


Behold the Lamb
Publications

The Better Thing!

**Abraham, Moses, and
David all died without
it, but Christ freely
offers it to
YOU!**

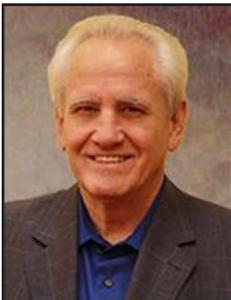
Message by: Leroy Surface

Opposing Points of View

On one hand we have the epistles of the apostles Paul, John, and Peter. We have the prophecies of the prophets who foretold the coming of Christ hundreds and even thousands of years before He came into the world, each of them telling some part of the purpose of His coming. We even have the word spoken by the angel Gabriel defining what the Messiah the Prince would accomplish at his coming. These all speak with resounding clarity telling us that Christ came to destroy the devil and his works, make an end of sin in the believer, and birth a people filled with everlasting righteousness.

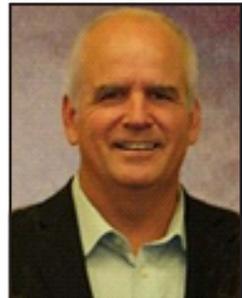
On the other hand we have a religious philosophy that has been developed over the last nineteen-hundred years. It tells us of a salvation that changes nothing, a righteousness that only God can see, and “saints” who are sinners just like the unbelievers of this world. Yet most of our modern religious leaders choose to stand with the purveyors of philosophy rather than with the apostles and prophets as recorded in the scriptures.

Who among them will agree with Paul, who says, *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life”* Romans 6:22. Which



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religious leader will stand up and say “...a child of God is not a sinner, because Christ has made us free?” Who will agree with John, who says, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him”* I John 3:5-6. What



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spiritual teacher will say of those who *“abide in Christ,”* that they *“do not sin,”* or of those who continue in sin, *“they have not seen Him, and they do not know him?”* This is what the apostle John said; we seek to say only the same, nothing more, nothing less.

“The Better Thing”

Message by: Leroy Surface

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is often called “*Faith’s Hall of Fame*.” In it are named sixteen men and women who “*by faith*” did mighty exploits and obtained wonderful promises. There were others who went unnamed who also “*...through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens...*” Hebrews 11:33-34. Certainly, these were some of the greatest men and women who ever lived on this earth, for no other reason than they “*believed God*” and did what He said. In “*believing God*,” every one of these were “*justified by faith*,” exactly as we who believe the gospel of Christ are also justified. The main thrust of this chapter, however, is often overlooked. It is found in the first and last two verses of the chapter:

Hebrews 11:1-2: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it **the elders obtained a good report.***”

Hebrews 11:39-40: “*And these all, **having obtained a good report through faith**, received not the promise: **God having provided some better thing for us**, that they without us should not be made perfect.*”

The purpose of Paul when writing this message to the Hebrews was neither to exalt nor diminish the achievements of these great men and women of faith. Instead, after detailing the “*good report*” each of them received “*by faith*,” the apostle ends the chapter by telling us they “*...received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us....*” It is my purpose in this message to make clear to the believer exactly what “*the better thing*” is.

The book of Hebrews deals with many “*better things*” as follows: a “*better hope*” Hebrews 7:19; a “*better testament*” 7:22; a “*better covenant*” established on “*better promises*” 8:6; a “*better sacrifice*” 9:23; a “*better substance*” 10:34; a “*better country*” 11:16; and a “*better resurrection*” 11:35. All these are “*better things*” which are spoken

of by the “*blood of sprinkling,*” which is the “*blood of Christ*” I Peter 1:18-19, who is our “*better sacrifice*” Hebrews 12:24. All of these together, however, do not begin to explain the “*better thing*” God has provided for us. These are only the means which God has provided for us who believe to receive this great salvation.

This message is very much about “*justification.*” It will show what it means to be “*justified by faith,*” to be “*justified by grace,*” and to be “*justified by His blood.*” You will probably read things in this message you have never heard before, but I promise, to the best of my ability and by the leadership of the Holy Ghost, everything you read in this little book will be what God says in the scriptures. I will begin with a section on “*justification by faith,*” and what it meant to those Old Testament saints who “*obtained a good report through faith.*”

Faith is simply “*believing what God has said.*” There is no other way to salvation in any period of time from Adam until this present day. What this meant to the Old Testament saints, however, is somewhat different than what it means to those of us who have believed and trusted in Christ, who “*loved us, and gave Himself for us*” Galatians 2:20. We who believe and trust in Christ have received “*the better thing.*”

Justified by Faith

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews is a listing of Old Testament saints whom we call “*heroes of faith.*” Sixteen of these are named. Many more are not named, but the great exploits which they did “*by faith*” are enumerated. We will analyze the “*good report*” of three of these “*heroes of faith,*” each of whom were “*justified by faith*” hundreds of years before Abraham was also justified.

Abel

Hebrews 11:4: “*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous...*”

Abel, the second son of Adam, was the first person to be “*justified by faith.*” Exactly as the scripture says of Abraham Romans 4:3, Abel also “*believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*” The apostle Paul places Abel first in the record of those “*heroes of*

faith” found in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous...”** Hebrews 11:4. The “good report” obtained by Abel was that *“he was righteous.”* Let me point out that the scripture does not say God only “saw” Abel as being righteous. The record of scripture says *“he was righteous.”* Able attained unto righteousness simply because he *“believed what God said,”* and his *“righteousness”* was manifest when he brought the *“more excellent sacrifice”* which God had asked of him.

Enoch

Hebrews 11:5: *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”*

The “good report” obtained by Enoch was simply *“he pleased God.”*

Genesis 5:21-22: *“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters...and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”*

There is an interesting fact found in the lineage of every generation of those between Adam and Noah, with the exception of Enoch. Notice in three examples I will give, compared to the fourth:

1: *“Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters”* Genesis 5:7.

2: *“Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters”* Genesis 5:10. .

3: *“Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters”* Genesis 5:13.

4: *“Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters”* Genesis 5:22.

