, especially his claims to divine sonship? The nation's first reaction was total unbelief... What they say here is almost a penitent confession, at least it grows out of a penitent spirit. The second question drives home the point more strongly. That the Lord was at work and employing his divine strength of arm is what was happening on Golgotha never entered any one's mind. They still marvel as they reflect on this blindness" (H. C. Leupold, Exposition of Isaiah. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971, pp. 225-26).
John R. Sampey said correctly, "The New Testament application of this great prophecy to Jesus is not an accommodation of words originally spoken of Israel as a nation, but a recognition of the fact that the prophet painted in advance a portrait of which Jesus Christ is the original."

What would be the reception of Jesus Christ if He walked into our synagogues or churches today? How would His message be received if He were to come to our town and villages in which we live? Would things have really changed?

"To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?"

The listeners refused to believe the omnipotent power of the LORD to accomplish His eternal purpose of redemption of Israel through the Servant.

God's arm upon a person is His omnipotent power. When you believe the message it is evident that the Lord's power has been manifested. This is true when we believe the message of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to save us (Romans 10:9-17). Only God is able to save. It is His power in action to save us who believe on Christ. Cf. Isaiah 40:10-11; 48:14; 51:5; 63:5.

Unless God demonstrates His saving power we can never be saved. A spiritual birth must take place to accomplish our salvation. No one can ever be saved unless God is at work deep in his inner being to bring about spiritual birth. He does it through the message of His Word. That is Paul's argument in Romans chapter ten.

Can God accomplish what He sets out to do? Who will believe the message of His mighty redemption? Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. That is God's omnipotent power at work to save a lost world.

The "arm of the LORD" is the omnipotence to work redemption in Israel. God is not an amputee, as some would have us believe our day. The "arm of the LORD" is a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. He has executed God's eternal purpose. The arm of the Lord is revealed in its grandest operation in the person and work of Jesus Christ. From the throne of God He rules the universe. When He returns at His Second Coming we will see the manifestation of the strong arm of the Lord in all of its power and glory (Philippians 2:8-11).

The Attitudes toward the Divine Sufferer (52:2)

For he grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
No appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

The Hebrew prophet tells the life of the Servant from the cradle to the grave. The "arm of Yahweh" will be manifested in the whole course of His life. The growing up as a tender shoot out of dry ground is the revelation of the great power of a sovereign God.
"To the mind of the speaker," observes E. J. Young, "what he depicts is so vivid and sure of occurrence that he sets it forth as already having taken place. What is sure is that the prophet is not speaking of someone who has already lived upon the earth before the prophet's time."

"He grew up before Him" refers to the coming of the Servant upon the earth. His appearance among men was not "in dazzling splendor of full maturity and daring achievement" (Leo Green). There was nothing about His appearance that would attract a large following. However, He was precious in the sight of God. He did everything with the idea of pleasing His Father (John 5:19-20). He lived His life in the power of God and in conformity to His will. He had God's attention. No person, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever lived every minute of his life under the complete control of the Spirit of God. He was under the ever-watchful eye of God.

Moreover, as Green notes, the Servant grew up under conditions of "simplicity, obscurity" and "adversity." On the other hand, as we may put it in the question of one of Jesus' own contemporaries, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

The people saw the Servant as a mere "suckling," or a "tender shoot" or twig that grows out of an old dead stump. Farmers cut off tender sucklings and cast them aside. It is a general statement of the humility of the Servant and rejection by the people.

Is this an illusion of Isaiah 11:1? Suckers can grow up to become giant trees. Does Isaiah have in mind the fallen dynasty of David? There is a close connection between Messiah ben David and the Suffering Servant. Even the disciples of Jesus had trouble accepting the idea of the latter. The Suffering Servant is "the Messiah himself, the Savior-King, the dynasty of David waited for" (Engnell).

He is like "a root out of parched ground" (v. 2b). Why, they looked at the Servant and decided there was nothing promising in Him. The dry ground could refer "to the lowly conditions and background in which the servant was to appear." He came from miserable conditions of poverty, a lowly Nazarene. A root in a dry parched ground would have a struggle to survive. The people would not compare Him to the tall cedars of Lebanon. He was a lowly birth and living in the Galilee of the Gentiles. There is no form of glory that men would boast in Him. The attitude of the people was such that they could find no beauty that they should desire Him. They drew their conclusion based on outward appearances rather than the righteous character of His heart.

Moreover, by the time Christ appeared in Israel, the ax of divine judgment had fallen upon Judah and nothing was left but stumps standing. There was an insignificant stump in Israel in the house of David. It had become so insignificant and unimportant that it is called "Jesse" in 11:1. The name of David had fallen to the level of which it stood when David's father bore the honor of the name of the family, long before David's glory. Nothing was left of that name by the time Christ came but just a tender shoot in hot, desert arid soil. It was a spiritually dry land when Jesus arrived in Israel.

The Servant dwelt among His own people and they refused to believe in Him (John 1:10-11). The invisible Word became visible and they rejected it. They refused God's Messenger and His message. He didn't look and sound like royalty.
The sad commentary of the people is fond in the following words in our poem:

    He has no stately form or majesty
    That we should look upon Him,
    Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.

The people completely misjudge Him. They rejected Him based on wrong perceptions. No one considered Him worthy. No one stood up and claimed to be His friend or colleague.

The Bible doesn't say anything about the physical appearance of Christ; therefore, we should concentrate on His spiritual qualities. He was completely like His Father and they refused to accept the righteousness of God (John 5:17-43). His holy character was an indictment.

The Lord Jesus Christ is still unattractive to the unregenerate natural man. "There was nothing about Him that would appeal to the natural man. He was no conquering hero, no mailclad, invincible warrior, no powerful political figure, no silver-tongued statesman" (Green). Here was no self-made saint.

How many came forward and defended Him at His trials before Pilate and Herod?

Keil and Delitzsch translate, "We saw Him and there was nothing in His appearance to make us desire him, or feel attracted by Him." He was repulsive and contemptible to them.

When it came push to shove they stood outside Pilate's house and shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "Not this man, but Barabbas!" The estimation of the world is still the same. Men do not fall at His feet and worship Him until they have had a radical change of heart that comes through a spiritual birth. "Unless a man is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The cross of Jesus Christ is always a scandal to the unregenerate man.

The reason for the response of the people (v. 3)

He was despised and forsaken of men,
    A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,
    And like one from whom men hide their face,
    He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

"despised"

The nation of Israel despised and rejected the divine Servant. The word "despised" which is used twice in this verse has the idea of "ceasing, lacking," like the "one who takes the last place." It is like being treated with contempt. Have you ever been the last one to be chosen on the baseball, football or soccer team? They all rejected Him. They put Him at the end of the line.

"Pilate's scornfully wondering question: Art Thou—such a poor-looking creature—the King of the Jews?" observes Alexander Maclaren.
When we look at the life of Christ we see Him despised and rejected of men. Luke 18:31-33 is a good example of what happened. Here are the words of Jesus when He took the twelve disciples aside and said to them:

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered up to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day he will rise again.

Like Isaiah's listeners, they could not handle the information. "They did not comprehend the things that were said" (v. 34). The disciples refused to believe it. The human mind listens only to what it wants to hear. There are none so deaf as those who refuse to hear, so blind as those who refuse to see. The message was mind-boggling. It was beyond belief.

"forsaken of men"

They kept back away from Him. It is the idea of leaving one in a lurch without help in time of need. They withdrew from Him. The image of lepers in the Old Testament who were kept separated from the populace and made to cry out, "Unclean!" The "better class of men" forsook the Servant. He was rejected, boycotted or shunned by men of rank.

The name of Jesus is either the most loved and cherished name among men, or the most despised and hated.

"man of sorrows"

He was "a man weighed down by sorrow" of heart in all its forms (Keil). His entire life was filled with "constant painful endurance" because He grieved over the sinful condition of His people. He saw their unbelief and wept over it. He wore the pain and sorrow of humanity. The pain and sickness may be identified with His vicarious suffering for our redemption. Here was the most misunderstood man on the face of the earth.

"acquainted with grief" or "sickness"

He was acquainted with sin "sickness." The word for "sickness" here stands for sin (Young). It reminds us of Isaiah 1:5-6,

Where will you be stricken again,  
As you continue in your rebellion?  
The whole head is sick,  
And the whole heart is faint.  
From the sole of the foot even to the head  
There is nothing sound in it,  
Only bruises, welts, and raw wounds,
Not pressed out or bandaged,  
Nor softened with oil.

Grief was His constant companion. It was not because He was a sickly person. What is being described here are the effects of the wrath of God against sin. Sin burned like a raging hot fever in His holy soul.

**Like one from whom men hide their face**

This was the reaction of men to the Servant. They found Him so revolting to look at because of the griefs and sickness that characterized Him. They turned their faces from Him as if He had some repulsive disease that distorted His face and made it impossible to look at Him. The people pulled their cloaks up over their eyes to hide His countenance from them. They were sickened and repelled by the sight of His agony on the cross. They were so disgusted by His awful bloody appearance that men turned their faces from the cruel scene. The scene was so repulsive they "hid their faces." "He was like a thing from which a man turns away his face" (Leupold).

However, it was more than physical suffering of the crucifixion. It was the holiness and righteousness of seeing an innocent sufferer hanging on the cross dying for their sins. He was the innocent substitute dying for the guilty. They couldn't bear it. Just as the message stopped the mouths of the kings, so they could not bear to look of the innocent sufferer bearing their guilt.

**He was despised and we did not esteem Him**

Martin Luther correctly translated, "We estimated Him at nothing." We counted Him a zero. We didn't give Him a second thought. That is how much we valued Him.

Read the words of this stanza again substituting the pronouns that refer to the Suffering Servant with the precious name of Jesus.

Who has believed our message?  
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
For Jesus grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And like a root out of parched ground;  
Jesus has no stately form or majesty  
That we should look upon Him,  
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.  
Jesus was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
Jesus was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Have things really changed? Edward Young writes, it is
... the same unbelief found all about us today. Men say pleasant and complimentary things about the Lord of Glory. They will praise His ethics, His teaching, declare that he was a good man and a great prophet, the only one who has answers to the social problems that today confront the world. They will not, however, acknowledge that they are sinners, deserving of everlasting punishment, and that the death of Christ was a vicarious sacrifice, designed to satisfy the justice of God and to reconcile an offended God to the sinner. Men will not receive what God says concerning His Son. Today also, the Servant is despised and rejected of men, and men do not esteem Him" (Edward J. Young, The book of Isaiah, Vol. III. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1972, p. 344).

I get excited and thrilled at the response to millions around the word who put their faith in Christ as a result of watching the Jesus film or who hear the presentation of the good news of Jesus' death for their sins. For some who read this it is unbelievable that reasonable people would put their faith in a crucified savior. For others it is absolutely revolutionary. The stigma and scandal of the cross will always be there. "For the word (the thing preached, the message) of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God . . . We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23-24, Italics mine). The "natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (2:14).

Our reaction is exactly the same as in the days of Isaiah and Paul. We rebel toward the message and the Messenger until the Holy Spirit breaks in upon our spiritually dead hearts and convicts us of our unbelief and the reality of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. Under the "strong arm of the LORD" our hearts are softened and we are born from above spiritually. Only then will we trust in Him alone for the gift of salvation and eternal life. Respond to the uneasy feeling of conviction in your heart right now. That is God's Spirit at work convicting you of sin and your need of Christ. Then trust in Christ as your personal Savior.

If you already know Christ as your personal Savior take these verses and fill your heart in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD God for so great salvation.

It is almost frightening that many never see the revealed power of God. The arm is revealed, but only those who have believed the report actually see it. Only those who believe in Him receive the benefits of His death and resurrection. The next time He raises His arm it will be in judgment against all of refuse to submit to Him. Please, before it is too late, put your faith in Him today.
The Divine Substitute


What is the meaning of suffering? Why do the righteous suffer? Why do bad things happen to good people? Why do good things happen to bad people? You have asked those questions in quiet moments of reflection.

Isaiah probes the meaning of suffering far beyond Job. The meaning of suffering is found in vicarious, substitutionary atonement that results in full redemption of the guilty sinner. In the Suffering Servant we see the pure suffering for the unholy and impure, and the righteous suffering for the unrighteous. Isaiah sees the accumulated sufferings in His being wounded, bruised, chastised, pierced-through, plagued, crushed—not for His own sins, but for ours. He carried on His own person the sins of the world. Yahweh provided His own holy Substitute for the unholy.

In the passage before us Isaiah explains the reason for the unparalleled suffering of the divine Substitute. It is as if the prophet stands beneath the cross of Jesus Christ with Mary, Martha and John and looks intensely at the bleeding body of the Suffering Savior.

Isaiah concentrates on the divine Substitute who suffers in our stead. As we stand at the foot of the cross with Isaiah, we see Him taking our place. He makes atonement for our sin. He died for you and me. Perhaps there is no better commentary on this great stanza than 2 Corinthians 5:21. God made the Servant "who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Isaiah takes us directly to the cross.

THE VICARIOUS SUFFERING OF THE DIVINE SUBSTITUTE (v. 4)

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

The word the prophet uses for "sickness" can mean a variety of illnesses. "The figure of sickness here refers to sin itself. The verse also includes the thought of the removal of the consequences of sin. Disease is the inseparable companion of sin" (E. J. Young).

Isaiah introduces "a certain grandeur." The idea of a substitution now clearly comes to the foreground. He brings out the contrast between the righteous One and the sickness and grief of the many. The griefs and sorrows the divine Sufferer bears are not His own.

The emphasis is on the pronoun "He." "He bore" our griefs. He lifted up and carried away our griefs and sorrows. The divine Substitute takes the sin in its consequences that belong to us, lifts them up upon Himself, and carries them away. Our sorrows "He loaded upon Himself" (Leupold).
The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch are very helpful suggesting that it is, "the toilsome bearing of a burden that has been taken up." He has taken the debt of sin upon Himself, and carries it as His own, i.e. "to look at it and feel it as one's own (Lev. 5:1, 17)." Therefore, He has born the punishment occasioned by sin and made expiation for it. The person bearing the sin is not himself the guilty person. He bore them in His own person that He might deliver us from them. This is the whole idea of substitution or representation. He became our representative for sin and died in our place.

What are the consequences of our sins? We live in a day when people want the freedom to do as they please, but they do not want the consequences of their choices. You are free to choose, but you are not free to choose your consequences.

The listeners to Isaiah's poem did not want to face the consequences of their sins. They pointed their finger and said we regard Him as being punished by God with this loathsome and horrible disease. They looked upon the punishment as the punishment for His own sins. They measured the sin of the Sufferer by the sufferings that He endured. They reasoned like Job's friends, He must have been suffering for His own great sins. They saw Him as the one stricken with a "hateful, shocking disease."

Those who gather around the cross shouting their insults had come to the same conclusion in their biased minds. "Let's see if God will deliver Him" (Luke 23:35). The implication is that if He is innocent God will deliver Him. If He doesn't deliver Him form the cross we will know He is guilty. They believed the lies of the religious leaders who claimed He was guilty of blasphemy. They had no idea that it was for their sins He was dying.

Please don't miss the emphasis Isaiah is making. I like the way Alexander Maclaren worded it. "You thought that He was afflicted because He was bad and you were spared because you were good. No, He was afflicted because you were bad, and you were spared because He was afflicted." The he adds, "The transgressions are done by us, and the wounds and bruises fall on Him. Can the idea of vicarious suffering be more plainly set forth? . . . It says as emphatically as words can say, that we have by our sins deserved stripes, that the Servant bears the stripes which we have deserved, and that therefore we do not bear them."

We ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted (v. 4b,c).

He was a marked man. God singled Him out for punishment. God had both "stricken," "smitten" and "afflicted" Him. He was "bowed down" by the hand of God. He was "struck down by God" is the alternate reading in NASB. God afflicted Him with the suffering. God's vengeance appeared to have fallen upon Him. There is no record of Jesus having any physical illness. He was healthy. However, our sins burned like the fire of a hot raging fever in His soul. He bore the penalty of our sins.

"Actually, the reverse should have been the case. We should have been horror-struck at ourselves, the guilty ones, and filled with loving admiration for Him, the innocent sin bearer" (Young). There was nothing wrong with Him. The problem is with us. We are wrong.

Our problem is spiritual. The "transgressions" and "iniquities" is evidence that the law of God has been broken. You can't miss the emphasis Isaiah makes: "transgressions" (v. 5, 8), "iniquities" (v. 5, 6, 11), "wicked" (v. 9), "sin" (v. 12). We need spiritual healing.
Several scholars point to a Jewish tradition drawn from this verse that the Messiah would be stricken with leprosy. That is no doubt going too far. The picture is that of a "loathsome, disgraceful disease." They saw Him as being severely humbled, oppress and punished by God.

They were correct in that God struck Him down because of sin. But it was not for His sins that He was being punished. It was for our sins that He was being punished.

The punishment of Jesus Christ was vicarious. The dictionary definition of the word is "performed or endured by one person substituting for another; fulfilled by the substitution of the actual offender with some other person or thing. *Vicarious punishment.* 2. Acting in place of someone or something else" (*American Heritage Dictionary*).

The apostle Peter recognized this great truth when he stated Christ "Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds we were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). He became our substitute and bore our sins.

Matthew in his gospel account quotes this verse in Matthew 8:17. Jesus had just healed the mother-in-law of Peter who had a high fever (vv. 14-15), along with many people who were demon-possessed, and "all who were ill" (v. 16). Matthew tells us He did it "in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our disease'" (v. 17).

Jesus' dealt with the root of suffering—our sin. This passage does not teach "faith-cure" theory of healing. Atonement does not include provision for bodily healing. (Cf. Romans 8:23; Revelation 21:4; 2 Corinthians 12:1-9; 2 Timothy 4:20).

On occasions Jesus did heal the sick, but He did not heal everyone on all occasions. He still heals on occasion, but He does not heal on all occasions. What Jesus was concerned about was our spiritual sickness. We are sinners and we need salvation from our sins. Jesus died as our divine Substitute.

**THE VIOLENT SUFFERING OF THE DIVINE SUBSTITUTE (v. 5)**

The Divine Substitute bore the sins of those who rightly deserved the punishment of God. He was the innocent sufferer dying for the guilty. He was suffering for our transgressions. Isaiah changes the figure from that of the sick man to one who is wounded.

Observe the strong verbs Isaiah uses to describe the extreme painful judgment of God on the Sufferer.

But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.

The thought in the word "pierced through" is a "piercing through unto death." The fact is He has died, and is not merely suffering. His death is violent and gruesome. Because of our transgressions, He was pierced through unto death. Cf. Zechariah 12:10. These are the strongest terms to describe a violent and agonizing death. Keil says, "There were no stronger expressions to be found in the language, to denote a violent and painful death."
Of the crucifixion Cicero wrote; "Let it never come near the body of a Roman citizen: nay, not even near his thoughts, or eyes, or ears."

The Servant bore the punishment for the sins we have committed. We were guilty before God and the Servant bore the guilt of our sins. He took our punishment that was due us because of our falling short of the glory of God. He was our substitute. He took our place and died our death that we rightly deserved.

Isaiah uses a series of emphatic personal pronouns in the plural—"our transgressions," "our iniquities," "our well-being," "we are healed," etc.

"He was crushed for our iniquities" runs parallel and reinforces the preceding line. He was "crushed, broken in pieces, shattered" for our iniquities. He was completely destroyed because of our iniquities.

He was pierced and crushed because of our sins and iniquities. It was not His own sins and iniquities, but ours, which He had taken upon Himself, that He might make atonement for them in our stead, that were the cause of His having to suffer so cruel and painful a death" (Keil and Delitzsch).

He bore our sins in the fullest sense of the meaning and was completely destroyed as a result of that punishment. Our transgressions and our iniquities were the cause of His suffering the violent judgment of God. God executed His judgment upon the divine Substitute.

Because we had transgressed, he was pierced to death; and being pierced and crushed was the punishment that he bore in our stead . . . As our substitute he bore the penalty that was rightfully ours . . . The servant must be one who was himself utterly free of transgression and iniquity, else his vicarious suffering could be of no avail. If one who himself was iniquitous bore the sins of another, then there is a travesty upon justice, for the sin-bearer in this case would have need that his own sins be borne by another. Inasmuch as the vicarious suffering is for those who had transgressed God's holy law, and inasmuch as the vicarious punishment of the servant actually sets us free in the sight of a holy God, we may say with assurance that there is only One of whom these words may be spoken, namely Jesus the Christ (Edward Young, Isaiah III, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, p. 348).

Our peace was procured by His "chastisement." This "chastisement" was the evil that was inflicted upon the Servant. The best translation would be in the sense of "punishment." The Servant is not suffering for His own sins, as with the idea of chastisement. The idea is that of the justice of God being served. It is the infliction of punishment and the execution of judgment. As a result of His punishment, He has obtained our peace with God. Shalom in the highest sense of the blessing of God. Luther translated: "The punishment was laid on him that we might have peace."

Shalom is a very strong word suggesting "wholeness," "at-one-ness," "blessedness" which is the condition of salvation. God's storehouse of spiritual blessings comes through His gracious provision of salvation. This "peace" is the result of a right relationship with God. He is the cause of our "well-being." The judgment of God administered to Him made our peace. His "chastisement" brings us peace with God. His stripes have made us spiritually well.

"As He enters into our guilt, so we now enter into His reward" (Hengstenberg).
Because of our sins God was not at peace with us. The cause of the enmity must be removed. Sin must be punished. "The wages of sin is death." We deserved the punishment because we are guilty. But the punishment fell upon Him. He was punished in our place. "The chastening of our well-being (Shalom) fell upon Him." Because God punished Him in our place, we are now at peace with God.

God's justice is satisfied by His holiness. God was executing divine judgment upon our sin bearer. The righteousness of God demands that sin be atoned. The debt has to be paid. Jesus Christ paid it at Calvary. One sinless, innocent person voluntarily submitted Himself to the divine wrath to pay our sin debt. Because the debt is paid God is free to give us a right relationship with Himself if we will trust in Christ.

The apostle Paul used the word "propitiate" to describe the turning away of the wrath of God that we rightly deserved. The wrath of God was turned against the Suffering Servant of Yahweh instead of being turned against us (Romans 3:21-26). This is the only way God can be just and the justify the sinner who has faith in Christ. The death of Jesus Christ as our vicarious substitute appeases the wrath of God and turns it away from us. He took the full force of it on our behalf, and in our place. What an awesome Savior.

"And by His scourging we are healed" (v. 5d). "By His wounds healing came to us!" (Leupold). The wounds were the strips on His body from the scourging He received from His executioners. His body was covered with bleeding welts left by the lashes.

Because of His beating we have healing from the dreaded disease of sin and all its consequences. By His wounds we receive spiritual healing and reconciliation with God.

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1 Peter 2:24-25).

It was the stroke of divine judgment that was inflicted upon Him. Our spiritual healing is set in direct contrast to His scourging. He got the divine strokes of judgment and we got in return spiritual wholeness.

Everything that would keep us from having a right relationship with God is removed. There is spiritual healing. The cause of our spiritual death is removed completely. There is healing in His wings. There is perfect peace with God. There is no greater message than that. Jesus Christ paid the full payment of our spiritual dept when He died in our place on the cross. It is paid in full! God can now save us by His grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. Because Jesus Christ paid it all we need to do is receive His gift of salvation and reconciliation by faith. You can have peace with God by simply believing or trusting in what Christ did for you on the cross.

**THE VIRTUOUS OF THE DIVINE SUBSTITUTE (v. 6)**

Why did the divine Servant have to suffer?

All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.
We are like a flock of dumb sheep that have all gone astray. All of us are destitute of salvation. "We walked through life solitary, forsaken, miserable, separated from God and the good Shepherd, and deprived of His pastoral care" (Hengstenberg). We are the guilty sinners who have wandered farther and farther away from God. "Each has turned to his own way"—not God's way. We have gone our own self-seeking way. We became egocentric instead of God-centered.

"All of us" has the idea of a flock of sheep, the solidarity of the people. The ones who lead the sheep have gone astray and the people follow. Israel's kings, priests and prophets had all failed. They led the people into sin. They were all false shepherds. There was no hope for the whole human race because the people of God had failed! The Psalmist confessed, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant, For I do not forget Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:176).

No where is there evidence in the Old Testament of Israel suffering vicariously for other nations. She can not suffer for others; she suffers always for her own sins. Isaiah emphasizes that the Suffering One is vicariously suffering for other people's sins. It is obvious the one suffering in this passage was suffering for others. There is no other way to interpret the language Isaiah uses here.

Sin separates us from God. It creates a giant uncrossable canyon between God and us.

Jesus' parable of the Good Shepherd (John 10) is quite fitting here. The Good Shepherd voluntarily gave His life for the sheep (v. 11). It was His clear, volitional choice. No one made Him do it (10:17-18).

"The LORD has caused" is emphatic meaning the LORD laid the iniquity on Him. "The Lord made the Servant suffer by placing on Him the iniquity that belonged to us all," writes Young. God caused the punishment for sin to fall upon the Substitute.

"To fall on Him," means "to hit or strike violently." It is to "cause to strike with great force." The strong "arm of the LORD" was coming down in swift, firm judgement on sin. We rightfully expect the hand of God's judgment to come down on us, but it doesn't in God's marvelous grace. It struck Him! It was violent and it was bloody. I wish those who constantly complain that life is unfair would get a good hold of this passage. It was unfair for Him because He took the fall. He bore our punishment. He chose to do so.

The one innocent person voluntarily submits to the punishment of God in His own person.

The only cure for our sin problem is the vicarious, substitutionary death of Jesus Christ as our Suffering Savior. "He has vicariously identified Himself with sinners, who are deserving of the wrath of God." No wonder Jesus cried out from the cross, "My God, My God, Why has Thou forsaken Me?" As Luther once said, "God forsaken of God. Who can understand that?"

Observe carefully the sequence of thought in this stanza.

He has born my griefs

He has carried my sorrows
He was pierced-through for my transgressions

He was crushed for my iniquities

Punishment for my spiritual well-being fell upon Him

By His scourging I am healed

The LORD has caused my iniquity to fall with a great force on Him

What is the meaning of His suffering?

His suffering was vicarious.

His suffering was voluntary.

His suffering was in obedient submission to the will of God.

His suffering was for every one of us.

His suffering accomplished reconciliation with God.

His suffering turned the wrath of God away from us and we now enjoy peace with God.

His suffering was all-sufficient for the sinner.

"It all again and again adds up to vicarious atonement, stated and restated, defined and redefined," is an excellent summary by Leupold.

The guilt that belonged to us God caused to strike Him, i.e. He as our substitute bore the punishment that the guilt of our sin required. Consequently, we are no longer without a shepherd, for the Shepherd has given His life for the sheep. Those for whom He served as substitute are designated *all of us*. In this phrase the prophet includes Himself and all for whom he speaks. It is not warranted to draw from these words a doctrine of universal atonement" (Young, p. 350).
The apostle Peter reminds us of the all sufficiency of the death of Christ. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit" (1 Peter 3:18).

I pray to the LORD God that we will take seriously the consequences of our sins and transgressions. "The wages of sin is death." However, "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:21a). "All this great multitude of sins, and mass of guilt, and weight of punishment, came upon the Servant of Jehovah according to the appointment of the God of salvation, who is gracious in holiness. . . It was our sins that He bore, and for our salvation that God caused Him to suffer on our account" (Keil and Delitzsch).

Please allow me to paraphrase what He did for you and me.

Surely my griefs Jesus Christ Himself bore,  
And my sorrows He carried;  
Yet I esteemed Jesus stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  

But Jesus was pierced through for my transgressions,  
He was crushed for my iniquities;  
The chastening for my well–being fell upon Jesus,  
And by His scourging I am healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray,  
Each of us has turned to his own way;  
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all  
To fall on Jesus Christ.
The Divine Sacrifice


We now enter with the Suffering Servant of Yahweh into what has been called "the holy of holies." Our great high priest sprinkles His own blood upon the mercy seat in the holy of holies. His death and burial now come fully into view. Through the eyes of the Hebrew prophet we walk along the steps which led Jesus from Pilate's court to His burial in Joseph of Arimathea's new tomb.

Serious Bible scholars have observed that the most unlikely and insignificant details of the very smallest circumstances of our Lord's death were pointed out with as much accuracy as those which were considered most important.

For example, what would be more unlikely than that He should be crucified, when crucifixion was not a Jewish form of capital punishment, but Roman that was borrowed and refined from the Carthaginians. It was unheard of during the time of David and Isaiah, yet it is foretold hundreds of years before Rome was built. What would have been more unlikely than that, if crucified, He should not have His legs broken, as was customary to hasten the death of the victims. However, the two criminals crucified with Jesus that day had their legs broken in the traditional manner of execution by crucifixion. Yet, the Scriptures recorded centuries earlier, "not a bone of Him shall be broken."

Let's reverently stand at the foot of the cross and see it through the eyes of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah eight centuries before it actually took place in history.

THE PATIENT VOLITIONAL SUFFERING OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE (V. 7)

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearsers,
So He did not open His mouth.

The inspired poet struggles to understand the violent suffering of the Servant. Again, he picks up the cruel suffering he previously introduced to us.

"He was oppressed" gives us a picture of the Servant of Yahweh being plagued, driven and hunted down unspARINGLY like a wild animal.

"He was afflicted" like the Jewish people were treated by the cruel taskmasters in Egypt. But He did not cry out like the slaves in Egypt when they were forced to make bricks.

To reinforce this patient volitional choice in suffering Isaiah says, "He opened not His mouth." The evidence that the Servant patiently, willingly accepted all the suffering is seen in His behavior during the
suffering. This patient suffering is brought out vividly by total lack of self-defense. There was no self-defense, protest, or complaint.

How strange this behavior is in comparison to our generation that plays the blame game in just about everything. There was no whine, whimper, or complaint on the part of the divine Sufferer. Job did not suffer in silence, and neither did Jeremiah and Habakkuk. However, the Servant of Yahweh endured patiently His suffering.

When we turn through the pages of history one of the amazing things is the patient suffering of Jesus Christ in spite of the injustice at the hands of Pilate and Herod. "While being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant, was not resentful or rebellious toward His sufferings. He chose to suffer and to do so in silent submission to the will of God. He patiently suffered voluntarily.

The expression, "He opened not His mouth," is a comparison of the Servant to a lamb. Shepherds shear sheep while they stand silently. They lead them to the slaughter and they open not their mouths. There is no bleating; they stand there in dumb silence. The Servant endured all His suffering patiently without a word of protest or complaint.

With double emphasis, Isaiah says the Servant did not open His mouth. It was unusual conduct to say the least, contrary to human nature. We would be screaming and hollering. However, patience will characterize the suffering of the divine Sufferer. He is submissive and quiet as He bears the oppression and affliction.

Jesus is God's precious lamb that is led to the slaughter in patient suffering. John the Baptizer recognized Jesus and declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1:29, 36). The apostle Peter also had this passage in mind when he wrote, "knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18-19). The writer of Hebrews understands this imagery behind these words after referring to the animal sacrifices in the temple. "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (9:14).

I readily agree with the Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch when they conclude: "All the references in the New Testament to the Lamb of God (with the corresponding allusions to the Passover interwoven) spring from this passage in the book of Isaiah." (Cf. Revelation 5:6, 8, 12f; 13:8)

There is abundant testimony of Jesus' attitude while suffering at His trials before Pilate. Jesus opened not His mouth, except when His refusal to speak might appear to compromise His claims to His death and resurrection. His behavior is like that described by Isaiah. "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearsers, So He did not open His mouth" (53:7). At His illegal trial before the Sanhedrin, false testimony was given and, "the high priest arose and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, 'Do You make no answer to what these men are testifying against You?' But He kept silent, and made no answer" (Mark 14:60). "And while He was before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And Jesus said, 'It is as you say.' And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, 'He made no answer.' Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not hear how many
things they testify against you?" And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so that the governor was quite amazed" (Matthew 27:11-14). In a parallel passage in Mark the conclusion is stated, "But Jesus made no further answer; so that Pilate was astonished" (Mark 15:5). The historian Luke tells us of the same response of Jesus before King Herod, "And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently" (Luke 23:9-10; cf. John 19:9).

In John 18:8-14 there is a fascinating bit of information that brings out the voluntary submission on the part of Jesus. The Great I AM permitted Himself to be bound. Judas betrayed Jesus with his infamous kiss, and the soldiers were ready to seize Jesus. "When therefore He said to them, 'I am He', they drew back, and fell to the ground. Again therefore He asked them, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus the Nazarene.' Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am He; if therefore you seek Me, let these go their way . . .' So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Ananias first . . . . Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people " (John 18:4-14, et passim).

The thing that stands out in the passage just cited is the soldiers who stepped forward to arrest Jesus were made aware of power, which they feared. Possibly, it was the tone of voice, flash of the eye. For a moment, they dared lay no hand on Him. They became as dead men; He became like a lamb. It was a rational choice that He freely made. No doubt the words of Jesus in 10:17-18 is the best commentary on this strange event. "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Yes, Jesus suffered patiently, but He yielded to that suffering from His strength. It was not due to emotional submissiveness. He chose to allow the suffering to take place. It was a choice He made; it was not forced upon Him because He was emotionally weak.

After the trials of Jesus we see Him being led away as a lamb to the slaughterhouse. "And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him" (Matthew 27:31; cf. Luke 23:26ff). "And having arrested Him, they led Him away . . . " (Luke 23:54).

An Ethiopian official returning from worshipping in Jerusalem, with his new copy of the scroll of Isaiah, was riding in his chariot reading this great passage in Isaiah. Philip caught a ride on the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah 53:7-8. He asked the Ethiopian, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He invited Philip to come up and sit with him. "Please," he said, "tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself, or of someone else?" (Acts 8:34). "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (v. 35). Philip didn't stammer around. He was precise in his understanding of the One who fulfilled this prophecy. He talked to the Ethiopian government official about Jesus, the patient Suffering Servant who is the divine sacrifice for our sin.

**THE PERPLEXING VIOLENT SUFFERING OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE (V. 8).**

By oppression and judgment He was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living,
For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?
The Sufferer will endure hostile oppression. Young translates, "from prison and from judgment He was taken." He notes the word *otzer*, "oppressed" suggests arrest or confinement or oppression, one that is unjust. . . It indicates a judgment involved in confinement or oppression, one that is unjust."

Judgment was passed upon Him as a result of His trial. The verdict was a glaring miscarriage of justice and hostile oppression. Pilate saw the flagrant miscarriage of justice and did nothing about it.

Isaiah speaks of the judicial proceedings, His trials and conviction. It is the manifestation of the justice of God that was inflicted upon Him. God was executing His justice on the substitute sufferer.

The Jewish religious leaders worked within the confines and restraints of the judicial system. However, behind every move of oppression and affliction was the sovereign hand of God, which in this case was the strong arm of judgment upon the innocent vicarious substitute (Acts 2:22-24).

"The supreme manifestation of His judgment was that which fell upon the servant," writes Edward Young.

As Isaiah reflects on the violent suffering of God's Servant he laments that not many of the Servant's generation gave serious consideration to the fact that he was an innocent person suffering for the transgressions of His people.

