

LESSON 1 - CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT 2 Timothy 3:14-17

To understand the Bible, we must read and study it with a Christ-centered view. This applies both to the Old and the New Testaments. The Gospel message of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead by Whom God's people are justified and from Whom God's people receive spiritual life and faith is the central truth of every book of the Bible, from Genesis to Malachi and from Matthew to Revelation. These Gospel truths may not be stated in exact doctrinal terms in every book of the Old Testament, but they are the central truths that underly and saturate all the revelation of God's glory before Christ actually came into the world. Just as it is revealed in the New Testament, the Old Testament is the revelation of how God saves sinners by His free and sovereign grace based solely upon the merits of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of all of God's chosen people. The Old Testament reveals Christ in prophecy, picture, and type, as well as in its stated doctrine. This is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and this truth is the key to understanding the whole Bible. Again, if we are to read and understand the Bible properly, we must read and interpret it with a CHRIST-CENTERED VIEW. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy -

2 Timothy 3 - (14) But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of Whom thou hast learned them; (15) And that from a child thou hast known THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: (17) That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

There is no doubt that "*the Holy Scriptures*" to which Paul referred here is the Old Testament writings. This is all that he had at that time. There is no doubt that Paul understood how the written word at that time was "*by inspiration of God*" (i.e. God-breathed). Paul understood these "*Scriptures*" to be the verbally-inspired, inerrant Word of God and not just the writings and opinions of men. There is no doubt that Paul knew how the revelation of God in Christ in the Old Testament was able to make one "*wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" Salvation by God's grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to God's people and received by them in God-given faith has always been the one and only way of salvation. This was true in the Old Testament as it is true in the New Testament. The Old Testament scriptures are "*profitable*" (useful) for "*doctrine*" (the teachings of God's Word), for "*reproof*" (conviction of our sins), for "*correction*" (showing us the right way of dealing with our sins), and for "*instruction in righteousness*" (the right way to walk by faith in Christ). The Old Testament reveals that the only way of salvation from our sins is by God's grace through the blood of Jesus Christ (the Lamb of God), which is His righteousness imputed to us, the very righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17*).

Consider some of the words of the Lord Himself concerning this matter. After His resurrection, the Lord walked for awhile on earth. One day He met two men from a village called Emmaus who talked of all the things that had happened in the Lord's crucifixion. Read *Luke 24:13-27*. Later on, just before His ascension unto glory, He sat down with His disciples and taught them how to preach the Gospel from the Old Testament. Read *Luke 24:44-48*. Consider another example of the Lord's own testimony -

John 5 - (39) Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: AND THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME. (40) And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life. (41) I receive not honour from men. (42) But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. (43) I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. (44) How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? (45) Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. (46) For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. (47) But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?

Christ stated that the “*Scriptures*” (the written Word of God) testify of Himself. They testify of the GLORY OF HIS PERSON (ex. *Isa. 9:6-7*). We learn from the Old Testament that the Messiah (Christ) had to be both God and man in one Person without sin. It was only as Godman without sin that He could accomplish His work as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s people, chosen and given to Him before the foundation of the world. They testify of the POWER AND SUCCESS OF HIS FINISHED WORK for His people (*Dan. 9:24*). Before the world began, in the everlasting covenant of grace, Christ was made, and willingly agreed to be, the Surety of His people. He had the whole debt of all their sins imputed (charged, accounted) to Him and obligated Himself to pay that debt with the price of His blood (*Gen. 3:21; Exod. 12*). To pay that debt, He had to be made flesh, and, as Godman, He was made under the law as their Substitute to die in their place to be their Redeemer and secure their salvation and eternal life (*Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:14-17*). By this great work, He established the only righteousness by which God has justified His chosen people (ex. *Isa. 45:19-25; Jer. 23:5-6*).

The Old Testament testifies of the reality of God as both a just God and a Savior, One who is sovereign, holy, righteous, as well as loving, merciful, and gracious. This revelation of God comes as He reveals Himself in and by the promised Messiah and the work of redemption. The Old Testament testifies of the utter sinfulness and depravity of all people, fallen in Adam and born spiritually dead and unable, unwilling, to believe and come to the Lord HIS way of salvation. The Old Testament reveals the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ by Whose righteousness sinners are justified before God (forgiven of all sins and declared righteous on a just ground), and from Whose righteousness sinners are born again and brought to faith in Christ and true repentance. The whole Old Testament, even the revelation of the Old Covenant Law of Moses, shows the impossibility of sinful people being saved and accepted with God by their attempts to keep that law (*Rom. 3:10-23*). It shows how the Law given to Israel on Mount Sinai was given to show them their sinfulness and their need of salvation by God’s grace through the merit of the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19; Rom. 9:31–10:4*).