While others may have *“lived”* mundane lives, caught up in the *“cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things”* Mark 4:19, Enoch *“walked with God”* for three hundred years at the same time he provided for his household of sons and

daughters. This overwhelmed me when I first saw it. Abraham only lived for 175 years. Moses lived 120 years, and David's lifespan was 70 years, but Enoch "*walked with God*" for 300 years. We know very little about him, but he may have been the greatest man of God in the Old Testament. Among the things we do know about Enoch is that he was a prophet of God who foretold two of the most earthshaking events in the history of the world, one past and one yet to come. First, Enoch prophesied the great flood almost a thousand years before it came. The evidence that Enoch knew of the flood is found in the name of his firstborn son, Methuselah. The name "*Methuselah*" is derived from two ancient Hebrew words which are understood to say "*when he dies, it comes.*" The child who bore that name became the oldest man who ever lived on earth, and died the same year the flood came.

According to the record given by Jude, the half-brother to Jesus, Enoch also prophesied of the second coming of Christ to earth, saying, "*Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince (convict and punish) all that are ungodly among them...*" Jude 1:14-15.

Paul reminds us, "*But without faith (without believing God) it is impossible to please him (God)*" Hebrews 11:6. God was "*pleased*" with Enoch, not because of some mysterious power he possessed which some call "*faith*;" Enoch simply "*believed*" everything God said to him, and his faith was "*proven*" in his "*walk*" with God. Enoch is second in the list of those who were "*justified by faith.*"

Noah

Hebrews 11:7: "*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*"

Noah was the third of those who were "*justified by faith.*" God spoke to him and he "*believed God.*" He prepared the ark, saved his house, condemned the world, and "*became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*" In neither of these three cases did God merely "*see*" these men as righteous. Of Abel it was said he "*obtained witness that he was righteous.*" The scripture says of Noah before he built the ark, "*Noah was a just man (righteous) and*

perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" Genesis 6:9. The "good report" obtained by Noah was that he "became the heir of the **righteousness which is by faith.**"

"Righteousness" which is "By Faith"

Righteousness which is "by faith" is the greater righteousness than that which is "by the law." Jesus told the multitude in His "Sermon on the Mount," that "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" Matthew 5:20. The "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees was their strict observance of the Law of Moses. Many of them were so perfect in keeping the Law that the "Law" could not condemn them, yet their hearts were filled with evil things. Jesus said of them, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.** He that hateth me hateth my Father also" John 15:22-23. The "sin" which they could not hide was their hatred for Jesus. The Law of Moses could not condemn them, but Christ, who knows the hearts, condemned them openly Matthew 23:1-36. God did not "see them as righteous."

The "righteousness which is by faith" is what Saul of Tarsus sought to receive after he discovered his perfect keeping of the Law to be nothing more than dung Philippians 3:8. His quest became "to be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith**" Philippians 3:9. Saul's "righteousness which is in the law" was "blameless" Philippians 3:6; why would he "count it to be but dung" in order to find "the righteousness which is of God by faith?" The fact is, the "righteousness of faith" is the "greater righteousness" than the righteousness of the law. It is real, and it cannot be received by works, but it is manifest in everything we do. It is a "gift of righteousness" Romans 5:17, which means it is received "by grace through faith" Ephesians 2:8.

About twenty four hundred years before Christ died to "take away our sin" John 1:29, "...by faith, Noah..." who was a righteous man, Genesis 6:9 "...became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" Hebrews 11:7, which is the "exceeding righteousness" Matthew 5:20 Jesus spoke of. It is righteousness which no one can produce of

themselves, and none could receive until Christ shed His precious blood and died on the cross to “*take away our sin*” I John 3:5.

Paul concluded the eleventh chapter of Hebrews by saying, “...*these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be MADE PERFECT*” Hebrews 11:39-40. The apostle Paul has shown what “*made perfect*” means in the previous chapter of Hebrews.

Made Perfect

Hebrews 10:14: “*For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*”

Noah was not “*perfected*” in his lifetime, but he was “*righteous.*” His “*righteousness,*” however, was not by nature, because “*sin*” remained in his nature. “*Sin*” was his “*inheritance*” from Adam, but “*righteousness*” is our “*inheritance*” from Christ. The word “*perfect*” in the New Testament is derived from a Greek word that means “*complete.*” The “*complete*” or “*perfect*” man or woman is the one whose sin has been “*taken away,*” and their heart has been “*purified by faith*” Acts 15:8-9. God does not see the “*ungodly as godly,*” the “*unrighteous as righteous,*” or “*the guilty*” as “*not guilty.*” That is not what “*justification by faith*” is. The “*perfected*” or “*complete*” man or woman is the one who has “*believed what God has said*” through both the messianic prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament. Their “*sin*” has been “*taken away,*” out of their heart and out of their nature. They have received from God a “*new heart and a new spirit*” Ezekiel 36:26; they have “*the mind of Christ*” I Corinthians 2:16, and partake of “*the divine nature*” II Peter 1:4.” They are “*heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ*” Romans 8:17. This is certainly a “*better thing*” than any of the Old Testament saints could possess in their lifetime.

Colossians 2:10-11: “*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.*”

Romans 6:6-7: “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*”

We who “*believe what God has said*” received this blessing when Christ died for us. That is the exact moment that Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and every other Old Testament “*saint*” also received it, fulfilling the saying of the apostle Paul, “*...that they without us should not be made perfect.*” We who believe were “*crucified with (in union with) Christ*” along with all those who “*died in faith*” during the centuries leading up to the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary. Noah, who “*became the heir of the righteousness which is by faith,*” received true righteousness the moment the blood of Jesus was poured out on the cross. It was there that we who believe were also “*perfected forever*” Hebrews 10:14.

I would be a fool to claim any kind of “*human perfection,*” but I know that from the moment I understood the truth of the gospel, He “*purified my heart*” by the “*faith of the gospel,*” and I am no longer a sinner. Paul’s words in Romans 6:6 confirm this for everyone who believes; “*...our old man is crucified with Him (Christ)...*” The word “*with*” is translated from the Greek word “*sun,*” which “*denotes union.*” Understand this to say, “*...our old man is crucified in union with Christ.*” What is the purpose of this great truth? “*...that the body of sin might be destroyed...*” The word “*might*” is not found in the Greek text, but it was added by translators to denote the reason for our crucifixion “*with Christ,*” which is the “*destruction*” of our old man (the “*body of sin*”).