Isaiah uses three strong words to describe the violent, perplexing death of the Servant: "He was taken away," "cut off," and "stricken."

"He was taken away," "snatched away" out of the land of the living into the realm of the dead. It was a "cruel and unjust termination of His life" (Leupold).

He was "cut off"—killed, "snatched away," "hurried away."

"Hostile oppression and judicial persecution were the circumstances out of which he was carried away by death" (Keil and Delitzsch).

"For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due?" Literally, "For the transgression of my people there was a stroke to Him" (Young). Yahweh is the One who strikes the Servant for His people. God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Psalmist also saw this same drama taking place when he wrote in 22:15;

My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

God is the one who lays Him low in death. His death is in accordance with divine will. It is a judicial death.

The only reasonable explanation Isaiah can give for the violent unjust, miscarriage of justice is the substitutionary atonement. It is the only way he can make any reason of it. The prophet places great
emphasis on the fact that the death of the Servant is a vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Otherwise, His suffering make no sense at all.

The prophet muses, it was for "my" people. He can not understand why his own people do not meditate on what is happening to God's Servant and come to the same conclusion. They are the recipients of the great benefits of His suffering. It is because of their transgression.

The "stroke" He received is the same verb in verse four. "Stricken" is suffering as a plague sent form God. Keil says the word "always signifies suffering as a calamity proceeding from God." It is a divinely sent plague. God has smitten Him. The visitation of God in judgment had fallen upon the Servant.

"And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him, and beating Him, and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, 'Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?' And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming" (Luke 22:63-65).

Alexander Maclaren observed long ago these words of Isaiah regarding the death and burial of Yahweh's servant "seem meaningless on any hypothesis but the Messianic one. . . The words as they stand have a clear and worthy meaning on one interpretation only."

The Suffering Servant patiently endured violent suffering as our divine sacrifice.

**THE PARADOXICAL VIEW OF THE SUFFERING OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE (V. 9)**

His grave was assigned to be with wicked men,
Yet with a rich man in His death;
Although He had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

The Jewish rules would have given Jesus a dishonorable burial with the "notoriously wicked criminals" away from the family plot. As a criminal they would have pitched His dead body into Jerusalem's garbage dump at Gehenna to be burned with the rest of the refuse. Ancient Jews dishonored criminals in burial by either leaving them unburied or disgraced by interment in an unclean place. The religious leaders would gladly have given the Servant a burial of dishonor and disgrace. They assigned Him to be buried with the criminals who were crucified with Him.

However, the absolutely amazing thing is a sovereign God intervened and overruled the enemies of the Servant and honored Him in His burial.

It is as though God put His stamp of approval upon His death and began the ever-increasing exaltation of His Servant. He died a painful death with the wicked men and God buried Him with a rich man's burial. The rich man, Joseph Arimathea was on the side of the Servant.

"His tormenters followed Him with hatred to the grave, but since His atoning work was finished no further dishonor to Him was to be permitted," writes Green. "The servant was given an honorable burial after his dishonorable death because of his perfect innocence" (Young).
"Wicked men" accompanied Him in His death. "And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left" (Luke 23:32-33). These were wicked criminals. "The classification with wicked persons applies to the company in which He suffered and died" (Leupold). In His death and burial, He was with the wicked and the rich. The wicked religious leaders failed in their intentions.

The word "death" is in the plural in Hebrew meaning a violent death. It is like dying again and again. It is the violent death of a criminal. Keil says, "It is applied to a violent death, the very pain of which makes it like a dying again and again."

In His burial He is associated with the "rich." The Jewish leaders considered wealth and riches a sign of God's approval and blessings. "And when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man came to Pilate and asked for the boy of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave" (Matthew 27:57-61). There were witnesses to the events that dreadful day.

This totally innocent person would have been buried as a "wicked person." "He was reckoned with the transgressors." How significant is the word "although" in verse nine. "Although" the Servant was given violent treatment He has been guilty of no crime that deserved a dishonorable burial, but God saw fit that He was given an honorable Jewish burial. It was a totally unexpected turn of events.

The Suffering Servant is an innocent sufferer. "Nor was there any deceit found in His mouth." Not even one improper word was ever heard from His lips. If there had been any deceit or lack of integrity in Jesus, Judas would gladly have revealed it to Jesus' enemies as justification of his own treason. If there had been any violence in Him the ever-watchful eye of His enemies would not have failed to see it and publicly charge Him.

The apostle Peter quotes verse nine in the context which speaks of the suffering of Christ for us, leaving an example for us to follow, "who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteousl; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:21-24).

Many competent scholars have noted down through the ages that the only true interpretation of this stanza is the traditional understanding that Jesus Christ is the Suffering Servant who offers Himself as the divine Sacrifice for the transgressions of Israel.

John Sawyer writes:

"It is significant that of the many passages from the Book of Isaiah that are prescribed to be recited regularly in the synagogue, this is not one; whereas for Christians this, of all Old Testament passages, came to be cited as a major scriptural authority for their belief in the saving life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For them the servant is Jesus, despised and rejected by men, silent before his accusers, condemned unjustly to death, burial in the
tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathea. The poem speaks also of the redeeming power of his suffering and death, and indeed of his resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God... the opening verse also implies that this servant of the Lord is divine" (Isaiah II. Daily Study Bible Series. Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1986, p. 149).

Moreover, that divine sacrifice is also available for everyone, Jews and non-Jews who will acknowledge their need of the Savior, put their faith, and trust in Him. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins we can proclaim with confidence and assurance that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

The value of His suffering infinitely surpassed all that could ever have been endured by sinful men. His death was the full, perfect and sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world. In His death He "blotted out the handwriting that was against us, nailing it to His cross." Our whole debt was cancelled. "There now remains no condemnation to them that believe in Him."

We reverently paraphrase this stanza to bring out the richness of the meaning of the substitute Sacrifice for our transgressions. Can you picture Him dying for your sins, through the eyes of the Hebrew prophet, writing 750 years before the coming of Christ? I am only changing the pronouns that refer to the divine Substitute to bring out the full impact of this awesome passage of Scripture.

Jesus was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet Jesus did not open His mouth;
Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearsers,
So Jesus Christ did not open His mouth.
By oppression and judgment Jesus was taken away;
And as for His generation, who considered
That He was cut off out of the land of the living
For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?
Jesus' grave was assigned with wicked men,
Yet He was with a rich man in His death,
Because Jesus had done no violence,
Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.
The Divine Satisfaction


Our song of suffering reaches a grand climax in the last three verses. The song begins and ends on the same high note of victory. Between the two high snow capped mountain peaks of extreme exaltation in glory is the deep, deep valley of humility and intense suffering. The one who died like a criminal was buried like a prince, and is now exalted high and lifted up so that He sees the fruit of His suffering. The Servant will see the result of His redeeming sacrifice and be fully satisfied. Unregenerate men would expect the sad song to end at the grave. But not this song. It is time to celebrate! He dies, yet His work goes on. He sees it, and He is satisfied. What a Savior!

Kyle M. Yates wrote:

God's purpose fulfilled as the Sufferer is exalted to the highest place after the hour of deepest humiliation. God willed it. His death satisfied the father, satisfied justice, satisfied the sinner and the Sufferer. His purpose was two-fold: to bring many sons to glory and to make the Servant the supreme Priest and Intercessor. He lives, He reigns, He intercedes. He suffered, was rejected, betrayed, killed that He might reign victoriously. 'Hallelujah! What a Savior! (Preaching from the Prophets, p. 103).

With vivid details, the inspired Hebrew prophet writes as if he were a personal eyewitness to the events at the cross, resurrection and exaltation of God's Suffering Servant. Keil writes: "The banner of the cross is here setup. The curtain of the most holy is lifted higher and higher. The blood of the typical sacrifice, which has been hitherto dumb, begins to speak."

THE PURPOSE OF THE DIVINE SATISFACTION (v. 10)

Thirteen times in this song, Isaiah mentions the vicarious substitutionary suffering born for others. This pattern is central to the theme of the Suffering Servant. In the New Testament, the cross of Christ is central. Both Testaments reinforce the master theme of the Bible. Moreover, the Song of the Suffering Servant finds its fulfillment only in the person and work of Jesus Christ as our redeemer.

It is interesting that the history of Jewish interpretation of this passage was centered on the Messianic interpretation until the time of Aben Ezra about 1150 AD. Almost all Christian expositors took the same view as early Jewish expositors until the nineteenth century. Later Jews abandoned the earlier traditional interpretation because of the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this great song of the Suffering Servant. I find no reason to accept modified contemporary Jewish theories and abandon the historical belief that Jesus Christ fulfills this great song.

Knight has well said that here we find "the deepest revelation of the God the Old Testament can offer." God has revealed through His prophet centuries ahead of time that salvation will be accomplished through the vicarious sacrifice of His Servant.
But the LORD was pleased
To crush Him, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

It was no accident, and God was not caught by surprise when His Servant was crushed and put to grief. It was Yahweh's eternal plan for redemption of Israel. There was no hostile intent, but only a righteous God dealing with the transgressions of His people. The emphasis Isaiah makes is God did it. It was the LORD's will to "crush" His Servant. The depth of His suffering, as we have seen, has been horrifying.

"The LORD was pleased to crush Him; putting Him to grief" catches us by surprise and shocks the mind until we remember in verse six he wrote, "the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." God is the author. "His death was not in the hands of the wicked men but in the Lord's hands" (Young). God was in control, not the Jewish religious leaders and the Romans soldiers. They could accomplish their evil deed only as the sovereign God allowed them.

The only adequate answer to the question of why God did it is found in John 3:16. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." God was pleased because His purpose on behalf of sinful man was achieved. Reconciliation with God was accomplished in the bruising of Jesus.

"The LORD" is the emphasis. The Servant was not caught up in evil circumstances. What was the pleasure of the LORD? His purpose in the suffering of His Servant was "the justification of many" (v. 11). God was at work accomplishing His eternal purpose. John R. Sampey observed, "The Servant's death, far from being an accident, was in Jehovah's plan for human redemption."

The expression "the LORD was pleased" is not the idea of some sadistic, demonic mind getting profound joy at inflicting punishment on an innocent person. Reconciliation with sinful man was achieved. He was pleased to accomplish peace in the midst of enmity. It is the pleasure that comes from seeing the matter through and accomplishing reconciliation and the resultant peace.

God was pleased to bruise Him painfully in the crushing, and "putting Him to grief." The results of the crushing is deep sorrow, and plunging into extreme distress.

"Suddenly," writes H. C. Leupold, "the tenses of the verbs changes; all is now viewed as future, perhaps with the intent of showing that what is viewed as accomplished still remains to be done: 'when He shall make a trespass offering.'"

The sacrifice is offered up to God, not by God. "Although the Lord does bring about the death of the Servant, He is not the Offerer." The Servant offers Himself as the sacrifice. He is both the Great High Priest and the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the people. In verse twelve the Servant receives the reward for faithful obedience. His whole life of obedience, which reaches the climax in death, is the sacrifice. He was obedient to death, a substitutionary death for the guilty sinner.
Asham is a "guilt offering." It is an expiatory sacrifice because it makes atonement for sins. "The very life of the Servant will be made an expiatory sacrifice," writes E. J. Young.

The sacrifice paid by the soul of the Servant is by submitting to the violent death. It was a self-sacrifice and it signifies: (1) the guilt or debt, (2) the compensation or payment, (3) discharges the guilt or debt and sets the man free.

The Suffering Servant, Jesus Christ, is the end of all the sacrifices because He is the satisfaction of the justice of God. His sacrifice is the climax of all the Old Testament sacrifices in the Hebrew economy because His sacrifice on Calvary is all-sufficient to cover every sin.

Isaiah uses the language and imagery of the Old Testament sacrificial system. Probably in the "guilt offering," or trespass offering, "all the blood was scattered over the altar (Lev. 5:14ff)" (Leupold). Christ is the satisfaction on our behalf to God.

"The Servant's anguish was in every way the fulfillment of a great plan. It had been foreshadowed by sacrifices. Nothing about it was accidental" (Leupold.)

In His own words Jesus said, "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Moreover, Isaiah says, He dies; yet, He lives! The idea of the resurrection is implicit in the following words of Isaiah.

He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

F. B. Meyer writes in Christ in Isaiah:

Vindicated by the trust of each individual soul. Each time one comes to Him, and finds healing, peace and salvation in his words, cleansing in his precious blood, shelter beneath the outspread arms of his cross, he sees his seed, he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; he is vindicated, and recompensed for all his pain.

What was God's purpose in the suffering of His Servant? "He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand." He shall prolong His day—eternally. He will die and rise again and He will see the results that He will accomplish. God will bless it eternally. The apostle Paul writes in Philippians 1:6, "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

"He will see His offspring" because He will rise from the dead. His spiritual seed consists of every individual down through the ages who has believed on Him as their substitute. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves the divine satisfaction of His vicarious substitutionary sacrifice. God saw it and was satisfied.
"He will see His offspring" only because He gave Himself as the expiatory sacrifice for sin. It will be a great multitude that no man can number (Revelation 5:9; 7:9). There can be no seed without redemption having taken place. Without the substitutionary atonement there can be no seed.

The Servant will see His "offspring," literally "seed." That would be impossible if He died and remained dead. But if He should rise from the dead, "He will see His seed." Isaiah says, death will not hold the Servant. As a living person He will see His seed and rejoice in the prosperity of the good pleasure of the LORD.

"He will prolong His days" reminds us of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He rose from the dead to enjoy an unending resurrection life. He is "alive for evermore" (Revelation 1:18). Jesus said, "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and Hades" (1:17b-18).

He is the Eternal One, without beginning and end who died as a sacrifice for our transgressions and rose from the dead and now lives for evermore. Because He lives, He has all power and authority over life and death for all eternity.

He will live many years. Longevity for the Jewish people meant God's favor and blessings upon them. God will bless His Servant who will live eternally. It is probably a reflection of other Messianic passages (2 Samuel 7:13, 16; Psalm 89:3-4). Christ is the eternal King on the throne of David (Psalm 132:12).

Isaiah has in view the unending resurrection life of our Lord.

"And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand." It will happen through His "seed" as they go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). The redeemed "will prosper in His hand." There will be spiritual growth and the "seed" will bear fruit.

God's eternal purpose of redemption will be fully accomplished by His divine Servant. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." When Jesus cried, "It is finished!" God saw it and was satisfied.

W. E. Vine has an interesting observation on this verse. He says "His hand" suggests the mediatorial and high priestly work and exercise of power and authority over the kingdom of God. Only the risen Jesus Christ has such power and authority. The kingdom of God will "prosper in His hand" means it will reach its successful conclusion and accomplish God's goal. He will be satisfied because He will prosper it.

By personal faith many will see His eternal purpose in Christ's suffering and be justified. They will believe on Him and He will declare them righteous in His sight, therefore, God will have accomplished His purpose.

THE PLEASURE IN THE DIVINE SATISFACTION (v. 11)

What exceeding pleasure Christ will have in seeing the results of His sacrifice in the untold multitudes who will respond to Him. God is gathering to Himself a people redeemed by His grace through faith alone in the redemption provided by the suffering Substitute.
As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

God is the speaker, just as in the beginning of the song (52:13).

No person or event down through history can be compared to what the LORD's Servant accomplished. We have witnessed 2,000 years of those benefits worldwide.

What will He see? "The anguish of His soul." He will look back upon that grief and suffering and be satisfied. Well done My good and faithful Son! Redemption has been accomplished.

He will see with "abundant satisfaction" and be fully satisfied at the success of the divine work.

It is unparalleled success. It is a job perfectly done. He will see many coming to salvation and be satisfied. "By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant will justify many as He will bear their iniquities." God can be just and justify the believing sinner. He accomplishes this justification by faith.

Don't miss the vicarious substitutionary atonement that keeps recurring throughout the passage. That is what makes it hard to outline. The themes and subthemes keep reappearing throughout this great symphony of redemption. He has redeemed a great multitude that no man can number through His vicarious suffering and atoning sacrifice from the guilt and power of their sins.

He will see the fruit of His labor and be abundantly satisfied. Revelation chapters four and five tells us of a great multitude gathered through all the ages worshiping the Lamb.

The Servant will see it and be fully satisfied. The divine work will succeed and the outcome of the atoning sacrifice will cause God to be glorified. The writer of Hebrews said, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As he will bear their iniquities.

"By His knowledge" can be translated "by knowledge of Him," or "by His own knowledge." Either is probably correct. Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). The apostle John wrote, "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

He will know that by bearing their iniquities many will be justified. Knowledge, even His knowledge, does not justify. Only the divine satisfaction of propitiation can do that.
It is the "flawless righteousness" of the Servant that will justify the many. His righteousness makes Him competent to a propitiatory sacrifice.

W. E. Vine writes, "... Because of His absolute knowledge as the Son of God, He would effect the justification of many ... He would make righteous all that come unto God by Him. But only on the ground of His vicarious sacrifice."

The justification referred to here is a "forensic justification and not the condition of the person justified" (Young). The Servant bears the iniquities that many may be justified. He pronounces them justified, acquitted (Romans 3:21-25; 5:1, 18, 19).

"As He will bear their iniquities" refers to something that will be done after the completion of the work. Isaiah mentions nothing of the benefits of the Servant's work until after He has died and risen from the dead. However, once he mentions that great fact he tells us the effects on mankind.

The Hebrew scholar E. J. Young writes eloquently:

. . . the act of bearing the iniquities in itself has not changed the character of those whose iniquities are borne. When the iniquities are born, i.e. when the guilt those iniquities involve has been punished, the servant may declare that the many stand in right relationship with God. Their iniquities will no longer be able to rise up and accuse them, for the guilt of those iniquities has been punished. Thus, they are justified. They are declared to be righteous, for they have received the righteousness of the servant and they are received and accepted by God Himself. Of them God says that they no longer have iniquities. This can only be a forensic justification (Isaiah, Vol. III, p. 358).

God is satisfied with the vicarious sacrifice and takes pleasure in it and the results it produces. The action is completed. "The verbs relating to the vicarious sacrifice are in the perfect tense, describing the action as finished. The verb referring to the intercession is in the imperfect tense, portraying the action is incomplete. Thus the Servant meets the two deepest needs of man: the need for a Savior and the need for a High Priest and friend" (Green).

Because God and His Servant are satisfied the message can now be proclaimed.

**THE PROCLAMATION OF THE DIVINE SATISFACTION (v. 12)**

Isaiah sees the Servant rising to triumph once again. "My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted" Isaiah told us in 52:13. We have now come full circle in the exaltation and extreme humiliation and even greater exaltation of the Servant.

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,  
And He will divide the booty with the strong;  
Because He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors.
The great ones of the earth are going to be brought to Him and do homage to Him.

"I will allow Him a portion with the great" are general terms, and do not refer to specific individuals. Could they be Moses and Elijah with whom Jesus shared His "exodus" on the Mount of transfiguration?

The apostle Paul described this same extreme humiliation and exaltation of the Servant. He wrote:

Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equity with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:6-11).

"He poured out His soul as an offering for sin." Vine observes, "It was a sacrifice offered to God with the effect of clearing the sinner from his guilt." This divine trespass offering satisfied God's justice.

Everything Jesus did depended on His finished work at Calvary. Even His sovereign power as King will depend on that completed work.

"He poured out Himself to death" means to "strip or empty, or pour clean out, even to the very last drop."

"He exposed His soul unto death; He voluntarily laid it bare even to death. No man took His life from Him, but He laid it down of Himself" (Young). Cf. John 10:15, 17-18.

The Servant permitted Himself "to be numbered," i.e. to be crucified between two criminals. By permitting Himself to be "numbered with the transgressors", He bore the sins of the many. This is the way our Lord interpreted these words. Jesus said, "For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me,'AND HE WAS CLASSED AMONG CRIMINALS'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37, Old Testament quote in all capitals). Describing the crucifixion of Christ Mark wrote, "And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on the right and one on the left. And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'and He was reckoned with transgressors'" (Mark 15:27-28). He is referring to Isaiah 53:12.

Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

The action in the word "interceded" is incomplete. Verbs referring to the vicarious sacrifice are in the perfect tense. The action is finished.

One of the most incredible things we see taking place at the cross is Jesus praying. Jesus kept on saying, "Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Jesus was interceding for those who were nailing Him to the cross. He was the sin-bearer and He was making intercession for transgressors.

And what is He doing now for us? "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:34). Hebrews 9:24 takes up the same note, "For
Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us . . .

It is the priestly work of the Servant that comes into view. He pleads before the throne the merits of His sacrificial atonement as the only grounds of acceptance of the sinner before God. (Cf. Matthew 26:38, 39, 42; Luke 22:37; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:1-2; Hebrews 10:12; 8:1; 4:14-16; 12:2; John 10:15, 17-18; Hebrews 9:28; Mark 15:28; 1 Peter 2:24).

"The basis of the intercession is the substitutionary expiation of the servant" (Young).

We can see that great multitude of people coming before the throne of God, "saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.' And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever'" (Revelation 5:12-13). The Lamb in Revelation is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

All of Jesus' future glory depends upon His death and resurrection:

- Because He poured Himself out to death
- He was numbered with transgressors
- He made intercession for the transgressors

Jesus Christ is the Suffering Savior, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). I love the way C. H. Spurgeon expressed that love and adoration for Him.

I believe that whenever our religion is most vital, it is most full of Christ . . . I can bear witness that whenever I am in deeps of sorrow, nothing will do for me but "Jesus only." I retreat to the innermost citadel of our holy faith, namely, to the very heart of Christ, when my spirit is assailed by temptation, or besieged with sorrow and anguish. What is more, my witness is that whenever I have high spiritual enjoyments, enjoyments rich, rare, celestial, they are always connected with Jesus only, other religious things may give some kind of joy, and joy that is healthy too, but the sublimest, the most inebriating, the most divine of all joys, must be found in Jesus only . . . I find if I want to labor much, I must live on Jesus only; if I desire to suffer patiently, I must feed on Jesus only; if I wish to wrestle with God successfully, I must plead Jesus only; if I aspire to conquer sin, I must use the blood of Jesus only; if I pant to learn the mysteries of heaven, I must seek the teachings of Jesus only. I believe that anything which we add to Christ lowers our position, and that the more elevated our soul becomes, the more nearly like what it is to be when it shall enter into the region of the perfect, the more completely every thing else will sink, die out, and Jesus, Jesus, Jesus only, will be first and last, and midst and without end, the Alpha and Omega of every thought of head and pulse of heart. May it be so with every Christian. (C. H. Spurgeon,
Let's conclude our study by reverently paraphrasing this last stanza by substituting the personal pronouns with the name of our blessed Savior. As we do let's bow our hearts before Him and yield our selves to Him whose name is above every name.

But the Lord was pleased
To crush Jesus Christ, putting Him to grief;
If He would render Himself as a guilt offering,
He will see His offspring,
He will prolong His days,
And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.
As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see it and be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As Jesus will bear their iniquities.
Therefore, I will allot Jesus Christ a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because Jesus Christ poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet Jesus Christ Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.
Isaiah 54-66

The LORD God Reigns!

The song of salvation through the vicarious, suffering sacrifice comes to a great fortissimo of triumph. The Suffering messiah is victorious. The sacrifice is complete. He has risen from the dead. He lives! "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" History is in His hands. He causes all things to work for His redemptive glory. He is the sovereign God who transcends and controls history for His redemptive glory.

Isaiah begins chapter fifty-four with a glorious shout of joy. It is now time to shout for joy because the Suffering Servant has accomplished our redemption. "The golden passional of the Old Testament is complete." He says, "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no children; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed . . . " (v.1). There is reason for this shouting. Those who are barren because of the captivity will now bear a tent full of children. They will have experienced God's blessings. "Enlarge the place of your tent; Stretch out the curtains of your dwellings, spare not; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your pegs . . . . Your descendents will possess nations, and they will resettle the desolate cities" (vv. 2-3).

The LORD, the Holy One of Israel, is our Redeemer and He has had compassion upon His people. Even though He chastised Israel because of her rebellion, He has remained steadfast in His unshakable love. Isaiah quotes the LORD in verse ten:

"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the Lord who has compassion on you.

The Redeemer has come who pays a full price in order to set His people free. "A Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the Lord (59:20).

SING THE INVITATION (55:1-3)

Because of the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh He can now offer an invitation for everyone to come and receive living water freely.

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. "Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,

*According to* the faithful mercies shown to David (vv. 1-3).

Based upon Isaiah fifty-three everything has now been prepared. The "Ho" (*hoi*) in verse one expresses a deep sorrow on account of the unsatisfied spiritual thirst and toilsome labor.

The "water" speaks of spiritual satisfaction, and "wine and milk" is figurative of spiritual revival and nourishment (2 Peter 2:2). The true believer "longs for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

The "waters" reminds us of the word of Jesus Christ in John 4:14; 7:37. Because of His redemptive work on the cross He can offer us spiritual water that will quench our spiritual thirst. Jesus offers us the great invitation to come to Him and drink. Jesus said, "... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. ... If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."

The one who comes and drinks of these waters must have an intense hunger for God. He must come like the prodigal (Luke 15:16ff). The only way to satisfy the soul is obedient faith.

This is a marvelous picture of grace in the Old Testament. These blessings and gifts of divine grace are obtained by faith alone. The humble believer can receive this spiritual satisfaction by a sense of need and readiness to accept it. The apostle Paul stated it wisely, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:6). "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The resurrected, glorified Savior offers the same invitation. "I will give to the one who thirsts from the springs of the water of life without cost" (Revelation 21:6). In Revelation 22:16–17, He said:

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

What must a person do to receive this water that satisfies? God says, "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David" (Isaiah 55:3). "Seek [acquire experiential knowledge] the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near" (v. 6). "Call" now while He stands ready with super abundance of grace to meet your need.

This "everlasting covenant . . . according to the faithful mercies shown to David" is continuation of the long string of covenants Yahweh made beginning with Abraham. "Some interpreters say the 'everlasting covenant' refers to the New Covenant (Jer. 32:40; Heb. 13:20). That is possible but the reference to David points to the Davidic Covenant, which also is said to last forever (2 Sam. 7:16). Just as God promised to keep His good hand on David, so He assured those who come to Him that He will never remove His good hand (His blessings) from them. He will always be with them and consider them His people" (Walvoord
and Zuck). This "eternal covenant" is secured in the Second David, the Son of God, the Messiah (cf. Hosea 3:5; Ezekiel 34:23-25; Jeremiah 30:9). The father of John the Baptist, Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied of Jesus saying, God "has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant. . . " (Luke 1:69). That was also the conviction of the New Testament saints (Acts 2:29-36; 13:22-23, 34-39).

How can God offer such an invitation to everyone, including the Gentiles? God's ways are not our ways (55:8-11; cf. 59:1-2). "Behold, the Lord's hand is not short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear" 59:1). H. C. Leupold observes, "For in addition to making David's throne an everlasting throne, David was singled out to make the Lord known in a measure to the nations." The Lord promised to David one who would sit upon that throne (2 Samuel 7:8-16). "Behind the David referred to in these verses stands 'great David's Greater Son.'"

Don't blame God for the separation that sin brings. It is not God; it is "your iniquities" that "have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He does not hear" (59:2). Therefore the solution is quite clear. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (55:7). "Let him return to the LORD" "involves a complete right-about-face." Respond to this great invitation and receive His light.

**SEE THE LIGHT (60:1-7)**

Chapter sixty is a blaze of light in the spiritual darkness that covered the whole earth. Jewish people and Gentiles are sitting in darkness of unbelief. The prophet shouts, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising" (60:1-3). In the second servant poem Isaiah had declared, "I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6).

Who is this "light" that has visited those dwelling in darkness? Who can penetrate the spiritual darkness that covers the earth? Why He has already come! "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant . . . " (Luke 1:68-69). Again Dr. Luke writes, "Because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, To shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:78-79, all capitalized words quote Old Testament). It is the heavenly glory of the Lord that flares up (Isaiah 6:3; 24:23; 40:5; 58:8).

The Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a perfect, plentiful, complete understanding of this great salvation. With the strong voice of the great I AM Jesus stated assertively, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12).

Isaiah had promised, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (9:2). They saw the "great light" that illuminated their spiritual darkness when Jesus walked the land. Jesus is that "great light" (cf. John 1:4-5). He said, "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness" (12:46).
Gentiles are drawn to the light of Jesus. Even at the birth of Jesus non-Jews came to worship Him (Matthew 2:1ff). How insightful to compare Isaiah 60:19-20 with Revelation 21:4; 22:5. There is a wonderful day coming when we will no longer need the moon and the sun because "you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory" (Isaiah 60:19). In the "new heaven and new earth" "the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illuminated it, and its lamp is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it" (Revelation 21:23-24). There will be no night there (v. 25) "because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (22:5).

**SAVIOR’S SELF-IDENTIFICATION (61:1-2)**

The speaker in Isaiah 61:1-2 is the Servant of the LORD, the Messiah whom we saw in chapters 42-53. What the speaker says is identical with what has already been said about Him (42:1; 48:16; 50:4; 42:7; 49:7).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,  
Because the Lord has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;  
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn . . . (61:1-2).

Kyle M. Yates said, "When Jesus came to select the best picture of Himself, He turned to this portrait." Jesus Christ saw Himself as the fulfillment of these grand passages in Isaiah. After reading aloud from the scroll of Isaiah 61:1-2 that was handed Him in the Synagogue at Nazareth, He rolled up the scroll and began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4:21). He announced that He was the one to fulfill this prophecy. It "stands fulfilled." The "favorable year" means the real year of Jubilee had arrived. The Messianic prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled that day. The age had arrived!

Luke 3:22; 4:1, 18 affirms to us that "the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove . . . and Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness . . . and Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit."

No one binds up the wounds of broken hearts like Jesus. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus issues an invitation and the only requirement is to be "weary and heavy-laden." He binds up the broken hearted and brings relief to the afflicted, suffering humanity. Jesus put the compassion of His loving heart into action. Luke 4:40 tells us, "while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on everyone of them, He was healing them" (cf. 7:13-15; 8:43-56; 13:11-15; 17:11-19).

It is interesting that Jesus ended His reading of this passage in Isaiah with "to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." Isaiah, however, did not stop there. He continued, "And the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (61:2b,c).
Jesus ushered in the Gospel of grace at His first coming. When He returns it will be "the day of vengeance of our God." Jesus foretold the coming of the day of vengeance upon the nation of Israel and Jerusalem in Luke 21:22-24. The Suffering Servant of Yahweh has been realized in the Son of Man who will reign as sovereign King.

**SOVEREIGN KING REIGNS (65:17-66:24)**

"Nowhere in the Old Testament is a more glorious picture of the future kingdom drawn" than in this passage. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. Isaiah brings his grand Gospel message to a climax when he sees the sovereign LORD God reigning throughout eternity as King of kings and Lord of lords. God reigns throughout eternity and He is in charge of the affairs of the nations. He makes a new everlasting covenant with those who accept His sovereignty and salvation. They live in a new city of incomparable beauty and complete security, the New Jerusalem, where the LORD God and the Lamb are the temple and the Lamb is the light (cf. Revelation 21:22-27).

What God is going to do is produce something "fundamentally new." It "is so revolutionary that it is the result of God's creative activity. That almighty power which was displayed at the original creation is again to be displayed in a new work of creation," writes E. J. Young. "For behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth" (65:17-19). Isaiah's picture of the Messianic age penetrates regions beyond the spiritual horizon of any and all Old Testament prophets. The new heaven and new earth "will so fully show forth the glory of God their creator, . . . the former heavens and earth will no longer be remembered, nor will they even enter upon the heart of man" (Young). This "transformation will be so complete that the former state of affairs on this old sin-ridden earth shall not even be remembered or come to mind" (Leupold).

The present system of universe will roll up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4; Matthew 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10; Revelation 6:12-14; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; Romans 9:19-21; Mark 13:25). He makes all things new. In the New Jerusalem, in the new heaven and new earth, the Lord God reigns!

It is well for us to keep in mind, "In the concept of the prophet, time and eternity, the age of the New Testament and the eternal heaven, are not sharply distinguished; and believers are already in the heavenlies" (Young). Walvoord and Zuck have a good word in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*:

In Revelation, however, the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1) follow the Millennium (Rev. 20:4). Most likely Isaiah did not distinguish between these two aspects of God's rule; he saw them together as one. After all, the Millennium, though 1,000 years in duration, will be a mere pinpoint of time compared with the eternal state.

Every time we lead someone to put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ as their substitute we are involved in something that will still be worthwhile a million years from now. One bright morning we will see people gathered there "from every nation and all tribes and people and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes." We'll join in that heavenly multitude singing a new song:

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . . " (Revelation 5:9).

Oh, come Lord Jesus, come!
Isaiah ends his scroll with a striking contrast and reminder to every generation. Our future depends upon what we do with Jesus Christ today. For those who will humble themselves and believe in Him as their suffering Servant who died for their sins we will continue eternally before Him in His presence (66:22-23). However, for those who reject His offer of grace today there is eternal rejection and suffering (66:24).

One thing is certain, "All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD God (66:23). Before whom will they bow? Philippians 2:9-11 says it is at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow and "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." There will be no exceptions when He returns. The LORD God reigns!

When the famous composer George Frederick Handel was sixty years old he was going through extremely difficult circumstances in his life. He was probably at his lowest financially, physically and emotionally. He had been ruined by jealous rivals in the music world and creditors were threatening to jail him. He was partially paralyzed, experiencing clinical depression and at the point of giving up.

One day he received a letter and package from Charles Jennens. In it were papers on which were scribbled passages of Scripture. Handel mulled over those Scripture verses and began to write. Day after day he wrote. He walked about in his room, weeping, crying and writing. With tears flowing down his cheeks he cried, "Hallelujah!" Handel finally went to bed exhausted and slept for seventeen hours. He had completed the greatest song on the sovereignty of God ever written—the Messiah.

In London in 1743 the first audience that listened to Messiah was so deeply moved by it that when the "Hallelujah Chorus" was reached, the king of England and the people stood to their feet. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and shall reign, King of kings and Lord of lords, forever and ever. Hallelujah!" Yes, He reigns forever and ever. Hallelujah!
Jeremiah 23:5-8; 30:8-9, 21; 33:14-18

A Righteous Branch of David

Judah was under the dominion of evil rulers, both political and religious during the life of Jeremiah. The Hebrew prophet broke out with a cry, "Woe to the shepherds." Kings and all civil rulers in Israel were referred to as shepherds. They were the civil rulers who had oversight of the affairs of the nation.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The evil shepherds were motivated by their self-interests and therefore "scattered" and drove away the people into Exile (Jeremiah 23:2). Jeremiah executes a beautiful play on words in verse two as The New English Bible brings this out: "You have not watched over them, but I am watching you to punish you for your evil-doings." Moffatt translates: "You scattered my flock and drove them away, you took no care of them; so I will take good care to punish you for the evil you have done." The New American Standard Bible reads: "You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds." Yahweh was actively bringing judgment upon these evil kings responsible for the national life in Judah. The LORD would bring a remnant out of the captivity (cf. Chapters 24, 40-44; Isaiah 1:9; 37:4; Micah 4:7; 7:18).