The revelation of Christ begins at the beginning of the Old Testament in *Genesis* and carries on through *Malachi*. One of the chief figures in the Old Testament is Abraham whom God used in a great way to reveal how He justifies the ungodly (*Rom. 4:1-5*). God set forth Abraham as a prime example of how He saves sinners by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Read the words of our Savior concerning Abraham. When speaking to the Pharisees of Abraham, the Lord said -

John 8 - (56) Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad. (57) Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? (58) Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Lesson 2 - LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Genesis 1:1-3

In *Exodus 33:18*, Moses asked the Lord God, “*I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory.*” In the Bible, the word “glory,” when pertaining to God, is used to describe the awesomeness of God’s presence and the magnificence and splendor of God’s works. Moses asked God for a revelation of Himself, and this revelation is the light concerning who God is in His splendor and majesty and what God has done, is doing, and will do, in the wisdom and power of all His works. Everything that God reveals in His Holy Word (the Bible) is revealed to show forth the light of His glory in four ways:

- (1) HIS GLORY IN CREATION which reveals “*His eternal power and Godhead*” (*Rom. 1:19; cf. Psalm 19:1-5*).
- (2) HIS GLORY IN PROVIDENCE (His governance of this world) which reveals His power and His wisdom (*Eph. 1:11; cf. Isa. 46:9-13*).
- (3) HIS GLORY IN THE CONDEMNATION OF THE WICKED which reveals His absolute holiness, truth, and justice (*Rom. 1:18-32*).
- (4) HIS GLORY IN THE SALVATION OF SINNERS BY JESUS CHRIST. This is the greatest revelation of God’s glory because it is the manifestation of EVERY ATTRIBUTE OF GOD working consistently together to save His chosen people by His free, sovereign grace and mercy in Christ. It is all based upon His justice satisfied in and by Christ as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His chosen people (*Exod. 33:19-23; Rom. 9:15-16*). This revelation can be described Scripturally in many ways, but one of the greatest ways of describing it is the way God identified Himself in *Isaiah 45:21* - “*A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR.*”

God reveals His glory as the God of creation, providence, judgment, and salvation to lead His chosen people to believe on Him as the God who justifies the ungodly in the Person and work of Christ. In our text, God reveals Himself in creation. When we view creation through Christ-centered eyes, we can see a direct parallel with God’s revelation of Himself in salvation by His grace through Christ. Just as all three Persons of the Trinity are involved in redemption and the salvation of God’s elect, all three Persons of the Trinity were involved in the creation of the world (*Gen. 1:2,26; Acts 17:24; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:14-17*). The Hebrew word for “God” in *Genesis 1* is the uni-plural *Elohim*, a plural noun (as noted by the “im” ending), yet normally represented by a singular pronoun “He.” We might view it this way - God the Father planned and purposed the work (*Eph. 3:9*); God the Son did the work (*John 1:3*); and God the Holy Spirit energized it unto life (*Gen. 1:2*).

Consider this vital truth - The reason God created this world was, ultimately, to glorify Himself in the redemption and complete salvation of His chosen people (sinners saved by grace) by the Lord Jesus Christ. This is all based on Christ’s righteousness (accomplished in His obedience unto death) imputed to them (*Rom. 1:16-17; 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). On this ground alone, they are all justified before God (forgiven and declared righteous). And from this work of Christ, they all receive spiritual and eternal life from Him (*Rom. 5:21; 8:10*). It is by Christ (His person, the work of redemption He accomplished, and the salvation of God’s elect by Him) that we find purpose and meaning in life in living by His grace and power for the glory of God (*Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 3:7-12*).

We see this as the Bible reveals that the very names of all whom God chose to save were written in “*the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*” (*Rev. 13:8*). This means that God chose them in Christ before He laid the foundation of the earth in creation. It was always God’s purpose to save His chosen people based on what Christ (the Lamb of God) would come in time and accomplish by His death as the Surety, Substitute,

Redeemer, Life-giver, and Intercessor of the people whom God had given Him in the everlasting covenant of grace.

(1:1) - The first thing revealed in the Scriptures is the eternal existence of Almighty God - "*In the beginning God.*" No argument is given to prove the existence of God. His existence is simply affirmed as a fact to be believed. God has no beginning and no end. He is the self-existent God, and all things created are by Divine design and for the purpose of His glory. All true doctrine and all true religion begin with "*in the beginning God.*" All human religion and philosophy begin with man trying to work His way up to God. In his fallen, sinful state, man always fails and ends up in idolatry. The Scriptures begin with God condescending to save and to reveal Himself to man.

The next thing revealed is that God "*created the heaven and the earth.*" God created this world in its order, harmony, and complexity, all which reveal a sovereign, good, wise, and powerful Creator. God's Word tells us that there is enough general revelation of God in creation to hold all people accountable to seek, worship, and serve Him. But by nature (as naturally born in our fallen, sinful condition), none of us will seek the true God even in creation (*Psalms 19:1-6; Rom. 1:18-23; 1 Cor. 2:14*).

Just as all creation is of the Lord as He is the first cause of all things created, salvation is also of the Lord as He is the first cause of salvation. God the Father purposed salvation before the world began. He chose the people whom He would save and made God the Son to be their Surety (*2 Tim. 1:9*). All of salvation was conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ Who was purposed and sent by the Father as their Surety (*Heb. 7:22*), and to be their Substitute, Redeemer, and Life-giver (*Gal. 4:4-6*).