The term “*body of sin,*” refers not to just some of our sins, but the “*entire body*” of sin, which speaks of what is called “*the sin nature.*” Some teachers are quick to point out that the word “*destroyed*” is translated from the Greek word “*katargeō,*” which is defined as “*to be (render) entirely idle (useless).*” They do so to tell us that the “*sin nature*” is not “*destroyed,*” but only “*asleep,*” and it can “*revive*” at any time. I am just as quick to point out that the same apostle (Paul), used the same word to tell us “*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*” I Corinthians 15:26. When “*death and hell*” are cast into the lake of fire Revelation 20:14, they will never revive nor return. They are eternally “*destroyed!*” In this present life, the only scenario in which sin can revive in the heart of one who

has been “*made free from sin*” is if they are “*moved away from Christ*” to trust in other things. Sadly, many in the church today are turning to trust in the “*deeds of the law*” (Jewish feast days, etc.). Paul said, “*...when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died*” Romans 7:9. The apostle John says, “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him*” I John 3:5-6. There are many who will tell you this is not so, but in denying the Word of God spoken by the apostle, they not only prove they are not “*believers,*” but they are, as they say, still “*sinner*” and they are not “*freed from sin.*” Stay with what God says in His word, and Christ will “*make you free.*”

God’s Call to Abraham

Genesis 12:1-4: “*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*”

The record of Abraham, who became “*the friend of God*” James 2:23, is not as simple as that of Able, Enoch, and Noah. We know by the scriptures that God called Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees to come down to Canaan several years before he “*departed out of Haran*” at the age of seventy five years. Notice the words in the text, “*...the LORD had said unto Abram....*”

Act 7:3: “*The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran (Haran), And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.*”

According to Jewish tradition, it may have been as much as twenty years prior to this that God had called Abram to “*get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house....*” The result at that time was somewhat different than what God had asked of Abraham:

Genesis 11:31: *“And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.”*

Haran was a city just north of Canaan, about “halfway” between where God called Abram from and where He called him to. If Jewish tradition is correct, Abraham may have spent as many as 20 years living with his father Terah in a “half-way house” in Haran. God had said to Abraham, while they still lived in Ur of the Chaldees, *“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house ...”* We know by the scriptures that the entire family had worshiped idols while living in Ur of the Chaldees Joshua 24:2. Again, Jewish tradition says that Terah was an “idol maker.” This is the reason God called for Abraham and his wife Sarah to make a complete separation from his father and kindred.

Considering what God told Abraham and what actually transpired, Terah must have invited himself to go along and continued to be in charge as the head of his house. It was not until Terah died in Haran that Abraham got on track to obey God. Even so, Abraham made the mistake of taking his nephew Lot with him. It was not until several years later, after separation came between Abraham and Lot, that God began revealing his purpose to Abraham.

Genesis 13:14-15: *“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”*

What Abraham Found: Part I

The fact of “*justification by faith*” did not begin with Abraham. Every man or woman whom God has received since the beginning of time has been “*justified by faith*,” beginning with “*righteous Abel*” Matthew 23:25. The apostle Paul established that justification is “*by faith*” in the third chapter of Romans before he mentioned Abraham in the fourth chapter. After laying out several facts concerning justification, Paul gives his “*conclusion*” to the matter, saying “*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith*

without the deeds of the law” Romans 3:28. We will look at the “facts” Paul considered when reaching his conclusion.

Romans 3:20: *“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight:*

“Obedience to the law” can wash the outward man and make him righteous in the eyes of others, because we cannot see the heart. God sees the heart of those who may cleanse the outward man perfectly through the works of the law, but cover uncleanness in their heart.

Romans 3:21: *“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.”*

The word “righteousness” in the book of Romans is more correctly understood to speak of either “justification” or “justice.” Neither God’s “justice” nor His “justification” is based upon the law, but on what Paul calls “the faith of Jesus Christ.”

Romans 3:22: *“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”*

Galatians 2:16: *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”*

The KJV is the only version of the bible that speaks of “*the faith of Christ.*” Modern versions translate this phrase to say “*faith in Christ.*” Most theologians argue the difference between the two is whether “*we believe God*” or “*Jesus believes God*” for us. This argument totally misses the point. “*The faith of Christ*” is a term synonymous with “*The doctrine of Christ*” and “*The gospel of Christ.*” The word “*faith*” is used as a noun, and speaks, not of our believing, but of what we believe about Jesus Christ: “*Who He is, why He came into the world, and what He accomplished through His death on the cross.*” The “*faith*” that justifies a believer is “*The Faith of Christ.*” It is believing “*the record that God gave of His Son*” I John 5:10.

Romans 3:23: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

This is an undeniable truth for all who are “*born of Adam.*” We were all “*born*” into this world with sin in our nature. This is not the truth, however, for those who are “*born of God.*” Paul gives “*all have sinned*” as the condition of every person before Calvary and the reason Christ died for us.

Romans 3:25-26: “*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*”

The English word “*propitiation*” is translated from the Greek word “*hilastērion,*” which is properly understood to be either a “*mercy seat,*” are the “*sacrificial lamb*” whose blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. Jesus was offered as “*The Lamb of God*” to “*take away the sin of the world*” John 1:29.