The LORD declared that He would gather together a "remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and shall bring them back to their pasture; and they will be fruitful and multiply" (v. 3). God will deliver them from captivity and return them to their land in Israel. In contrast to the evil shepherds of Israel God will raise up "a righteous Branch" from David (vv. 5-6). They were all absorbed in the ministry to self. Self-interest groups controlled the government. They sought only their own enrichment, security, comfort, etc. They forgot spiritual realities and trusted in material prosperity. The leaders were trusting in their own cunning rather than the living God.

The last four kings in Judah were evil. Zedekiah was the current evil "shepherd" and he scattered the people. "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!" declares the LORD (Jeremiah 23:1).

The LORD's intervention would bring good "shepherds" to rule over His sheep.

The good shepherd that Jeremiah longed to see come and deliver his people was realized in the person and leadership of Jesus Christ. He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14-16; Acts 17:1; Luke 1:78; John 18:37). He is the righteous one from the Branch of David. The Good Shepherd would "act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:5). Moreover, He is "the LORD our righteousness" (v. 6). He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21-23), and He will not lose a single one of His sheep (John 6:39; 10:28; 1 Peter 1:5).

THE RIGHTEOUS BRANCH OF DAVID

There were two facets of the doctrine of the Messiah in the Old Testament and rabbinical writings. Both of these ideas are found in verses five and six. We see the Messiah as a person in verse five, and the
teaching concerning the Messianic Age in verse six. These facets are also found in Isaiah (11:1-5, 6-16; 9:5-6; 11:1-9; Micah 5:1-5; Amos 9:11; Hosea 3:5, etc.). These and other verses describe the coming New Age when the Messiah would restore David's dynasty.

God promised Jeremiah that He would raise up from David's line a righteous Branch (23:5). The shepherds of Israel have corrupted God's flock. Yahweh will restore the nation from exile and will provide true "shepherds" who will care for His flock. In this passage the LORD promises the coming of the ideal king, "a righteous Branch" in the line of David.

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land."

This passage in Jeremiah is clearly messianic and was one of many such utterances by the Hebrew prophets that contributed to the developing messianic belief in ancient Israel. Verses five and six are full of messianic thinking as well as 33:15-16. The English word "Messiah" is derived from the Hebrew word Mashach meaning, "to anoint." The term Messiah in the sense of the ideal king is not used in the Old Testament even though the idea is clearly present.

"The announcement concerns the ideal king (Messiah) of the Davidic line under whose just and victorious rule the dynastic hopes of Judah would be realized. The Royal Psalms gather up much of this idealism (Psalm 2, 4, 72, 89-110)" (J. A. Thompson, NICOT, The Book of Jeremiah, p. 489).

The "Branch" is a "growth," or literally "sprout" and is used in the ancient Near East to describe the rightful heir to the throne (33:15; Isaiah 4:2; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). Isaiah uses a different word in 11:1 but with the same idea. This heir will be an ideal king. He will act wisely and do what is just and right. During His reign "Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which he will be called, 'the LORD our righteousness'" (vv. 5-6; cf. 3:17; 33:16; Ezekiel 48:35; 1 Corinthians 1:30).

No matter how gloomy and desperate the present situation was in Judah, Yahweh promised to raise up to David a righteous branch. This one branch of David will sit on the throne forever and He will reign in righteousness. The second David, the Messiah's dominion will last forever. Only the one Good Shepherd of Yahweh stands in contrast to evil shepherds in Ezekiel 34:23. This is the one to whom the promise was made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Chronicles 7. The name of this branch of David is Yahweh our Righteousness.

Ezekiel wrote, "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken" (34:23-24).

Jeremiah says, they will call Him "Yahweh our Righteousness" because He is righteous. He will lead His people into righteousness (Isaiah 11:1; Matthew 2:23). This ruler will spring forth or bud forth as a Righteous Plant. He is the blossom of the Jewish nation that will spring forth from what appears to be an almost dead stump.
The Messiah is here called Yahweh and He is our righteousness. The righteous Branch obtains our righteousness (Romans 5:18; 3:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Mark 10:18; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 10:4; Philippians 3:9). Jesus Christ is the Righteous One (Acts 3:14; Hebrews 1:8, 9; Romans 3:22).

The meaning of "saved" is "rescued," "delivered," "liberated." This ideal king would provide safety for His people. Jeremiah will develop the idea of salvation in chapters 30-31.

The righteous "shoot" (semah) appeared to be dead, but it was not. This dynasty of David's tree would burst forth like a shoot. Most of our English translations read "Branch" or literally "Sprout" in the margin. During the postexilic times Branch became the technical term for the expected ideal king (Zechariah 3:8; 6:12). This true shoot that comes from the line of David will be a wise ruler. "He will reign as king and act wisely." Literally, "and a king will rule and act wisely." He will "act wisely" and "have success." He will ably reign in contrast to the current ruler.

How can a man be just with God? The answer is in the Lord that men are justified. Is it the Lord their righteousness that righteousness resides; the Lord Himself is their righteousness. This is the high point in the Old Testament revelation respecting justification.

John Murray writes, "It is in the light of the New Testament that we understand how the Lord Himself is our righteousness. But it is also true that it is on the background of this Old Testament witness that the high point of the New Testament disclosure is to be understood. The Pauline doctrine of the righteousness of God from faith to faith (cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9) can only be understood in the light of the Old Testament counterpart" (NIC, The Epistle of Romans, p. 347).

**THE NEW AGE OF THE MESSIAH**

The Righteous Branch, the Messiah, would usher in the New Age.

Jeremiah says the coming "second Exodus" would be much greater than the first Exodus from Egypt (23:7-8). "Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when they will no longer say, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘As the Lord lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ Then they will live on their own soil."

Jeremiah builds on the same idea in Jeremiah 30:8-9, 21. The context is panic and terror because the awful Day of Yahweh has arrived. Other prophets mention this same event (Amos 5:18-20; Isaiah 2:12-21; Zephaniah 1:14-18). Imagine, Jeremiah says, men having birth pangs! It is a great day of distress. On the backdrop of this chaos we find another messianic promise (vv. 8-9). The shift is from judgment to deliverance. The purpose here is the nation willingly serves the LORD under the leadership of their new king (v. 9). Verse 21 doesn't specifically mention the messiah king, however the magnitude of such a restoration visualized can only lead to the greater David. Thompson writes, "This passage has a peculiarly messianic ring (cf. Isaiah 11)." No Davidic king ever regained the throne after the Exile. These events have not yet taken place. "The Old Testament always speaks of the Day of the Lord as near at hand (Isa. 13:6), much as the New Testament speaks of the Second Coming. The New Testament takes up the theme of the Day of the Lord and adds immeasurably to its content with its final and climactic fulfillment described in the Book of Revelation," writes F. B. Huey, Jr. He adds, "Jeremiah, as did other prophets, foresaw a Davidic
king as a key to the day of the Lord. . . the New Testament is careful to show that Jesus Christ is of the family of David and, as the eternal Son of God, is the fulfillment of the promises of a Davidic king that were first made to David (2 Sam. 7).” Some Jews have individually accepted Christ as the fulfillment of the messianic promises.

I think Huey in his book on Jeremiah has a sane word for us in our day: "The fact that the Jewish people continue to exist . . . indicates that God is not through with His people (cf. Rom. 11). It is better to leave the details of what God plans to do with the Jews in His hands rather than to work out detailed chronological charts and timetables. . . "

Jeremiah 33:15-17 is a parallel messianic passage based upon 23:5-6. Here the focus is on both Israel and Judah and the "good word" the LORD will perform (v. 14). The ideal king, Messiah, will rule justly and rightly. He will deliver or "save" Judah, and Jerusalem will "dwell in safety." Again the emphasis is on "righteousness." He will "be right, straight, just, righteous in dispensing justice, upright." Righteousness is that which is right and is essential to truth. "Yahweh is our righteousness" (v. 16). He will "cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth" (v. 15). His very name reveals God's method of restoration.

"For thus says the Lord, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel'" (33:17). This is the same promise given to David in which a throne would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Despite the judgment and exile God's promise to David still stood true. This strengthened the Messianic ideal. Again, the prophet takes us back to the original promise of the LORD to King David. The division of the kingdom after Solomon was not a part of God's will. David's son will sit on the throne, and the Levitical priests will serve Yahweh (v. 21). An ideal king will come who is the essence of righteousness and He will be a king who is to be a priest and He will sit on a throne of David. He will be a King-Priest.

G. Campbell Morgan candidly writes, "The consummation is not yet. Literally and locally Jerusalem has never been rebuilt on this wise. Judah has never known these conditions. Israel has not yet dwelt in peace by the side of Judah, as said the prophet that she should. But the Branch has come, the King-Priest has appeared; and God is still moving surely, quietly, persistently toward that goal."

Jesus Christ fulfilled all these grand promises to Jeremiah. Before He was born the angel told Mary, "you shall name Him Jesus." You will call Him Yeshua, "salvation." He is Yahweh saves. But he went on, "He will be great, and will be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:32-33). For further study: Luke 1:69; Acts 2:30; 13:23, 34, 38; Revelation 5:5; 22:16; Romans 11:25-26).

Clyde T. Francisco notes, "A Christian can never read this prophecy without realizing that Jesus Christ is its fulfillment. He it was, in the fullness of time, who brought the righteousness of God to man. It is he who rules forever as the heir of the promises of David."
Jeremiah 31:31-34

The New Covenant

In Jeremiah 31:31-34 we stand on one of the greatest mountain peaks in the Old Testament. It is the only reference to a "new covenant" in the Old Testament, and is no doubt the most significant of Jeremiah's sayings. The LORD God will write His law on the heart of the individual. It has been observed by many scholars that this is one of the most important passages in Jeremiah and contains "one of the deepest insights in the whole Old Testament." This passage finds its fulfillment only in the true believer in Jesus Christ and His covenant with sinful man.

A RADICAL CHANGE IS NEEDED

The nation of Israel failed to live up to the terms of the old covenant. It was impossible because of the total depravity of man. Of course, it was never meant to bring salvation. The only person who ever lived up to the requirements of the law was Jesus Christ. Israel's problem was spiritual. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). The new covenant was required because of the sin problem. The context of chapter 31 is the children of Israel playing the blame game. Let's blame our parents for the mess we are in. They sinned and we are suffering. The LORD God declared, "Every one will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge" (v. 30).

Sinful, depraved man could not fulfill the divine commandment. However, in the fullness of time God Himself made the ideal life possible through His own provision of the Savior under a new covenant. There was no other solution to the depravity of man. The new covenant does not promise sinlessness, but forgiveness. We are saved sinners. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Jesus had this passage in mind when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28). The "new testament" literally means new covenant and is fulfilled only in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6ff; Hebrews 8:8-9:28; 10:16ff; Romans 11:25-26). Jesus was saying to His disciples that the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah was now being instituted. It describes His work of salvation.

What is needed is a change in the inner nature so that men are able to obey. God changes the "want to" in the inner man. "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (v. 33). He will write His "law" within them and in their hearts. It will be on their minds and will control their will. Moses' old covenant was written on a slab of stone (Exodus 31:18; 34:28-29; Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:22). What was needed was a change from the inside out in depraved sinful man. Man's sinful rebellious nature demands a radical change that only God can accomplish.

The background of this passage is the Mosaic covenant between Yahweh and Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:1-24:11). The LORD is sovereign God of the Covenant with Israel. The condition of the covenant was Israel's obedience to its laws. Obedience would bring blessings. Disobedience would bring chastisement.

CONTRAST THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS
1. Yahweh guarantees the success of the new covenant. He took the initiative to establish the covenant. In contrast to "thou shalt not," and "thou shalt" are the words, "I will put," "I will write," "I will forgive." Israel couldn't keep the law of the old covenant. The law proved man was helplessly depraved and led him to the Christ. The old covenant proved man was a depraved sinner, guilty in the eyes of a holy God and unable to live up to the demands of the perfect law. The new covenant is a demonstration of God pursuing the guilty sinner until He has found him and ransomed him.

2. The new covenant is a covenant of sovereign grace. It accomplished what the law and the old covenant could never do. All will know Him, from the least to the greatest. This is not universalism because those who reject His offer of grace will be judged and spend eternity in hell.

3. The stimulus to keep the new covenant comes from within the person. God places His Spirit within the person through regeneration and the indwelling of His Spirit to enable him to want to keep the covenant. The Holy Spirit writes it upon the heart. Under this covenant people obey because they want to. God has changed the heart. Man is incapable of influencing a positive relationship with a holy God. He can not because he is spiritually dead. It is not the doing of sinful man. God changed the heart of man. "For the love of Christ controls us . . . " (2 Corinthians 5:14).

4. The new covenant is an intimate personal relationship with God. Every individual must have an experience with God to be included in this covenant (John 3:1-16).

5. The new covenant will last throughout eternity. This new covenant can not be broken. It is based upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a covenant in His blood which covers all our sins. "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

6. Salvation for the Jewish person will come only through the new covenant, not through the Mosaic Law. Jesus "came to His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). It was only after the Jewish people rejected Him that the gospel was taken to the Gentiles (Acts 10:15, 34-35; 13:46; 15:7-9).

A NEW COVENANT WITH ISRAEL

This new covenant is with Israel and Judah, the whole Jewish people (v. 31). Gentiles, according to the apostle Paul, have been grafted into the vine (Romans 11).

The notable New Testament scholar F. F. Bruce writes, "All Israel, not a faithful remnant, but the nation as a whole, would see the salvation of God. If their temporary stumbling was foretold, so was their ultimate and permanent restoration (Isaiah 59:20f; Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 11:25, 26). The new covenant will not be complete until it embraces the people of the old covenant. Temporarily alienated for the advantage of the Gentiles, they are eternally objects of His promises, once made to the patriarchs, can never be revoked." F. B. Huey, Jr. says, "The preservation of the Jewish people to the present time is an affirmation of this
promise." "Its first and peculiar application is to Israel, and to the fact that in the economy of God, the ideal of Israel will yet be realized," observed G. Campbell Morgan.

Verse 34, tells us that each man will "know the LORD." The word "know" means an accurate first hand personal knowledge from observation. It will not be second hand knowledge, but an intimate personal experience of Yahweh. Thompson notes, it "carries its most profound connotation, the intimate personal knowledge which arises between two persons who are committed wholly to one another in a relationship that touches mind, emotions and will. In such a relationship the past is forgiven and forgotten" (J. A. Thompson, NICOT, Jeremiah, p. 581).

**A COVENANT FOR ALL BELIEVERS**

From the prison cell Jeremiah set forth his final burst of song. Assured of the love of God he saw far beyond his prison cell in Jerusalem to the days of God's ultimate victory. Behold, the days are coming when there will be a new spiritual sense of direct relationship to God.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 is an exact description of the covenant under which the true Christian lives. It is the communion and walking in the Holy Spirit as a result of regeneration of the depraved sinner. It depicts the radical change of the sinner and his new relationship to Jesus Christ. Such a believer is abiding in Christ.

"By one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." That is the position of the believer. That is where the relationship begins. Those who believe on Christ are cleansed by His precious blood and are brought into immediate fellowship with Him as a child of God. We live and walk and have our being in His presence. He abides, settles down and makes Himself at home in our hearts. We are living with the "new covenant" relationship and everything depends upon His sovereign grace.

God says He will place His law within the individual and will write it upon the heart. There will be the consciousness within the life of the Divine thought and will and purpose in that moment of reflection. These principles of the new covenant will be upon the heart. They will not be on tables of stone. "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (v. 33).

This is the whole argument of Hebrews 8:6-7. He then quotes these verses from Jeremiah 31 to argue his point. Jesus Christ "has obtained a more excellent ministration, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second." The fault was with the depraved sinners who were incapable of keeping the covenant with God.

How tragic that we still go seeking legalistic laws and regulations by which to live the Christian life. We have a higher standard. The law made nothing perfect. It still doesn't. It can't. Not even in the Christian's life. Only the Holy Spirit can do that by applying the living presence of Christ within us.

The difficulty of our knowing what God would have us to do next at any time in our lives is the measure of our distance in fellowship from God. That is the measure in which we regard iniquity in our heart. The pure in heart see God. That is the condition of knowing Him and walking with Him. When we maintain fellowship with Him we have immediate illumination. The allegory of the vine in John 15:1-11 depicts this
living relationship with Christ. This is our responsibility as believers (1 John 1:6-9). The knowledge of God is dependent upon a cleansed heart.

The new covenant will be a clear apprehension of the will of God by individual souls, without human meditation. The apprehension of the will of God will be possible through direct and personal knowledge of God on the part of all men. This knowledge will result from putting away of moral defilement. The result will be a clear vision of God.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

Have you entered into that sweet privilege that is ours as His children? It is in communion of the Holy Spirit, wherein the law of God is written in the heart, interpreted to the individual directly and immediately in the hour of need. God speaks when we are in communion with Him. This great truth can be misapplied and abused. It does not mean to neglect or set aside God's written Word. This only proves those individuals do not know His walk nor His final revelation in His written Word, the Bible. The Holy Spirit from the moment spiritual birth takes place puts a hunger for God's Word within the individual, writes it upon the heart, so they will be His people and He our God. It is an inner communion with God.

Have you as a believer asked Christ to reveal Himself within to you? Do you know His real abiding presence in your life? Are there times when His sweet indwelling presence breaks in upon you and He is so real to you that you could reach out and touch Him if it were humanly possible? When He has purged the heart of all known sin and you come into His presence He will reveal Himself to you as you have never known Him before. "The Lord gives us the knowledge of Himself. The knowledge of the will of God is the outcome of the knowledge of God" (Morgan).

This is a description of the covenant under which the Christian lives. It is a description of the communion with the Holy Spirit. The indwelling Spirit interprets His word in the hour of need. I am to expect the Divine voice to break in upon my conscience as I read the Scriptures and pray. It is intimate fellowship, not through intellectual attainment, but direct, immediate, a consciousness which is independent of instruction by man, by meditation, quietness, silence. He waits until we are quiet enough to receive His words that He may make Himself known to us more perfectly. It is based upon His saving grace. Maintained fellowship is the condition for this immediate illumination of Him. The measure in which we regard iniquity in our heart determines our distance from Him in our illumination.

It is to know God personally in a mature, intimate knowledge of Him. It is not to know theology, or an orthodox creed, but to know Him and to abide in His presence and He in you. It is to know Him personally in a first-hand dealing with Him. I am not speaking of a highly ecstatic emotional experience. I am speaking of an intimate relationship with another. "They shall know Me." It is the inheritance of every believer, not a select few. It is a direct, immediate, conscious sense of His living presence. It is to come in the presence of another living person who knows us better than we know ourselves.

Do you know Him personally? We fail to know Him because we do not acquaint ourselves with Him. We do not avail ourselves to Him. We are not willing to sit quietly in His presence with the written Word of God. You can not know Him without spending time in His Word.

This is the covenant in which we are to live. Why are we afraid to sit in the quietness and silence and meditate on His great attributes? Why are we so prone to do all the talking instead of silently, actively
listening? Then when we are in His presence we long to stay in it and not leave. So why are those occasions so rare? Why aren't we willing to flee there more often since we relish them? When we have an attitude of waiting and listening in His presence He comes. Oh how sweet and peaceful are those precious moments.

God waits until we are quiet enough to receive His word that He may make Himself known to us more perfectly. "It is when we have learned the secret of waiting and of being still and quiet that we find His law within, written upon the heart, and we know the next thing to do, without the commandments on tables of stone, without the interpretation of the human teacher" (Morgan, Jeremiah, p. 184).

This is indeed that great New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.
Shepherds: True and False

The LORD God, Yahweh, pictures Himself as the Shepherd of His people in the Old Testament. These great Messianic analogies look forward to the faithful and true Shepherd of Israel who will be like His father David. However, the Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep.

FALSE SHEPHERDS OF ISRAEL (34:1-10)

This is yet another passage in the Hebrew prophets that speak of the evil shepherds of Israel and Judah. "Shepherds" often referred to kings, priests and prophets who had oversight of the affairs of the Jewish nation. They were men of authority (Isaiah 44:28; Jeremiah 2:8; 10:21; 23:1-6; 25:34-38; Micah 5:4-5; Zechariah 11:4-17). Our word "pastor" is the Latin for shepherd."

With few exceptions the shepherds in Ezekiel's day were evil. Ezekiel writes:

Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, "Thus says the Lord God, "Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" (Ezekiel 34:1-2).

It was a familiar refrain during the last days of the southern kingdom of Judah. The evil shepherds Ezekiel is referring to were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. Their self–interests, controlled them. Ezekiel's description of their selfishness is vivid in verses 1-10. After Josiah all of the kings were corrupt in Judah and they scattered the people.

It is against this backdrop of evil shepherds that Ezekiel presents the hope of the coming ideal Shepherd–King who will lead His people under a new covenant. The LORD God will lead the people back to the land, and they will be converted and ruled by the Messiah (34:11-16, 23-24; 37:24-28).

YAHWEH SEARCHES FOR HIS SHEEP (34:11-19)

A familiar role of Yahweh in the Old Testament is that of a shepherd over His flock in contrast to the evil shepherds of Israel. It is first found in Genesis 49:24, where He describes Himself as "the Mighty One of Jacob, . . . the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Ezekiel says only Yahweh and His Messiah would be the "Shepherd" of His people (v. 23).

The LORD God is pictured as a Shepherd searching for His sheep.

This imagery is familiar in the Old Testament. King David with poetic beauty said, "The LORD is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). "Oh give ear, Shepherd of Israel, Thou who dost lead Joseph like a flock; Thou who art enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!" (80:1). The prophet Isaiah in his great passage on comfort sees the LORD God "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs, And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isaiah 40:11). Jeremiah cried, "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock" (31:10).
Fifteen times in Ezekiel chapter 34 the LORD says, "My flock," or "My sheep." They are His possession as a shepherd. "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out" (v. 11). This passage is a vivid description of the Lord God pastoring His flock. He watches for His own and seeks them out (v. 11). He cares for His scattered flock and will deliver them from all the places they have wandered (v. 12). "I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land" (v. 13). "I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest" (v. 15). Throughout this passage we see a searching shepherd, seeking His lost sheep, binding up the broken, strengthening the sick and feeding them in a rich pasture.

In the above verses it is noted that the Shepherd–King has a special relationship with Yahweh. In verses 11-16 the shepherd is Yahweh, however in vv. 23-24 the shepherd is "my servant David." The pronouns "I" and "my" are used forty-five times demonstrating "this shepherd would be God in a personal form." The Good Shepherd would later say, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30; cf. 17:21ff).


David wrote, "He makes me lie down in green pastures." Here the LORD says, "I will cause them to lie down." He gives perfect security (34:11-16). Jesus gives perfect peace in His pastures fair and meadow (John 14:27; 16:33; 20:19; 14:1; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7). There will be a day when He will reestablish His people peacefully in their land (vv. 14-15; Revelation 20:4-6). This Shepherd–King will rule with righteousness (v. 16), and He will be a righteous judge (2 Corinthians 5:10ff; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; Revelation 20:11-15)

H. A. Ironside well said, "He will seek after those that are lost, and will bring back those that have been driven away; he will bind up those that have been maimed, and will strengthen those that were sick; but the self-sufficient and the strong will be disappointed in that day when He shepherds His sheep in righteousness."

**JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD (34:20-25; JOHN 10:11).**

Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken (vv. 23-24).

In contrast with the many evil shepherds and the division of the kingdom into the northern and southern kingdoms each having their own kings, the LORD "will set over them one shepherd, My servant David" (v. 23). This shepherd will judge between the sheep and feed them and be a shepherd.

**The identity of the true shepherd**

Who is this shepherd? "My servant, David . . . And I, the LORD will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD, have spoken" (vv. 23-24). This coming Shepherd will be known as "my servant David" (37:22-26; 2 Samuel 7:16; Jeremiah 30:9; Isaiah 55:3; 40:10-11; Hosea 3:5). He will establish an everlasting throne of David as Yahweh had promised. This grand promise of the
establishment of an everlasting throne of David finds its fulfillment only in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

No doubt, Jesus had this passage and other Old Testament shepherd imagery in mind when He said, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. . . I am the good shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep; And I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one Shepherd" (John 10:11, 14-16; cf. Luke 1:69; Acts 3:13, 26; 4:25-30).

The True Shepherd makes a new covenant with His flock (v. 25; 37:26)

The True and Good Shepherd will make a "covenant of peace" with His people (v. 25). Jeremiah had called this same covenant the "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31). It is an everlasting covenant" (Ezekiel 16:60). How desperately sinful man needs peace with God, which was lost in the fall. God will restore it in the Messianic Age.

However, we don't have to wait until then to experience inner peace. There is no greater promise of assurance in God's word than these words of the Good Shepherd as He comforts the sheep of His pasture in John 10:24-30:

The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one."

Just like the prophet Ezekiel said, Jesus judges the sheep and gives assurance and comfort to His flock. He declared God's Word very plainly. Those who reject Him are not of His sheep. "My sheep are in the habit of listening to My voice; and I know them, and they follow Me." Have you come to an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd?

Here are six great truths Jesus gives to every true believer:

1. "My sheep hear My voice" (v. 27). They are in the habit of recognizing and paying attention to His voice.

2. "I know them" (v. 27). The Good Shepherd knows His own sheep.

3. "They follow Me" (v. 27). That is the constant habit of the true sheep.

4. "I give eternal life to them" (v. 28). This isn't a passing fad. The Good shepherd loves His sheep and wants them to spent eternity with Him.
5. "The shall never perish" (v. 28). It is double negative in the original language. They shall "not perish, never." They can never perish because "no one shall snatch them out of My hand." You can't jump out either, even if you were stupid enough to do it, because the Father has His hands around the hands of Jesus! "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all . . . " (v. 29).

6. "No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one" (vv. 29-30). Double security! Jesus holds us in His hands and the Father holds Him in His hands! (cf. Romans 8:38-39).

How great is our Savior! Marvelous is His sovereign saving grace.

**THE FUTURE REIGN OF THE SHEPHERD–KING (37:24-38)**

This new covenant of everlasting peace anticipates events and promises never realized in the first return of Israel from Babylonian captivity. They never knew "peace" as described in these passages. Israel returned to her land and was dominated by Medo–Persia, Greece and Rome until A.D. 70 when the Romans burned Jerusalem. Either one must come to the conclusion that this "covenant of peace" was an unrealistic hope that never materialized or that a future event is in mind.

God's "covenant of peace" looks forward to the blessings Israel will experience in the Millennium. This covenant will establish Israel in her land permanently with David's greater Son as her Shepherd–King. Later Ezekiel stated that the covenant of peace would also involve the rebuilding of God’s temple as a visible reminder of His presence (37:26-28).

In chapter thirty-seven, Ezekiel expands on his message in chapter 34. When the Messiah came the first time not many in Israel recognized Him for who He was, but there is a day coming when He will make them one nation in the land. God will restore Israel because of her unique relationship to Him. Yahweh says, "one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms. . . My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. . . David My servant shall be their prince forever" (37:22-25). Now He tells us that the "covenant of peace" will be "an everlasting covenant with them" (v. 26). It is an everlasting kingdom with an everlasting covenant and an everlasting King. "David My servant shall be their prince forever." Then He goes on to tell us we shall worship the Shepherd–King forever. He is also our God. He tells us He "will set My sanctuary in their midst forever" (v. 26). "My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" (vv. 27-28). This is far beyond Zerubbabel and Herod's temples which was consumed by Roman fire in AD 70. It did not stand forever nor was it ever filled with the Shekinah glory.

I don't think you can take seriously these passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel without being reminded of the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 11:25-29.

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob." "This is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." From the
standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God’s choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The promise made in Ezekiel chapters 36-37 will take place in the future when Israel is secure in her own land. One wonderful day the "Chief Shepherd" will appear (1 Peter 5:4). Lamar Cooper writing in *New American Commentary, Ezekiel* expresses the broader fulfillment of these passages. He writes,

The reference in Ezekiel to a gathering from 'all nations' seems to imply a wider scope for the return that looked beyond the first return from the Assyro-Babylonian captivity. This prophecy reflected the hope of a regathering after the A.D. 70 dispersion among all nations of the world (cf. 11:16-17; Isa. 11:12; Jer. 16:15). . . . New Testament conversion is only a preview of the massive spiritual revival God has in store for all of true Israel and Gentiles who believe. The New Testament concept of redemption came out of the theology of the Old Testament. . . . It is clear from our vantagepoint that all of these promises were not fulfilled after the first return from Babylon. . . . The establishment of the messianic kingdom is the theme of this entire section on restoration (pp. 316-332, *et passim*).

Ezekiel "anticipates the future work of God with Israel in bringing about a complete restoration of the nation." The righteous King who is the Messiah in 37:24-28 will carry out the work of the Good Shepherd of 34:23-31. Even so come, Lord Jesus.

"All God's dealings in regard to Israel's future blessing will be in pure grace; nothing will be on the ground of merit, for they have merited only judgment" (Ironside). This is also true of each of us. We merit only judgment because of our sins. However, God in His rich abundant and merciful grace reaches down to each of us this day and offers abundant life.

Have you put your personal trust in the Good Shepherd? He has come to give you eternal life. All you have to do is receive it.
The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel was a captive in the land of Babylon during the seventy years of exile. Nebuchadnezzar had carried him away when the nation of Judah was taken captive. Ezekiel is the first prophet of the exile in Babylon. Daniel, somewhat younger than Ezekiel, lived during the second part of the exile.

Ezekiel saw the terrible sin of Judah and the punishment caused by forsaking the LORD God. "The soul that sins will surely die" (18:4) is equivalent to the Apostle Paul's summary, "The wages of sin is death."

The New Testament book of Revelation is full of Ezekiel. The apostle John saw four living creatures, the throne of God and a man on the throne. The LORD God reigns upon His throne. Ezekiel and John both see the power and majesty of the sovereign Lord. Even though Ezekiel may not have understood all the significance of his mission, he did see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. God reveals Himself through Jesus Christ and Ezekiel saw the revelation of God in Jesus. The Old Testament prophets often spoke more than they knew. Because of the progressive revelation of God in the New Testament we have the privilege of seeing much more in Ezekiel than Ezekiel was privileged to see. He saw the promise; we see the fulfillment realized in Jesus Christ.

**EXILE IN REVERSE (36:22-24)**

God promises to return His people to their own land. The return of Judah to their land in 535 B.C. after the Babylonian exile is promised by the LORD. "For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land" (36:24). However the passage before us, and the next chapter of Ezekiel reaches far beyond the return from the Babylonian exile. Lamar Cooper writes:

The reference in Ezekiel to a gathering from "all countries" seems to imply a wider scope of the return that looked beyond the first return from the Assyro-Babylonian captivity. This prophecy reflected the hope of a regathering after the A.D. 70 dispersion among all nations of the world (cf. 11:16-17; Isaiah 11:12; Jeremiah 15:15)" (Cooper, *Jeremiah*, p. 316).

The restoration is more than a physical restoration to the land of Israel. We will say more about this later. God promised spiritual restoration as well.

**A CLEANSED PEOPLE (36:25)**

"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols" (v. 25). The sprinkling of clean water symbolized cleansing from sin. It has nothing to do with baptism. In the Old Testament sprinkling and washing with water pictured cleansing from ceremonial defilement. God will purify Israel from her sins and God will impart new life.

The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch write, "Cleansing from sins, which corresponds to justification, and is not to be confounded with sanctification, is followed by renewal with the Holy Spirit, which takes
away the old heart of stone and puts within a new heart of flesh, so that the man can fulfill the commandments of God, and walk in newness of life (vv. 26-28)."

The writer of Hebrews saw the fulfillment of this cleaning in the blood of Jesus Christ. "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:11-2). Then he adds, "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God . . . all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (v. 14).

Because of the finished work of Christ "we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh . . . having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22). We have been saved "according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7).

However, that is not all God does for His rebellious people.

A NEW HEART FOR NEW PEOPLE (36:26-27)

A "new heart" and "new spirit" is the promise of spiritual regeneration. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (vv. 26-27).

Jeremiah also spoke of this spiritual change in the heart of sinful man (31:31). The change is in the heart that will cause the people to turn to the Good Shepherd. The people receive a new heart that desires to please the LORD. The "new spirit" (v. 26) is "My Spirit" in v. 27. He is referring to the Spirit of Yahweh (Ezekiel 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). Only the Holy Spirit can empower man to fulfill the word of God. There are twenty-five references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Ezekiel. A new heart and a new spirit are themes Ezekiel reflects on several times.

Jesus may have had this passage in mind when He spoke to Nicodemus one night in Jerusalem. To this upright, moral, spiritually sensitive man Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nic asked, "How can a man be born again when he is old?" Jesus replied, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. . . Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again"' (3:5, 7).

Reflecting on that work of God in the human heart, the apostle Paul wrote: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Holy Spirit changes the heart to cause the individual to "follow" the Lord (v. 27). The Spirit enables and creates the desire in the heart of the person to do what is humanly impossible. The only way to live a life pleasing to the Lord is by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26).
The Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart of the believer will "cause you to walk in My statutes and you will be careful to observe My ordinances" (v. 27). What Moses law could not do God does through His "Spirit within you." His dwelling within enables the "new heart." The heart of stone has been removed and replaced with a "new heart" and "a new spirit."

Only the sovereign grace of God can do that. As the believer yields to the Holy Spirit He enables us to "walk" in the statutes of God and carefully observe His "ordinances." The holy life is an exchanged life.

One of the most intriguing ideas is the people will return to the land and live in it permanently. The meaning is to "live" or dwell as permanent residents and is the opposite of the non-immigrant or alien. "You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God" (v. 28).

How strange that this promise becomes a stumbling block to some students of God's word when the greater miracle is the radical change in the heart of believing sinners. If we take verse 28 for what it says God will take care of the logistics. He will bring the people back to "the land" "from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you back into your land" (v. 24). The problem is not God's doing it, but is our accepting the impossibility of man doing it. God will do it in His own way in His own time. The people "will live in the land" as permanent residents. This will be a God sized accomplishment; not something brought about by politicians.

Not only will He bring his people cleansed, forgiven with a new heart and new spirit to their land, but also He promises fruitful agricultural production. Observe who instructs the increase in the fruit trees, grain, crops, etc. There will be no more famine for the people in the land. God's fruitfulness will cause the people to see His glory and repent (vv. 29-30). God instructs the grain to produce and the crops to yield abundantly. "I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, that you may not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations." Duguid observes, "God will also restore the land to a 'better-than-original' state. " It will be like the Garden of Eden before sin invaded it.

How will you know that it is for real? The result will be a radical change in the heart. "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and your abominations" (v. 31). True repentance will have taken place in the core of their being. The people will "remember" their evil ways and will "loathe" their iniquities. They will not secretly want the opportunity to be tempted to sin again. They will no longer be ready to sin when the temptation comes. They will see their former life style and feel the revulsion. That is what every true believer should experience when they pause and silently reflect upon their sins of the past in the sight of God. God is holy, and His holiness should cause us to loathe our past sins. His holiness should produce a desire in our hearts to be holy.