(1:2) - The earth being "*without form, and void,*" and in "*darkness*" shows how God created the earth out of nothing. This is the creative power of Almighty God. This also could describe the state of people by nature as fallen in Adam and born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. As far as spiritual and eternal life are concerned, we are, in essence, nothing. We have no righteousness, no ability to work righteousness, and no will or desire towards God for salvation His way (*Rom. 3:10-20*). So, when God saves a sinner, He creates that sinner out of the nothingness of sin and depravity and makes that sinner a new creation in Christ, by virtue of His righteousness imputed (*2 Cor. 5:14-17; Eph. 2:8-10*).

"*And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*" - God the Holy Spirit applied the power of God in the creation of the earth. He was the Prime Mover, sent from the Father and the Son, to bring life from God to a dead earth. In salvation, God the Holy Spirit is sent from the Father and the Son to give spiritual and eternal life to spiritually dead sinners (*John 3:3-7; Rom. 8:10*).

(1:3) - "*And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.*" - This shows the invincible power of God's Word. His Word is never unfulfilled or void (*Isa. 55:11*). His Word "*is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword*" (*Heb. 4:12*). Just as when God spoke physical light into existence in the creation of the world, when He speaks spiritual light (His Word as it is in Christ Who is the Light) into a sinners mind and heart, there will be the light of salvation (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*). No sinner can resist this invincible work of the Holy Spirit Who gives light to those who sit in darkness. This light is the light of the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed as the glory of God revealed in the Person of Christ Who is God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh to dwell among us, and Godman without sin. It is the light of the finished, accomplished, victorious work of Christ to redeem and save ALL for whom He died, was buried, and arose the third day. This righteousness of God is the merit of Christ's work of redemption for His people which enables God to be both a just God and a Savior (*Isa. 45:17-25*).

Lesson 3 - MAN AND THE FALL

Genesis 3:1-19

From *Romans 3:21–5:21*, God reveals, in glorious detail, His way of justifying sinners based on the ONE ground of salvation, the righteousness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God shows how the Gospel message of salvation from sin and death is totally by His free and sovereign grace, all accomplished because of the glorious Person and finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of a people whom God had chosen and gave to His Son before the world was created. He states clearly that all who are justified (forgiven of all sins and declared righteous in God's sight) are "*justified by His blood*" and "*shall be saved by His life*" (*Rom. 5:9*). Christ died on the cross to satisfy the justice of God and to accomplish and establish righteousness to insure life for His people. This is Christ's righteousness which God has imputed to His people (*Rom. 4:1-8*).

In *Romans 5:12-19*, we see this great Gospel truth further established by contrasting the role of Adam, the first man, in our fall with the role of Christ in our redemption. Sin and death came by ONE man, Adam, and the whole human race sinned in Adam as our representative head. "*Death passed upon all men,*" (Lit., "spread to all men") because "*all have sinned*" (Lit., "all sinned") by Adam. God had determined that Adam, in the garden, would represent his whole posterity. When Adam fell, the whole human family fell into a state of sin and death. Just as Adam represented the whole human race, the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, represented the whole election of grace, all whom God had chosen and had given to Christ. As the first man, Adam, was created from the earth by God and brought sin and death into the world, the second man, the Lord Jesus Christ, came from heaven and accomplished righteousness and life for His people (*1 Cor. 15:22,45,47*).

Romans 5:13-17 is a parenthesis to explain that just as condemnation and death are the effects of Adam's sin, justification and life are the effects of Christ's righteousness. Just as Adam's sin demanded condemnation for all to whom his sin was imputed, Christ's righteousness demands the justification of all to whom His righteousness is imputed (*Rom. 5:18-19*). The only remedy for sin and death is the grace of God in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Gospel principle is set forth in the recorded history of man's fall in *Genesis 3*. Let us first go back to *Genesis 1* -

(1:26-31) - God made man in His own image and gave man dominion over the earth. Unlike the animals, Adam possessed all the qualities of character that God could communicate to created beings. God has certain attributes that are communicable, such as goodness, reason, and knowledge. Some of God's attributes cannot be given to created beings, such as infinity, immutability, and omnipresence. As a created being, Adam was by nature mutable, but God created him upright and good. Adam possessed a human righteousness, but he was mutable. Unlike the animals, Adam had the power to reason with a sense of and view towards eternity (*Eccl. 3:10-11*). Unlike the animals, Adam not only had physical life and breath, but also spiritual life and breath evidenced by his knowledge of God and a sense of responsibility to obey and glorify God.