Verses 25-26 belong together, as the one deals with forgiveness of “*sins that are past*” through “*faith in His blood,*” and the other deals with the “*justification of the believer,*” also through “*faith in His blood.*” The “*faith*” which justifies us is “*faith in His blood.*”

Romans 3:27: “*Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*”

We are often told that when God “*justifies*” us, nothing is changed; that God has only declared the “*guilty*” to be “*not guilty, innocent, and even perfect in His sight,*” when all the while we are the same sinful wretch we were before we were “*justified by God.*” If this were true, Paul would have no need to “*exclude boasting.*” Why would anyone make the boast that “*God has saved me, and I am still the same as I always was; nothing has changed except the way God sees me.*” Sadly, I hear that “*boast*” all the time from religious people who have never been “*born of God.*” The truth about justification in the New Covenant is that everything changes from the inside out at the moment of “*justification by faith in His blood.*” It is a miraculous transformation that comes in a moment of time when “*the light of truth*” shines into the heart of a sinner. It may come after years of trying and failing to “*change ourselves,*” but never “*because*” of those efforts. When it does come, no one can doubt it is the miraculous work of God.

Romans 3:28: *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*

Romans 4:1-3: *“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”*

“What Abraham found” actually began after Abraham had been in the land of Canaan for ten years. He had gained much wealth while he dwelt in Haran ^{Genesis 12:5}, and continued to prosper in everything he touched in the land of Canaan. After ten years in Canaan, however, Abraham had no children, and a “house-born servant” was his heir. Abraham counted all his great riches to be nothing, because he had no son.

Genesis 15:1-4: *“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.”*

Genesis 15:5-6: *“And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he (Abraham) believed in the LORD; and He (God) counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Abraham “believed God” when He said “...he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.” Again, he believed God when He said of the stars of heaven, “...so shall thy seed be.” When God “counted” Abraham’s faith to him for righteousness, it was guaranteed that Abraham would receive the promise. “What Abraham found,” however, was that we cannot receive the promise of God through our human efforts.

When God first promised Abraham a son, He never mentioned that the “son of promise” would be born to his wife Sarah, who was a

“barren woman.” Abraham was a healthy man, and could certainly father a child. The *“plan”* was actually devised by Sarah: Abraham would take her bondmaid Hagar to birth a child to Abraham for Sarah. The plan, though revolting to us, was within the realm of the customs of that day. It was not a *“one night stand”* for Abraham. He actually took Hagar as a second wife Genesis 16:3, which was also within the realm of the custom of the day, and she conceived and brought forth a son for Abraham, and called his name Ishmael.

Abraham *“believed God”* when He said his *“heir”* would *“come forth out of thine own bowels.”* He entered into human efforts, however, which God will never accept, when he fathered a son through Hagar. From the time Ishmael was conceived in Hagar, there is no record that God visited Abraham again until the child Ishmael was thirteen years old. Abraham truly believed Ishmael was the child God had promised, but Ishmael was a product of Abraham’s human ability. For thirteen years Abraham focused his love and attention on Ishmael, seeking to *“train”* a little *“wild man”* Genesis 16:11-12, into the blessing God had promised. The apostle Paul wrote concerning this, *“For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory (boast), but not before God”* Romans 4:2. Abraham had much to boast about in Ishmael, because he was totally the result of Abraham’s human ability, but God did not receive him. The child of promise must be the child of the barren woman, Sarah.

Genesis 16:16-17:1-2: *“And Abram was **fourscore and six years old** (eighty six years), when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram. And when Abram was **ninety years old and nine** (ninety nine years), the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. **And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.**”*

Ishmael was thirteen years old when God appeared again to renew His covenant with Abraham. As God speaks, Abraham *“falls on his face”* verse 3, and is silent. God renews promises to Abraham, changes his name from Abram to Abraham, and institutes circumcision as a token of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants forever, and all the while Abraham remains silent. It is when God gives the greatest and most wonderful of all promises that Abraham opens his mouth in protest:

Genesis 17:15-18: “*And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!*”

Sarah is 90 years old and has been barren her entire lifetime. God tells Abraham the “*son of promise*” will be born to Sarah. Until this point, everything God has said seems to approve and confirm Ishmael as well as Abraham’s efforts to train him into what God had promised. Abraham believes it is Ishmael’s descendants who will become a great nation and possess the land of Canaan forever. When God mentions Sarah and the birth of a son by her, Abraham “*falls on his face*” a second time, this time in laughter. Clearly, at this moment, Abraham neither believes nor rejoices in the prospect of Isaac. He cries to God “*O that Ishmael might live before thee.*” At this moment, Abraham is no closer to the promise of God than he had been many years before when he left Ur of the Chaldees for the land of promise.

Abraham loved Ishmael. For thirteen years he had poured himself into training his son, preparing him for this very day when he believed God would receive Ishmael and thus approve Abraham’s works. Those in the churches today, who do not believe the promise of God, also “*love their works.*” On the other hand, those who have come to the knowledge of the truth which Jesus said will “*make you free*” from sin, have “*suffered the loss*” Philippians 3:8 of every religious activity they trusted in to make them righteous. All their “*works*” have been “*burned*” I Corinthians 3:15, and out of the ashes they have “*looked to Jesus*” as both the “*author and the finisher of our faith*”

Hebrews 12:2.

We love our works! They identify who we are. We tend to believe we can work our way into favor with God, but that simply is not so. We have been taught that the “*Romans seven*” experience is normal to every child of God. **Not so!** It is a record of Saul of Tarsus during the time he was losing everything he trusted in before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He had no problem serving God as a Jew

until he heard the testimony and prayer of Stephen Acts 7:59-60. He kept all the righteousness of the Law of Moses “*blameless*” Philippians 3:6, and every commandment but one of God’s law. It was the tenth commandment that revealed the content of Saul’s heart and brought him down to the despair of “...*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” This was the lowest day of Saul’s life, but it turned into the greatest day when he met Jesus, and understood that He is “*the Christ.*” After trusting in Jesus as “*both Lord and Christ*” Acts 2:36, Saul answered his own question, saying, “*I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*” Romans 7:25.

At ninety nine years of age, Abraham was no closer to God’s purpose than he was before he left the land of idolatry to come to Canaan. He had the promise from the beginning, but how to receive it had escaped him until this day, which was well over twenty-five years after the day God first appeared to him. Millions of people in America and around the world have “*believed in Jesus,*” but after “*servicing Him*” for decades through step plans and obedience to principles, they are no closer to the promise than when they first “*believed.*” In fact, many people’s lives have been destroyed by countless schemes of unscrupulous preachers who manipulate their followers for personal gain. Jeremiah’s words for ancient Jerusalem describe this generation perfectly; “*The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*” Jeremiah 5:31. Oh so many today are eating the bitter fruit of believing the lies that have been planted in their hearts for over a generation.