Modern man needs the message of this passage in its context. God will not do it because He loves us or for our sake. He does it out of "concern for My holy name" (vv. 21, 32). His name is holy and He does it for His glory alone. "It is not for your sake . . . that I am about to act, but for My holy name . . . " (v. 22). "I will vindicate the holiness of My great name . . . the nations will know that I am the LORD . . . when I prove Myself holy among you in their sight" (v. 23). This reveals God's purpose. He "will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land" (v. 24). The purpose is so His holy name will be redeemed.
The honor of God's name will be vindicated by a show of power among the nations when He brings Israel back to her land (36:21-23). The Lord will act, not for Israel's sake, but for the sake of His own name. The root of God's action in restoring His people is grounded not in His love (which suggest something loveable about the object of His affections) but in a demonstration of His holiness" (Ian M. Duguid, *NIV, Application Commentary, Ezekiel*, p. 415).

What God does for Israel as well as non-Jews is an act of sovereign grace. No one deserved this restoration promises (v. 32). A sovereign holy God reached down to Israel in His amazing grace to save and restore. "The only reason for the continued existence of human beings on this planet is God's commitment to His external plan sovereignly to save for Himself a people" (Duguid, *Ezekiel*, p. 421).

Have you personally experienced this "new heart" and "a new spirit"? Jesus Christ came to give you eternal life. All you have to do is receive it.
Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel were the prophets of the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah covers the last days of the southern kingdom in Jerusalem as the Babylonians were battering down the walls of the city in 586 B.C. The Israelites in Babylon felt their nation was dead. God's prophecy through Ezekiel was to "the whole house of Israel" which was being held captive. Israel had "died" and there was no hope. The vision of the dry bones is a prophecy of the restoration of Israel to her land when the greater son of David will reign as king and all Israel will "have one shepherd." The reviving of these dead bones signified Israel's national restoration. It depended on God's power alone for a national and a spiritual restoration. The breath of new life in the dead corpses symbolized the work of the Holy Spirit (36:24-28).

The great visions of Ezekiel weave together a theme of hope to a desperate people who are suffering in exile for the sins of their nation. The vision is powerful and vivid. Lamar Cooper observes, "Death in most of the Old Testament was viewed as an impossible situation from which there was no return." To see this vast army revived and living in the land was startling and unexpected.

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel watched in visions the glory of the LORD departing from the temple in Jerusalem. He saw the Shekinah glory leaving the inner court and moving to the outer court and then rising and moving out to the Mount of Olives and rising up from there. Had God completely forsaken His people?

ISRAEL RESTORED TO THE LAND

In chapter thirty-seven Ezekiel describes the remarkably beautiful vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. He sees in his vision a valley full of dry bones, bones that are not joined together, and then when joined they have no breath in them. Then God breathes upon them and they come to life again. This picture of God's resting grace illustrates what God is going to do with the nation of Israel. From God's perspective she has been lying there as a nation for 2,000 years in a state of death, but a day will come when God will breathe upon this nation. Like the valley of dry bones, it will receive new spiritual life, and God will use it to reestablish His kingdom on earth.

As Ezekiel was giving his prophecy he saw "the bones come together, bone to its bone" (v. 7), "flesh grew" and "skin covered them" (v. 8), "breath entered them," and "they stood up" (v. 10).

The LORD was kind enough to give us the interpretation of the vision in vv. 11-14. "These bones are the whole house of Israel... Thus says the LORD God, 'Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves and caused you to come up out of your graves, My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and you will come to life; and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,' declares the LORD" (37:11-14).
Most interpreters agree that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is not the main point of this chapter. The main purpose of the vision was the restoration of Israel. However, if God could bring a hopeless dead nation to life, it would be a small step to the realization that the same God could conquer man's greatest enemy, death.

It also needs to be noted that this vision is not a preview of the birth of the New Testament church. The early church, which was composed mainly of Jewish people, never applied the name Israel to the church. That application came centuries later. It is true some of the Old Testament figures are applied to the church, however Romans 11:1-36 reminds us God fully intends to restore Israel and that many will be saved by grace through faith in Christ alone just as many Gentiles are being saved today. The blessings of the new covenant are not an equation of Israel with the church. Lamar Cooper writes,

Ezekiel clearly envisioned the transformed land of Israel in chap. 36 and the national resurrection of Israel in chap. 37. We must take care not to banish the Israel of the old covenant from the picture in favor of the church. Thus the promises of Israel are not promises to be collected exclusively by the church. . . The arrival of the church age did not circumvent Israel but God's plan to share his salvific love with all people (Rev. 22:17). It also assured that Israel would someday be included in the fulfillment of this promise (Rom. 10:1-21; 11:25-33). (Cooper, NAC, Ezekiel, p. 322).

In a second symbol Ezekiel gives the uniting of the sticks which pictured God's restoring and reuniting His people in the land as a single nation (37:15-22). It has nothing to do with the Mormon cult's teaching that the Book of Mormon and Bible being joined together. That is heresy. The prophecy is the bringing together of two contrasting entities into a "compound unity." It is the rejoining of two nations into one.

Verse twenty-one restates the purpose of the vision and the goal of the LORD. The Lord God says, "Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king over all of them; and they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into the two kingdoms" (vv. 21-22). God will have weaned them off idols and "their detestable things" and "transgressions." God will deliver them and "will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (v. 23).

"Only God can produce life for those who are physically and/or spiritually dead (37:3). Nothing but a miracle will resurrect the dead (John 11:25; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58)" (Cooper). The revival of the nation can only be attributed to the power of God. When the Gentile nations see that happening they "will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever" (v. 28). It is the Holy Spirit who will empower the dead, dry bones and give them life (v. 14) and God alone will get the glory.

Who will be this "one king" who will be "king for all of them"?

**DAVID WILL BE THEIR KING (37:24-28)**

The LORD reaffirms and reinforces the previous message to His people about who their deliverer will be. They are incapable of delivering themselves. They are like dead people in a grave. They are powerless. The LORD makes this clear in vv. 24-28.
My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.

This restoration of Israel is a foundational thought in Hebrew prophecy regarding the exile. Our minds hasten back to Ezekiel 34:23-24 where he has already introduced us to "one shepherd, My servant David." All of these grand prophesies take us back to the original promise to king David in 1 Samuel 7:13-16. The identification of the Shepherd-King David is Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Son of God (Luke 1:69; Revelation 7:14-17; 14; 22:16; 1 Peter 5:4; John 10:11-18; 1:34, 41, 49; Matthew 2:2).

Under "My servant David" the people will be led by the Holy Spirit to obey God's ordinances and keep His statutes (v. 24). They will enjoy the "everlasting" "covenant of peace" (v. 26). You can not escape the emphasis on "everlasting" and "forever" in vv. 25-28 because it is used five times.

John Walvoord keenly notes, "The Israelites residing in Palestine today are not the fulfillment of this prophecy. But it will be fulfilled when God regathers believing Israelites to the land (Jeremiah 31:33; 33:14-16), when Christ returns to establish His kingdom (cf. Matthew 24:30-31)."

"The reestablished kingdom will have an everlasting king who will be 'my servant David,' an everlasting 'covenant of peace,' an everlasting 'sanctuary,' and an everlasting blessing (vv. 24-28)" (Cooper, p. 327).

**EVERLASTING WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY**

Moreover, Ezekiel sees the "sanctuary in their midst forever" (v. 26). In chapter forty, he describes with astonishing, precise detail the coming restoration of the temple. He sees the glory of God returning to the Holy of Holies and the Shekinah establishing itself in the Holy of Holies. In his vision Ezekiel sees the throne of God and underneath it the river of God, sweeping through the temple, out the eastern side, across the land and into the Dead Sea to heal its waters. This can't be Zerubbabel's temple because it was consumed by Roman fire in A.D. 70, and therefore, did not stand forever. Many Hebrew scholars remind us that it was never filled with the Shekinah glory. It is a glorious picture of the Spirit of God in the millennial kingdom. "The passage anticipates the future work of God with Israel in bringing about a complete restoration of the nation." God is not through with Israel.

We are the temple of the living God

Let's pause and make a beautiful application of Ezekiel 47:1-9 to our lives as believers in Christ. Here is a marvelous picture of the restoration of the temple of God in man. The apostle Paul wrote, "We are the temple of the living God" (2 Corinthians 6:16b). The living God dwells in the holy of holies in the temple of our bodies. This is the secret of the exchanged life of the believer of Jesus Christ. It is a life in which the resources of the Holy Spirit are discovered and applied to our daily lives.

Ray Stedman wrote years ago,
If we read this as referring only to the literal fulfillment, we will miss much of the value and all of the beauty of this book, for this entire story can be applied to you as an individual. What God does on a large scale in the history of the world, He is ready to do on a smaller scale in the history of your life. As He is ready to call back out of death and to give life to a nation that turns to Him in the midst of its degradation and weakness—as He was ready to do for Israel—so He is ready to do with an individual. Here is a beautiful picture of the saving grace, Jesus Christ, making us alive in Him, calling us back into glory of the manhood and womanhood that God intends for us. Then follows a picture of the enemies we face, and how God goes before us and destroys them one by one as we walk by faith.

Jesus stood in the temple on the last day of the feast of the Tabernacles and cried out, "If any man thirst, let him keep coming to Me and let him keep drinking" (John 7:37). "He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water" (v. 38).

Ezekiel saw a throne and flowing out from under the throne was a river. The water of the Spirit came from the very throne of God. Ezekiel sees the river move past the altar, the place of sacrifice. "We can never drink of the water of the Spirit unless we are willing to do so by means of the cross of Calvary. It is only as we are willing to accept the judgment of death upon the flesh—the natural man and his abilities, ambitions, and desires—that we can drink of the river of the Spirit of God" (Stedman).

Ezekiel sees the river quickly grow large enough in which to swim. There are no tributaries. It's source is God. It is a "great, gushing, mighty torrent of life coming from under the throne of God." Three times the prophet in his vision says, "He led me through."

Have you as a believer of the Lord Jesus Christ experienced these living waters? This is what it means to abide in Christ and walk in the Spirit.

The waters were ankle deep

Has the Holy Spirit led you to the place where the waters are ankle deep? I pray you don't stop there. Too many of us have experienced only a shallow sense of God's grace and power in our lives. I am convinced this is why people take off on carnal tangents and chase after religious fads. They flock from one emotional experience to another and remain shallow spiritually.

We are carnal—still fighting with God and His Spirit within. The carnal believer is still selfish, disobedient, unbelieving. He is only ankle deep, still resisting God's grace.

The waters were knee deep

Moreover, Ezekiel says, "He led me through and it was knee deep." Have you begun to hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God? You will never be satisfied completely until the Holy Spirit places within your heart a hunger and thirst to be right with God in every area of your life. When was the last time you saw God? Only the pure in heart see God. Do you find yourself down on your knees crying out to God for more of His presence?

The waters were waist deep
Then Ezekiel was led through to water up to his loins. There is less and less of the old nature dominating the believer and more and more of God's grace revealing Christ within. Who has the power and control in your life? Are you still in conflict between the sovereign will of man and the sovereign will of God? Zechariah 4:6 says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts." Has the Holy Spirit brought you to the place of quiet yielding obedience to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit? Life in the Spirit is the only way to live.

The waters over his head

Ezekiel saw one more thing. "He led me on and the water had risen and it had become a river to swim in. " It is the picture of the believer utterly committed to God's will in his life. He is now over his head. God is in control. The grace and the power of God controls his life. When Ezekiel went back to the bank of the river he saw trees. God brought healing to the barren deserted land. The river is fertile. The river of life that flows from the throne of God is full of life.

Galatians 5:22 says God produces in the believer all kinds of spiritual fruit. It is the fruit of the Spirit and wherever the Holy Spirit is in control of the person will be fruitful. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (5:22-25). Some of us have been at every stage of spiritual life Ezekiel is describing and there is still room for growth.

Revelation 21:1-2 is a picture of the same river of life. The river in these passages of Scripture is clearly the Spirit of God's testimony to the risen Messiah. He brings spiritual refreshment and blessing. On either side of the river the tree of life bears fruit with spiritual healing for all who partake of it.

The refreshing waters from this river are free for all who will humble themselves and drink. There is a river of water that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. The Savior stands and gives the great invitation to all who will come to the fountain and drink. "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come,' and let the one who hears say, 'come.' And let the one who is thirsty come: Let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. It is fully offered to all who will come and drink.

To the woman at Jacob's well Jesus said, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

Have you experienced the river of the Spirit of God? Does the Holy Spirit flow right through the center of your life? That is when you begin to live, and your life becomes full of God's presence.

It has been suggested that the temple Ezekiel is describing (48:35) may ultimately picture the resurrection body which is the new temple for God. However, God's present temple is composed of all those who have been built by the Holy Spirit into the house of God.

Tragically, some have never experienced this life in the Spirit that God gives. You are still "dead in your trespasses and sins." And you will remain dead spiritually until the Holy Spirit comes into your life and raises the dead.
"When it comes to the vision of the heavenly city we understand that God is using symbols of wondrous beauty and glory to set forth the magnificence and marvelous character of the eternal home of the saints. The river there is clearly the Holy Spirit's testimony to the risen Christ, which brings refreshment and blessing everywhere it goes, and we see on either side of the river the trees of life with its marvelous fruits, speaking of the message of the gospel which brings spiritual healing to all who receive it" (Ironside).

Frequently the Scriptures use the symbol of a river as referring to the grace of God in Christ ministered to the soul in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Have you personally experienced this new life in Christ? Jesus Christ came to give you eternal life. All you have to do is receive it.
Daniel 2, 7, 9, 12

The Coming of Messiah the Prince

The Old Testament scholar Clyde T. Francisco wrote, Daniel "is a marvelous prediction of the coming of the Messiah and the messianic kingdom and of the eventual triumph of that kingdom (2:44-45; 7:7-28; 9:24-27; 12:1-4)."

The book of Daniel contains the crucial foundational passages concerning Israel and the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In these chapters you will find one of the most incredible prophecies of the coming of Christ ever recorded. The phrase "in the latter days" describes "the coming of the messianic age which God will bring in as the climax of history. It is the final period when God will bring in His kingdom and all history will reach its consummation... This present age with its sin and rebellion will give way to the 'age to come' in which evil will be destroyed and all wrongs set right... The interpretation of the mystery is a message about this coming kingdom," writes D. S. Russell.

We will make every attempt to allow the Bible to speak for itself as we apply the historical-grammatical rules of interpretation and therefore, let the Bible tell its own eternal message.

Years ago the beloved expositor Harry Ironside said, "Where there is light, there is bugs." It is my prayer that we see the light of the Shekinah glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. May He deliver us from the bugs of wild fanciful imagination and hermeneutical abuses.

I have only one agenda: what does the Word of God say. I want to examine carefully His Word and be obedient to its message.

Someone called the book of Daniel "the book of Revelation in the Old Testament."

The claim in the book is that the author Daniel made the prophecies contained therein and therefore must be taken in their plain sense. Daniel lived about 620-535 B.C. and wrote his prophecy in that time period while living in exile in Babylon.

The book of Daniel opens with Daniel as a young captive in Babylon. The events are centered on the captivity of Israel in 583 B.C. when the city was destroyed and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took the Israelites to live in the city of Babylon and provinces of the Babylonian empire. Daniel is one of those captives who were taken as a teenager from Jerusalem to spend the rest of his life in exile in a foreign land. The book ends with Daniel as an elderly man, honored and respected as a statesman, having served under several kings in both the Babylonian and Medio-Persian empires.

Four nations are referred to symbolically in visions and dreams in Daniel. They are Babylon (605-538 B.C.), Medio-Persia (538-331 B.C.), Greece (331-146 B.C.) and Rome (146 B.C.-A.D. 476).
A VISION OF THE FUTURE WORLD KINGDOMS (2:31-45)

In chapter two Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had some nightmares. He dreamed and called his "magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans (master astrologers), to tell the king his dreams" (2:2). He put panic in their hearts when he told them to "declare to me the dream and its interpretation" but he didn't tell them what the dream was. He forgot it! The counselors rebelled because they knew they were on the verge of exposure for their deception. If they were truly able, by supernatural power, to interpret dreams, then surely it would make no difference to them if the king remembered the dream or not. Their supernatural powers would give them the unremembered dream! Therefore, their duplicity was exposed. When they failed to come up with the dream Daniel told the king, "There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries," and He always bats a thousand. This God, says Daniel, "has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days" (2:29).

Daniel reveals and interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:31-35).

You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome. The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

In verses 36-40 Daniel interprets the dream for the king. There are four empires and Babylon is the first empire with Nebuchadnezzar as the head. A second kingdom which would be inferior to the first would follow it. History identifies it even before the book of Daniel closed, as the Medio-Persian Empire. It in turn is followed by a third empire that came upon the scene quickly. Chapter eight of Daniel reveals it as the kingdom of Greece under Alexander the Great. The fourth empire includes the Roman Empire. The book of Revelation clearly identifies this empire with the city of Rome. It is significant that the period embraced by the image covers all of time from the Babylonian Empire to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The remarkable thing about this dream is its ending. A final kingdom comes out of nowhere and smashes the huge image. "You continued to look until a stone was cut without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them" (v. 34). It didn't have any human help. It was by divine providence. It is the kingdom of God. The final kingdom that comes out of heaven as a stone cut without hands and strikes the grotesque image and destroys it is the kingdom of God. All of the kingdoms of men will end at the appearing of God's kingdom. If we have any doubt it is quickly cleared up in verse 44. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." Ultimately God's kingdom will prevail over all the earth with the right monarch on the throne. He will be the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the "blessed and only sovereign" (1 Timothy 6:15). He is God's rightful King. God's eternal purpose will then be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). It is the kingdom of God through the reign of the Messiah (cf. Luke 1:31-33; John 18:33-40). "How great are His signs, and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (Daniel 4:3).
"There are many Messianic prophecies," writes Leupold, "such as Isaiah 2:1-4 in which the Messiah's times are described without specific mention of the Messiah. Daniel has other strong references to the Messiah, cf. 2:44, 45; 7:13-14; 9:24-26."

It is also significant that we have not yet reached the end of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning. As we shall see in this Hebrew prophecy the empire of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has long ago crumbled into dust and the great Babylon is an uninhabited desolation of ruins covered with the dust of the centuries. However, it is still the dream that this king dreamed that is being fulfilled by the world political powers even in our day.

THE "SON OF MAN" IS COMING (7:13-14).

Chapters two and seven seem to follow the same general pattern. Most scholars interpret the four beasts in chapter seven as the same nations we saw in chapter two, Babylon, Medio-Persia, Greece and an empire beginning with Rome but extending to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Daniel writes,

I kept looking in the night visions,  
And behold, with the clouds of heaven  
One like a Son of Man was coming,  
And He came up to the Ancient of Days  
And was presented before Him.  
And to Him was given dominion,  
Glory and a kingdom,  
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language  
Might serve Him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
Which will not pass away;  
And His kingdom is one  
Which will not be destroyed.

The "Son of Man" referred to here is not strictly a man as other men are but appeared as other men. It is a comparison. We immediately think of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, the God-man. His two natures are perfectly working together. This divine nature is reflected in the fact that He appears "with the clouds of heaven."

This is the term Jesus used to identify Himself with humanity. It speaks of His lowliness, humanity, patience as well as triumph and victory. He uses the term over 80 times in the Gospels as a substitute for the pronoun "I." He used it when making great claims on men and when referring to His suffering, death and resurrection. But He also uses it when speaking of His future glory and His coming again (Matthew 16:27, 28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Luke 22:30).

In the book of Revelation He is seen in the opening chapters as possessing all power in heaven and on earth. He takes the scroll with the seals and opens it. Daniel sees this same person coming with clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days (cf. Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62). Christ is often associated with coming in clouds of heaven (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7; 14:14).
Jesus told the high priest at his trial, "You shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heavens." The high priest knew what Jesus was saying and almost had a stroke. This is why they voted that night to kill Jesus and crucify Him the next morning.

On another occasion Jesus said, "The Son of Man shall come in His glory with all His angels with Him. Then He will sit on His glorious throne" (Matthew 25:31). At that time His throne will be established and all nations shall gather before Him and worship Him. The Lord God is in sovereign control of history. "The promised kingdom finds its fulfillment in Jesus. The consummation of that kingdom remains a mystery which will one day be revealed, but in a very real sense it is already present in Him. To proclaim the events of His life, death and resurrection is to preach the good news of the kingdom. To respond to Him in repentance, faith and love is to enter the kingdom. To be 'in Christ' is to be part of that 'new humanity' which is God's 'new creation'" (Russell).

There shall finally come an eternal dominion by the Messiah. It is a double statement in verse fourteen: "everlasting dominion" and "will not pass away." The parallel statement reinforces the duration of His Kingdom, "and His kingdom will not be destroyed." It is what Leupold calls an "absolute assurance."

The title "Son of Man" has depths of meaning for Jesus' profound sense of messianic consciousness. This Son of Man is also the Suffering Servant of Yahweh who will reign eternally as the King of glory.

**THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH THE PRINCE (9:24-27)**

Chapter nine of Daniel is in the context of the prophet–statesman praying over the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding the 70 years of exile in Babylon. God sent the angel Gabriel in response to the prophet's prayer (9:20-23). Daniel records what Gabriel said to him:

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate."

**Seventy Weeks (v. 24)**

God marks out a specific period of time. He even gives a definite starting point when the time period will begin. It is a clear precise recorded event in history. Gabriel speaks in symbolic language. The Hebrew term "weeks" literally means "units of seven." All scholars agree that seventy weeks can not be ordinary week but must be seventy periods of seven years each. It is impossible to find any epoch in Jewish history, lasting but 490 days, in which the events narrated here could be verified. The "seven" means year weeks, seven years to each prophetic week. The units of seven designate years, not days or weeks. Here the seventy units of seven would equal 490 years. Daniel had been studying Jeremiah's prophecy regarding the
seventy–year period of captivity and realized that the time was nearing for the end of the predicted captivity. Daniel had lived through the whole Jewish captivity and was praying about it, so it was natural for him to understand these as years. These seventy weeks cannot be ordinary weeks but must be seventy periods of seven years each or 490 years which best fits the historical context.

In this revelation to Daniel the 70 weeks describes the cutting off of Messiah Prince which sharply distinguished His first coming from the time of His reign as King over Israel. This is the first passage to refer to the "Messiah" (v. 25). He is the "anointed one." The verb is Mashach and involves consecration. The passage speaks of the purpose, time and results of His coming. "The New Testament usage of 'the Christ,' i.e., the Anointed One, is built on this word and plainly refers to Jesus" (Leupold). The Mashach of v. 26 is identical with the Mashach nagid of v. 25, "Christ, who in the fullest sense of the word is the Anointed" (Keil).

**Six objectives**

Several things will take place during the 490 years. Here we have the sum total of all that God promised to do to men.

- Finish the transgression

- Make an end of sin

- Make atonement for iniquity

- Bring everlasting righteousness

- Seal up the vision and prophecy

- Anoint the most holy place

The events during this 70 "week" period have been divided into three segments. In seven "weeks" or 49 years the wall of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and restoration accomplished. This began in 445 B.C. (Nehemiah 2) when the decree was issued by King Artaxerxes. Secular historians all give the date 445 B.C. That is the correct starting point for the 490 year period. Clearly history confirms the fulfillment of that prediction when the city of Jerusalem was rebuilt.

Then followed a second period of 62 weeks of years, or 434 years, when the Messiah the Prince will be cut off and have nothing. Add 434 years to the 49 years and you have 483 years until the coming of the "anointed one, a Prince." The "anointed one" is the "Messiah Prince." From the going forth to rebuilding of Jerusalem till the coming of the Messiah Prince would be 483 years. It began in 445 B.C. and it is completed in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus was 30-33 years old when the 69 units of seven
were completed. This is another prediction of the death of Christ in the Old Testament. Christ in His death made atonement for iniquity (Isaiah 53:10; Romans 5:10; 3:21-22; Jeremiah 23:5-6) The Messiah was rejected by His own people and did not at that time receive the kingdom that belongs to Him as the Son of David. Then the nation that rejected the Messiah was destroyed in A.D. 70 when the Romans burned Jerusalem. Jesus prophesied the destruction of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44; 21:24).

At the destruction of the Temple the Roman soldiers were so angered by the defiant stubborn Jews that they disobeyed their generals and burned the temple, melting the gold and silver so that it ran down the cracks between the stones of the temple. To get to the precious metal the soldiers pried the stones apart and fulfilled Jesus' prediction that not one stone would be left standing upon another.

The purpose of the coming of the Messiah will be to take away the transgressions of the people (v. 24a). We know from history that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for man's sin on the cross at Calvary. The first three deal with the removal of sin and its consequences. This Jesus did on our behalf by dying on the cross.

Jesus "was cut off and had nothing" (v. 26). This "cutting off" is from a word meaning "to hewn down, to fell, to cut to pieces, signifies to be rooted up, destroyed, annihilated, and denotes generally a violent kind of death . . . " (Keil and Delitzsch). He received a crown of thorns instead of a royal crown of the King. He was given a broken reed instead of a royal scepter. He was hung on a bloody cruel cross instead of being seated on a throne of glory. However, in that crucifixion he "made atonement for the iniquity." The first part of the accomplishments was fulfilled when Jesus was "cut off" on the cross. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not" (John 1:11; cf. Isaiah 53:8; Mark 9:12; Luke 24:26).

Then Gabriel told Daniel, "the prince of the people who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined" (v. 26). That occurred with the complete destruction of Jerusalem by General Titus in A.D. 70. Cf. Matthew 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 19:43.

The 70th Week

What about the remaining one week or seven years? We have come up to 483 years out of the 490 years.

Some scholars take the final "week" as having already taken place, applying it to the first coming of Christ. The cutting off of the Messiah is followed by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, then by desolations unto the end. Titus accomplished the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. This interpretation sees its purpose and fulfillment in the sacrificial death of Christ.

Other scholars view the last "week" or seven years as in a holding pattern. Nothing in history of Israel have yet fulfilled this remaining seven years of the prophecy of Daniel. There is no account in Acts to indicate when this period ended. The 70th week has yet not come. We are still waiting for the events of the last week to occur. The only conclusion is the remaining seven years is still future and we are waiting for the final week to begin. Everything has been accomplished through the death of Christ to make atonement for iniquity. However, the "bringing in everlasting righteousness" will be fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom. The "anointing of the most holy place" could refer to the dedication of the holy of holies in the millennial temple (Ezekiel 41-46), or the enthronement of the Messiah as the King of kings in the Millennium.
If this view is correct then "the prince to come" is a reference to the Antichrist who will make a firm covenant with many for one week, including a covenant with Israel permitting her to restore sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. v. 27; Matthew 24:15-21; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). In the middle of that seven–year period, the Antichrist will break his covenant and stop the sacrifices. He will establish his own wicked rule and religion (v. 27b; cf. Revelation 19:20). The defeat of the Antichrist by the Lord Jesus Christ will lead to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Clyde T. Francisco says, "After Antiochus is conquered, the even greater Anti–Messiah shall also meet defeat at the hands of the Messiah. (This king comes from the fourth kingdom, so cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes)"

**EVEN SO, COME LORD JESUS**

When will this take place? No one knows! The message of the Scriptures is for us to be ready for Christ's return. Bible prophecy as a rule avoids setting dates in the future. When you hear someone on radio or TV, or in the newspaper or in their latest book speculating about dates and codes, stop and remember no one knows when He is coming. Only the heavenly Father knows when. Burn the book and go on with life. Any date setting is foolishness. It is a definite sign that the individual or group is like Nebuchadnezzar's soothsayers.

Because this great prophecy of Daniel has already been partly fulfilled in precise accuracy concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ, we can rest assured that the rest of this prophecy will be as accurately and fully fulfilled when He returns. Let's leave the logistics up to His sovereign knowledge and power (Acts 3:17-21). Since the first 69 weeks have been perfectly fulfilled according to Daniel's prophecy, I am confident He will work out in His own perfect way and time the one remaining "week" to His full satisfaction.

One esteemed Old Testament scholar writes, "To expect too little from prophecy means to find but little in it. The final goal of God in His dealings with men is here realized, the thing that also makes the conclusion of the book of Revelation." Another accurately states, "The words of Moses and the prophets have a meaning and a significance far beyond their own plain sense (cf. Luke 24:44ff). They point beyond themselves to their fulfillment in Christ and the Good News of His salvation."

Like the temporary stopping of the missile launch countdown clock, God's clock on Israel will resume again. It would appear there has been "a partial hardening to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved . . . From the standpoint of the gospel they (Israel) are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:25-29).

Are you ready for His return? Even so, come Lord Jesus.
Hosea 1-3

One Leader Who is David their King

Hosea is a book of love in the Old Testament, and it is a beautiful illustration of grace. "In coming near to Hosea, we come very near to Christ."

He is the prophet of a broken heart who learned how Yahweh suffers over the sins of His people. The dominant theme of the book is God's love. The shattered romance of his life led him to see an even greater romance. "Hosea was able to see God's inexhaustible love as no other prophet had understood it," writes Kyle M. Yates. He is "the champion lover of all literature. He takes his place among the greatest lovers of all the ages." As G. A. Smith well said, "The man learned God's sorrow out of his own sorrow." With each pang of suffering Hosea came to know the infinite heart of a holy God more clearly.

Yahweh had married Israel in His covenant of grace. However, Israel was like an unfaithful wife who had broken her covenant with God. She chose to go after idols of the neighboring nations like an adulterous wife. Yahweh, because He is holy and righteous, must punish her unfaithfulness.

The time covered by the prophecy of Hosea is undoubtedly the darkest in the history of the kingdom of Israel. It was a period of military dictatorships, despotism, murder, political intrigue, anarchy, bloodshed, misrule, mass confusion and idolatry. It was a day full of broken covenants.

Against this backdrop, writes Keil; "This love bursts out in the flame of holy wrath . . . . A gentle sound of divine grace and mercy is ever heard in the midst of the flame, so that the wrath gives expression to the deepest anguish at the perversity of the nation . . . " Her salvation rests on Yahweh alone and His deliverer. Their deliverance will be a divine deliverance (1:7).

The kingdom of Israel had fallen away from Yahweh and had sunken into idolatry. She had become an adulterous nation. Hosea paints a vivid picture of the ugliness of sin. His language is graphic because Israel had thoroughly perfected her adultery. "The land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking Yahweh" (v. 2).

Because of her deliberate disobedience the LORD said, " . . . I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel. On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel" (vv. 4-5).

Judgment will fall upon the nation. "For great will be the day of Jezreel" (v. 11). The name Jezreel means "judgment," or the "threatened judgment." The first son of Hosea was named Jezreel after the fruitful plain of Jezreel. There king Ahab had murdered Naboth and stole his vineyard. The result was the extermination of his dynasty. It was there that many acts of unrighteousness had been committed and Hosea says judgment will fall on Israel at Jezreel. "The day of Jezreel" would be the day the nation was broken in the valley (v. 4). It will have great consequences on the nation.

But it also becomes a reminder of God's salvation (vv. 10-11). There they will be weaned off their idols and trust in "the living God" as their only hope as in opposition to dead, lifeless, brainless idols.
One Leader will Unite the People

E. W. Hengstenberg says, "The peculiarity of the Messianic prophecies of Hosea, as compared with those of the time of David and Solomon, consists in the connection of the promise with the threatenings of judgments, and in the Messiah's appearing as the light of those who walk in the deepest darkness of the divine judgments." He adds, "In Hosea the Messianic announcement meets us in its most developed form."

The messianic predictions uttered by the Hebrew prophets are closely connected with the messages of coming judgment. It is the LORD God in opposition to the heathen gods that is boldly proclaimed. The all-powerful Messiah is seen as the invincible conqueror of the heathen world. He will subject the whole earth to the kingdom of God as we see in Daniel. He will be the "one leader" who will unite His people under the LORD God.

Something wonderful is going to happen where "You are not My people," it will be said to them "you are the sons of the living God" (v. 10). The children of Israel and Judah will be reunited together under "one leader" (v. 11). It will be one single head, or one prince king who will bring the people together. The bringing together of the people will be under Yahweh and David their king. It will take place under messianic times. Only a small number have come to Him which "furnish a pledge of their complete fulfillment in the last times, when the hardening of Israel will cease and all Israel be converted to Christ (Romans 11:25-26" (Keil and Delitzsch).

It is obvious this is the correct application when we turn to 1 Peter 2:10 and Romans 9:24-26. Both Peter and Paul quote the passage as proof of the calling of Gentiles to be the children of God in Christ. Israel had become like non-Jews and had fallen from the covenant of Yahweh. The apostles affirm that God had adopted the Gentiles as His children. This promise to Hosea is that after the Gentiles have been saved a large number of Jews will respond to God's saving grace in the Messiah. However, Israel's heart is still "hardened."

The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch came to this conclusion:

The fulfillment of the promise must also include the incorporation of believing Gentiles into the congregation of the Lord (Isaiah 44:5). This incorporation commenced with the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles by the apostles; it has continued through all the centuries in which the church has been spreading in the world; and it will receive its final accomplishment when the fullness of the Gentiles shall enter into the kingdom of God. As the number of the children of Israel is thus continually increased, this multiplication will complete when the descendants of the children of Israel, who are still hardened in their hearts, shall turn to Jesus Christ as their Messiah and Redeemer (Romans 11:25-26).

Hosea 1:10 is quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 9:26. Paul gives us further light on the meaning of this verse. The sovereignty of God is the theme in Romans nine. God in His sovereign grace has included the Gentiles.
And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles. As He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, ‘My people,’ and her who was not beloved, ‘beloved.’"

"And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, ‘you are not My people,’ There they shall be called sons of the living God."

Israel will be reinstalled, but in the mean time Gentiles will believe and become "the sons of the living God." Blessings will come to the non-Jewish people.

The apostle Paul did not want believers in the church at Rome to be ignorant of what God was doing with His people. He wrote, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved . . . " (Romans 11:25-26a). Then he goes on to quote Isaiah 59:20, 21 to remind us that it will be "the Deliverer," the Messiah who will accomplish this great event. There is no ground for spiritualizing the reference to the Jewish people, "Israel," in verse twenty-six. A. T. Robertson and Charles Hodge insist that Paul is referring to the whole nation. George Ladd reminds us the rejection of Israel is not permanent.

The "partial hardening" need not mean "every Jew without a single exception," but Israel as a whole, the nation, the eternal objects of God's electing love. The emphasis is on God's sovereign saving grace. These Jewish people will be saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It will no longer be just a small remnant who will be saved but many will be saved as a result of the hardening being terminated.

The "hardening" is the "covering with a callus" (Thayer). It is "mental dullness, dulled spiritual perception." But remember it will be a "partial hardening." A day will come in God's perfect timing when they will respond and be saved by His grace. That will take place Paul says when "the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." When the church is completed and every Gentile has entered into the kingdom and the total number of the elect are saved God will once again turn to the Jewish people and their hearts will respond to His wooing love and they will believe on Him and be saved. "How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (v. 33).

This will not be a political movement, but the sovereign hand of Yahweh and His anointed One.

**Who is "David their king?"**

Some expositors think Hosea 3:5 was fulfilled in the return of the remnant to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. However, the great day of Jezreel has not yet come. That will occur when the Messiah, Jesus Christ returns and Judah and Israel will be gathered together under "one leader." By far the greater number of interpreters understand Him to be the Messiah, therefore, verse eleven still remains unfulfilled.