The words of *Genesis 1:26-31* along with *Genesis 2:15-17* can be described as a covenant of works between God and Adam. God stated His law and commanded that Adam obey. Adam's continuation in his original state of uprightness and his place with God in the garden of Eden was conditioned on his obedience to God's commandments. There were two trees that God had placed in the center of the garden (*Gen. 2:9*). These were literal trees that had symbolic meaning. The "*tree of life*" is a picture of Christ Who is the way and essence of eternal life for God's people. The "*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" symbolizes God's sovereign right and authority to set the standard of good and evil by which man is to live and abide. Man never has the right to set his own standard of good and evil,

and when he does, it is utter rebellion and sin (*Judges 21:25*). The penalty of sin was (and is) death.

(3:1-7) - Eve was deceived by Satan who appeared in the form of a serpent. Notice Satan's tactic. He questioned and denied God's Word (*John 8:44*). His message was, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" This has been the message of Satan's ministers since the fall. False preachers will tell sinners who do not believe in the true Christ of the Bible that they are safe in salvation. They speak peace to unbelievers. Adam, the representative of the whole human race, then disobeyed God by taking sides with Satan and Eve against God and His Word. He broke the covenant of works and declared his independence from God. He took it upon himself to set his own standard of good and evil. He did not believe God. This shows that sin is essentially unbelief. Unbelief causes man to declare his independence from God and set his own standard of good and evil, of saved and lost, declaring his own way of salvation.

(3:8-13) - When Adam sinned, physical death began its effects. Spiritual death came immediately as Adam and Eve lost any capacity or desire for communion with God. Adam became afraid and ashamed. Realizing their nakedness, they sewed fig-leaf aprons to cover themselves. This is a picture of fallen man's lack of righteousness and his attempts to make himself righteous by his works. This is spiritual death and depravity. Paul described this state in *Romans 3:10-20*. The ultimate consequence of sin is eternal damnation and death if there is no way of salvation from sin. Since the fall, all people born of Adam's race are born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (*Eph. 2:1-3*). Spiritual death is marked by unbelief, ignorance, and a rejection of all things that glorify God in HIS way of salvation (*John 3:19-20; 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14*). Left to ourselves, in spiritual death, we will not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation and life. By nature (as we are naturally born), we have no will or desire to believe God.

(3:14-19) - The Lord pronounced three curses: (1) His curse upon Satan (*3:14-15*); (2) His curse upon the woman (*3:16*); and (3) His curse upon the man (*3:17-19*). These are physical consequences of sin, but for men and women, they are not necessarily the ETERNAL consequences of damnation and eternal death. This is first expressed in the curse upon Satan in *Genesis 3:15* with the promise of THE WOMAN'S SEED who would bruise Satan's head (i.e. destroy Satan). He would do this but not without suffering Himself. Satan would bruise His heel, describing how He would suffer and die but not be utterly destroyed. THIS IS A PROPHECY OF BOTH THE GLORIOUS PERSON AND FINISHED WORK OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO SAVE GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS. From other Scriptures we learn that this was God's purpose and plan from the beginning, even before He created the world and even before Adam fell (*Eph. 1:1-11; 3:11; Titus 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8*). Before there ever was a sinner, there was a Savior! Before God made a covenant of works with Adam, He had already made a covenant of redemption by grace with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God had already chosen a people to save by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them. Even though they too fell into sin and death by Adam, and like the children of wrath deserve nothing but damnation and death, their sins had already been imputed to Christ, their Surety. Christ is the seed of woman. He was not born of man. His holy humanity was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, so that He is both God and man in one glorious Person. As Godman, He was (and is) able to save His people from their sins (*Matt. 1:21,23; Gal. 4:4-6; Heb. 2:14-17*). All conditions of their complete salvation were laid upon Christ, and as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, He alone fulfilled all righteousness and secured the salvation of all whom the Father had given Him (*John 6:37-45*).

Lesson 4 - THE WAY OF LIFE *Genesis 3:20-24*

(Gen. 3:20) - Adam disobeyed God and brought himself and the whole human race into a state of sin and death (*Rom. 5:12*). The Lord God has shown Adam and Eve the impossibility of gaining life and a right relationship with God by their works. He has graciously shown the only way of life and righteousness by the glorious Person identified as the seed of woman (*Gen. 3:15*). This is the first spoken prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is God the eternal Son and Who would be sent forth “*made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*” (*Gal. 4:4-5; cf. Matt. 1:21,23; John 1:14*). The Bible teaches us that this was God’s purpose established as, before He created the world, He chose a people to save by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and made Christ to be their Surety (*2 Tim. 1:9; cf. Eph. 1:3-7*).

Here is the first time that the woman is named “Eve,” which means “life” or “living.” She is described here as “*the mother of all living.*” We can say that she is the mother of all living physically as all people descended from Adam and Eve. But, more importantly, we can say she is the mother of all who live SPIRITUALLY in the sense that the Lord Jesus Christ came through her in His human nature without sin. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life of His people.