Genesis 17:20-24: “*And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year. And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham. And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him. And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.*”

Romans 4:11: *“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.”*

Circumcision was to Abraham the proof that he believed God before he was circumcised. What he believed, however, was something he had not believed until this very day, at ninety nine years of age, that Sarah, the *“barren woman,”* would conceive and give birth to Isaac. Abraham had resisted God, pleading the case for Ishmael and his human efforts, but ultimately he did believe God, and his obedience to circumcision was the proof of His *“faith.”* In so doing, Abraham became *“the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised....”*

What Abraham Found: Part II

Romans 4:18-22: *“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: **He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.**”*

“Who against hope believed in hope...” The word *“against”* in this phrase was translated from the Greek word *“para,”* which means *“A primary preposition; properly near, that is, (with genitive case) from beside....”* Abraham had acted out of *“hope”* for fourteen years, but it was a *“false hope.”* When God rejected Ishmael and promised Isaac, all hope in his human abilities was destroyed. The reality is, there had never been any hope of receiving the promise from God until Abraham lost all *“hope”* in his human ability. Only then could he trust in God alone. Now, he stood against every impossibility with the hope of the promise God had given and lived each day in expectation of its fulfilment.

“...he considered not his own body now dead...neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb...” Abraham did not waste a single

moment repeatedly saying (confessing?), “*my bodies not dead...my bodies not dead.*” He did not ignore the facts: Sarah’s womb was dead, and the prospect of him bearing another child was nil, but he “*believed God,*” and ignored the impossibilities.

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief...” The impossibilities Abraham faced were staggering, but the promise of God was even more staggering; which would Abraham “*stagger*” at? Most Christians do not “*stagger*” at their circumstances; they learn to cope with them. The modern church has a program for every problem today, all designed to keep the people from “*staggering*” and “*failing*” under the circumstances. We give them props and supports to help them live with their problems. All these things are deemed “*necessary*” to the modern church, because it is the promises of God that stagger them. They don’t see the problem as too great, because there is always a program to help. It is “*the promise*” that is “*too great.*”

“And being fully persuaded that, what He (God) had promised, He was able also to perform.” The “*righteousness of God*” to Abraham was Isaac, “*the son of promise.*” Abraham was eighty-five years old when he first believed to receive a son, but he trusted in his human ability, and both his son and his works were rejected by God. He was ninety-nine years old when he believed to receive a son through his “*barren wife,*” Sarah. Now, in “*believing God,*” he was “*fully persuaded*” that God was, not only “*able,*” but “*willing*” and “*ready*” to give him Isaac.

“...therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” The English word “*therefore*” was translated from the Greek word “*dio,*” which means “*through which thing.*” The context of these verses pinpoint a single day in which God “*imputed*” Abraham’s faith to him “*for righteousness.*” It was that same day when he was ninety nine years old, and “*fully persuaded*” that God would give him a son through Sarah. The apostle Paul settles with the question of “*when*” God imputed Abraham’s faith: “*...for we say that faith was reckoned (imputed) to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision*” Romans 4:9-10. Abraham was “*justified by faith*” in the same day he stopped “*laughing at the promise,*” and “*believed God*” that Sarah

would bear a son to him. This was the same day and just before he was circumcised. Within a year Abraham held Isaac, the child of promise, in his arms. Abraham found God's "*promises*" can only be received "*by grace, through faith*" ^{Ephesians 2:8-9}, and "*not of works, lest any man should boast*" ^{Romans 4:2}.

The Better Thing

Hebrews 11:39-40: "*And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.*"

There are sixteen men and women named in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, all of whom are "*heroes of faith*," plus many others who for time and space could not be named, "*...who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, etc.*" ^{Hebrews 11:33}. These are certainly the greatest men and women who have lived since the creation of man, simply because they "*believed God.*"

Consider for a moment some of the things they accomplished "*through faith.*" Noah prepared an ark and not only saved his immediate household, but preserved the human race in his descendants. Abraham received the "*child of promise*," born to his ninety year old "*barren wife*," Sarah. "*By faith*" Moses brought the children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt ^{Hebrews 11:27}. "*By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land*" ^{verse 29}. "*By faith*" Joshua and the children of Israel compassed the walls of Jericho about for seven days until they fell down ^{verse 30}. "*By faith*" Gideon defeated the Midianites with 300 men; young David slew the giant and delivered Israel; Samson killed a thousand Philistines with "*the jawbone of an ass*;" Daniel "*stopped the mouths of lions*" ^{verse 33}, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "*quenched the violence of fire*" ^{verse 34}.

It is easy to read of these wonderful things and "*wish*" we had lived in their day, but that is not the message the apostle intended we would receive. Instead, the apostle tells us, "*...these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us.*" Oh, that God will give us eyes to see, and ears to hear, and hearts to understand, the "*better thing*" which God has prepared for His children. ^{I Corinthians 2:9}.

This Grace

Romans 5:1-2: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into THIS GRACE wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*

We who believe are “justified by faith” exactly as Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and all others who have “believed God” were justified. “Justification,” however, is “much more” in the “New Covenant” than Abraham received in his day. The same “faith” that justifies us also gives us “access” into what Paul called “this grace wherein we stand.” The term “**this grace**” is something none of the heroes of faith in the Old Testament could even comprehend, much less, possess. “**This grace**” must be the promise Abraham “saw afar off,” and “embraced,” being fully persuaded of it. It is the “better thing” God has provided for us. The Old Testament prophets saw in their visions of things to come a wonderful “day,” which Isaiah called “the day of salvation” Isaiah 49:8. The apostle Paul quoted Isaiah, and added, “...now is the day of salvation” II Corinthians 6:2.

I Peter 1:10-11: *“Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”*

The “day of salvation,” which the prophets saw afar off, was so wonderful to them that they “enquired and searched diligently...what, or what manner of time...” this would be. It was something they so desired to receive that God had to reveal to them it was “...not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you” I Peter 1:12. It is salvation so wonderful that even the angels “desire to look into it.”