The "one leader" is a ruler who would be able to bring about a change in the attitude of the people of Israel toward both the northern and southern tribes. This "new head" would be the unifying force that could
lead the nation to reestablish itself as in the days of ancient David. They would return from exile, repossess the land and become a great nation as when David was their great king.

David had long been dead and buried in Jerusalem; but Hosea represents this person in his everlasting dominion, which the Jews knew would "last as long as the sun and moon."

There is nothing against these events being realized in the messianic age. Hosea may have equated all of these accomplishments with the messianic age and the reign of the second David when the great day of Jezreel would be accomplished. It would be a day of victory for Yahweh. The Messiah would accomplish his work in the messianic age. In Christ we see most fully concentrated the mercy of God. In His appearance and everlasting dominion the promises given to David were first to be fully realized.

This same refrain is picked up again in Hosea 3:4-5. "For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols" (v. 4).

Verse four finds fulfillment in the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C. and the Babylonian exile in 586 B.C. The city of Jerusalem and the Temple were completely destroyed in A.D. 70.

"Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days" (v. 5). This verse reminds us of 1:11. Keil writes, "The true return to the Lord can not take place without a return to David their king, since God has promised the kingdom to David and his seed forever (2 Samuel 7:13, 16), and therefore David is the only king of Israel (their king). This King David, however, is no other than the Messiah."

These events will not take place until "in the last days." This expression is not a reference to a future time generally, but "always the closing future of the kingdom of God, commencing with the coming Messiah (Genesis 49:1; Isaiah 2:2)." These days are always associated with the messianic age. It never occurs in any other sense than the messianic times. This is a theme stressed through out the prophetic books in the Old Testament. These days anticipated the suffering, punishment and the return of the golden age of David. The prophets used the expression "the latter days" to refer to the messianic age when the throne of David would be reoccupied by one of his descendants.

The future of Israel is a returning and seeking the LORD their God and David their King who is Christ. This is the way the ancient Jewish writers understood Hosea 3:5. It can not be referring to King David who died and was buried in Jerusalem. It is David's greater Son and David's Lord, Jesus Christ (Ezekiel 37:23, 24). When Christ returns many in Israel will be converted to Christ. They will respond to His saving grace and put their faith in Him for salvation.

The greatest authorities among the Jewish religious leaders declared, "The last days means the days of the Messiah." The ancient Jewish Targum of Jonathan says, "This is the King Messiah; which he be from among the living or from the dead. His name is Messiah."

God is so deeply in love with His people that He will not be turned aside in His search for His people. His love will not fail. We can leave the logistics of the future up to Him.

"The prophet sees a vision of God waiting, yearning, pursuing, wooing, winning, redeeming and restoring His wandering wife. Surely God can make the way of salvation possible," observes Yates.
Indeed, He has in the all-sufficient work Jesus Christ accomplished on our behalf. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Hosea 13:14

Ransomed from the Power of Death

Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol?
Shall I redeem them from death?
O Death, where are your thorns?
O Sheol, where is your sting?
Compassion will be hidden from My sight.

It is helpful to keep in mind that this remarkable passage is set against the background of a nation that had for 250 years maintained an idolatrous worship. The context of chapters twelve and thirteen tell us that judgment was imminent toward Ephraim. Evil leaders led the northern kingdom astray. It all began with self-exalted pride, and then idolatry to rob the people's hearts away from God. The nation had committed spiritual adultery by going after the neighbor's idols. Hope had all but disappeared for the people of Israel. The probability of Yahweh's judgment seemed certain because there was no way Israel could escape divine judgment. They had provoked the LORD God to anger. None of their iniquities had been forgotten. Every evil deed would be called to account. God would send Sheol to do its worst (v. 14a,b). They were beyond mercy. The future of the nation would be one of drought, famine and loss of every thing valuable they had gained through dishonesty and deceit (v. 15).

The two opening statements in verse fourteen may be translated better as rhetorical questions implying a negative answer: "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from death?" Clyde Francisco rightly observes, "The context demands that verse 14a,b be read a question, "Will I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Will I redeem them from death?"

Judgment was coming upon the nation.

It is time for death to unleash its thorns of destruction upon the people (cf. vv. 15-16). They alone were responsible for their guilt. In the Old Testament, death was viewed as an impossible situation from which there was no return. All who died went to the grave called Sheol. There was no return from this huge, relentless monster standing with mouth open wide ready to sweep everyone into it.

In verse twelve the prophet refers to an ancient Oriental custom of tying up money and other valuables in a bundle and hiding it. This was done for security purposes. The Lord will see to it that their sins and iniquities will not be hidden. All their sins were preserved for judgment. "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is stored up" (v. 12). It is interesting that the pains of childbirth come upon "him" (v. 13).

Redemption from death will come. They will be ransom from the power of Sheol. From the context it is obvious Israel will be raised from its national death. She has long been buried among the nations without spiritual and national life, just like those who sleep in the power of Sheol. Yahweh will deliver the faithful of Israel and Judah and they will rise from the dust of the earth. Israel was like a dead man, buried among the nations, wandering like a shade in Sheol. It is a picture of national restoration.
Yahweh had delivered His people in the past, could He do it again? In spite of the coming judgment Yahweh gives a word of hope saying He will redeem His people from the power of national death. With the threat also comes a promise.

Once again, it is a reminder of the words of Daniel 12:1, 2; Isaiah 26:19 and Ezekiel 37. A remnant of Israel and Judah will awaken from their death–sleep, and shall come forth at the call of Yahweh to return to Zion with singing and everlasting joy in their LORD.

The idea of the resurrection of the dead was not a clear understanding in the Old Testament. There is nothing in the Old Testament that can compare to the great passage like Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58. Even a grand passage like Ezekiel 37 is not teaching a doctrine of the resurrection as its main point. However, since Yahweh is the author of life, the possibility of the resurrection must be kept open. Both Hosea and Daniel give us insight into that hope and Ezekiel saw the nation raised from destruction to newness of life. "The full and deep meaning of these words was but gradually unfolded to believers under the Old Testament, and only attained complete and absolute certainty for all believers through the actual resurrection of Christ" (Keil). The annihilation of death is expressed forcibly with these words of triumph: "O Death, where are your thorns? O Sheol, were is your sting?" Let me hasten to caution that this passage in Hosea does not teach restitution of the wicked. It has nothing to do with the wicked dead and their future. It applies to the restoration of Israel. Of course, it is a small step from the realization that the God who could resurrect a dead nation can also conquer the greatest enemy of mankind.

**Death is dead**

The only one who ever escaped the reign of death was Jesus Christ. On some blessed morning there will be another fulfillment of these words of Hosea. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28, 29). These words of Jesus shouldn't cause us to be amazed, because right now there are those who having read this passage have made a personal commitment of their lives to Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and have passed from spiritual death to life. The day of the Messiah's appearing in glory has not yet come. This is a day of calling out men and women to turn from the self–worship to the Savior.

The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, applied the language of this text to depriving Sheol of its prey (cf. 1 Cor. 15:55-56). He was not offering a textual and exegetical analysis of verse 14, but saw in these words a grand application of our own resurrection. The apostle Paul wrote in 15:51-57 the following:

**Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The Old Testament scholars Keil and Delitzsch says, "The Apostle Paul had therefore very properly quoted these words in 1 Corinthians 15:55 in combination with the declaration in Isaiah 55:8, 'Death is
swallowed up in victory,' to confirm the truth, that at the resurrection of the last day, death will be annihilated, and that which is corruptible changed into immortality."

John Walvoord writes,

The apparent victories of Satan, in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:13) and on Golgotha (Mark 15:22-24) were reversed on the cross (Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15) and vindicated in the resurrection of Christ. From the vantage point of the certain resurrection of the saints, Paul voiced his taunt against death and Satan.

The Christian hope, since Christ rose from the dead, is that both the living and dead shall be changed and therefore receives the resurrection body. We find the same idea at more length in I Thessalonians 4:13–18.

Death will be utterly vanquished forever. For those who belong to Christ, death’s power will be removed forever. The apostle Paul saw in the resurrection of Christ the absolute defeat of death and absolute and everlasting triumph of the power of God. We look forward to the ultimate and final resurrection when Christ returns. What a day of rejoicing that will be!

The great apostle reminds us to keep our perspective about these future events. He keeps our feet on the ground saying, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (v. 58). The Second Coming of Christ always has it ethical applications for those of us living today.

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes power over death. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Joel 2:28-32

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Joel, a Hebrew prophet in 835 B.C. describes a devastating locust plague in detail. You can hear the swarms of locust moving through the vineyards in 1:4, 7. It is against such a devastating disaster of swarming, crop-eating locusts that Judah experienced in Joel’s day that makes the promise of the outpouring of God’s Spirit so remarkable. Three thousand years later we receive Joel’s words eagerly because we come to the same God of grace with hearts of repentance and faith.

Joel proclaims an even profounder message of the coming Day of Yahweh. It will be a sudden conclusion to human history and brings all humanity to the point of divine judgment. If we allow the focus to shift from Joel’s locust’s plague to our morally and spiritually depraved day we see tremendous relevance of this prophetic message. Salvation and destruction go hand in hand. The Day of the LORD is a day of salvation as well as a day of judgment.

The opening chapter speaks of desolation because of Judah’s sins.

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DESOLATION (1:1-2:17)

Locust swarms by the millions had invaded Judah and have totally destroyed the land (1:2-7). Therefore the prophet issues an urgent call for national day of prayer (vv. 13-20). The prophet sees the calamity as the hand of God. He recognizes the sovereign hand of God behind the plagues and His divine deliverance (v. 15). Joel calls the people to repentance (v. 13). He writes in 1:4, 7,

What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten;
And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten;
And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten. . . .
It has made my vine a waste
And my fig tree splinters.
It has stripped them bare and cast them away;
Their branches have become white.

John D. Whiting wrote an article describing a locust plague in Palestine in the December 1915, issue of National Geographic. "Thus Joel, writing some seven or eight hundred years B. C., begins his description of a locust plague. We marvel how this ancient writer could have given so graphic and true a description of a devastation caused by locusts in so condensed form." (p. 511). In 1915 the first swarms of adult locusts appeared in March, coming from the northeast, going toward southwest in such "thick clouds as to obscure the sun for the time being" (p. 513). The females, about two and one-half to three inches long, at once began to lay their eggs, sinking a hole about four inches deep into the hard soil and depositing about 100 eggs. "It is estimated by competent authorities that as many as 65,000 to 75,000 locust eggs are concentrated in a square meter of soil" (pp. 516, 521).
In 1915 the fully developed flying locusts appeared about June 10 and at once began to complete the destruction begun in the earlier stages. They attacked the olive trees, whose tough, bitter leaves had not been to the liking of the creepers. Food becoming scarcer, both creeping and flying locusts attacked the olive trees, and “between the two they stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark. Likewise, every variety of tree was attacked. . . Of the cacti they ate away layer after layer over the whole surface, giving the leaves the effect of having been jack-planed.” (p. 542). The full-grown locusts had cleaned up every bit of vegetation.

Even in the year 2000 A.D. scientists tell us if the locusts are not destroyed or contained shortly after they hatch and once the swarm has formed control efforts are minimal. Plagues continue as long as climatic conditions favor the large hatches. One such swarm reached across the Red Sea and was estimated to have covered 2000 square miles. A swarm can contain up to 120 million per mile.

Joel tells us though God is gracious and slow to anger the current locust plague is the backdrop of a future desolation (2:1-11). The Day of the LORD is coming and is a major theme of Joel (2:1, 11, 25). God intervenes in the affairs of Israel (Zeph. 1:14-18; Joel 1:15) and heathen nations (Isa. 3:6; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 30:3). It will be a day when all moral accounts will be settled: (1) For the wicked it is a day of judgment and punishment, but (2) For the faithful it is a day of glory, reward, salvation and vindication of the righteous. However, there is more to his message because it is also illustrative in that a historical incident represents a partial fulfillment of the eschatological Day of the Lord. It is an eschatological “day” of the Great Tribulation (Isa. 2:12-19; 4:1), the Second Coming of Christ (Joel 2:30-32) and the Millennium (Isa. 4:2; 12; 19:23-25; Jer. 30:7-9).

Therefore the prophet issues a call to personal repentance (vv. 12-14, and a day of national repentance (vv. 15-17). On this historic occasion the people repent and God intervenes and saves Judah.

THE DELIVERANCE OF JUDAH (2:18-3:21)

God is faithful to His promises (vv. 25-27). In the context of this call to personal and national repentance the prophet lifts his spiritual sight and sees with his prophetic lenses another day and a greater promise for his people. It is something unheard of in the Old Testament. “The signs of the dawning of judgment are appended to the outpouring of the Spirit of God,” writes Keil.

Again, the prophet sees beyond the local repentance and revival of the nation to a future day when the nation will receive supernatural blessings (2:28-3:5)

Joel declares in the days of the Messiah the Holy Spirit will be poured out “on all flesh,” and not just a few individuals for specific assignments. The special gifts of the Spirit were given only to certain individual Israelis. However, in the age of grace the gifts of the Spirit will be poured out on all mankind (Acts 2:8-11, 39, 41; 10:34-47; 11:20, 21; 15:7-12). The “all men” refers to all believers, male and female, slave and free, youth and old, irrespective of age or sex, or social standing. Joel declares that God will pour out His Spirit in abundant measure, an overflowing supply. It is an ever-renewed outpouring on generation after generation. It will be the age of the Spirit.

Joel says in verses 28-29:
It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind;
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

“To pour out” signifies “communication in rich abundance, like a rainfall or waterfall.” It is true the Spirit of God is the only inward bond He has with His people, but the outpouring in abundance with the gift of the Holy Spirit was confined to the few whom God chose and endowed as prophets. This limitation was to cease in the future. Moses expressed his desire that all the people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them (Num. 11:29).

The “sporadic communication of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament” cannot be regarded as the “outpourings of the Spirit of God.” Keil observes, “This first took place when Christ Jesus the Son of God had completed the work of redemption, i.e., on the first feast of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of Christ.” The outpouring of the Spirit shall continue until the fullness of the Gentiles shall enter the kingdom of God. This was fulfilled along with Joel’s prophecy in the future.

The promise made in Joel is far greater than anything experienced under the law. The emphasis is on the greatness of this fresh outpouring of the Spirit. As Calvin stressed, it “does not mean merely to give in drops, but to pour out in great abundance. But God did not pour out the Holy Spirit so abundantly or copiously under the law, as He has since the manifestation of Christ.”

The greatest evidence as to where Jesus Christ is at the present time is the reality of Pentecost. We know that Jesus has risen from the dead, ascended into heaven and is now seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us because He sent the Holy Spirit just as He promised. The Holy Spirit came just as He promised on the day of Pentecost; therefore, Jesus is in heaven. “The last days” in Acts 2:17 had arrived. They began with Christ’s first advent and will continue until the second.

The Old Testament scholar, J. W. Watts said, “As the condition of restoration is spiritual, so the consequences are represented as a pouring out of the Spirit, a great spiritual fruitage. Upon all classes will come this blessing, men and women, young and old, servants as well as masters.” Then he adds, “The fulfillment of this prophecy on the day of Pentecost, as point out by Peter in Acts 2:14-21, does not forbid other fulfillments.”

The apostle Peter quotes the whole passage in Joel as fulfillment at Pentecost in Acts 2:16-21. Our understanding of Joel and Peter’s interpretation must be with constant vigilance with what the Holy Spirit has taught by the prophets and apostles (1 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 2:10-13).

The apostle Paul has given us an infallible explanation and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out on the 120 believers, on the day of Pentecost, that was the very thing “which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” That was the gift of the Spirit who came as the accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. The outstanding characteristic of the prophets of the Messianic times such as
Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit without any limitations. Ancient rabbis expected the fulfillment to take place in the future on the advent of the Messiah.

“No single case occurs in the whole Old Testament of a slave receiving the gift of prophecy,” observed Keil. Therefore, the outpouring of the Spirit on slaves is something very extraordinary. The Jewish community did not expect it.

F. F. Bruce writes, “Certainly the outpouring of the Spirit on a hundred and twenty Jews could not in itself fulfill the prediction of such outpouring ‘upon all flesh’; but it was the beginning of the fulfillment. . . The effect of the Spirit’s outpouring is the prophetic gift, exercised in visions and dreams and by word of mouth.”

**Possession of the Spirit is down payment of every believer.**

In the Old Testament we often read of the Holy Spirit coming “by drops, as it were, upon the judges and the prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream, as was promised with an eye to gospel times.” Peter tells us that this came about in the “last days,” the days of the Messiah. The blessing is not just for Jewish people, but also for Gentiles. The Spirit shall be “poured out on all flesh.” In Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Rom. 10:11-13). In Christ there is neither bond nor free (Gal. 3:28). I doubt if Peter understood the full implication of this until the Spirit taught him at the home of Cornelius and his friends who were Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). The Holy Spirit now works in the hearts of men bringing conviction of sin, righteousness, unbelief and the judgment of God. He works in unbeliever’s hearts to bring them to an understanding of God’s salvation offered through the death of Jesus Christ. And when a person is born again He comes to live within the person and the believer’s body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit.

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Fruit is the mark of authentic believers. You will know them by their fruits. To what extent are we manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in our daily life? God expects the believer to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Jn. 15:1-12).

Christ is seen as the One who will give the Holy Spirit (2:28; Jn. 16:7-15; Acts 1:8), who judges the nations (3:2, 12) and who is the refuge and stronghold of Israel (3:16).

**The coming Day of Yahweh**

Joel pictures the gathering of all nations for judgment. It will be a time of judgment that will come upon all nations after the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. The later prophets, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, Ezekiel and Malachi, quote him and develop even further this theme. Again J. W. Watts notes: “(1) It is accomplished by JHVH; (2) It is caused by the unrighteous treatment of Israel at the hands of the nations; (3) It happens in the time of warfare against Judah and Jerusalem; (4) It is climaxed

Keil and Delitzsch note, “It will be the last decisive judgment, in which all the single judgments find their end.” These wonders are extraordinary and marvelous natural phenomena. They call to mind the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:17; 9:24).

Joel 2:30-32 describes such a future scenario:

I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.
The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.
And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord
Will be delivered;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As the Lord has said,
Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

F. F. Bruce has an interesting observation on Peter’s quote of these verses.

The wonders and signs to be revealed in the world of nature, as described in vv. 19, 20, may have more relevance in the present context than is sometimes realized: it was little more than seven weeks since the people in Jerusalem had indeed seen the sun turned into darkness, during the early afternoon of the day of our Lord’s crucifixion. And on the same afternoon the paschal full moon may well have appeared blood–red in the sky inconsequence of that preternatural gloom. These were to be understood as tokens of the advent of the day of the Lord, “that great and notable day,” a day of judgment, to be sure, but more immediately the day of God’s salvation to all who invoked His name (*NIC, Book of Acts*, p. 69).

Compare the Day of the LORD in Joel in 2:30-32; 3:1-21 with the words of Jesus in Matt. 24:31; 25:40, 45, and John in Revelation 16:14; 19:14; 14:18-19. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming which will be ushered in with “wonders in heaven and hearth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood.” It will be completely fulfilled in the Day of Judgment at the end of time. The judgments of God will come upon a sinful world. As Joel declares it will be a summons to judgment (3:1-17) and result in the great consummation (vv. 18-21). The LORD God reigns. He is sovereign over the universe. Judgment of the nations goes hand in hand with the outpouring of the Spirit.
**Only way of escape**

However, let us ever keep in mind that there is a way of escape from the wrath to come. How does God restore the years the locust have eaten? There is only one way and that is through Jesus Christ the Messiah. He offers forgiveness and the indwelling of His Spirit in everyone who will call upon His name in repentance and faith. God will deliver you from the Day if you will repent today and believe on Christ as your savior. The apostle Peter brought his greatest message to a close with this invitation in Acts 2:36-39.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

“Calling upon the name of the Lord” is a confession of the mouth and expression of the heart as in Romans 10:9-10, 13. It is only those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ who will receive the outpouring of the Spirit of God. None are saved but those who call upon His name for salvation (Acts 4:12).

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes the giving of the Holy Spirit. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Amos 9:11-15

The Kingdom Restored

Against a backdrop of divine judgment (1:2) the Hebrew prophet Amos gives a message of hope in 9:11-15. A remnant of faithful believers is spared from destructive judgment of Yahweh. Chapter nine opens with a vision of the temple shaken by the Angel of the Lord which falls and buries Judah and Israel under its ruins. However, instead of being swallowed up by the Gentile nations Israel would be sifted by the familiar to and fro motion of one shaking a sieve (vv. 7-10). God is going to shake Israel like a woman shaking a sifter. The result would be a purging type of judgment but through it a purified remnant would be preserved. The dust and the dirt will fall to ground, and the kernel of grain will be left. She shall be purified from all chaff and impurity.

Amos has two contrasting themes with the dominant subject of Israel's sins and coming judgment in the first eight chapters. However, with 9:11 there is expectation of a restored kingdom. Cf. 5:3, 14-15. God promised to raise from the fallen nation a new people for Himself (9:11-12) and return the people to the land (9:13-15).

I take these words as genuine words of Amos as John R. Sampey understood them. “When he returned to Judah and wrote out his prophecies, these words of promise and hope formed a fitting conclusion to his bitter denunciation of Israel’s sins.”

Amos is probably the first of the Hebrew prophets to relate the kingdom to the “day of the L ORD” (5:18). He expected Israel’s promised salvation to be the climatic event at the end of history.

RESTORING OF THE KINGDOM OF DAVID (9:11-12)

God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16 remains true even in the most desolate of times. The judgments prepare the way for God's mercy and salvation comes only through the house of David. By this time in history it was becoming clear to the prophets that the promise given to David can be fulfilled only in the Messiah. Amos declares in verses 11-12:

“In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,  
And wall up its breaches;  
I will also raise up its ruins  
And rebuild it as in the days of old;  
That they may possess the remnant of Edom  
And all the nations who are called by My name,”  
Declares the Lord who does this.

Rebuilding David's Reign (9:11)
No king, past or present, had rivaled king David during the golden age of the kingdom. He was a symbol of greater things in the future. Hebrew prophets had a message of future hope in turbulent times (Ps. 2; 72; Amos 5:18) even though by the time of the restoration there would be nothing left of the kingdom but a “booth,” “tabernacle,” or hut made of branches used for temporary shelter by soldiers in battle. It was a lean-to or shepherd's hut. They were booths constructed of branches and leaves to hide from the weather. Amos sees the repairing and rebuilding of David’s house as a symbol of Israel’s greater restoration. The ancient Jewish rabbis adopted "the Son of the fallen" as one of the titles of the Messiah. Though he does not use the terminology here the kingdom of David could only be raised up through an offshoot from David's family. This can be no other than the Messiah.

Moreover, only God could bring about the revival of the nation as described by Amos (9:11-15). He speaks of the "fallen booth of David" (v. 11). No descendent of David had ruled in the North since 931 B.C. when Jeroboam I led the rebellion.

The "booth" is in contrast to "house of Jacob" (9:8) and "house of Israel" (9:9; cf. 5:2; 8:14). God promises in verse eleven to restore the nation like its golden age. But Amos is speaking of a future spiritual kingdom, not a political one. The Zionist movement would not fit the description.

A descendent of David would be humble and establish a worldwide kingdom (Isa. 9:6-7; Mic. 5:1-5a). The apostles identified Him as Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:22-36; cf. Matt. 1:1; 2:6). Jesus began His ministry by calling the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6; 15:24; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:5ff; 13:46; 14:1). Pusey remarks, "The royal palace had to become the hut of Nazareth ere the Redeemer of the world could be born, whose glory and kingdom were not of this world."

The time of the restoration would be "in that day" (Amos 9:11; 5:18-20). It would be a day when God would purge the nation by its devastation. It would be a day of judgment. This occurred in 722 B.C. and in 586 B.C. The remnant of "Joseph" in the South (5:15) survived until 586 B.C.

All of the prophets foresee the Messiah's appearing at a time of the deepest debasement of the Davidic dynasty and total loss of the royal dignity.

However, "the day of the Lord" would also be a day of salvation and restoration. There was a limited restoration when the exiles returned from Babylon under Zerubbabel and Nehemiah 538-430 B.C. But this restoration did not meet the lofty expectations predicted by the prophets.

In Acts 15:13-18 James at the Jerusalem Conference interpreted Amos' prediction of a renewed kingdom as fulfilled in the preaching of the Gospel. He appealed to Amos 9:11-12 and sees its fulfillment in the Gentiles who have believed on Jesus as the anointed of God.

James speaks as a typical Hebrew who affirms from the Hebrew Scriptures that God was taking from the Gentiles a people for Himself. James was quoting Amos from the Greek translation called the Septuagint (LXX). In the Greek translation the “nations” or “Gentiles” (ethne) stand in contrast to the “people” (laos) which usually refers to the Jewish people. God called the descendents of Abraham to be His chosen people (Deut. 14:2). “You are a people (LXX, laos) holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the people (LXX, ethne) on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be His treasured possession.” God would reestablish His King so all nations ("mankind") would have salvation. Jesus brought salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike.
God chose Israel to be His chosen people. At the Jerusalem Council James declares that Yahweh has chosen a people for Himself from among the Gentiles! James uses the Hebrew Scriptures to teach that He has also called the Gentiles to be His chosen people in the full sense that Israel is.

F. F. Bruce writes, “James’ application of the prophecy finds the fulfillment of its first part (the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David) in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, the Son of David, and the reconstitution of His disciples as the new Israel, and the fulfillment of its second part in the presence of believing Gentiles as well as believing Jews in the church.”

In the end of times God’s people will consist of a restored Israel from David’s “booth” and a group of Gentiles who will share in the same messianic blessings, yet they will be ethnic Gentiles without becoming Jewish proselytes. Of supreme importance is the fact of the preservation of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

This passage “harmonizes perfectly with the thought of grace going out to the nations.” Moreover, “after the present work of God in taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name is completed, the Lord will turn His hand once more to Israel, and raise up the tabernacle of David, fulfilling all the promises made through the prophets (Acts 15:16-17)” (Harry Ironside, Minor Prophets, p. 184).

God revealed to the apostle Peter that Gentiles are equal partners in the kingdom (Acts 10-11).

**The Extent of David's Reign (9:12)**

Why "Edom"? Edom had been a traditional enemy of Israel. No Edomite exists in the world today. We are not told how God will include a believing remnant of Edomites in David's kingdom at the end of time. Here Edom is probably representative of the Gentiles in general in the parallel expression "all the nations." Perhaps she is representative of the Gentile nations. There is no record of Edomites who trusted in the Lord. James uses a translation of Amos that used the word "mankind" in the place of "Edom." David's dynasty will include people from every tribe and nation.

God would expand the "booth of David" to include Gentile nations. God’s plan has always been to provide salvation to the Gentile nations. It is through Abraham that “all peoples on the earth” would be blessed. Cf. Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18; 26:3-4; 28:13-14; Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-13; 42:1-7; 45:22-25; 49:5-7; 55:1-5). When God restores the kingdom under David’s greater Son, both Jews and Gentiles will bear the name of the Lord.

Persons who submitted to the Lord's anointed King would become a part of the kingdom. Therefore, the main characteristic of the rebuilding of the kingdom is salvation provided through the lineage of David at a time of deepest abasement.

**RESTORING THE PEOPLE TO THE LAND (9:13-15)**

God will bless His people with the same intensity with which He has punished them. Kyle Yates said, “Instead of the hills melting because of God’s anger, they would flow with the produce of the vineyards upon their slopes and melt (lit. dissolve themselves) by the abundance of the harvest.”
**Planting Fields (9:13)**

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord,  
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper  
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;  
When the mountains will drip sweet wine  
And all the hills will be dissolved.

The future restoration included the land, its cities, and the return of God's people. God promised to bless the land with an unprecedented prosperity. God would reverse the calamity. The promise is in contrast to loss described in 5:11, 16-17; 3:9. Walvoord and Zuck write:

Instead of drought and famine (Amos 1:2; 4:6-8), there will be unending prosperity (9:13; cf. Lev. 26:3-5, 10; Deut. 28:4-5, 8, 11-12).

Instead of the turmoil of war (Amos 2:13-16; 3:11, 15; 4:10-11; 5:2-3; 6:9-10; 7:17; 9:1, 10), there will be unbroken peace which will enable Israel to enjoy the fruit of her labor (v. 14; cf. Lev. 26:6; Deut. 28:6).

Instead of the fear of exile (Amos 4:2-3; 5:5, 27; 6:7; 7:11, 17; 9:4), Israel will confidently defend herself from every foe and remain in the land (v. 15; cf. Lev. 26:7-8; Deut. 28:7, 10).

In the days when God restores Israel, the land will be so productive (cf. Isa. 27:6) that the plowman who starts in October will have to wait for the reaper who should have finished in May. The one who treads grapes in July will find the planter still sowing new seed into the ground broken by the long-delayed plowman. The grapes will hang so heavy in the mountain vineyards that the hills will drip and flow (lit., ”melt“) with new wine (cf. Joel 3:18). So much juice will drip from the vines or overflow from the vats that the mountains will appear from a distance to be "dissolving" as softened mud will ooze down the slopes (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*).

You cannot help but think of Paul's word in Romans 8:19-25 when he says God has promised to redeem His creation. The earth will be restored to the likeness of the original creation. Paul describes some of the wonders of the earth's redemption.

**Planting Cities (9:14)**

After release from exile they would rebuild the ruined walls and cities. But this could be only a partial rebuilding and fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy. Kyle Yates says many “interpreters see in this verse the foreshadowing of the restored kingdom of David, wherein we find the germ of Israel’s great messianic prophecies.”

“Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel,  
And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them;
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.

“A near fulfillment,” writes Irving Jensen, “would be Israel’s return to the land from captivity; the distant fulfillment would be a kingdom without end. The eternal reign of Christ is in view.”

The doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Messiah includes the renewal and restoration associated with the true redemption because the historical Jesus is truly the “Son of Man.” There will be a time of messianic restoration and blessing. Amos instills hope in the righteous remnant by reminding them of God’s steadfast love.

**Planting people (9:15)**

“I will also plant them on their land,
And they will not again be rooted out from their land
Which I have given them,”
 Says the Lord your God.

God promised to "plant" the people in their homeland. He promised to prosper the land and the people. It would be a secure land in which the blessing will endure forever. It is a lasting event in which they will never be torn from the land again. God's people will dwell forever in the land He has given them. Cf. Deut. 34:4; Josh. 21:43-45. This would happen only when God established the eternal reign of David's greater Son. The reestablishment of David's throne was fulfilled when Jesus came. The rule of the house of David was a fore gleam of the eternal, universal dominion of God in Christ. II Sam. 7:13-16; Lk. 1:32-33

**When did the restoration of Israel happen?**

Some suggest it was fulfilled in 538 B.C., 200 years after Amos prophesied. Zerubbabel returned to the land from Babylon with a group to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6).

A small remnant did return from exile and rebuild the city walls and the temple and it was thriving during Jesus’ time, but the civil rule was exercised by Rome and the spiritual leadership was a family of depraved Sadducees and self-righteous Pharisees. However, it was again destroyed by the Romans in 70 A. D. and therefore was not an everlasting restoration.

Other scholars suggest the modern state of Israel is the fulfillment of Amos. This has come about in the restoration of the State of Israel in 1948. They believe God is committed to the land and the people. However, the modern State of Israel is a secular, non-religious political movement.

Still others see the fulfillment in the church of Jesus Christ. They see the remnant being transformed into the Christian "remnant." The real Israel consists of all the faithful believers from the exile through modern times and into the future.
All of these suggestions have some truth to them but they are only a foreshadowing of the ultimate fulfillment of the promise by the Messiah. At the second coming Jesus will set up His kingdom and reign triumphantly over all the earth. Believers will enjoy the everlasting rule of God.

The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch wrote:

The raising up of the fallen hut of David commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian church by the apostles; and the possession of kingdom and all the other nations upon whom the Lord reveals His name, took its rise in the reception of the Gentiles into the kingdom of heaven set up by Christ. The founding and building of this kingdom continue through all the ages of the Christian church, and will be completed when the fullness of the Gentiles shall one day enter into the kingdom of God, and the still unbelieving Israel shall have been converted to Christ . . . . This sifting will be first brought to an end through the judgment upon all nations, which will attend the second coming of Christ. Then will the earth become a Canaan, where the Lord will dwell in His glorified kingdom in the midst of His sanctified people.

The last three verses remind us of Isaiah 2; 4 and 11. The Lord Jesus Christ will be enthroned as the King upon the throne of David. God will establish the eternal reign of David’s greater Son. The rule of the house of David was a foregleam of the eternal, universal, dominion of God in Christ. The ultimate fulfillment of all these passages is found only in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Just as we are seeing God gathering out from the nations of the world a people of His own Name there is coming a day when He will again work in the stony hearts of His own people Israel (Rom. 11:25-29). Our sovereign God is not through with Israel. A day will come when His Spirit will draw many of the Jewish people to respond to His saving grace. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Kenneth Matthews says, “At His second coming, He will reign triumphantly over all the earth; and believers who have entrusted themselves to Him will join in that everlasting rule of God.” The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes the giving of the Holy Spirit. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Obadiah 15-17

Obadiah's Hymn of Indignation

Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, and is the most unlikely place where we would expect a positive word about the Messiah’s reign. In deed, the prophecy has been described as a "Hymn of Hate," and "Obadiah's Indignation Oration." This Hebrew prophecy could be from the oldest writing prophet and could be placed in B.C. 845. Others give it a later date of 587.

Obadiah means "Servant of Yahweh." The theme of his short prophecy is the destruction of Edom whereby one historical event is taken as occasion for a prophecy. In it he predicts the destruction of Edom, the most hated enemy of Israel. But he also sees another day of judgment upon the enemies of God. He sets his sights on "the Day of Yahweh."

A Repugnant Family Feud

To understand Obadiah we must go back to the days of two brothers Jacob and Esau. Jacob beat his older brother out of his birthright and as a result two brothers and their descendents have been fighting ever since. They have taken sides and waged war with each other. Esau's descendents settled in the land of Edom. It was south of the Dead Sea, marked by well-watered plains, on an important caravan trade route that became a very wealthy trading center. They were notorious for making raids on their neighbors and retreating to their impregnable strongholds at Sela (Petra), Teman and Bozrah.

The bitter hatred of the Edomites was reinforced in Numbers 20 when they refused to allow the Israelites passage through their territory while fleeing from Egypt. In the conquest of the Promised Land they fought against Israel. Later King David and his son Solomon subdued them, and the Edomites later rebelled under King Ahaz. This family feud was long, bitter and tragic. One writer says, "It is significant that nowhere in the Old Testament is any mention made of the gods of the Edomites," and there is no indication that Israel ever went after Edomite gods. There is no indication that they even had a religion. They lived on vengeance.

The pious, patriotic prophet of Judah pours forth the flaming righteous indication of his soul. He denounces the proud Edomites who deserve the punishment of God.

In this brief book Edom is destroyed (vv. 1-9) and the reasons for her destruction are given in vv. 10-14. However, it is against this backdrop of judgment on Edom that we discover that Israel will be restored. A remnant will come forth from Judah vv. 17, 21.