(Gen. 3:21) - The Lord shows here the way and the ground upon which He saves His people from their sins and brings in an everlasting and unchangeable righteousness so that He is just to save and justify His chosen people - sinners saved by grace. It is through the death of a God-appointed, suitable substitute who by death could satisfy the justice of God against the sins of His people (*Heb. 2:14-17*). This is the work of Christ, the Lamb of God, for His people. The Lord God slew an animal (probably a lamb) and made “*coats of skin, and clothed*” Adam and Eve. The Lord showed that sin demands death and righteousness demands life. The coats of skin are pictures of Christ’s righteousness imputed to God’s chosen people. This is the very righteousness of God accomplished and established by the shedding of Christ’s blood unto death. Upon this one ground, God justifies His people. He forgives all their sins and declares them righteous in His sight, all based on the blood of Christ. And from this legal act of justification, all for whom Christ lived, died, and arose again, are given the gracious gift of spiritual life which Adam lost in the fall (*Rom. 5:17-18*). In this act of slaying an animal and making coats of skin for Adam and Eve, the Lord established the sacrificial system of worship to picture and prophesy of the coming Messiah and His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of God’s chosen people imputed to Him by God the Father (*2 Cor. 5:21*). This is where worshippers would shed the blood of particular animals and bring the blood before the Lord. This way of worship carried on until Christ came and finished His work of fulfilling all righteousness for His people.

(Gen. 3:22) - In referring to Himself by the pronoun “us,” we see the Lord again reveals Himself in the Trinity of His Persons. He is ONE GOD Who subsists in three distinct Persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the salvation of sinners (*Col. 2:9-10*). The meaning of the phrase, “*the man is become as one of us,*” is found in the following phrase - “*to know good and evil.*” It is God’s sovereign right to set the standard both of good and evil. All good and evil must be measured as it relates to God. Adam has attempted to exalt himself to a place that belongs only to God. He declared his autonomy (self-governing) from God. He followed Satan and Eve to attempt to set his own standard of good and evil and rejected God. Fallen, sinful man knows and judges good and evil by relating it to himself rather than God. This causes him always to be wrong in his

judgments of salvation and how to restore a right relationship with God. Man is not the measure of good. God is the measure of all good (*Matt. 19:17*).

“And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever” - God has revealed HIS way of salvation and of restoring a right relationship with Himself. It is by the work of the woman’s seed, the Godman (the Lord Jesus Christ) and based on His death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s people whom He chose and gave to Christ before the world began. This is the ONLY way of salvation, and it is by God’s hand - His power and goodness. The *“tree of life”* is the Lord Jesus Christ Who is life and from Whom we have eternal life (*John 3:36; 14:6; 1 John 5:11-12*). God did not fear that, if left in the garden, Adam might take of the tree of life and live forever. He excluded Adam from taking of the tree of life and gaining eternal life by Adam’s works.

(Gen. 3:23-24) - So, God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden *“to till the ground from whence he was taken.”* Man was cursed to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and it is a work that would never be finished. He would have to do this the rest of his life, and when he would die, he would leave that work unfinished. The next generation would have to begin where he ended. This is a good description of man trying to work his way to salvation. It is a futile, even deadly, attempt to do what is impossible for sinful man to do. Sinful man can never finish the work of righteousness because he has no righteousness and is unable to work out righteousness for himself. The way of the tree of life is not gained or preserved by the works of men’s hands.

According to the KJV, God placed Cherubims, which are angelic beings, and a flaming sword whirling around to guard or protect the way of the tree of life. Notice it does not say to bar man from the way of the tree of life, but to keep it or guard it. In other words, the way to the tree of life was to be closely guarded. Man can only gain access to the tree of life God’s way. The flaming sword represents God’s Word and God’s justice. The way to the tree of life is a way of law and justice satisfied by the sacrifice of the woman’s seed. John Gill wrote that the words here are not to be understood of placing the cherubim, but of Jehovah placing Himself in His shekinah glory at the east of the garden of Eden. The verse would read - *“So He (the Lord God) drove out the man; and He dwelt at the east of the Garden of Eden between the Cherubims, as a Shekinah (a flaming sword), to keep open the way to the tree of life.”* Another possible translation could be - *“And He (the Lord God) made the glory of His shekinah, or glorious majesty, to dwell of old at the east of the Garden of Eden, over or above the two cherubim.”*

Because man has sinned and been driven out of the garden, God placed His glorious presence outside the garden between the cherubim, and it was there that God kept the way of the tree of life. It was there that sinful men were to approach and worship God by sacrifice. There are two things that support this translation: (1) The word translated “placed” in the AKJV is never translated “placed” anywhere else in the OT. It is translated “dwell” 83 times elsewhere. It means to “tabernacle” or “dwell.” (2) The next time we see the cherubims are in *Exod. 25:17ff.* where God gives instructions for the ark and the mercy-seat. The Lord God is always portrayed as One who dwells upon the mercy-seat, between the Cherubims. Was this God’s prescribed place of worship? Possibly. Was this where Cain and Abel brought their offerings? Possibly. We know that Cain rejected the way of life. He ignored God’s justice and denied the Gospel. He lifted himself up in self-righteousness and was rejected by God. By God’s grace and through the gift of life and faith, Abel obeyed God, believed the Gospel, humbled himself and sought life through Christ. And though God in justice drove Adam from the garden, He has always kept the way to the tree of life under His guard and open for any sinner whom He would bring to Christ and come for salvation, righteousness, and life His way (*Rev. 22:12-14*).