“**This grace in which we stand**” was defined by the Spirit of Christ as He spoke through the Old Testament prophets, foretelling “**the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.**” It must have been “the glory” of a “new creation” that caught the attention of

the prophets. They were seeing in their visions a “*new creation*,” something that had never before existed. They also took note that “visions of *glory*” followed their visions of great “*suffering*.”

Immanuel: The “Seed of the Woman”

The same day sin entered into the world through Adam’s disobedience, God gave the promise of one called “*The Seed of the Woman*” who would “*bruise the head of the serpent*” Genesis 3:15. Over three thousand years later, the prophet Isaiah prophesied of a “*virgin*” who would conceive and bring forth a son. She would call his name “*Immanuel*” Isaiah 7:14, which means “*God with us*.” By this, we can understand “*the Seed of the Woman*” would be “*The Son of God*.” In his visions, God revealed ever more about the child Immanuel. “*His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace*” Isaiah 9:6. “*And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him...*” Isaiah 11:2. “*He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth*” Isaiah 42:1-3.

Isaiah 53:1-4: “*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*”

It is Immanuel who is called “*the arm of the LORD*” in this verse. Isaiah had previously introduced Him as such, saying, “*Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God*” Isaiah 52:9-10.

Isaiah 53:2: “*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*”

This speaks of the childhood of Immanuel: We know Him as Jesus of Nazareth.

Isaiah 53:3-4: “*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath*

borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.”

This refers to the ministry of Jesus. The apostle John remembered this prophecy when he saw the wonderful things Jesus did and the hatred of so many towards Him: *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”* John 12:37-38.

Isaiah 53:5: *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”*

Why Christ Suffered

Jesus is *“The Christ.”* The apostle John said, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”* I John 5:1. *“The Christ”* is the one John introduced as *“The Word”* in his gospel: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God”* John 1:1-2. He is the creator of the universe: *“All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made”* John 1:3. John continues in his introduction to say, *“...and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”* John 1:14.

“The Seed of the Woman” was first introduced in the third chapter of Genesis. *“Immanuel”* was introduced in the seventh chapter of Isaiah. The first mention of *“The Christ”* (The Messiah, the Prince) is in Daniel 9:25. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell the prophet Daniel about the coming of *“The Messiah”* (The Christ), who would come into the world to *“...finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...”* Daniel 9:24. Gabriel pinpointed the exact year *“The Christ”* would come, and all of Israel were excited in expectation of His appearing *“Luke 3:15.* That was the same year Jesus was baptized by John and the Holy Ghost descended upon Him *Matthew 3:16-17.* John would later record, *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not”* John 1:11.

“The Christ” came into the world as *“The Seed of the Woman”* to *“bruise the head of the serpent”* Genesis 3:15. He came as *“Immanuel”* (God with us) to *“save His people from their sins”* Matthew 1:21-23. He came as the *“Son of God”* to *“destroy the works of the devil”* 1 John 3:8. He came as *“The Lamb of God”* to *“take away the sin of the world”* John 1:29. He was from the beginning *“with God”* and He *“was God:”* it was *“by Him”* that *“everything that was made was made”* John 1:3, but He became a *“meek and lowly man”* Matthew 11:28-30 to fulfill every promise of redemption and restoration through His sufferings and death on the cross. The apostle Paul confirms this, saying, *“...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”* Hebrews 2:14-15.

The same day Jesus raised from the dead, He talked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who were blinded by unbelief, and did not know who He was. Jesus said to them, *“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”* Luke 24:25-26.

The gospel as it was preached by the apostle Paul is revealed to us in brief during his first visit to the synagogue in Thessalonica.

Acts 17:2-3: *“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”*

According to both Jesus and the apostle Paul, it was necessary that *“The Christ”* would suffer, die, and be raised from the dead on the third day. All these things were foretold by the prophets, but why must it be so? The answer is clear and simple, but the multitudes are blinded to it. Again, we will go through a brief litany; Christ died to *“...bruise the head of the serpent;”* to *“...save His people from their sins;”* to *“...destroy the works of the devil;”* and to *“...take away the sin of the world.”*

The Glory that Follows

John 17:5: *“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”*

When the Old Testament prophets received visions of “*the grace that would come to us*” I Peter 1:10-11, they saw both “*the sufferings of Christ*” and “*the glory that would follow.*” These two are inseparable. If Christ had not suffered, died, and raised again, there would be no “*glory*” afterwards, but if there is “*no glory,*” Christ “*suffered in vain.*” So, what is “*the glory*” that Christ was willing to suffer and die for?

According to His prayer to His Father the night before His death on the cross, He was willing to lay down his life to receive “*the glory which I had with thee before the world was*” John 17:5. This term, “*before the world was*” does not speak of “*before the earth was.*” If that is what Christ wanted, He would have simply refused the “*death of the cross*” Philippians 2:8, called for “*twelve legions of angels*” Matthew 26:23, and destroyed the earth and all that is in it.

The term “*before the world was*” speaks of how things were before Adam disobeyed God and brought the entrance of sin. Adam’s “*transgression*” was the “*foundation*” of what the apostle Paul called “*this present evil world,*” which Christ died to deliver us from Galatians 1:4. “*Before the foundation of the world,*” everything God had created was “*very good*” Genesis 1:31. Man was created in the “*image and likeness of God*” Genesis 1:27. Adam breathed the breath of God Genesis 2:7; he was made to be just a little less than God Psalms 8:5, and he was “*clothed with glory and honor*” of God. This is how things were “*before the world was.*”

When Christ the creator of the original creation died on the cross, his original (old) creation died with Him Romans 6:6. This we must believe to receive our part in the New Creation. The apostle Paul said, “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things (the original creation) are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” II Corinthians 5:17. He didn’t say they “*should be,*” or someday they “*will be,*” but he said “*...all things are become new.*” When Christ arose from the dead a “*New Creation*” was raised with Him I Peter 1:3.