The Ruin of Edom (15-16)

Obadiah has a strong firm conviction regarding the inflexible integrity of God. He is a righteous God who is in active control of every phase of His creation and His chosen people.
The Hebrew prophets looked forward to the time when Yahweh would intervene in human affairs and judge the evil world.

The Edomites represented the self-sufficient, oppressive we can do it all by ourselves without God attitude. The prophets proclaimed the end of all opposition to God. There would come a day when Yahweh would settle all accounts. He will rise to judge the world. That is the coming Day of Yahweh. It will be a day of doom and destruction to all opposition to God and a day of salvation and victory to the people of God.

Obadiah saw the "Day of Yahweh" looming near for all the enemies of God in verse fifteen.

For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations.
As you have done, it will be done to you.
Your dealings will return on your own head.

All of the Gentile nations will drink of the cup of the wrath of God. Keep in mind the Day of the LORD is a demonstration of divine justice and divine grace.

Edom's defeat is but a prelude to the overthrow of all powers set in opposition to the LORD.

Edom is best regarded as a type of the power of the world that is in opposition to and hostile to God and His kingdom.

The cause of Edom's ruin is their wickedness toward Israel (vv. 10-11). Edom was hostile because Yahweh elected Israel (Genesis 27:41).

Edom and all the enemies of Israel will receive just retribution for their sins against Israel on the Day of the LORD. The day is drawing near on all the nations. The rule will be "as you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head."

It would appear that Obadiah was the first prophet to use the expression "day of Yahweh." It is a day "on which Jehovah reveals His majesty and omnipotence in a glorious manner to overthrow all ungodly powers, and to complete His kingdom." Out of this comes the idea of "the day of judgment and retribution which predominates in the prophetic announcements . . ." (Keil and Delitzsch).

But judgment is only one side of what is in view on that day. God reveals His glory in judgment as well as salvation. In verse sixteen he writes:

Because just as you drank on My holy mountain,
All the nations will drink continually.
They will drink and swallow
And become as if they had never existed.
The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch observe that our passage describes, "not only judging all nations and rewarding them according to their deeds (vv. 15b, 16), but as providing deliverance upon Zion (v. 17), and setting up His kingdom (v. 21). The retribution will correspond to the actions of Edom and of the nations."

Moreover, "... Obadiah regarded Edom as a type of the nations that had risen up in hostility to the Lord and His people, and were judged by the Lord in consequence, so that what he says of Edom applies to all nations which assume the same or a similar attitude towards the people of God. From this point of view he could, without reserve extend to all nations the retribution which would fall upon Edom for its sins."

However, as we shall see it is a divinely ordained future for Israel.

**The Role of the Remnant (17-21)**

"But on Mount Zion" is a fresh cool breeze against the heat of the hot, hostile night. Obadiah writes in verse seventeen:

> But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,  
> And it will be holy.  
> And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions.

Most scholars see verse twenty-one as part of the stanza formed with verse seventeen. The theme of Zion dominates both verses 17 and 21. Verse 21 takes up the phrase "on Mt. Zion" which begins in v. 17. My Zion is the seat of the kingdom of Yahweh (v. 21). It is a type of the kingdom of God in its fully developed form just as Edom is a type of the nations of the world system in opposition to God. Obadiah writes in verse twenty-one:

> The deliverers will ascend Mount Zion  
> To judge the mountain of Esau,  
> And the kingdom will be the Lord’s.

The sacred site will be rehabilitated. The fortunes of God's people are contrasted to the absolute destruction of Edom. There is consolation and hope for the remnant.

H. E. Clements notes, "The possession of Mt. Zion as Yahweh's abode is very closely connected with the right to dwell on the land . . . . Yahweh's holy hill was a symbol of Yahweh's land, and to worship on the one carried with it the privilege of dwelling on the other." When the fortunes are reversed the land too will be restored to its rightful owners. With play on words the prophet links the city of Jerusalem.

Israel's enemy Edom will be destroyed, but Yahweh will restore His people. The true victor, of course, is not Israel, but Yahweh who is sovereign over the Edomites of this world. The Lord God reigns!

Verse eighteen draws out the contrast further by emphasizing the total destruction of "all the nations." God will bring judgment upon the nations of the world.
Then the house of Jacob will be a fire
And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau will be as stubble.
And they will set them on fire and consume them,
So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,”
For the Lord has spoken.

The Old Testament idea of the blessings of God was bound to the material possession of the Promised Land. As Allen observes, "the land had a sacramental significance: spiritual restoration to divine favor is inextricably linked with material restoration of Palestine."

**The Reign of the Deliverer**

Some modern scholars see this and other passages that relate to the restoration of the land fulfilled in the modern State of Israel. On the other hand, other scholars see the contemporary Israel inspired by raw political nationalism rather than by the divine. But cannot our Sovereign LORD use a political, even non-religious Israel, to accomplish His chosen goal? Still other scholars see the territorial Israel transmuted into a supernatural heavenly Jerusalem and new Israel.

One thing is for sure the coming of this kingdom has already begun with Jesus Christ, and in Him it reaches its consummation at His Second Coming.

Edom is only a type of the God-hating Gentile world and therefore the true fulfillment can be seen in Christ alone.

Hengstenberg explains, "The leading thought is: The universal dominion of the kingdom of God which follows the deepest abasement of the people of God, and of which the fullest and most perfect realization must be sought in Christ . . . . The coming of this kingdom began with Christ, and looks for its complete fulfillment in Him." Cf. Joel 3:21; Mic. 4:7; Isa. 24:23.

Just as surely as God fulfilled His judgment on Edom He will also fulfill His promises regarding Zion and her Deliverer!

Who will eventually dominate the world? The house of Jacob, the true people of God will under the rule of the Messiah.

Malachi 1:3 reminds us Yahweh made the mountains of Esau into a wilderness. This can only refer to the desolation of the land of Edom by the Babylonians.

The destruction of the Edomites as a nation was commenced by Judas Maccabaeus in 164 B.C. John Hurcanus subdued them entirely c. 129 B.C. and forced them to accept Judaism including circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic Law. They became the hated Idumeans during the days of Christ and gave to the Jews the Herodian family. They completely disappear from history with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. The Romans slew the Idumeans in Jerusalem along with the Jews. A few Edomites who remained
were lost among the Arabs. The Edomites were "cut off forever" (v. 10) by the Romans. Its very name disappeared from the earth. There are no Edomites living today.

Amos 9:11, 12; Numbers 24:18 and Obadiah 18 all refer to the same events. A Ruler will arise out of Jacob (the Messiah) and, according to Amos it will take place in connection with the raising up of the fallen hut of David, and according to Obadiah, in the day of Yahweh along with the judgment of all the nations.

The fulfillment of Obadiah 17 and 21 can only belong to the Messianic times. It commenced with the founding of the kingdom of Christ on this earth and it reaches its fulfillment at the second coming of Christ.

Jesus Christ alone will be exalted. "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus Christ is Yahweh–God. One day all mankind will be made to acknowledge that Jesus Christ is all He claimed to be—very God of very God. Unfortunately, for many it will be too late for the salvation of their souls. There is a day coming in the future when the exalted place the Savior now occupies in heaven will consummate in the universal submission and acknowledgement of His lordship by all mankind.

Will you submit to His lordship today as a free volitional choice? One day you will not have that free choice. You will bow before Him and confess Him as a sovereign whose right it is to reign. One day we will have the glorious opportunity of being a part of the "great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-10). Even so come, Lord Jesus!

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes the giving of the Holy Spirit. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Jonah 1:15-17

Something Greater than Jonah is Here

What comes to your mind when you think of the Hebrew prophet Jonah?

Fish, a big fish, a whale, a run away prophet are some of the typical answers I get.

What came to Jesus' mind when He thought of Jonah?

The prophet Jonah tells us that he is the son of Amittai (1:1). His name means “Dove” and he belonged to the Ten Tribes of Israel, and grew up near Nazareth at Gath Hepher. He was a prophet who was given a second chance. George Robinson says he was a “man whose religion resided in the realm of emotion, rather than in the sphere of his will.”

Jonah was confronted with the reality that the God of the Hebrews loves the Gentiles. He would rather forgive the repentant sinner than punish.

History or Fable

Either this is true or the greatest fish story ever told! Did God have the creative power to “prepare a great fish to swallow up Jonah”? Could God speak to a fish and cause it to vomit out Jonah upon the dry land? Jesus accepted the account of Jonah as historical (Matt. 12:39-41; 16:4; Lk. 11:29-30). Clyde T. Francisco observed: “If one's God is great enough, the miraculous elements are not disturbing, even to the modern mind.” God can take care of the great monster fish; let's make sure our hearts are right with Him.

B. O. Herring, said, “No reverent biblical student prior to modern times interpreted the narrative as parable or fiction.” Jonah is a simple historical narrative. It is not an involved allegory as some writes suggest. No allegory in the Old Testament has as its hero a historical person. If the book is an allegory it does grave injustice to the real Hebrew prophet Jonah.

If you are willing to accept the fact that Yahweh is the great God of creation and salvation you will not have any problems with Jonah. For Yahweh to "appoint a great fish to swallow Jonah" and Jonah to be in the stomach of the great fish is no greater event than Jesus, the Son of the living God being raised form the dead. I suspect that is the real problem people have with Jonah and other miracles in the Bible. If we can get rid of miracles we can get rid of all moral responsibility to God, or so we think.

Jonah’s Personal Experience

Jonah was a Hebrew prophet who lived about 800 B.C. or a little after during the reign of Jeroboam II. His message is to "present with compelling persuasiveness the responsibility of the saved to save others." It presents the missionary imperative of Israel. Yahweh is a God of grace who also loves non-Jewish people.
The LORD commissioned Jonah to go to the great pagan gentile city of Nineveh the enemy of Israel and preach a message of warning of coming judgment.

"But Jonah . . ." arrests our attention. He is the fleeing prophet running from God and from his vocational demands. Yahweh is anxious to share evidences of His grace, forgiveness, mercy and compassion for a lost world even though it maybe the enemy of His chosen people (4:11). "And should I not have compassion on Nineveh . . .?"

Jonah resisted breaking out of his nationalistic religion. He was regional in his thinking. He was foolish enough to think that he could flee from the presence of Yahweh. You are not going to flee from Yahweh by going to Tarshish or any other pagan city. Jonah "paid the fare" went down into the ship to go "from the presence of the LORD" (v. 3).

Somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea "the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up" (v. 4). Did God get Jonah's attention? No, but He sure got the pagan supposititious sailor's attention (v. 5).

Jonah was sound asleep and when the sailors cast lots the "lot fell on Jonah" (vv. 5-9). He confessed up and when the sailors heard which God Jonah was trying to flee from they became "extremely frightened" (vv. 10-14). After prayer and sacrifice they took matters in their own hands.

"So they picked up Jonah, threw him into the sea, and the sea stopped its raging. Then the men feared the Lord greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord and made vows. And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of the fish three days and three nights" (vv. 15-17).

In the Hebrew way of reckoning time Jonah was in there one whole day and the parts of the other two days, the day before and the day after, and, therefore three days. The Jewish people, even in Jesus’ day, did not reckon time as we do. They counted the day on which any period began as the first day, and then they did the same thing on the day the period ended. Thus, Jonah was in the belly of the giant fish three days.

Jonah prayed (2:1-9), "Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry ground" (v. 11). God called Jonah a second time, "arise, go to Nineveh . . . So Jonah arose and went . . . and they turned from their wicked way . . ." (vv. 2, 3, 10).

**Something Greater than Jonah is Here**

Like the Jewish rabbis of His day, Jesus accepted the book of Jonah as historical (Matt. 12:38-41). Jesus called Jonah's experience in the "great fish" a "sign" of His own coming resurrection from the dead.

Jesus had been performing miracles as He ministered to people's needs. A group of Pharisees and scribes were pressuring Him for a sign form heaven, a miraculous sign. They wanted to have their sensations tantalized. It appears that they pressed him on various occasions for these attesting miracles and He steadfastly refused. He told them in their begging for signs that God had already given them a sign and it was before their eyes. They refused to believe the sign.
These people were not sincere and Jesus knew it. They were asking Him to accredit Himself by doing some striking miracle. They demanded proof that He was the Messiah and they wanted it now. They wanted something unmistakably from God right now. They wanted something produced on demand for instant gratification. Where is the evidence that God is at work in Your life? They wanted to impose their own rules on God.

Jesus responded saying, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here " (Matthew 12:39-41).

Jonah and his strange experience is a type of Christ and His resurrection. When Jesus said, “a greater than Jonah is here” He was not referring to a legendary character, but a real man and a real experience. Otherwise the comparison would not have made sense because Christ rose from the dead. It is clear that Jesus accepted this Old Testament account as the record of a historical fact. Just as the very big fish swallowed up Jonah, so the earth will swallow up Jesus; and as Jonah was delivered from his imprisonment, so will Jesus who is Jonah's great Antitype rise from the grave.

"Something great than Jonah is here." What is that something?

Jesus takes us back to Jonah 1:17. "Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster. " It is no fairy tale He has in mind. It is the miracle God gave to Jonah. Jesus reminded the Pharisees and Sadducees again of the sign of Jonah in Matt. 16:4. There is a greater event than Jonah here. Then He openly told His disciples the meaning of the sign after Peter's great confession of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God (v. 16). After telling His disciples to tell no one that He was the messiah He opened His heart to them.

Don't miss these words in v. 21. "From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day."

What was the reaction of the disciples? It was astonishment, rejection and horror. Peter took Him aside as if to hold Him back from suicide and began to rebuke Him saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You" (v. 22).

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's" (v. 22).

This is the "something greater than Jonah." It is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God! That Jonah could live through his experience is nothing short of a miracle. It was a sign given by God. The pagans of Nineveh believed the message of Jonah and repented.

When Peter preached his greatest sermon he reminded his audience of something greater than Jonah. He said,
Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power . . . This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear (Acts 2:22-24, 32-33).

Michael Wilcock writing on Dr. Luke's account (11:29-32) of Jesus' conversation with the crowds of people who were looking for a miraculous sign from heaven says:

. . . Not someone greater, you notice: Jesus is not, strictly speaking, comparing himself with Jonah. It is the whole thing which is greater, deeper, more real. Jonah experienced a kind of death, a kind of burial, and a kind of resurrection, and he went to Nineveh with only an embryonic version of the good news—good, but limited. But in Jesus something greater is happening. The Holy Spirit has broken into the world in power, and by means of a real death, a real salvation, at the deepest possible level. That which the story of Jonah illustrated and foreshadowed is made actual in the person of Jesus (The Message of Luke, p. 129).

One of the amazing things about Jonah is that it was in the very city of Joppa where Jonah went to find the ship that centuries later the apostle Peter received from God the revelation that Gentiles were included in His chosen people on the same basis as Jewish people (Acts 10). Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Both Jewish people, non-Jewish and pagans can have a right standing with God by simple faith in Jesus Christ alone. William Barclay asked, "What is our reaction when we are confronted with God in Jesus Christ?" We can respond with arrogance that we know more in our modern age of understanding than Jesus knew, or with hostility like the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day, or we can simply bow in humble repentance and submission like the Ninevehites.

How important is the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The apostle Paul responded, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).

The all-sufficient work Jesus Christ includes God's free gift of eternal life. Have you received His free gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ alone?
Micah

Prince of Peace to be Born in Bethlehem

The Messianic pictures in Micah are exceptionally beautiful," says Kyle Yates. The Messiah is to be born in Bethlehem and universal peace will come when men of all nations learn at His feet.

"Flashes of indignation, vivid descriptions, beautiful promises, follow one another in rapid succession."

The sins of the people are put before us in blunt frankness and it is on this backdrop that the prophet "believed that the people who came and sat at the feet of the Messiah would be changed and fortified so that the homes of the land would be transformed" (Kyle). Micah reminds us that God is never in a hurry and He is sovereign in people's lives. He causes all things to work for His honor and glory.

The divine conqueror came as a lowly babe from remote Bethlehem to bring salvation to a lost world. It was not Jerusalem or Rome, but a small insignificant village and peasants that God came to fulfill His eternal purpose. The wise men went to Jerusalem seeking the newly born King of the Jews. They were sent to Bethlehem by the seven hundred year old prophecy from Micah. To that little village came the most significant event in Israel's history. Universal peace will come when the people of earth sit at the Messiah's feet and He arbitrates their international disputes.

The Breaker

If we aren't careful we will miss the first word of promise to the remnant. God will send His breaker to open a way for His redeemed (2:12-13). God will assemble the lost sheep and gather His remnant.

“I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture They will be noisy with men. “The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And the Lord at their head.”
““I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture They will be noisy with men. “The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And the Lord at their head.”
The figure is that of the children of God being shut up in a prison and they will be delivered by the mighty hand of Yahweh.

In the highest sense Christ opens the prison doors and redeems the captives of Zion. He breaks through the prison walls and leads His people out the gate to freedom. No human power can stop Him. Yahweh is at their head. "The breaker" breaks through, goes up before them, passes through the gate and goes out. The One leading them is King Yahweh. Just as the angel of the Lord went before the people in the wilderness, so the Messiah will lead the procession in the future redemption of the people of God.

Keil says, "The future of this prophecy commenced with the gathering together of Israel to its God and King by the preaching of the gospel, and will be completed at some future time when the Lord shall redeem Israel, which is now pining in dispersion, out of the fetters of its unbelief and life of sin." It is a beautiful picture of "the redemption to be effected by Christ out of the spiritual Babylon of this world." Jesus Christ releases the captives and sets free the downtrodden.

The unfaithfulness of God's people cannot make null and void His promises of redemption. The time of universal peace will not take place before the royal palace and the temple are utterly destroyed. Ezekiel saw the Shekinah departing before the Babylonians destroyed the temple (Ezek. 10:18; 12:22). However, our prophet says that Zion will eventually be exalted from deepest degradation to the highest glory. Zion is depicted in glory as the heathen nations stream to it to hear the law of the LORD. The dominion of Zion will be restored from its fallen condition in the distant future.

**The Restoration of Zion**

The opening verses of chapter four are almost exact duplicate of Isaiah 2:2-4. The Lord has given the same promise of millennial blessing to Micah and Isaiah. Both men were moved by the Holy Spirit to pen these words. That does not prevent the thought of their knowing of each other's preaching and ideas.

"In the last days" (4:1) always denotes the Messianic era in the prophets. Jesus Christ split time. The line of demarcation is drawn by the incarnation of the Son of God, the Messiah. How long will the Lord reign over the peoples of the world? Verse seven says, "The LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever." The prophet lifts our sights to afar. The throne of David will be firmly established before the Lord forever (2 Sam. 7:12, 13).

"The mountain of the house of the LORD" is the temple mountain, Mt. Moriah, which will be exalted above all the mountains and hills in glory (v. 2). The Gentiles are seen steaming to the mountain to receive God's blessings. In the eyes of the prophet Zion becomes the greatest and loftiest mountain in the world because nations stream to it to hear God's Word. Yahweh is enthroned there and He gives continual instructions to the nations. "And the peoples will stream to it. And many nations will come and say, 'Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD and to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths'" (v. 2).

Keil notes the "earthly elevation is a symbol of a spiritual one." The LORD God is enthroned there. The Gentiles stream to Him out of a desire for salvation. "The word of the LORD" is the message of salvation. This manifestation takes place in Christ and will be exalted in the Messianic time. Formerly the people of
Israel went to the mountain to worship, now many flow there to worship the Lord of glory. Zion is glorified by the appearance of the Messiah.

Theodoret remarked, "This is the preaching of the Gospel, which began at Jerusalem, and from thence as its source flowed over all the earth, offering drink to those who came to it in faith."

The Messiah will judge between the nations. What the League of Nations and the United Nations could not do this person will accomplish. The Prince of peace is the bringer of peace. He acts as a judge, Lit. "to set right," and settle and put to stop disputes. Many nations will acknowledge Him as King and Judge.

"Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hoods; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war" (v. 3). Weapons of warfare will be turned into agricultural machines. No more war colleges! Verse four describes that happy state of perfect peace. It will not be done by humanism, but in the strength of the Lord forever (v. 5).

All of this will take place in a time of humiliation and when miserable conditions prevail in Israel (vv. 6-7). The Lord inflicts this misery in the punishment of sins. The restoration of the remnant which is to become a strong nation over which Yahweh reigns in a perfect monarchy. Calvin said, "God will prove that He was the author of that kingdom, and that all the power is His. . . The prophet therefore indicates a certain difference between that shadowy kingdom [of David] and the new kingdom which God will openly manifest at the advent of the Messiah."

Keil and Delitzsch explain,

The substance of the promise itself points to the times of the completion of the Messianic kingdom, i.e. to the establishment of the kingdom of glory (Matthew 19:28). The temple mount is a type of the kingdom of God in its New Testament form, which is described by all the prophets after the forms of the Old Testament kingdom of God. Accordingly, the going of the nations to the mountain of the house of Jehovah is, as a matter of fact, the entrance of the heathen who have been brought to the faith into the kingdom of Christ. This commenced with the spread of the gospel among the Gentiles, and has been continued through all the ages of the Christian church. But however many nations have hitherto entered into the Christian church, the time has not yet come for them to be so entirely pervaded with the spirit of Christ, as to allow their disputes to be settled by the Lord as their King, or to renounce war, and live in everlasting peace. . . The cessation of war and establishment of eternal peace can only take place after the destruction of all the ungodly powers on earth, at the return of Christ to judgment and for the perfecting of His kingdom (cf. Rom. 11:25ff). . . The kingdom of glory will be set up on the new earth, in the Jerusalem which was shown to the holy seer on Patmos in the Spirit, on a great and lofty mountain (Rev. 21:10; 21:22)." They see it as "the time of the completion of the kingdom of God in glory.

In verses 8-10 the reign of Jehovah upon Mount Zion is still further defined as effected through the Messiah. The prophet does not here mention the descendant of David, but Yahweh Himself. Hengstenberg notes, "For although Christ was the true seed of David, yet He was also, at the same time, Jehovah, viz. God made manifest in the flesh. With respect to this promise, however, it must also be kept in mind that it
will be finally fulfilled only in the future, when the kingdom and throne of glory (Matt. 19:28) shall be set up."

"The tower of the flock" (v. 8) refers to the descendents of David. "He stands and feeds in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God." Even so come, Shepherd of Israel and shepherd your people.

**The Birth of the King**

This shepherd king will come from humble stock in extremely humble circumstances.

The Judge of Israel in 5:1 is in His deepest abasement and contrasted with the Ruler of Israel in His divine glory. The humble village of Bethlehem is contrasted with the greatness of what it will become when God bestows it with glory. From Bethlehem there comes forth a glorious ruler in Israel. Dominion will return to the house of David. The insignificance of Bethlehem is seen from the circumstances of its being left out of the list of towns in the tribe of Judah. "The birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, and not in Jerusalem the city of David, presupposes that the family of David, out of which it is to spring, will have lost the throne, and have fallen into poverty. This could only arise from the giving up of Israel into the power of its enemies," write Keil and Delitzsch.

The old Jewish synagogue unanimously regarded this passage as containing a prophecy of the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem.

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel.
His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity" (5:2).

The fulfillment by the fact that Christ was actually born in Bethlehem cannot be looked upon as accidental circumstances because His parents were not residents of Bethlehem, but Nazareth.

In Josephus' days it was little more than a mere village. It was too small to be numbered among the heads of Judah. It was of lowly rank. Just as youthful David had been an insignificant shepherd in this small village and God exalted him to be of king of Israel, so from this insignificant village the Messiah would be born and crowned with glory. God raised him from being a shepherd of lambs to the shepherd of the nation. The Ruler proceeding from Bethlehem is the Messiah.

When we examine this prophecy we are reminded how God caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem in its fulfillment. Matthew 2:1-11 simply relates the arrival of Magi from the East to worship the King of the Jews. The family of David had been reduced to the lowest degradation. An imposter sat on the throne in Jerusalem, an Idumean by birth who had no blood of David running through his veins. Foreigners ruled the nation through a puppet king of non-Jewish blood.

"The ruler of Israel who has sprung form eternity" is to be born in Bethlehem Ephratah. The coming forth from Bethlehem implies birth in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5, 6; John 7:42).”
This Ruler will be the Good Shepherd (v. 4) and be the Prince of peace (v. 5). "And this One will be our peace." The One who is peace will give peace to His people (cf. Eph. 2:14). The Prince of Peace is the Messiah (Isa. 9:6). Keil notes, "To the nations Christ is set for the rising and falling of many (Lk. 2:34; Rom. 9:33; Isa. 8:14; 28:16)

Hengstenberg gives us a good summary of evidence regarding the old Jewish interpretation of this passage.

"The reference to the Messiah was, at all times, not the private opinion of a few scholars, but was publicly received and acknowledged with perfect unanimity. As respects the time of Christ, this is obvious from Matt. 2:5. According to that passage, the whole Sanhedrim, when officially interrogated as to the birth-place of the Messiah, supposed this explanation to be the only correct one (Cf. John 7:42). Bethlehem is marked out as the birthplace of the messiah, was held as an undoubtedly truth by the ancient Jews. This appears form the confident reply of the Sanhedrim to the question of Herod as to the birth-place of Christ." Their interpretation was changed after the fact. All the ancient Jewish interpreters adhere to the Messianic interpretation.
The Hebrew prophet Haggai wrote about B.C. 520 during the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem (B.C. 520-516) after the Babylonian Exile. His goal was to encourage the builders by giving a word of hope.

Haggai may be a contraction of Haggiah meaning “festival of Yahweh.” He was evidently born in Babylon during the exile, or was an extremely old man who returned to Jerusalem as a member of the group of nearly 50,000 with Zerubbabel. He recorded his messages during the reign of Darius (c. 520 B.C.).

It is said that the Jewish rabbis were accustomed to lament that five things in the first temple were lacking in the second. These were the sacred fire, the Shekinah, the ark and cherubim, the Urim and Thummim and the spirit of prophecy. As to the outward appearance the second temple was greatly inferior to the first. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had removed the temple treasures and vessels (Ezra 3:12, 13; 2 Kings 24:12-13).

There were some very old people in their midst who had seen the Temple in its former glory and this new one they were building was “nothing in comparison” (2:3). Word was getting around the camp so Haggai preaches to encourage them to continue on with the task for God’s glory. “Now take courage, Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord, ‘take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work; for I am with you,’ declares the Lord of hosts” (v. 4). You can’t miss his emphasis. It is “take courage,” “take courage,” “take courage” “and work” because the Lord is with you.

There is no reason to fear because the Lord is with them. “I am with you . . . My Spirit is abiding in your midst” (vv. 4-5). Don’t despise the days of small things if God has His hand in it. The Lord is their King and Shepherd and they will therefore lack nothing in the service of the Lord. He will provide the means of fulfilling His temple with splendor.

The Shaking of the Nations

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land’” (v. 6).

Perhaps the LORD is reminding the people of the time when He shook the world when He descended upon Mt. Sinai and gave the covenant to the people of Israel (Exodus 19:16-20; cf. Heb. 12:26). However, the prophet is speaking of a time when the shaking of the world will be more violent and will affect the heavens and the earth. All nations will be affected and even the islands of the sea. We are given the impression that the whole universe will be shaken.

This “shaking” is a herald of the coming of the Lord to judge the nations of the earth. It reminds us of the vivid prophecy of Isaiah in 24:18-23.
The later prophets employed the imagery of the shaking of the nations as the inauguration of the messianic age (cf. Ezek. 33:19-33; Isa. 13:13; 24:18-23; Joel 3:15-21). Haggai foresees the whole universe in convulsions that effect every nation.

The apostle Peter wrote of such a shaking in 2 Peter 3:10-13. “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

Nothing in the universe will remain the same. The Almighty God and His Messiah will break the power of the nations. The ultimate fulfillment of this passage will be at the Second Coming of Christ. Haggai continues in verses 21-22, “I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. And I will overthrow the thrones of the kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, every one by the sword of another.” Yahweh is the sovereign ruler who overthrows the powers of the kingdoms. He is sovereign over the nations. Wars and revolutions are nothing but His shaking of the Gentiles. The LORD God reigns. He uses these cosmic events to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

**The Desire of the Nations**

The LORD God says, “I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord of hosts” (v. 7). The margin of the NASB reads, “the Desire of all nations will come.” Who is this person and when will He come?

There are two prevailing interpretations of this verse. Older scholars following Luther see Christ as the “Desire of the nations,” and another group that interpret it as not a reference to the person of the Messiah, but to a “far wider and richer sense that the mere literal appearance of His person in the literal temple” (Thomas Moore). Luther was a strong proponent of the interpretation that Luke 2:22-26 was the fulfillment of Haggai. In one sense, Jesus Christ will be the desire of all the nations. Matthew 24:14 Jesus said, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

On the other hand, Calvin concluded, “the more simple meaning is . . . that the nations would come, bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God.”

God is never short on supply for His people and His eternal purposes. God is not dependent upon men to supply His needs. Everything belongs to Him.

“The wealth of all nations,” or “desire of the nations” is a designation for the Messiah. You can translate it “desire,” or “consolation.” The Gentile nations will come to the desire of all nations, the Messiah. He is “the object of desire” meaning that in which a man finds pleasure, joy and value.
Isaiah and Micah told of all nations flowing to the mountain of God to worship Him and hear His Word. He will be the one in whom the nations find their treasure and riches. He is the “Pearl of Great Price.”

The key idea is expressed by Keil and Delitzsch, “That shaking will be followed by this result, or produce this effect, that all the valuable possessions of the heathen will come to fill the temple with glory.” Isaiah comforted his people saying,

> Behold, the Lord God will come with might, 
> With His arm ruling for Him.  
> Behold, His reward is with Him  
> And His recompense before Him.  
> Like a shepherd He will tend His flock,  
> In His arm He will gather the lambs  
> And carry them in His bosom;  
> He will gently lead the nursing ewes.

“There is no indication that Haggai thought Zerubbabel would be the Messiah, as some scholars claim. Yet it is significant that Jesus was a descendent of Zerubbabel,” writes Clyde T. Francisco.

The result of all this shaking of the universe will be the filling of the Temple with the glory of the Lord.

**The Glory of the LORD**

“The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and in this place I will give peace,’ declares the Lord of hosts” (vv. 8-9).

The Temple is going to be filled with the possessions of the Gentile nations as they come to worship their King. Through the shaking they realize that He is sovereign over the universe.

A beginning of this fulfillment can be seen in Jesus coming to the Temple and cleansing it. The glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple at their dedication. The fulfillment commenced when Yahweh came to His temple in the person of His Son Jesus Christ the Messiah. The prophet Malachi wrote in 3:1, “Behold I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the Lord of hosts.”

Francisco suggests, “The days of the greatest glory of that Temple lay ahead. Of course, this was fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus.”

As the incarnate Logos, in whom the “glory of Yahweh” filled the temple, Jesus Christ brought glory to the temple in the truest essence. He brought a greater glory to the Temple with His divine presence, not in symbolic form, but true divine glory. The glorification of the house of God commenced with the Incarnate Son of God and will reach it consummation when He returns. Cf. Rev. 21:10, 11, 22-24. Cf. Heb. 12:26-27. It takes in the whole span from the first coming of Christ to His return in glory.
The glory of the second temple was that it was the starting point for the new covenant. This glory reaches over the entire unfolding of the glorious kingdom of Christ.

“The fulfillment of this promise has a literal and an eschatological application . . . In essence the Old Testament temple finds its ultimate fulfillment in the ‘Lord of the temple,’ who is greater than the temple (Matt. 12:6), namely, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 2:13-22). The final fulfillment coincides with the consummation, when the temple would be superseded by the Lord Almighty and the Lamb as the city’s temple (Rev. 21:22-27),” writes Pieter Verhoef, (NICOT, Books of Haggai and Malachi, p. 106).

Therefore, Yahweh can say, “The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former” (Haggai 3:9). The former glory is that of Solomon’s temple, the later that of Zerubbabel of which Herod is only a remodeling and addition. The final glory will be a lasting one.

“In this place I will give peace.” The Prince of Peace is one who brings peace to Jerusalem. When He reigns as sovereign the world will know true peace. Note the parallel passages (Mic. 5:4; Joel 4:17; Isa. 60:18). Jesus came to give us perfect peace. Cf. Isa. 9:7; 66:12; Ps. 72:17; Lk. 2:14.

Haggai makes an astonishing promise: “The glory of the latter house shall be greater than that of the former one” (v. 9). At the second coming of Christ the unfulfilled passages in Haggai will be accomplished and fully realized. Jesus Christ will be the desire of all the nations of the world. He alone can change the heart of the peoples. His will be a kingdom that will not be shaken (Heb. 12:26-28). The glory and honor of the Gentile nations will be brought into it (Rev. 21:24, 26). The temple as a sanctuary will disappear but the essence of the promise will be fulfilled in the New Jerusalem, where “the dwelling of God is with men” (Rev. 21:3; 22).

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart.
Zechariah 1:11-17; 2:5-6

Yahweh Remembers and Brings Peace

Zechariah, whose name means “Yahweh remembers,” or “Remembered of the LORD,” had an enthusiastic message of encouragement for the men who were working at restoring the Temple after the Babylonian exile. He was one of the exiles who saw Jerusalem for the first time when he arrived with the returning exiles in 520 B.C. “God had called him and the time was ripe for his preaching. His passionate enthusiasm for the restoration of the Temple challenged the people to carry on to the hour when the building was completed,” writes Kyle M. Yates.

An important part of that message of encouragement is the Messianic component. He interprets the meaning of the Temple to the people of Yahweh. Messianic interpretation dominates the book. G. L. Robinson said, “No other book is as Messianic.” “There is a deep flowing messianic strain underlying his message that gave him confidence that what he urged was in line with God’s destiny for the nation,” says Clyde Francisco. The fulfillment of those hopes depended on the completion of the Temple.

“Zechariah’s picture of the coming Messiah stirs the soul,” writes Yates. “This great King is to come as the Prince of peace (9:9-10) vindicated, victorious and lovely. He comes triumphantly and yet in the guise of peace. Instead of riding a warhorse he rides a humble beast used by kings and notables on missions of peace. . . . The references to the Messiah King and the Good Shepherd point forward to the life and ministry and death of our Lord.” The great conflict will end in a glorious victory when the King Messiah comes in glory. “The temporary victory gained by the enemies of God will be forgotten when the Messiah in all His might shall put all enemies under His feet and establish His kingdom in Jerusalem. As the capital Zion shall then be the holy city of God. At evening time there shall be light” (Preaching from the Prophets, p. 211).

The Promised Peace (1:1-17)

Israel has been punished for her sins of idolatry by being carried into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., which lasted for seventy years. Zechariah writes at the end of the exile in 520 B.C. as the exiles return to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple (1:1). The Temple was rebuilt and completed in 516 B.C. (v. 16). The LORD punished Israel for her sins and she repented (vv. 2-4).

There is a time of peace coming when God restores His people (v. 11). The Babylonians went too far in their punishment of Israel and God will deal with them (vv. 14-15).

Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line who has come to measure Jerusalem (2:1ff). He envisions a city “without walls” (v. 4). Another angel came up to the first angel and said to him, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. For I,’ declares the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ” (vv. 4-5). In the time of peace there will be no need for protecting walls surrounding Jerusalem. It will be a time of perfect peace. Walvoord writes, “The LORD will be Jerusalem’s protection without and ‘glory within’ (cf. Isa. 60:19). This promise looks forward to the Lord’s personal presence through the Messiah in
the millennial kingdom on earth. Ezekiel envisioned the future return of the divine glory to the temple (Ezek. 43:2-5) but Zechariah was granted a vision of the glory extending to the entire city (Zech. 2:5) and to the whole land (v. 12; cf. 14:20-21)” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

The Shekinah glory of Yahweh will be Israel’s protection. “I will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst” (v. 5). Israel will be able to say, “I saw God do it!”

Keil and Delitzsch write:

Jerusalem is in future to resemble an open country covered with unwalled cities and villages; it will no longer be a city closely encircled with walls; hence it will be extraordinarily enlarged, on account of the multitude of men and cattle with which it will be blessed (cf. Isa. 49:19, 20; Ezek. 38:11). Moreover, Jerusalem will then have no protecting wall surrounding it, because it will enjoy a superior protection. Jehovah will be to it a wall of fire round about, that is to say, a defense of fire which will consume every one who ventures to attack it (cf. Isa. 4:5; Deut. 4:24). Jehovah will also be the glory in the midst of Jerusalem, that is to say, will fill the city with His glory (cf. Isa. 60:19).

In verses eight and nine it is Yahweh Himself as the Angel of the Lord or Messiah who speaks. It is a difficult Hebrew phrase in which NIV translates, “after He has honored me and has sent Me.” The KJV reads, “After the glory hath He sent Me.” The NASB reads, “For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches, touches the apple of His eye’” (v. 8). The meaning is probably that God will send the Messiah who will judge the nations that have plundered Israel. He will display His glory at the judgment of the Gentiles at the Second Coming of Christ (Matt. 25:31-46).

Praise to Jehovah for Peace (1:10-13)

As a result of God’s deliverance and protection the people break forth in praise to Him. Verses 10-13 are a grand time of worship. “Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” declares the Lord. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”

The Hebrew scholars Keil and Delitzsch write:

This dwelling of Jehovah, or of His angel, in the midst of Zion, is essentially different from the dwelling of Jehovah in the Most Holy Place of His temple. It commences with the coming of the Son of God in the flesh, and is completed by His return in glory (John 1:14; Rev. 21:3). Then will many, or powerful, nations attach themselves to Jehovah, and become His people (cf. 8:20, 21; Isa. 14:1). This kingdom of God, which has been hitherto rejected to Israel, will be spread out and be glorified by the reception of the heathen nations which are seeking God (Mic. 4:2). . . . This appointment of Israel to be the possession of Jehovah will become perfect truth and reality in the future, through the coming of the Lord.
It is a time when God has prepared the earth for Christ’s triumphant reign. It is a call to praise to the LORD as the King of Jerusalem. The Prince of Peace has arrived! This will be the time when the Messiah will come to rule on the throne of David. The emphasis is on the Second coming of Christ when God’s blessings to Israel will over flow to the Gentile nations. Yes, it is possible that both of Christ’s advents are in view here. In the Millennium people from many nations will worship the LORD (Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16; Isa. 2:3-4; Micah 4:2). The entire human race will bow in awe before the LORD God! This prophecy of glory intended for Israel (8:18-23) is still unfulfilled because of the blindness in part to Israel regarding the Messiah. The fulfillment began in the first appearance of Christ and will be consummated when He returns (Phil. 2:8-11).

E. G. Hengstenberg in his *Christology of the Old Testament* says, “In this reply the prophet embraced the whole of the blessings of salvation intended for the covenant nation, and the full meaning of his declaration was first realized in Christ. The conclusion (8:20-23) relates exclusively to the manner in which the kingdom of God would be glorified by Him, and as a still further expansion of Micah 4:2; Isa. 2:3; Jer. 31:6, it contains a description of the eagerness with which heathen nations would strive for admission into the kingdom of God.”

How interesting to compare this prophesy in Zechariah with an experience centuries earlier in the life of the Hebrew prophet Elisha and his servant who were surrounded by the enemy army with horses and chariots. His servant cried out, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” The old prophet said, Ah, no sweat. “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Yeah, but where are they? Then Elijah prayed, “O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. When they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord and said, “Strike this people with blindness, I pray.” So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17-18).

“I will be a wall of fire round her, and I will be the glory in her midst” (Zech. 2:5). The Son of God, Yahweh our righteousness said, “I am with you always” (Matthew. 28:20). Just as He dwelt among His people visibly, even so He remains with His people today invisibly and will visibly return in glory and be with them forever. This presence of Yahweh, the greatest glory imaginable to the human mind, will be the crowning splendor of the city of God and its inhabitants (Rev. 21:3). Yahweh of hosts who came in the person of His incarnate Son and dwelled visibly among His people (John 1:14), and invisibly with His Body the church to the end of time, and will return from heaven in eternal glory. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

The highest possible glory is conferred upon Jerusalem because the Lord Himself takes up His abode there. The whole announcement is Messianic. “The essentially Messianic character is especially apparent from what is said in vv. 10-11, of the Lord dwelling at Jerusalem, and the heathen nations flocking thither in consequence, as a splendid demonstration of the mercy of God, which according to v. 13, was to fill all nations with overpowering amazement” (Hengstenberg).

The prophecy of Zechariah closes with a picture of all nations being gathered by the LORD against Jerusalem. They will take the city and plunder it (14:1-2). Then the Lord will take charge of His people and will appear on Mount of Olives, and by splitting this mountain, prepare a way of safety for the rescue of the remnant and come with all His saints (vv. 3-5) to complete His kingdom. From Jerusalem will flow a stream of salvation and blessing over the whole land (vv. 6-11). The hand of the LORD will destroy the enemies (vv. 12-15). However, a remnant of Gentiles will turn to the LORD and believe.
It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart. He will give you His perfect peace right now if you will believe on Him.
Zechariah 3:8

My Servant, the Branch and the Stone

Zechariah chapter three is a vision of “Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD.” He is standing because he is conducting his priestly duties representing the nation Israel (Deut. 10:8; 2 Chron. 29:11). This not Joshua, the son of Nunn, whom we encounter in the book of Joshua. This Joshua is a type of the high priest of Israel who is to come because he and his priestly companions are said to be “men symbolic of things to come” (v. 8).

Satan is seen standing at the right hand of Joshua accusing him before the Angel of the LORD. The presence of Satan changes the scene from a priestly one to judicial. Because of God’s gracious love and choice of Israel the Angel of the LORD acquits Joshua. The basis of the rebuke is God’s choice of Israel. Walvoord and Zuck note that in the figure before us just as “the high priest represented the entire nation on the Day of atonement, so here Joshua the high priest was accused and acquitted on behalf of the nation Israel.” The acquittal took the form of removing the filthy garments (vv. 3-5) and clothing Joshua with a clean garment.

Hengstenberg notes the Messiah “could be represented as the antitype of the priesthood, only so far as he was to effect in the most perfect manner that mediation and expiation which had been but partially effected by the later.”

The Angel of the LORD

The Angel of the LORD is to be identified as the preincarnate Christ. He speaks as LORD and yet distinguishes Himself from the LORD when He addresses Satan. Moreover, He virtually forgives sins. “The LORD said to Satan . . . “The LORD rebuke you, Satan!” (v. 2). In verse four the Angel of the LORD says, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”

Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree’ ” (vv. 8-10).

Joshua and his companions prefigured the future cleansing of the nation. Of course, this future cleansing is linked to the one who comes in the future with three messianic titles. He is revealed here as My Servant, the Branch and the Stone.

My Servant

As the Servant of Yahweh, we know from the prophet Isaiah that Jesus Christ came to do the Father’s will (Isa. 42:1; 49:3-4; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek. 34:23-24). Zechariah probably has in mind Isaiah 52-53.
because he says in verse nine the Messiah will remove the iniquity of the land. He is the Lord’s Servant because of His willing, patient and perfect obedience to His Father (Ps. 40:6-8; Isa. 42:1ff; 49:1-5; 52:13ff; 53:1f). In John 5:30 Jesus said, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

The Branch

Jesus Christ is the humble descendent of king David who will bring the kingdom out of its fallen state and reign in power and glory (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 6:12-13).

“I am going to bring My Servant the Branch,” Zemach, or literally “the Sprout.” Zechariah uses the word simply as a proper name for the Messiah. “My servant Branch” is exactly the same as Ezekiel’s “My Servant David” (Ezek. 34:23-24; 27:24). The idea comes from Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15, where the promise is given that a righteous Sprout or a Sprout of righteousness shall be raised up to Jacob. Jeremiah used the figure of the descendent of David who would create righteousness upon the earth and the Branch of Yahweh (cf. Isa. 11:1-2). The Messiah is to spring up as a rod out of the stem of Jesse that has been hewn down, or as a root-shoot out of dry ground. The Branch denotes the Messiah in His origin from the family of David that has fallen into humiliation. The sprout will grow up from its original state of humiliation to exaltation and glory. In Zechariah the deeply humiliated priesthood is exalted by the grace of God into a type of the Messiah. The removal of iniquity is the exclusive work of the Messiah. The early Jews admitted that “the servant of the Lord, Zemach” meant the Messiah.

Calvin said, “He compares Christ to a sprout, because he appeared to spring, as it were, from nothing—because his origin was contemptible.”

The Stone

The rabbis said the stone occupied the empty place on the Ark of the Covenant in the most holy place of the second temple. Early expositors were almost unanimous in referring the stone to the Messiah. However, most scholars see the stone representing something already in existence. Hengstenberg says, “The unhewn stone, which is to be polished and carved by the Lord, is a figurative representation of the nation and kingdom of God, descriptive of its present lowly condition, and the glory, which it is afterwards to receive from the Lord.” Keil notes, “The stone is the symbol of the kingdom of God.” The stone represents the kingdom of the Messiah King.

We know from Daniel the Lord Jesus Christ is the crushing stone that rolls over the Gentiles bringing God’s judgment at the end of the age (Daniel 2:44-45). He is also a stone of stumbling for unbelieving Israel (Rom. 9:31-33). Cf. Psalm 118:22; Matt. 21:42; 1 Peter 2:5-6.

The statement “on one stone are seven eyes” (v. 9) may be taken either upon one stone are seven eyes, or seven eyes are directed upon one stone (Keil). In Revelation 5:6 the seven eyes of the Lamb are the seven Spirits of God, and with the sevenfold eyes of Yahweh, they are the sevenfold radiations of the Spirit of Yahweh (Isa. 11:2) (Keil). The “seven eyes” on “one stone” is probably the wisdom and intelligence of the Messiah or the Holy Spirit upon Him (Isa. 11:2; Rev. 5:6). The seven eyes indicate perfect insight and perfect knowledge and powers of the all-knowing omniscient King.
The Sin-Remover

The mediatorial priest in Zechariah points to the mediatorial office and atoning work of the Messiah. Ultimately Jesus Christ is one who cleanses Israel and “removes the iniquity of this land in a single day” (v. 9). The deliverance from the exile shows that “Joshua and his friends were smoking sticks plucked by the omnipotence of grace from the fire of merited judgment.” But this miracle points beyond itself to “an incomparably greater and better act of the sin-absolving grace of God, which is still in the future.” It is fulfilled in the coming of the Branch. “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day” was accomplished at Calvary when Jesus Christ died once and for all to take away sin (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10; 9:12; 10:14; 9:26; Ps. 103:12; Rev. 5:6; Acts 10:43). The wiping away of sin will be effected by the Messiah and will not have to be continually repeated, but will be finished all at once. The day of completion was at Calvary.

Keil and Delitzsch note the train of thought: “Jehovah will cause His servant Zemach to come, because he will prepare His kingdom gloriously, and exterminate all the sins of His people and land at once. By the wiping away of all guilt and iniquity, not only of that which rests upon the land, but also of that of the inhabitants of the land, i.e. of the whole nation.”

This could refer to the first coming of Christ when He died as the sinner’s substitute on the cross paying our sin debt. Moreover, Walvoord says, “it is more likely a reference to the day of His Second Advent when at the end of the future Tribulation period the merits of His death will be applied to believing Israel (Zech. 13:1).”

The Branch will usher in a time of security and peace. The chapter closes with a picture of millennial blessing that follows the return of Christ. God’s people are seen sitting “under his vine and under his fig tree” (v. 10) indicating security, peace and prosperity through the reign of the Branch of David. “That day” seems to refer to the whole time of blessing which follows the coming of Christ. The Branch is the Prince of peace who brings perfect peace to those who call upon His name (Rom. 5:1).

Because of this great Day of Atonement we have the privilege as believers of coming to the very throne of God with boldness by means of the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19) and have no need of any human priest or mediator (John 16:23-27). Every believer is now a member of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6). Let’s exercise our priesthood! He has washed us and made our garments clean with His blood.

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart. He will give you His perfect peace right now is you will believe on Him.
The Humble Crowned High Priest

Zechariah 6:12-13 reads, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.’”

Zechariah tells us that the mediator of our salvation is a crowned high priest, or priestly king. From humble origins He will rise to a victorious reign over all the kingdoms of this world.

The prophet Zechariah is told to take silver and gold and have a crown made for Joshua the high priest. In Judaism the two offices were rivals and were never combined. Kings came only from the tribe of Judah and the high priest could come from the tribe of Levi. The crowning of Joshua the high priest with a royal crown, which did not properly belong to the high priest as such, had a typical meaning. The high priest normally did not wear a crown and his headdress did not signify royal dignity or glory. It symbolized holiness to Yahweh. However, the crowning of Joshua points to a man who should sit upon his throne as both ruler and priest. He would combine both royalty and priesthood in His own person and position. Therefore Joshua would represent or typify the Messiah, the anointed Priest-King.

The priests and kings, and sometimes the prophets, were the “anointed ones” (Ex. 28:41; 30:29; 40:12-16; 1 Sam. 15:1, 17; 16:3, 12-13). Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit upon whom the leader was filled for special occasions in the Old Testament. The Messiah, like Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18ff; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5-7), combined these two offices in His person. Through Him all believers in the New Covenant are priests and kings before God.

A Crowned Priest–King

The man whose name is “Branch” (Zemach) is a clear reference to former prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah (3:8; Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:5). This Zemach is a growing thing, the sprouting one. “He will grow from below upwards, from lowliness to eminence. This sprout will build the temple of Yahweh. The Messiah is called Zemach because Yahweh will cause a righteous growth to spring up to David. He will bear glory (no article) as glory, excellence, splendor and majesty (Heb. 3:3; Eph. 1:20ff; Phil. 2:9f; Rev. 5:6-14; 14:1ff; 19:11-16). With supreme majesty the Messiah will rule upon His throne as the Lord of Lords and the High Priest. The two highest offices in Israel, royalty and priesthood, are united in the one person, the Messiah (Ps. 110).

Walvoord notes the crowning of Joshua, “had a typical significance pointing forward to the Messiah as King-Priest, like Melchizedek centuries earlier (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; cf. Heb. 7:11-21).”

The only way a Jewish High Priest and King could be combined into one office is by the order of Melchizedek, and not the Levitical order. The priest on His throne is Jesus Christ. In Him both offices are
united in one person and are performed in perfect harmony. “The Messianic interpretation as fulfilled in Christ is the only one that does justice to this marvelous prophesy, the only one in keeping with the words and facts,” observes Laetsch.

Keil and Delitzsch say, “In this majesty He will sit upon His throne and rule, also using His regal dignity and power for the good of His people, and will be a Priest upon His throne, i.e. will be at once both Priest and King upon the throne which He assumes.” The Jewish priest did not sit on a throne, but stood before Yahweh ministering. “The Messiah, who unites in Himself royalty and priesthood, will counsel and promote the peace of His people.”

In Revelation 19:12-13 Christ is crowned. “His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.” Christ is not said to wear many separate diadems, but a crown consisting of several diadems twisted together, and the insignia of His regal dignity.

The Messiah is in a special sense Zion’s King, the King of the Jews, who is a descendant of the tribe of Judah and the royal house of David. King David had established Zion, the royal city in Jerusalem. Zechariah encourages the Jewish people in Jerusalem that the long-expected eagerly desired King is coming.

**Humility of the Priest-King**

Zechariah 9:9 is one of the most amazing prophecies in the Bible. Pause and let it sink in.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
He is just and endowed with salvation,  
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus took His last journey to Jerusalem (Matt. 21:2ff; Mark 11:2ff; Luke 19:30ff; John 12:14ff). Matthew records in 21:2-7, Jesus said to two of His disciples:

“Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“Say to the daughter of Zion,  
‘Behold your King is coming to you,  
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’ ”
The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats.”

Of course Jesus rode only one animal. “The she-ass was to follow, to set forth Zechariah’s figurative description with greater completeness,” writes Keil. Jesus was demonstrating to the people before His death that He was the King foretold by the prophets, who would come in lowliness and establish His kingdom by suffering and dying. His humble entry into Jerusalem formed the commencement of the establishment of His kingdom. He set forth a living symbol of the true nature of His person and kingdom as foretold in the Scriptures.

The Kingdom of the Messiah would not begin with a big flare of pageantry, but through lowliness and suffering and later might and glory. It was not the coming of a political kingdom of world supremacy, but a spiritual kingdom that would overcome the world.

The character of the Messiah King is described as “just,” righteous. He is the righteous Servant (Isa. 53:9, 11), and a righteous Branch (Zemach) (Jer. 23:5; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Heb. 7:26; 1 John 2:1). Because He is the righteous King His judgments are always right (Isa. 11:3ff). He will never fail to deliver because He is the Savior King.

The Lord of glory comes humbly riding on a borrowed ass and her colt. He doesn’t come riding on a beautiful white stallion, leading a great army. He rides a colt, a foal, and a young, untrained, unbroken animal still running with its mother. Mark 11:2-4, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.” I grew up on a dairy farm I know what it is like to get your brains bucked out by an unbroken animal. But the Master mounted the unbroken animal and rode off on it. The animal was in total submission to its Creator-Master.

**The Kingdom of Peace**

The next verse tells us the humble King Messiah will bring in peace. “He shall proclaim peace to the nations, and His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” He shall speak. He rules by His Word. He has no other weapon but His Word which is the power of God unto salvation. It is through this Good News that His Kingdom shall spread from sea to sea to the ends of the earth (Ps. 72:8).

He began by restoring the foundation of peace that was destroyed in the Garden of Eden in the Fall.

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart. He will give you His perfect peace right now is you will believe on Him.
Zechariah 11:12-13

The Price of a Slave

Traitor. It is a horrible, detestable vulgar word. It is the “blackest ingratitude” of supreme contempt for other people. In the passage before us an even greater insult is the “wage” of the traitor.

In one of the most remarkable prophetic visions in the Bible the Hebrew prophet Zechariah sees himself taking the role of the Good Shepherd. The wicked shepherds had neglected and oppressed the poor sheep of Israel. The faithful Shepherd regards it as His sacred duty to shepherd His sheep. God in His grace sought to reunite the lost sheep of the house of Israel. With two staffs, the Messiah, typified by Zechariah, began his work in vv. 8-11.

The two staffs are called “Favor,” and “Union” (v. 7). The beautiful staff called “Favor” in the NASB, is full of grace, loving-kindness, friendliness and pleasantness. God made a covenant with Israel out of His love. The other staff “Union” meaning cords, binding, or union reminds us of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (v. 14).

Because of their obstinate rebellion in v. 9, the Shepherd, symbolized by the prophet, will no longer “pasture” them so He cut into pieces His staff “Favor.” He withdraws His grace and turns them over to their enemies.

The New Testament parallel is to be found in Luke 19:41-44 when Christ wept over Jerusalem saying, “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation” (vv. 43-44). A little later Jesus said, “. . . and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (21:24).

The Rejection of the Shepherd

In the verses that follow we see the justice of God upon the nation. It comes in punishment of their ingratitude and contemptuous treatment of the Good Shepherd (vv. 12-14). Instead of humble, repentance, faith, love and obedience they treated Him with contempt and hatred. The prophet asked for his wages due a faithful shepherd. The “wages” God desired were a humble heart of repentance and faith. That is the only return worthy of the Good Shepherd. With “devilish ingenuity” they offer Him a wage and at the same time add insult to their hated rejection of Him. “Meticulously they weigh out thirty pieces of silver, the exact sum stipulated in God’s Law as payment to the owner of a slave gored to death by an ox (Ex. 21:32). . . . Their faithful Shepherd, symbolized by Zechariah, Jehovah their Righteousness (Jer. 23:6), worth no more to them than the price of a lowly slave! (Cp. Acts 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:8). The insult offered to His Messenger is regarded by Jehovah as an insult to Himself, for He is One with this Messenger, in whom is the name, the essence of Jehovah (Ex. 23:20, 21)” (Laetsch, The Minor Prophets, p. 474).
Hengstenberg reminds us of the Lord looking for figs on the fig tree of the Jewish nation, at a time when it has lost its capacity to produce what God desired (Matt. 21:19). The parallel passage in Mark tells us Jesus went into the temple and cleansed it (11:12-18).

In verse 12 we see Zechariah acting the role of the coming Messiah. Because the people rejected the Good Shepherd’s ministry, He asked as His wages only the price of a slave. “The goodly sum” was literally “the magnificence of the value at which I was valued by them!”

The religious and civil leaders negotiated the price, not as shepherds, but as part of the flock itself.

In his vision the prophet cast the silver in the house of the Lord. The prophet writes with vivid words:

I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, “Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.”

**Thirty shekels of silver**

They “weighed out thirty pieces of silver” which is the price of a slave. Before money was coined rings or bars of silver were used for money. The silver was weighed on a scale and therefore the unit of weight was called a shekel.

The allusion is to the sum of compensation for a slave that had been killed (Ex. 21:32) and the price at which a slave could be purchased (Hos. 3:2). So when they weighed out thirty shekels they made him understand clearly they did not estimate his service higher than the labor of a household slave. Hengstenberg says to offer such a wage was in fact more offensive than a direct refusal. Yahweh’s response was an ironical “a splendid value that has been set upon Me.” It was an insult to God! Yahweh regarded the wages paid to His shepherd as paid to Himself. This is how much they valued His work on their behalf as a nation. Therefore, God commands the prophet to throw this miserable sum of silver to the potter. He was casting away the money.

Laetsch tries to bring out the play on words in vv. 12, 13. “They weighed; cast it away! I cast; and again, the price I was priced.”

“The insignificant remuneration paid to the betrayer was really an expression of contempt towards the shepherd,” correctly observes Hengstenberg. The insult would seem to make it evident that they intended to take the life of the Good Shepherd (cf. 12:10; 13:7).

Keil and Delitzsch conclude: “Jehovah Himself speaks of these wages as the price at which He was valued by the people; and it is only from the gospel history that we learn that it was not Jehovah the super-terrestrial God, but the Son of God, who became incarnate in Christ, i.e. the Messiah, who was betrayed and sold for such a price as this.”
The Historical Fulfillment

The statement “I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD” has puzzled the scholars who have refused to accept the historical fulfillment in the New Testament. Matthew 27:3-10 gives the historical record of the omniscient Ruler of the universe in control of events. The same thirty pieces of silver paid out to Judas Iscariot by the chief priests for delivering Jesus to them (Matt. 26:15) were cast into the house of the Lord by Judas (27:5). The chief priests took the same silver pieces and gave them to the potter from whom they bought the field to bury strangers (vv. 6-7).

Matthew 27:9-10 reads,

“Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; and they gave them for the Potter’s Field, as the Lord directed me.”

Keil and Delitzsch make this observation:

The payment of the wages to the shepherd in the prophetical announcement is simply the symbolical form in which the nation manifests its ingratitude for the love and fidelity shown towards it by the shepherd, and the sign that it will no longer have him as its shepherd, and therefore a sign of the blackest ingratitude, and of hard-heartedness in return for the love displayed by the shepherd. The same ingratitude and the same hardness of heart are manifested in the resolution of the representatives of the Jewish nation, the high priests and elders, to put Jesus their Savior to death, and to take Him prisoner by bribing the betrayer. The payment of thirty silverlings to the betrayer was in fact the wages with which the Jewish nation repaid Jesus for what He had done for the salvation of Israel; and the contemptible sum which they paid to the betrayer was an expression of the deep contempt which they felt for Jesus. . . . The high priests would not put the money into the divine treasury, because it was blood-money, but applied it to the purchase of a potter’s field, which received the name of a field of blood. . . . The prophecy was almost literally fulfilled; but, so far as the sense is concerned, it was so exactly fulfilled, that every one could see that the same God who had spoken through, the prophet, had by the secret operation of His omnipotent power, whichextends even to the ungodly, so arranged the matter that Judas threw the money into the temple, to bring it before the face of God as blood-money, and to call down the vengeance of God upon the nation, and that the high priest, by purchasing the potter’s field for this money, which received the name of “field of blood” in consequence “unto this day” (Matt. 27:8), perpetuated the memorial of the sin committed against their Messiah.

Everything that happened that fateful day was “in accordance with the purpose of God.” We should not be amazed at how exactly the prophecy was fulfilled. God did it!

The priests carried the money away from the temple, as being impure, and bought a wretched piece of ground in the very same valley, which had once before been defiled by innocent blood and had called down the vengeance of God upon Jerusalem, as predicted by Jeremiah, and on the very same spot where Jeremiah had formerly proclaimed to the people their rejection by the Lord. Here, then, was the blood-money deposited (Matt. 27:6), the reward for betraying the innocent blood (v. 4), from which the field received the
name of “field of blood” (v. 8; Acts 1:19), and here did it lie as a witness against Israel, a pledge by which
the nation had bound itself to submit to the punishment of God . . . . Tradition also places the field of blood
in the valley of Hinnon, in perfect accordance with the results when you compare the words of Jeremiah
and Zechariah with the New Testament accounts (Hengstenberg, Christology of the Old Testament).

Did Matthew make a mistake calling Zechariah Jeremiah in 27:9? Did he get confused and write
Jeremiah when he was quoting Zechariah? Matthew says the word spoken by the prophet was fulfilled by
the purchase of the potter’s field for thirty shekels of silver, the price of the Messiah. However, Jeremiah
says nothing of the betrayal, but says the Lord “directed him” to buy the field (v. 10; Jer. 32:6-8). Zechariah
mentions the price. It seems reasonable that Matthew combines both of these prophecies and gives credit to
the major prophet Jeremiah whose information he stresses in the purchase of the field. Matthew does the
same thing in 21:5 where he combines two prophecies of Isaiah and Zechariah and gives the credit to the
famous “prophet.” Mark 1:2 does the same thing with Malachi and Isaiah giving credit to Isaiah. The
Minor Prophets are rarely quoted by name though their information is frequently used throughout the New
Testament. Hosea, Joel, and Jonah are the only ones named, but others are quoted without citing them.
Matthew had the words of our verse in mind for a long time before he wrote them at this point in his
Gospel.

The Broken Staff

In verse fourteen as a result of the shameful payment for his service, the Shepherd breaks his second staff
as a sign that He will no longer feed the ungrateful nation and leave it to its bitter fate. He breaks or
destroys the relationship between Judah and Israel. It is a divine decree. They are completely ripe for
judgment.

“They would not have this man Jesus to rule over them (Luke 19:14); they would have no king but
Caesar (John 19:15). Therefore God delivered them into the hands of their self-chosen king, the Roman
emperor; and the Roman soldiers carried out the destruction foretold, (chs. 11-13). Jews and Romans
combined to smite the land, and God sent no deliverer. That was the final judgment upon Judah as a nation

As we have seen the context refers to the days of the Messiah, so the reference to the siege and
destruction of Jerusalem would be expected in the same setting. The invading armies of Rome A. D. 70-71
devastated the entire land of Judah and Jerusalem. Because of her rejection of Him, the Jewish nation
would be rejected by her Lord and His Shepherd (vv. 4-14). Verse nine was literally fulfilled in the Roman
invasion of Jerusalem when the Jews destroyed one another in the fury of their contentious spirit. In
desperation they were left no other choice but literally “to eat one another’s flesh.”

The effort of the Good Shepherd was not all in vain. There was a remnant of Jewish people who
discerned the Messiah in the Shepherd and believed on Jesus Christ as the anointed of the Lord and were
saved. The ruin of the nation by the Roman war was accelerated soon after the rejection of Christ by the
majority.

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of
your heart. He will give you His perfect peace right now is you will believe on Him.
Zechariah 12:8-10

Mourning for the One Who was Pierced

God is always actively pursuing an intimate love relationship with His people. The Holy Spirit is the author and giver of all grace. It is through His agency alone that we are able to turn from our selfish ways to the living God. It is not until the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin that we can know our spiritual state and the terrible consequences of it.

The Holy Spirit turns the eyes of our heart to the crucified and now living Savior. We are humbled by our sense of spiritual poverty and overwhelmed by the love of an infinite holy God who cared enough about our sinful state to die for us.

The prophet Zechariah tells us Yahweh will pour out His Spirit of grace upon the house of David (12:8-10). In the Old Testament economy the kings, priests and prophets were anointed with oil symbolizing the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Anointed of Yahweh, the Messiah, came ministering with the anointing of the Spirit of Yahweh without measure. Jesus spoke Himself into office quoting the words of Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners.” (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). Moreover, under the new covenant all believers in the Messiah have the infilling of the Holy Spirit. He gives, not unsparingly, but in full measure as is needed.

In this great passage the prophet makes a remarkable statement about those in the future who will pierce the Branch and then look upon Him and go into deep mourning as if they had lost their only child.

In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them. And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn (vv. 8-10).

Outpouring of the Spirit

This outpouring of the Holy Spirit points us back to Joel’s great prophecy. Keil says, “The spirit of grace is the spirit which produces in the mind of man the experience of the grace of God. But this experience begets in the soul of sinful man the knowledge of sin and guilt, and prayer for the forgiveness of sin . . . and this awakens sorrow and repentance.”

He will minister graciously to Israel in her sinful condition and will lead her to call upon Him in repentance. The work of the Spirit is to produce repentance in the hearts of the rebellious and to turn spiritual eyes to the crucified Savior. The apostle Peter said, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a
Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:30-32).

**Piercing the Servant**

"They will look on Me whom they have pierced" (v. 10).

The idea is to pierce, thrust through and to slay by any kind of death. The context signifies it means to put to death.

“Jehovah, I AM THAT I AM, pierced by an instrument of death wielded by human beings!” says Laetsch. Yahweh says, “They will look on Me whom they have pierced;” Christ said, “I and the Father” (distinguishing two persons) “are One” (Jn. 10:30; 14:9). Laetsch continues, “So here Jehovah speaks of the Messiah as of a different person who nevertheless is One with Him in the undivided and indivisible Essence of Jehovah. Cp. Deut. 32:39; Isa. 48:12; I am He=Jehovah, the First and the Last. Yet He calls Himself the Messenger of the Lord God and His Spirit (v. 16).”

“This Spirit through His apostle reveals to us the actual fulfillment of this strange prophecy. More than 500 years later the Lord used a Roman soldier as the unwitting agent to fulfill this prophecy (John 19:34, 37). And the water and the blood which flowed from the side of Him who was already dead (v. 33) proved beyond doubt that this Pierced One was the Prince of Life, Jehovah Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:6; Acts 3:15; 1 John 5:5-12, 20).”

It is a picture of the slaying of the Maleach Yahweh, who is the same essence with Yahweh, became man in the person of Jesus Christ. Keil and Delitzsch bring out the meaning, “As Zechariah repeatedly represents the coming of the Messiah as a coming of Jehovah in His Maleach to His people, he could . . . also describe the slaying of the Maleach as the slaying of Jehovah. And Israel having come to the knowledge of its sin, will bitterly bewail this deed. . . . The person slain, although essentially one with Jehovah, is personally distinct from the Supreme God.”

The historical fulfillment of this prophecy is found in John 19:37 when the Son of God was crucified on Calvary. A soldier pierced His side with a lance as He hung on the cross. This piercing with the spear brought to a climax the death of Christ. The Messiah was put to death as the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. No doubt comparing it to the Passover lamb, John quotes the Law saying, “not a bone of Him shall be broken” (v. 36).

**Mourning of the nation**

The prophet proceeds to show another amazing thing that takes place at the crucifixion. Those who had despised and rejected the Branch and killed the Prince of Life and brought about His piercing now “look attentively, hopefully, trustingly” upon Him whom they have pierced. They suddenly realize the enormity of their sin and cry out to God. The bitterest and deepest death-wail of the nation is brought out as the anguish of mourning for the first-born.
As the crowd of onlookers walked away that eventful afternoon Luke tells us, “And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts” (23:48).

Hengstenberg says, “The crowds, who had just before been crying out, Crucify Him, here smite upon their breasts, being overpowered with the proofs of the superhuman exaltation of Jesus, and lament over the crucified one, and over their own guilt.”

The Holy Spirit gives divine enablement to the people to “look on Me, the One they have pierced.” They have pierced Him unto death. It was Jesus Christ whom they crucified.

The full commencement of the fulfillment of this passage in Zechariah is found on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:37-41 and in the preaching of the apostles in Acts chapters 3-5.

The fulfillment says Keil will “not terminate till the remnant of Israel shall turn as a people to Jesus the Messiah, whom its fathers crucified. On the other hand, those who continue obstinately in unbelief will see Him at last when He returns in the clouds of heaven, and shriek with despair (Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:30).” It is with a deep penetrating conviction and mourning that will take place. But for so many it will be too late to be saved.

According to Romans 11:25-29 there is a day coming when many in Israel will recognize her Messiah and turn to Him. The change in person from “mourn for Him” to “mourn for Me” is common in prophetic literature. The outpouring of the Spirit prompts the people to mourn for sin in private (v. 10) and public (v. 11).

This profound sense of spiritual poverty and mourning leads to a cleansing from all sin because the precious fountain has been opened.
Zechariah 13:1, 6-7

The Precious Fountain Opened

In God’s marvelous grace He will open up a fountain for the cleansing away of sin. God in His mercy provides a means of dealing with man's greatest problem. “The wages of sin is death,” but God paid the penalty so He could freely acquit the sinner. God opened up the fountain that cleanses away sin and unrighteousness. This is totally impossible for depraved man to do. Only God can forgive sin. This is not speaking of baptism as taking away sin because the earthly fountain of water is a symbol of the spiritual water that cleanses away sin, i.e. the blood of Jesus Christ. The vicarious, sacrificial death of Christ, through His shed blood cleanses away sin. 1 John 1:7 tells us the blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin. The apostle John writes, “. . . the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” God’s detergent is the only one that can deal with our guilt before God.

God's Fountain

“In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity” (13:1).

“That day” refers to a future day of the LORD (14:1). We find the phrase “on that day” sixteen times in the last three chapters of Zechariah (12:3-4, 6, 8-9, 11; 13:1-2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8-9, 13, 20-21). It should be obvious that this day is clearly in his mind. On the day of Christ’s crucifixion and death the fountain was opened potentially for Israel and all mankind. This is the day when Gentiles and Jews are turning by faith and trusting in the death of Jesus to wash them of their sins. There is also a day coming when the Jewish people will turn to Christ (Romans 11:25-29).