Lesson 5 - THE BLOOD MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Genesis 4:1-8

(Gen. 4:1) - There were no children born to Adam and Eve before the Fall, but there were many born to them after the fall (*cf. Gen. 5:4-5*). Cain was the first male child, and Abel was the second. Seth and many others came later. Some interpreters believe that when Cain was born, Eve thought he was the savior promised in *Genesis 3:15* and pictured in *Genesis 3:21*. She stated at his birth, “*I have gotten THE man from the Lord,*” or “*I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah* (the Lord who saves).”

(Gen. 4:2) - God has singled out these two sons of Adam to establish by example and reinforce what He had taught Adam and Eve - redemption and salvation by His free and sovereign grace in Christ Jesus (redemption by blood) (*cf. Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22*). The Lord God showed them the impossibility of salvation by even the best works of men (*cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Titus 3:4-7*). The way of Abel is the way of grace - salvation conditioned on Christ. The way of Cain is the way of works - salvation conditioned on sinful people. In reality, there are only two religions in the world - grace and works. They will not mix or cohabit (*Rom. 11:6*). All who attempt to come to God must choose one or the other, and the Bible shows us that by nature none of us will choose God's way by grace. By nature, we are all like Cain. But God has determined to show mercy to some, like Abel (*Rom. 9:15-16*), and He tells us that His mercy is only to be found in Christ and based on His righteousness alone. All who desire salvation God's way beg for mercy in Christ (*Luke 18:13*). Now, Cain was a farmer, and Abel was a shepherd.

(Gen. 4:3) - Cain and Abel were not young boys at this time, but they were evidently heads of households with wives and children. During this time the fathers, or the heads of the household, were, in essence, the priests of their families. This carried on into the time of the patriarchs of Israel which began with Abraham and went on until the Old Covenant priesthood was established. We know that God had instructed Adam as to how and where he was to seek atonement for sin and worship and approach the living God (*cf. Gen. 3:21-24*). Adam, in turn, had taught his sons and daughters as Abraham later taught Isaac (*cf. Gen. 22:6-7*). This is the Gospel of Christ wherein the righteousness of God is revealed in type and picture (*Rom 1:16-17*). So, Cain and Abel, as heads of families, brought their offerings to God. Cain brought the fruit of the ground which he had worked and raised.

(Gen. 4:4) - Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. “*And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.*” The Lord God accepted both Abel's person and Abel's offering, because the person is identified by the offering. This is a picture of a believer's oneness (union) with Christ Who is every believer's Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. All whom God brings to believe in Christ are one with Him in view of God's law and justice. Christ's blood is the full payment of the sin-debt of everyone of God's elect. Christ's righteousness has been imputed to everyone of God's elect. And, like Abel, when God is pleased to reveal Himself to them, they will all come before God, like Abel, pleading the blood (i.e. the righteousness) of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why did God have respect unto Abel's offering?

(1) It was an offering of blood which meant satisfaction to God's law and justice - righteousness established for Abel by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) It was a confession of sin, depravity, guilt, defilement. Abel came humbly before God, realizing his need of a substitute, a righteousness he could not produce. It is important that we understand the distinction between Abel and Cain was not because Abel was a better person than Cain. Abel was (and is) a sinner saved by grace.

(3) It was a confession of the inadequacy of his best efforts to keep the law and establish a righteousness of his own. Abel knew that righteousness could only come by the promised Savior.

(4) It was an offering of God-given faith (*Heb. 11:4*). Abel believed and obeyed God. He came to God the way God told him to come, and the way God brought Him (*John 6:44-45*).

(5) It was an offering that typified the Lord Jesus Christ, the woman's seed, and salvation based on His righteousness alone. Christ is the Lamb of God, the innocent dying for the guilty. The lamb had to be a male of the first year, in the prime of life, without spot, without sin. It had to be slain (*Gen. 3:21*), shedding its blood, and roasted with fire. Christ suffered and shed His blood for our sins.

(Gen. 4:5) - God had no respect either for Cain or his offering. What was wrong with Cain's sacrifice?

(1) It was a bloodless sacrifice, thereby denying the law and justice of God (*Rom. 8:7*).

(2) It denied his own sinfulness, his depravity, his guilt, and defilement

(3) It denied his need of a Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Cain would be his own high priest, his own mediator, and his own intercessor.

(4) It exalted himself, his own works and efforts, and denied that he deserved condemnation and death based on his best efforts to serve God. He approached God on the grounds of his own merit and works. He was proud of the fruit of his fields (*Rom. 6:23*).

(5) It was evidence of unbelief and disobedience as he refused God's way of atonement, acceptance, and worship (*Gen. 3:24* - propitiatory offering; *Luke 24:44-47*; *Eph. 1:6-7*).