The New Creation Kingdom

Hebrews 11:9-10: “*By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked*

for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Hebrews 11:13: *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

Abraham, along with Isaac and young Jacob (Jacob was 15 years old when Abraham died), spent his last years “*looking for a city...whose builder and maker is God.*” Old Abraham could “*see it afar off,*” probably in his visions at night. They were “*persuaded,*” and they “*embraced*” the promise. The “*city*” they searched for was a “*heavenly city;*” The city he “*saw afar off*” was the “*the New Jerusalem.*” He, along with Isaac and Jacob, were persuaded of the promise. They “*embraced the promise,*” and confessed they were “*strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*” Three verses later, the apostle writes, “*Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city*” Hebrews 11:16.

The prophet Isaiah saw the “*New Jerusalem.*” in his visions. He lived in Jerusalem about a century before the city was destroyed by the army of Babylon. He saw the uncleanness and perversion, the idolatry and ungodliness of that city. The “*Jerusalem*” which Isaiah describes in his visions is the same city Abraham could see “*afar off.*” Isaiah understood that his prophecies would never be fulfilled in the natural city of Jerusalem, which Paul called “*Jerusalem which now is*” Galatians 4:25. The “*Jerusalem*” of Isaiah’s vision was “*much more.*”

Isaiah 65:17-18: *“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.”*

Isaiah went into some detail, describing “*the New Jerusalem.*” He spoke nothing, however, about the material makeup of the city; instead, what he described is obviously the heavenly city the apostle John saw in “*The Revelation.*” Notice the similarity in their visions.

Isaiah 60:19: *“The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.”*

Compare Isaiah's description of Jerusalem in her glory with the description the apostle John gave of the "New Jerusalem," which he saw "descending out of heaven from God."

Revelation 21:23: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

Isaiah said, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day..." John said of the New Jerusalem, "...the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it." The comparisons are many, proving beyond doubt that Isaiah saw both the "sufferings of Christ," and "the glory" that would follow. He saw "the new heavens and the new earth" ^{Isaiah 65:17} which is yet to come, and he saw the "New Jerusalem," which is right now "the city of God" ^{Hebrews 12:22} and "mother of us all" ^{Galatians 4:25} who are "born of God."

Isaiah 60:21: "Thy people also shall be **all righteous**: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, **that I may be glorified.**"

David's Vision

None of the prophets saw with more clarity and simplicity the "sufferings of Christ" and the "glory that followed" than David. A thousand years before Jesus was born to Mary, David described the sufferings of Christ almost perfectly.

Psalms 22:1: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalms 22:7-8: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

Psalms 22:16-18: "For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: **they pierced my hands and my feet.** I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me. **They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.**"

In the same Psalm, David tells of "the glory" that would follow "the sufferings of Christ."

Psalms 22:30-31: "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his

righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.”

“*The glory,*” which began on the Day of Pentecost, defines better than any theologian the purpose of Christ’s coming into the world and His death on the cross. It was not about “*taking our punishment*” or “*paying our debt.*” The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was about a “*new creation;*” bringing an end of the “*old*” through death “*with Christ,*” and bringing in the “*new*” with His resurrection. Peter said, “*Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,** which according to his abundant mercy **hath begotten us again** unto a lively hope **by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...**” I Peter 1:3.*

David saw the New Creation of the Sons of God immediately following his near perfect description of the sufferings of Christ.

“**A seed shall serve Him: it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.**” This speaks of the “*generation of Christ.*” They are the children of God by spiritual birth, and not by adoption. They are, right now, the “*sons of God*” I John 3:1-2, and “*joint heirs with Christ*” Romans 8:17. They have a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*” Ezekiel 36:26 by virtue of their “*new birth.*”

“**They shall come, and shall declare His righteous...**” To “*declare His righteousness*” can only be understood in context with the words of Paul in Romans 3:25; “*Whom (Christ Jesus) God hath set forth to be a propitiation (sacrificial lamb) through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness....*” Christ, the creator of all things, hanging on a cross to “*take away the sin of the world,*” shouts to the entire world that “*God is righteous.*” If one man’s disobedience (Adam) made every man and woman a sinner Romans 5:12, “*justice*” required a “*second man*” to undo what the first man did, and thus “*make many righteous*” Romans 5:19. Christ, the eternal “*Word of God,*” who was “*with God*” and “*was God*” John 1:1, came into the world as the “*second man*” I Corinthians 15:47, to undo what the “*first man*” did. If there had never been a “*second man,*” God would be proven to be unjust. That second man, “*the Lord from heaven*” I Corinthians 15:47, dying on the cross is the “*righteousness of God*” to fallen man. If any person dies in their sin, and is cast into hell, it will not be because God is not just. It can only be that they “*did not*

believe,” or they “*did not hear.*” This is the reason we who are born of God must preach the gospel of Christ (declare His righteousness) to the lost.

“...unto a people that shall be born...” The gospel must be preached before the lost can be “*born again.*” But what is the gospel that “*must be preached?*”

“...that He hath done this.” The gospel that must be preached is the true record of what Christ has done through His death on the cross. The doctrine of “*penal substitution*” has been around for several centuries, but the apostles of Christ never heard of it, because it is not what God says in the scriptures. The truth of the gospel first points to the cross, then it points to the “*glory*” that follows the cross. Christ did not die to take our punishment; He died to take our sin, and there is a vast difference between the two. If Christ had taken our punishment, we would still be sinners, and sadly, that is what most people believe. They “*stagger at the promise of God*” Romans 4:20, which was fulfilled upon us who believe when God raised Jesus from the dead. This is what Christ has done at Calvary.