That fountain not only deals with our past sin and guilt, but it also provides for our sanctification. He continually cleanses us from our sins. The LORD our Righteousness prepared the fountain. It is never a cistern or stagnant pond of water, but a wellspring of water that is always fresh, abundant, easily accessible and flowing spiritual water. The vicarious, substitutionary fountain filled with the blood of the Lamb of God has been opened and now there is cleansing for all who will come to Him (Heb. 9:7-15). He invites everyone who is a sinner to come freely to the fountain for cleansing of all sin.

The Fountain Opened

The fountain was broken open at the cross. Blood of the Suffering Servant of God flowed through every pore as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk. 22:44). The cruel scourges tore open His back (Jn. 19:1), and the crown of thorns woven by the soldiers pierced his temples (Mk. 15:17, 19). His hands were nailed to the cross (Jn. 20:20, 25, 27). “The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7; cf. Rev. 7:14).
The fountain was first opened to the “house of David” in the great preaching of the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36). Zechariah continues in 13:6-7

“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the man, My Associate,”
Declares the Lord of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

The Shepherd Smitten

The smiting of the Shepherd is according to the will of God. The smitten one is the Shepherd of Yahweh. “The shepherd of Jehovah, whom Jehovah describes as a man who is His next one (neighbor), cannot of course be a bad shepherd, who is displeasing to Jehovah, and destroys the flock, or the foolish shepherd... The idea of nearest one (or fellow) involves not only similarity in vocation, but community of physical or spiritual descent, according to which He whom God calls His neighbor cannot be a mere man, but can only be one who participates in the divine nature, or is essentially divine. The shepherd of Jehovah, whom the sword is to smite, is therefore no other than the Messiah, who is also identified with Jehovah in 12:10; or the good shepherd, who says of Himself, ‘I and My Father are one’ (John 10:30).”

Jesus Christ is the Shepherd of Israel, appointed by God Himself (John 10:11). He alone can be called “Yahweh’s fellow” for he was God as well as man (Jn. 1:1), even the true God (5:20), although One with the Father Himself (5:30) He assumed our nature with the purpose that He might suffer for our sins.

Yahweh calls His True Prophet as opposed to the false prophets (13:2-6), the Messiah, My Shepherd (vv. 7-9). Not only does the prophet give us a picture of the smitten Shepherd, but also the scattering of the sheep and the saved remnant.

Yahweh is the one who directs the death of His Shepherd who is in deed the True Shepherd, the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20) and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

The deity of God’s Shepherd is strongly affirmed in 13:7. The Lord claims “unity of essence” with His shepherd. Therefore, the deity of the Messiah is emphasized.

The effect of the killing the Shepherd

The death of the shepherd is according to the counsel of God (Isa. 53:10). The Shepherd was smitten (Isa. 53:4, 7, 10) at the crucifixion of Christ and His own sheep abandoned Him like scattered sheep (Matt. 26:31, 56).

The flock will be dispersed in consequence to the slaying of the Shepherd. The nation has brought judgment upon itself. But even then, a remnant will be saved (vv. 8-9).
The historical fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the words of Jesus to His disciples the night before His death in Matthew 26:31-32. He said, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee” (cf. Mark 14:27). The soldiers came and arrested Jesus and the disciples fled in all directions. After His death they barricaded themselves behind locked doors in fear of the Jewish religious leaders. However, the Lord soon brought His hand back over the disciples fulfilling His own words, “But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.”

This does not exhaust the meaning of Zechariah’s words. There will be a remnant of those who believe on Jesus the Messiah (Rom. 11:22-36). Keil and Delitzsch suggest the “cutting off of the two-thirds of Israel commenced in the Jewish war under Vespasian and Titus, and in the war for the suppression of the rebellion led by the pseudo-Messiah Bar Cochba. . . it was continued in the persecutions of the Jews with fire and sword in the following centuries.”

The false shepherds of Israel consumed the sheep. However, “The Old Testament prophecy reached to John the Baptist, and attained its completion and its end in Christ (Matt. 11:13; Luke 16:16; cf. Matt. 5:17)” (Keil).

John Walvoord writes:

The reference to God’s turning His hand against the little ones may refer to His allowing the persecutions against Jewish Christians in the Book of Acts. The scattering of the sheep also seems to refer to the scattering of the Jewish nation when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in a.d. 70. Just as the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21) telescopes prophecies of the scattering of the Jewish nation fulfilled in a.d. 70 with those to be fulfilled in the last half of the future Tribulation period, so Zechariah here combines into one focus the same two periods and scatterings of the Jewish nation. Thus Zechariah 13:8-9 probably will see its final and complete fulfillment in Israel’s dispersion in the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 12:6, 13-17). At that time two-thirds of the Jewish nation will be struck down and perish, but the surviving remnant will be restored, at least for the most part, to their covenant relationship with the Lord.

The surviving remnant will have been purged and purified by the persecutions in the Tribulation, as well as by God’s judgment on living Israel at the Second Advent (cf. Ezek. 20:33-38; Matt. 25:1-30). They will call on the name of the Lord in faith (Zech. 12:10-13:1) and become a restored nation (Rom. 11:26-27). Their renewed covenant relationship with the Lord (Hosea 1-2; Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 37:23-28) will be reflected in God’s words, They are My people (cf. Zech. 8:8), and the people’s response, The Lord is our (lit., ”my”) God (cf. Hosea 2:21-23) (Walvoord and Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary).

Zechariah closes with the gathering of all nations together by the LORD against Jerusalem. They will take the city and plunder it and lead away half of its inhabitants into captivity (14:1-2). However, the Lord will then take charge of His people, appearing on the Mount of Olives, and splitting this mountain prepare a safe way for the rescue of the remnant and come with His saints (vv. 3-5) to complete His kingdom. From Mount Zion salvation will stream forth over the whole world (vv. 6-11). God will miraculously smite the enemies who came to destroy Jerusalem (vv. 12-15). The enemies are destroyed by the immediate interposition of the Lord. There will be a remnant of Gentile nations who will turn to the Lord and worship
Him (vv. 16-19), and Jerusalem will become holy because the LORD dwells in her midst (vv. 20-21). In chapter fourteen we have “predicted in Old Testament form the completion of the kingdom of God, which the Apostle John saw and described in Rev. 20-22 in New Testament mode under the figure of the heavenly Jerusalem” (Keil and Delitzsch). Cf. Matt. 24-25.

The message of the old and the new covenant is clear. There is cleansing, washing, forgiveness for every missing of the mark and for the removal of every guilty stain left by sin and depravity (Isa. 1:18; 1 Cor. 6:9ff; Eph. 2:5ff; 1 John 1:7; 2:2). Come to the fountain for cleansing today. The LORD God reigns!
Malachi 3:1

The Messenger of the Covenant

The book of Malachi gives us the last recorded revelation from Yahweh in the Old Testament. It will be 400 years before another voice is heard. These were long “silent years” in preparation for the coming of the Messenger of the Covenant. Malachi means “my messenger” and was written shortly before 432 B.C. It parallels the conditions in Ezra and Nehemiah. This book best fits the situation existing after Nehemiah’s first visit before he returned from Persia in 432 B.C. Until the appearing of John the Baptist no other messenger was directly sent to Judah from Yahweh.

In spite of Judah’s sins and rebellion against the LORD there is the appealing words, “I have loved you,” says Yahweh to His people. The message shows how the love of God will prove His choice of Israel. A day of healing or a day of burning is coming depending upon the response of the people. As in our day they were orthodox, but denying the power thereof. He gives a message to the priests in the opening chapter and then the balance is addressed to the people. A corrupted priesthood equals a corrupted people. “The Lord has the right to demand the best, for He is a great King.”

Malachi presents a remarkable picture of God’s holiness and man’s unrighteousness. It is a message of God’s unmerited, free grace and man’s self-righteous demand of reward. Theodore Laetsch gives an excellent summary:

We see divine patience in the face of human stubbornness: the Master’s condescension and the servant’s impudence. We behold the Creator’s solicitude for the eternal welfare of His handiwork, and the creature’s sullen dissatisfaction with hisMaster’s will and way. We observe the Judge’s solemn warning of impending judgment and the blind, self-righteous sinner arrogantly demanding the coming of judgment. We see our God’s perfect holiness and our own imperfections and guilt. In the same measure that we recognize our own sinfulness and wickedness, the mystery of divine love and the depths of Jehovah’s grace become the more unfathomable, and the greater ought our gratitude grow toward Jehovah, our Covenant God through Jesus Christ, His Messenger, the Angel of the Covenant (The Minor Prophets, p. 509).

The LORD will come to Redeem and Judge

Yahweh is an unchanging God of holiness and infinite grace. He warned His people to repent because their past behavior had worn Him out (2:17). “You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet you say, ‘How have we wearied Him?’ . . . ‘Where is the God of justice?’” They had succeeded in making Yahweh tired of His people! They were blinded by their self-righteousness. They insolently asked, “How have we wearied Him?” They insulted Him in their whine, “Where is the God of justice?” Who are You to grow tired of us who have meticulously observed Your Law? Others in rational piety asked, “Where is the God of judgment?” They had no realization of unmerited grace of God in their lack of understanding of total depravity and unworthiness. Their sense of the grace of God became darkened. They were charging Him with injustice and were too blind to see their own self-righteousness. Chapter three opens with an urgent plea and warning to His dissatisfied, rebellious self-righteous people who charged the Lord with injustice. How does the Lord answer their false charges?
It was through “My messenger,” Malachi that Yahweh declared, “Behold, I will send My messenger (using the same word as the prophet’s name), and he shall prepare by clearing the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He shall come, says the Yahweh of hosts” (3:1, Pounds’ Paraphrase).

“Behold I will send . . . He shall come.” Yahweh of Hosts is the speaker. Driver notes, “It asserts forcefully and suggestively the certainty of the approach.” The LORD was predicting the coming of the herald of the King, Messiah, in such a way that it was plain that the Messiah Himself was identified with Yahweh. “He shall prepare the way before Me.” The LORD sends “My messenger,” My angel, My herald to announce the Lord’s coming and to “prepare the way before Me” (Isa. 40:3). The messenger will prepare the way for the Lord by calling the rebellious self-righteous people to repentance. He will remove the spiritual stumbling blocks of self-righteousness, arrogance, unbelief, crookedness and perversity. Only God can do that! The messenger will deliver God’s message.

Keep in mind the word in Hebrew for “angel” and “messenger” is the same. John the Baptizer was the angel of Jesus, but Jesus Himself was the Covenant-Angel of whom Yahweh had said long ago, “My name is in Him” (Exodus 23:20, 21). It was to this very temple, rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and enlarged by Herod, that the Messiah suddenly appeared.

All four of the Gospels identify the messenger by declaring that Isaiah 40:3 was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3; 11:7-10; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). He is also called the second Elijah (Malachi 4:5).

The angel told Zechariah, “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:16-17).

Jesus quoted Mal. 3:1 giving His acceptance that John the Baptizer was the fulfillment of this prophecy. Matthew 11:10-15 says:

This is the one about whom it is written,

‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You,  
Who will prepare Your way before You.’

Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.
E. W. Hengstenberg gives a good argument for the “messenger” as a collective term that included all prophets preparing the way for Christ and coming to a climax in the person of John the Baptist. I think, however, it is best to take this prophecy as being specifically fulfilled in the mission of John. Malachi presents a messenger to come in the future, who is definitely identified by Christ and others as John the Baptist who is the special herald of the Lord. Cf. Matthew 3:2-12; Mark 1:4-8; Luke 3:7-18; John 1:6-8, 19-36; 3:22-36.

What will be his responsibility? "Clear the way before Me." His job will be to remove or "clear away" all the impediments lying in the road. He will remove all that retards the coming of the Lord. The enmity toward God, ungodliness of the people will be removed by calling upon the people to repent. Cf. Isaiah 40:3. The Messenger will call the people of Judah to turn from their sins to the Lord with a pure heart. Was that not the message of John the Baptist? When he arrived on the scene in the wilderness of Judah his message was clear and penetrating, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:1-2). Matthew quotes Isaiah 40:3 demonstrating that John is that messenger of the LORD (v. 3).

Theodore Laetsch correctly says:

Jehovah, speaking of Himself in the first person, announcing His advent, suddenly speaks of Him whose way shall be prepared, in the third person, “The Lord shall come”; adon, same word as ch. 1:6, “master,” “ruler,” one vested with authority and power. The article designates Him as the Supreme Ruler. He is that Son of David whom David called his Lord, adon, sitting at the right hand of the Lord Jehovah (Ps. 110:1; cp. Matt. 22:42-45), who as the eternal royal High Priest (Ps. 110:4) is Jehovah Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:5f). Yet He is not a second Lord. Though a second person, He is One with Jehovah in one indivisible essence and being (Ex. 23:20f; John 10:30; 14:9ff). When this Lord comes, Jehovah comes.

Jesus said it was John the Baptist in Mathew 11:10-14; Mark 1:2; Luke 7:27, referring to Mal. 4:5. Note the context. Cf. Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:25; 14:6.

This messenger is a concrete personality. How interesting that not a single prophet rose in Israel between the Hebrew prophet Malachi and the coming of John the Baptist. John is the extraordinary messenger of God in the spirit and character of Elijah.

The Messenger of the Covenant

"The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple" (cf. Mal. 1:7, 10; 2:13; 1 Kings 8:11; Hag. 1:9, 14; Ex. 25:8; 40:34ff). The Lord is (ha Adon) Adonai. He will come suddenly, unexpectedly as a thief in the night. “Suddenly” is never used to denote immediacy, but always means unexpectedly, regardless of the lapse of time.

God will "send His messenger, " John the Baptist who will announce the "Messenger of the Covenant," or angel of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist’s birth was announced “suddenly,” unexpectedly (Luke 1:5-22). The unexpected “sudden” announcement of the Messiah’s birth came shortly thereafter (1:26-38; 2:8ff; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-8). The unexpected voice was heard in the wilderness calling men to repentance (Luke 3:2ff), and the Messiah appeared suddenly (Lk. 3:21ff; Jn. 1:10f, 29ff,
46ff; 2:18; 6:41f; 7:40-53). All these events took place just as Malachi prophesied. They were literally fulfilled.

At His first coming Jesus did appear in the Temple after the preparatory work of John the Baptizer (Lk. 2:22ff, 41-49; John 2:13-22; 5:1ff; 7:14-53). He was announced by His forerunner crying in the wilderness, "Behold the Lamb of God who lifts up and takes away the sin of the world." He came preaching repentance and announcing the coming of the kingdom of God.

Pieter Verhoef concludes: “In the light of the history of the fulfillment, it is obvious that the prophecy unites the facts of the first and second comings of Christ, but then in such a manner that the aspect of judgment is stressed in both instances” which is evident from vv. 2-5. “The final fulfillment will concur with the second coming of Christ, the central fulfillment was realized in His first coming, and temporary fulfillments accompanying God’s dealings with His people, in both the OT and NT dispensations.”

At His first coming Christ was preceded by the “forerunner,” John the Baptist. “We may assume that the prophecy’s final fulfillment will coincide with the coming of the great Day of the Lord at the second coming of Christ. . . . In the dispensation between the first and second comings of Christ, the herald of the day of consummation is essentially the Church through the Word and the Spirit of God” (Verhoef).

At His second coming Jesus will appear suddenly in His literally "palace." The God-King will dwell therein forever (Ezek. 43:7; 37:26, 26). “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The Maleakh, "the Covenant angel" is One in essence with Yahweh, the coming of the Lord to His Temple is represented as a coming of Maleakh. He is fulfilled in the coming of Christ in whom Malekah, the Logos, became incarnate (Isa. 42:6; Ex. 3:6f; 14:19; 23:20; 33:14; Heb. 9:15; 12:24; Mark 1:2).

“The Angel of the Lord” is the Son of God before His incarnation. This Angel appears first in the age of the patriarchs and then throughout the history of Israel in every age from Moses, the Judges, David, Elijah, Zechariah, and here in Malachi it is the same person as the Angel of the Covenant. This Angel of the Covenant or Messenger of the Covenant is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, before His incarnation. He is seen as One with Yahweh. The LORD identifies the Angel of God with Himself (Exodus 23:20ff). The Lord calls this Angel God, Lord, Yahweh (Gen. 16:7-11, 13; 32:28; Hosea 12:4f; Ex. 3:2-15; 13:21; 14:19; Judges 6:12-16). This Angel of the Lord is I AM THAT I AM (Ex. 3:2-14) and is just as truly Yahweh’s Messenger, His Angel sent by the Lord. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). “He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? . . . Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me . . . ” (14:9-11; cf. 17:21-26). For an in depth look see our study on the Angel of the Lord in this series.

The Lord will come into His temple to sanctify and judge (3:2-6). “And who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears?” His coming is like the “refiner’s fire” and the alkali of the fuller. John the Baptist announced, “As for me, I baptize you in water because of repentance, but He who is coming after me . . . He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). He comes to refine and purify. He comes to give a new heart, to break to pieces the stony heart out of their
flesh and give them and soft sensitive heart to His presence. He comes to put the Spirit in them and to clothe them with garments washed in His own blood, robes of righteousness. He comes to implant in their hearts faith in the Redeemer and He continues to do it until the day He calls them home to be with Him in heaven. This purifying refining work goes on throughout the believer’s life on earth (Rom. 6:11-21; 7:5-25; 8:1ff; Gal. 5:13-26).

It is my prayer that you will let Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, the Messiah become the desire of your heart.
Malachi 4:1

The Sun of Righteousness

In our journey through Christ in the Old Testament we have discovered that we can look to Christ as God, and as such trust in and worship Him. Thomas Moore summarizes:

There is one being called the Angel of the Lord, Angel of the Presence, Angel of the Covenant, etc, who appeared to Abraham in Mamre (Gen. 18:1, 2, 16; 19:1), and who is there called Jehovah; who appeared to Jacob in Bethel (Gen. 31:11; 48:15) to Moses in the bush (Ex. 3:2, 4, 6) who went before the camp in the Shekinah (Ex. 14:19), who delivered the Law at Sinai (Acts 7:28), who led the people through the desert (Isa. 63:7, 9), who was promised as the one who was to make the new covenant (Jer. 31:31), and who is predicted by Malachi (3:1) as to appear in the temple then existing. This Messenger, we are thus clearly taught was Divine, for He is called Jehovah. This Divine Messenger (Mark 1:1, 2) assures us, was Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus Christ is “God manifest in the flesh,” “God over all, blessed forever” (Haggai and Malachi, pp. 155-56).

The Angel of the Covenant is the same one who led the people out of Egypt. He appears and reappears throughout Hebrew history. We encounter Him again in Malachi four.

The break between chapters three and four in Malachi is unfortunate because the opening words of chapter four is a continuation of what has gone before. The Lord will discern between the righteous and the unrighteous. When will that take place? It will happen when all the wrongs of the ages is righted at the Millennium (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-12). It will usher in the never-ending “day of the LORD,” the eternal state of Revelation 21-22. Chapter four opens with the manifested glory of the Lord Jesus who will visit judgment on those who have rejected the invitation of grace. That “day” which Malachi announces will burn “like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff” (4:1). All the proud and wicked will be as stubble. It will be the day of the wrath of the Lamb.

“The antithesis between the righteous and the wicked will be the consequence of the Lord’s Day,” observes Verhoef. No one will be able to endure that “day” which is characterized as “the great and terrible day” (4:5). Calvin referred it to the first coming of Christ, while many other scholars think of His second coming and the Day of Judgment. “The central fulfillment is to be related to the first coming of Christ, just as the final fulfillment must be seen in connection with His coming again, the day of final judgment.”

The Day is Coming

"For behold, the day is coming" (v. 1). That day arrived in Christ and He will come again. The "sun of righteousness will rise with healing in His wings." The Sun of Righteousness will burn away the chaff, or He will heal depending on the situation. If He finds righteousness He will bring healing. If He finds unrighteousness it will be a day of "burning like a furnace." Cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Isa. 2:12.

It is apparent the coming day will be a day of judgment. “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them
"Ablaze," says the Lord of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." All the ungodly in Israel that "day" will burn like a furnace. In this hot "oven" nobody and nothing that is unrighteous will be spared. For the wicked it will not be a refining and purifying, but judgment. The Day of Judgment is a serious day.

Verse one is not teaching annihilation of the soul with the idea that every unbeliever will be blotted out of God’s universe. That is only wishful thinking that there will not be eternal judgment for those who reject Christ. Malachi is speaking of a temporal judgment like Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire from heaven will consume the bodies of the wicked on the earth before the Millennial kingdom is set up, and become ashes under the feet of the righteous. This passage is not speaking of the soul and the spirit. Other passages of Scripture make abundantly clear there will be a judgment after death and eternal punishment.

In a day of thick darkness and gloom there will be for the preserved remnant a light breaking forth in overwhelming glory. "But to you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will shine with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall" (4:2).

**The Sun of Righteousness**

Here Malachi calls the promised Messiah the Sun, the greater light to rule the day of the New Testament. Balaam called Him the Star out of Jacob (Num. 24:17); Isaiah called Him the Great Light (9:2) and the Light of the Gentiles (42:6; 49:6).

"Righteousness" is to be regarded as the key word in the phrase "sun of righteousness." The "Sun of Righteousness" is called the Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:6). In Him righteousness is personified. "On the Day of the Lord righteousness will become apparent just like the shining sun in all its brightness and blessedness," says Pieter Verhoef. Cf. Psalm 37:6; Isaiah 58:8. "Righteousness" here represents the Messiah, either as Christ incarnate or in His function as Judge of the world, or both. Cf. Luke 1:78; John 1:4, 9; 8:12; Isa. 9:2; John 5:21; Rev. 21:23; 11:1-5; 1 John 5:11, 12.

"Sun of Righteousness" (v. 2). The "sun of righteousness” is the Son of righteousness. He brings healing in His wings. Is that not what He did upon His first coming to the temple? And when He comes again the second time He will come in a blaze of glory and reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The shining forth of the Sun of Righteousness will bring healing for His own, but judgment for the wicked. His very radiant glory will consume the unrighteous. There will be no Millennium until Christ appears, purging the scene for the establishment of His kingdom.

For those whose righteousness depends alone in the Sun of Righteousness it will be a day of salvation in all of its full significance. The light of the sun represents the fullness of God’s salvation for the believer. The “day” will not bring eternal darkness for them, but the eternal day of His presence. This “healing” will ultimately be the consequence of the vicarious sacrificial atonement of the Suffering Servant of the LORD. Under His wings we find healing, redemption, everlasting life and peace with God. Again the final and complete fulfillment of this passage will occur at the first and second comings of Christ. At the first coming He purchased our righteousness. At the second coming we will behold His glory. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). This is true only because Jesus is our righteousness. "He [God]
made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Branch of David is righteousness incarnate because the righteous one has procured our righteousness as the vicarious Substitute. He took upon Himself our penalty for sin (Isaiah 53:5-7; Romans 6:23) and paid it in full. The Lord Our Righteousness has come with healing in His wings for our sin sickness, and not only for ours but for the whole world (1 John 2:2). He is our propitiation.

THE COMING OF ELIJAH

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD” (v. 5; Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; cf. Luke 1:16, 17).

Just as in the prophetic passages that refer to the return or resurrection of King David who had been dead for centuries, and who would “reign over the nation of God in the mind and spirit of David; so the Elijah to be sent can only be a prophet with the spirit or power of Elijah the Tishbite. The second David was indeed to spring from the family of David, because to the seed of David there had been promised the eternal possession of the throne” (Keil and Delitzsch). We don’t need to look for a literal descendent of Elijah the Tishbite, but “simply a prophet in whom the spirit and power of Elijah are revived.” This man of God would bring God’s message in the power and energy of old Elijah.

Isaiah 40:3 declares, A voice is calling,

“Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.”

The fulfillment of this prophecy of Elijah, whom the Lord would send before His own coming, was sent in the person of John the Baptizer. The angel announced to his father before his birth as the promised Elijah (Luke 1:16, 17). He would go as the forerunner before the Messiah and announce in the spirit and power of Elijah calling the people to repentance. His job would be to make ready “a prepared people for the Lord.” Matt. 3:1-12; Luke 1:17; 3:2-8; Mark 1:2-8

John announced himself as being the fulfillment of that prophetic role of Elijah and Jesus affirmed it, too (Matthew 17:10-13; Luke 7:18-35; Mark 9:11-28; John 1:21-23).

The majority of ancient and modern Protestant interpreters maintain the two figures, "the messenger" (3:1) and "Elijah" (4:5) are in fact identical (Verhoef).

Apparently the Jews in the time of Christ expected the historical prophet Elijah would return in person probably because of Elijah's ascension to heaven (2 Kings 2:1-11) and his expected coming as forerunner. In the New Testament this "Elijah" was applied to John the Baptist (Luke 1:16-17). The disciples asked, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus' reply was, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come" (Matthew 17:10-13). He also said, "Now if you are willing to accept it, he [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is to come" (Matt. 11:14).
In the light of New Testament application it is not necessary to expect the coming again in person of the historical prophet Elijah. He was introduced in our text as a typical representative of the Old Testament prophets. What was said about the historical Elijah has been applied to the Elijah of our text. He will go before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah' (Lk. 1:17) (Verhoef). This Elijah is the one who paves the way for the coming of the Lord.

Just as Malachi predicted the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ came to His temple. His work began with the first coming of Christ and will ultimately be completed at the second coming.

The Hebrew scholar Keil writes: “The day of the Lord, which they announce as the day of judgment, commenced with the appearance on earth of Christ, the incarnate Logos; and Christ Himself declared that He had come into the world for judgment (John 9:39; 3:19; 12:40), viz. for the judgment of separating the believing from the ungodly, to give eternal life to those who believe on His name, and to bring death and condemnation to unbelievers. This judgment burst upon the Jewish nation not long after the ascension of Christ.” Israel rejected her Messiah and destruction came upon Jerusalem in the great Roman war of A. D. 70. Universal judgment will come upon the earth at the visible second coming of the Lord at the last day.

The great and terrible day of the Lord suggests the second coming of Christ. As we have just seen and in our study of Malachi 3:1 the New Testament emphasis is on John the Baptist as the promised Elijah. However, the nature of prophecy is to project separate future events into one eschatological portrait. One fulfillment of a prophecy does not exclude the possibility of further fulfillments in the course of history. This is true when applied to the two comings of Christ. When we apply this to the coming of Elijah and the coming Day of the Lord the first and central fulfillment in the time of Christ's first coming, and the final and ultimate fulfillment will be when Christ comes again.

Laetsch says, "Here he is to prepare the people for the Second Advent. The Purifier of His people (3:3) is also the Judge (3:2, 5). As so frequently in prophecy, the coming of Christ into the flesh and His coming unto judgment are here seen in one grand, panoramic view (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2f; 1 Peter 4:7; James 5:8f; Rev. 3:20; 22:20; 2 Peter 3:8-13)."

The early church fathers also saw Elijah fulfilled in Revelation 11:3-12 as one of the witnesses.

The Old Testament comes to its grand climax with this prophecy and waits 400 years before the coming of the last of the great Hebrew prophets who prepares the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus into His temple.

“The Law and the prophets bore witness to Christ, and Christ came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them.” The greatest testimony of that grand fact is seen at the Mount of Transfiguration with their representatives before the transfigured Jesus discussing His coming exodus (Matthew 17:1ff; Mark 9:1ff; Luke 9:28ff).

I agree full heartedly with Theodore Laetsch when he said: "Would Malachi, the spokesman of God, have said that the Law of Moses had been commanded by the Lord to His servant Moses at Horeb if a large number of these statutes had never been enacted by Moses, but had originated in the minds of priests and scribes living many centuries after Moses? Perish the thought!"

**Messianic elements in the prophets**
• “Kingdom of God shall be established in all the earth.”

• King is God-Man

• Servant of God will redeem men through suffering.

• God’s purpose of Grace is centered in the Messiah.

That day arrived in Christ and He will come again. The “Sun of Righteousness” will burn away the chaff, or He will bring healing depending upon the situation.
The Only Possible Legitimate Messiah

Matthew, who is the most Jewish of the Gospels, begins with the words, “Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

Is Jesus Christ the legitimate heir to the throne of King David? How can we be sure that He is the only possible legal, and the royal Messiah of Israel?

Jesus Christ “was a descendent of David,” therefore His Jewish ancestry is very important to establish His legitimacy as the Jewish messiah.

God “promised beforehand through the prophets in the holy scriptures” things concerning the coming of the son of David. Those things related to the place, nature of His birth, life, death and resurrection. His Jewish background would demand that He be born of the line of David if He would be eligible to sit on the great king’s throne and reign forever as the true king of Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah was specific when he wrote in 23:5-6 of the coming of the royal son of David:

   “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord,
   “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
   And He will reign as king and act wisely
   And do justice and righteousness in the land.
   “In His days Judah will be saved,
   And Israel will dwell securely;
   And this is His name by which He will be called,
   ‘The Lord our righteousness.’”

The Jewish writer Matthew uses the genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth to prove that Jesus had descended from King David and therefore qualified to be Israel’s Messiah. The promise had been given to King David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before Me” (2 Samuel 7:16).

Matthew uses at least forty formal quotations from the Old Testament, and at least sixteen times he uses the formula, “all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet saying . . .” Matthew traces the origins of Jesus to King David and to the Jewish patriarch Abraham.

Matthew begins his genealogy with Abraham and moves forward through fourteen generations in history to David, and then his descendants through fourteen generations to the Babylonian exile, and another fourteen generations to “Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ” (Matt. 1:16).

Another genealogy is given by Luke, which moves in the opposite direction. He begins with Joseph and goes back to David, Abraham and Adam (Luke 3:31, 34, 38). He is giving evidence to show that Jesus “will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end” (1:32-33).
Both of the genealogies are dealing with the same person, Jesus the Messiah. Both trace the lineage of Jesus through His adopted father Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born.

The difficulty we encounter when we look at the two genealogies is quite interesting. They are the lines of two brothers and the children are cousins. Matthew says that Joseph was the son of Jacob who descended from David through David’s son and successor King Solomon (1:6). However, Luke says that Joseph was the son of Heli who had descended from David through Nathan (Luke 3:31), who was also David’s son and a brother of Solomon (v. 32).

Bernhard Weiss and James Orr carefully note that we are looking at two lineages of Joseph and Mary respectively, each who are descendents of King David. “Nathan’s line ran on through the years and ultimately produced the Virgin Mary. Solomon’s line ran on through the years and ultimately produced Joseph.” But Joseph was not the father of Jesus. He was the husband of Mary, the adoptive father of Jesus (Matt. 1:16). The distinction between these two lines of descent from David is between the “royal” line of those who actually sat on the throne and the “legal” line of descent from one oldest son to the next, even though these descendents never actually reigned as kings of Israel.

It is important to keep in mind these two lines of descendents from King David. Nathan was the older brother of Solomon, but the younger brother took the throne. Solomon was the king God chose to reign after David’s death. Normally, however, that would have fallen to the elder son, Nathan, who would have been king if God had not given it to Solomon. Of course, none of Nathan’s descendents ever claimed the throne. There were no reigning kings in his line of descendents, even though they had the legal right to the throne.

The line of Solomon continued down through the centuries until it eventually produced Joseph, who was betrothed to the virgin Mary who would eventually become her husband after she had given birth to Jesus. However, note very carefully that Jesus was not a descendent of Joseph. However, when Joseph took Mary under his protection and thus became the adoptive father of her divine child, he passed the right of royalty to Jesus.

Moreover, Jeremiah 22:30 tells us that if Jesus had descended from Joseph a divine curse would have been on Him. Jeremiah tells us a terrible curse was pronounced on king Jehoiachin (Jechonias, whom Jeremiah abbreviates to Coniah), the last of the actual reigning kings who descended from King Solomon.

“Thus says the Lord,  
‘Write this man down childless,  
A man who will not prosper in his days;  
For no man of his descendants will prosper  
Sitting on the throne of David  
Or ruling again in Judah.’ ”

Because of God’s curse on Jehoiachin, no king who ever descended in that line could be a legitimate king. If Joseph had been the physical father of Jesus, Jesus could not have been the Messiah. Jesus is the son of Mary, not the son of Joseph and Mary.

But wait. What about Joseph and his descendents? Remember, Jesus was not a physical descendent of Joseph. Joseph was Jesus’ step-father. Each of his half brothers, who were the only other possible
candidates for the Messiah had the curse of Jehoiachin on them and would have passed it on to their children if they had become king.

Because Jesus was a divine child his adoptive father handed the reign over to Him. Therefore, Jesus was a legitimate royal heir to the throne.

Donald Grey Barnhouse explains:

The line that had no curse upon it produced Heli and his daughter the Virgin Mary and her Son Jesus Christ. He is therefore eligible by the line of Nathan and exhausts that line. The line that had a curse on it produced Joseph and exhausts the line of Solomon, for Joseph’s other children now have an elder brother who, legally, by adoption, is the royal heir. How can the title be free in any case? A curse on one line and the lack of reigning royalty in the other.

But when God the Holy Spirit begat the Lord Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin without any use of a human father, the child that was born was the seed of David according to the flesh. And when Joseph married Mary and took the unborn child under his protecting care, giving him the title that had come down to him through his ancestor Solomon, the Lord Jesus became the legal Messiah, the royal messiah, the uncursed messiah, the true Messiah, the only possible messiah. The lines are exhausted. Any man that ever comes into this world professing to fulfill the conditions will be a liar and the child of the devil (Man’s Ruin: Exposition of Bible Doctrines, Taking the Epistle to the Romans as a Point of Departure, vol. 1, Romans 1:1-32. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952, p. 45-47).

Moreover, because Jesus descended from Mary, who also was a descendent of King David through the lineage of Nathan, He had a legal claim to the throne. The two lines of David focused on the Messiah. No one else could ever bring a legitimate claim to the throne of David.

Donald Barnhouse concludes, “If Jesus is not the Messiah who has descended from David according to the Old Testament prophecies, there will never be a Messiah. For Jesus had no human children, and each of his brothers (who are the only other possibilities through whom another messiah might descend) had the curse on him and would have passed it on to his children” and Jeremiah’s prophecy would thus be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ is the legitimate descendent from two lines of King David. He is the King announced in the Jewish prophecies. He is the King Messiah who was also the Son of God. He is the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” No one else can make that claim. He is the only possible legitimate Messiah. There can absolutely be no other.

How significant that the great prophecy that the Messiah King would come through the line of David was given just a few verses after the great words of judgment on the descendents of Jehoiachin. C. C. Ryrie notes, “If Jesus had been born only in the line of Joseph (and thus of Jechoniah, Heb. Coniah), He would not have been qualified to reign on the throne of David in the Millennium.” He also writes, “Had our Lord been the natural son of Joseph, He could not have been successful on the throne of David because of this curse. But since He came through Mary’s lineage, He was not affected by this curse.”

Though Jechoniah’s sons never occupied the throne, the line of rulership passed through them. If Jesus had been a physical descendent of Jechoniah, He would not have been able to occupy David’s throne.
Luke’s genealogy makes it clear that Jesus was a *legal* descendant of David through his son Nathan (Lk. 3:31). Joseph, a descendent of Solomon, was Jesus’ legal adoptive father, so Jesus traced His *royal* rights to the throne through Joseph.

Jesus Christ is the only legitimate legal Jewish Messiah. Let us bow and worship Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.