(Gen. 4:6-7) - Cain was angry and depressed over the fact that God would accept neither him nor his offering. Whatever comfort and assurance the religion of works will give to its followers, it will not last. God will not and cannot be reconciled to any sinner on the basis of any work that sinner performs (only in Christ - *2 Cor. 5:18-21*). Cain was not angry with himself, as he should have been. He was angry with God and with his brother. But notice how the Lord told him that he had no proper reason to be angry - "*If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.*"

"Doest well" and "doest not well" must be understood from the context. Many suppose that the Lord was telling Cain, "You need to be a better person. You need to be more sincere." This is not the case. Cain's problem was not insincerity. His problem was pride, self-righteousness, and unbelief. DOING WELL is what God brought Abel to do - come before God as a sinner seeking mercy in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*cf. Isa. 1:17-19*). DOING NOT WELL is what Cain did - come before God based on His works and rejecting God's way of salvation by grace in Christ. To come before God as Cain did is to leave oneself open to the destruction of sin - "*if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*" This metaphorically states that if a sinner rejects God's way of salvation, then sin is like a beast crouching at the door and waiting to devour him. He has the impossible task of defeating this ravenous beast. The Lord showed Cain the impossibility of any sinner defeating sin by his own works. Without Christ, sin will destroy and make an end of all sinners (*1 Cor. 15:56*; *James 1:14-15*). We need one who can make an end of sin (*Dan. 9:24*; *1 Cor. 15:57*).

(Gen. 4:8) - Rather than repenting and coming to God by faith in Christ Jesus, Cain was angry with his brother and killed him. The first murder was over salvation by grace vs. salvation by works. Again, grace and works cannot mix, and by nature, unbelieving people hate, not only the light of God's Word as it exposes their darkness, but also the people of God who bring and promote this message of God's grace in Christ (*Matt. 10:16-22*; *John 3:19-20*; *15:18-16:3*; *1 John 3:11-12*).

Lesson 6 - NOAH FOUND GRACE

Genesis 6:1-10

(Gen. 6:1-5) - From *Genesis 3* up to this point, we find that man has not improved spiritually but has grown worse. God saw nothing but evil (*cf. Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Rom. 3:9-18*). We need to understand that this includes all people without exception, from what men judge to be the worst to what men judge to be the best (*Psalm 39:5; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23*). “The sons of God” began to marry “the daughters of men.” Some claim the “sons of God” were angels intermarrying humans, but this is not the case. The previous chapter shows where God separated the line of Seth from the line of Cain. God separated the sons of Seth from the sons of Cain to use them as His instruments through whom He would send Christ into the world. It was forbidden for them to corrupt that line by intermarrying with the descendants of Cain. Here we see where many of them disobeyed by marrying into the ungodly line of Cain. This showed they had no fear of God and no value for God’s promise. As the sinful history of man continue, we that God sovereignly preserved His appointed line in spite of their unbelief.

Genesis 6:3 shows us that the time of God’s longsuffering with that generation had reached its conclusion, and in 120 years, God would exercise His just wrath against sinful men. We will see that during the 120 years, the Gospel was preached and the warning was given. This does not mean that God tried to save people, but they would not let Him. It is simply a testimony to the longsuffering of God and the sinfulness of men - “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (*Rom. 9:22*).

The word “giants” in *verse 4* comes from a word that signifies “to fall.” It describes “violent, oppressive, fallen men.” These were powerful men who were feared and admired by people. People began to hold them up as heroes. Throughout the history of man, it has always been the physically strong, not the spiritually strong, who gain the public’s respect, admiration, and loyalty. *Verse 5* shows how God views sin, not only in act, but also in thought - “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” We see early on how sin and depravity are inward matters of the heart and how that simply cleaning the outside will not cure the disease (*Jer. 17:9-10; Matt. 23:25*). This is why human religion cannot cure of the problem of sin. Only God can change the heart.

(Gen. 6:6-7) - This speaks of God repenting and grieving. We know that repentance and grief refer to a change of mind and emotion. Elsewhere, the Scripture tells us that God will not and cannot change or repent (*Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Mal. 3:6*). We also know that change cannot be attributed to a perfect God. Change must be for the better or the worse, and God is perfect in His being, His thoughts and actions. So, how do we interpret such verses? Do we deny what the Scriptures say elsewhere about God? Do we admit to a contradiction in the Bible? Do we dishonor God by giving Him human qualities? Obviously, this is an expression that attributes human qualities to God only for our understanding. In our view, there are time that God seems to alter the course of His actions in providence, but we always find out later that what appeared to be change to us was always God’s eternal, sovereign purpose. God alone decrees the end from the beginning. The point here is not the God changed. It is simply a way of describing in human terms God’s hatred and justice against sin so that we can have some idea, even though inadequate, of how terrible sin is in God’s eyes. We see here how God is holy and just. He must punish sin, yet we also know that God is gracious and merciful. He had already promised to redeem mankind through the promised seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the salvation of His elect whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. So, God’s purpose was to preserve the line of Seth, and here we see this line preserved by His power and grace in the salvation of a sinner named Noah.