What Christ Has Done

Hebrews 2:14: “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*”

I John 3:5-6: “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*”

I John 3:8: “*He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*”

John 1:29: “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*”

Hebrews 9:26: “*...but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*”

Romans 5:19: “*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*”

Romans 6:6-7: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”*

Romans 6:22: *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”*

A Vision of “The New Jerusalem”

I had been diligently seeking the Lord in fasting and prayer many years ago, when one night, while worshiping alone in the middle of the night, I was caught up in the Spirit of God. I heard something from God that made me to think I would see the same thing the apostle John saw in one of his visions. John was *“in the Spirit”* and heard a voice saying, *“Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife”* Revelation 21:9. When I think of *“the bride,”* I think of *“the glorious church”* which Paul said Christ will *“present unto Himself”* Ephesians 5:25-27. What John actually saw, however, was *“...that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God”* Revelation 21:10-11. He described it in some detail, the massive walls, the gates of pearl, the streets of gold, etc. I had never understood how tangible buildings could be construed as *“the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”*

While I was *“in the Spirit”* that night, I heard the voice of God saying, *“Come hither, and I will show you the City of God, the New Jerusalem.”* I thought I would see the same things John had seen, but what I saw actually explained to me what John had seen. In the vision God gave to me, I saw a multitude of people that could only be described as John first described the city; *“...having the glory of God”* Revelations 21:10-11, I believe I must have seen what John described in another vision as *“a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”* Revelation 7:9, who had *“washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”* verse 14.

I was overwhelmed by what I saw and felt in these people. The presence of God enveloped them to the extent they seemed to be *“clothed”* with the glory of God. I specifically recall that *“their conversation was the Word of God,”* but they were not simply *“quoting scriptures.”* Their *“words,”* as Jesus said, were *“spirit and*

life,” and when they spoke, sickness, disease, and unclean spirits fled before them. The only word I could find to describe this people was “*glorious*,” it was, as an old gospel song says, “*a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, washed in the blood of the Lamb.*”

As I came out of the Spirit that night, I was weeping tears and crying aloud, “*Oh God, I must be one of these! I must be one of these!*” By no means did I think I was “*one of these*,” nor did I think myself worthy to be, but there was awakened in me an unquenchable hunger and thirst to be “*one of these.*”

I was about thirty years of age when I received the vision, and there is one thing I have known from that day to this; the “*city of God*” is not known by “*walls*” with “*precious stones, gates of pearl,*” and “*streets of Gold.*” It is so far beyond those mundane things. It is made up the people of God, every one of them being “*the righteousness of God*” II Corinthians 5:21. The apostles of Christ are the “*foundation stones.*” Revelation 21:14. The apostle Peter said, “*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*” I Peter 2:5. The apostle Paul confirms “*the saints*” are “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*” Ephesians 2:20.

Much More

Romans 5:1: “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

We who believe the gospel have been “*justified by faith*” exactly as Abraham was. At the same time, we have received “*the better thing*” than any of the Old Testament saints could receive during their lifetime on earth. Can you comprehend that “*justification by faith*” is “*much more*” since Christ shed His precious blood on the cross? In fact, the apostle Paul reveals it is “*through faith in His blood*” Romans 3:25-26 that we are justified.

Romans 5:9: “*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*”

Paul uses the words “*much more*” five times in this fifth chapter of Romans. His purpose is to show that the “*redemption*” is much more than “*the fall*,” and “*grace*” is much more than “*the law.*”

Abraham, along with every other Old Testament saint, was “*justified by faith*” when they “*believed God.*” The apostle Paul introduces something “*much more*” when he says “*being **now justified by His blood.***” The Old Testament saints approached God with the blood of animals, of which the apostle Paul tells us “*...it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*” Hebrews 10:4. We who know the truth come boldly into the presence of God “*by the blood of Jesus*” Hebrews 10:19. The “*blood*” does not “*cover us;*” instead it “*cleanses us*” 1John 1:7; it “*washes us*” Revelation 1:5; and it “*sanctifies us*” Hebrews 13:12. We are “*...now justified by His blood.*”

Romans 5:10: “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **much more**, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.*”

If Christ died to reconcile enemies to God, how “*much more*” will He do for those who are reconciled? The apostle answers, “*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*” Romans 8:32.

Romans 5:15: “*...if through the offence of one many be dead, **much more the grace of God**, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.*”

Christ came into the world to destroy sin and death, both of which came into the world through Adam’s disobedience. Through the “*offence of Adam,*” every person died. “***Much more the grace of God***” wrought by Jesus Christ through His death at Calvary has “*abounded*” to give “*life*” to everyone who will believe.

Romans 5:17: “*For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; **much more** they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*”

Death reined over every person from Adam to Christ because of Adam’s offence. “***Much more,***” we who have received “*abundance of grace*” and “*the gift of righteousness*” now “*reign in life*” by Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:20: “*Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did **much more abound.***”

It is important to correctly understand this verse. Those who continue to find “*pleasure in unrighteousness*” II Thessalonians 2:12, want to believe “*the more sinful we are, the more gracious God is.*” The correct understanding of this verse, however, is revealed in the words of the apostle John: “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” John 1:17. There was about fifteen hundred years between the time “*the law was given*” and “*grace and truth came.*” Sin greatly increased under the Law of Moses, but when Christ died on the cross, He destroyed sin and abolished the law for the believer, and “*grace*” abounded. We are “*saved by grace*” Ephesians 2:8. Under grace, sin has lost its dominion Romans 6:14. Grace is our strength in every time of need II Corinthians 12:9.

Through grace, God has given us a “*new heart and a new spirit*” Ezekiel 36:26. Christ has “*made an end of sins*” Daniel 9:24, and by grace has made us “*free from sin*” Romans 6:22. We have the mind of Christ and we partake of the divine nature, all because we have received “*abundance of Grace.*”

If the redemption is “*much more*” than the fall, it is impossible that redemption leaves us either “*in sin*” or “*sin in us.*” If grace is “*much more*” than the law, then “*grace*” must do what the law could never do. The Law could kill the sinner, but the grace of God, working through the knowledge of the truth, has taken sin out of the heart and nature of everyone who “*believes the truth*” and “*trusts in Christ.*” We are “*born again*” of the Spirit of God. We are “*citizens*” of the “*New Jerusalem*” which is in heaven, the “*mother of us all*” Galatians 4:26. We dwell in Christ, the paradise of God, where there is neither “*sin*” nor a “*serpent.*” We have received “*The Better Thing*” which God has provided for us Hebrews 11:40.

I Corinthians 2:9-10: “*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.*”

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