(Gen. 6:8) - *“BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD”* - Even though God’s grace has already been revealed, this is the first time the word “*grace*” is used in the Bible. It means God’s free, unmerited favor and blessing in salvation by Christ. Salvation has always been by grace, not of works. What does this tell us about Noah? It tells us that, by nature, Noah was no different than the rest of fallen, sinful, spiritually dead humanity. Notice, it does not say, “God found grace in the eyes of Noah.” It says, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” There was nothing in Noah, or done by Noah, to earn or deserve God’s blessings. Salvation by grace begins with God, not with man. Grace is not the result of something man does or wills to do. It is a sovereign act of, and gift from, God to unworthy sinners. Noah was a sinner whom God sovereignly chose to save by His grace based on the merits of Christ. Noah was no more worthy or deserving of God’s grace than any other sinner in his generation. The name “Noah” means comfort or rest. So, in the midst of pending judgment against all mankind for sin, there was hope, comfort, and rest in the grace of God.

(Gen. 6:9) - *“Noah was a just man”* - No man is justified in God’s sight by the deeds of the law (*Rom. 3:20*). So how was Noah a just man? He was justified (forgiven of all his sins and declared righteous in God’s sight) by God’s grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ Whom Noah knew as the promised Messiah (Savior). This refers to Noah’s standing before God in Christ and in the grace of God which was given to Noah *“in Christ Jesus before the world began”* (*2 Tim. 1:9*). Noah’s sins had already been imputed to Christ, and Christ’s righteousness had already been imputed to Noah. Christ would come in time and redeem Noah (as well as all of God’s elect) by His death on the cross and be raised again because of Noah’s (as well as all of God’s elect) justification.

Noah was *“perfect in his generation”* - Does this mean that Noah was not a sinner and had no sin? If this were true, Noah would not have needed grace. The word translated *“perfect”* is elsewhere translated *“without blemish”* 44 times. It also means *“sincere and upright.”* This refers to Noah’s completeness in Christ (*Col. 2:9-10*). Noah was not sinlessly perfect in his conduct. But Noah kept himself unblemished and unaffected by the sinfulness around him in that, by God’s grace and power, he believed God and obeyed God. Again, by God’s grace and power, Noah continued to look to Christ as the Author and Finisher of his faith (*Heb. 11:7; 12:1-2*). God did not impute sin to Noah because of Noah’s Surety and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*).

Noah *“walked with God”* - Just like Enoch before him, Noah was reconciled to God by the merits of Christ. He had been given the gifts of faith and repentance to believe God, love God’s Word, and enjoy fellowship with God in Christ. Noah believed and obeyed God’s Word as proven by the fact that, based on God’s Word, he *“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”* (*Heb. 11:7*). Noah acted with reverent respect and regard for the glory of God. He believed God’s way of salvation, both physically in the ark, and spiritually in Christ Who is every saved sinner’s Ark of salvation and refuge from the wrath of God against sin. He inherited (not earned) the righteousness which is by faith,” i.e. the imputed righteousness of Christ which all believer’s receive by God-given faith (*Rom. 10:4-10*). All who refuse Christ are condemned with the world (*John 3:36*). Also, for the entire 120 years that Noah was building the ark, he was also preaching the Gospel of God’s grace wherein the righteousness of God is revealed (*2 Pet. 2:5; cf. Rom. 1:16-17*). How do we know that the righteousness Noah preached was the righteousness of Christ? It is because Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and God’s grace always reigns *“through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord”* (*Rom. 5:21*).

Lesson 7 - OUR ARK IS CHRIST *Genesis 6–7*

(Gen. 6:11-12) - God looked over creation and pronounced it evil. God in justice planned to destroy all mankind from the face of the earth (*Gen. 6:7*). But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord (*Gen. 6:8*). Though He would destroy all people (and justly so, for their evil), God made a covenant to preserve Noah and his family. Noah was not saved because of goodness and merit found in himself, but God was gracious to him in Christ. The judgment of the world was an act of God's wrath upon sin, and the salvation of Noah was an act of God's mercy and justice through Christ. *Genesis 6:9* says that Noah was a just man, upright, and walked with God; but his standing, his state and character was a result of the grace of God in Christ for him and the grace of God in Christ working in him (*1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 2:8-10*). God was pleased to show mercy to Noah and pass by all the others (*Rom. 9:11-16*).

(Gen. 6:13-21) - God commanded Noah to prepare an ark for him and his family. God's Word tells us that *"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"* (*Heb. 11:7*). This shows us several things about Noah. Noah acted upon God's Word and not his own view of things. Noah obeyed God, not simply out of fear of death, but out of a reverent respect for God as He was revealed to Noah in Christ. Noah sought and found righteousness in and by the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, which he received by God-given faith.

(Gen. 7:1-5) - The Apostle Peter tells us that as Noah prepared the ark, he preached to his generation (*1 Peter 3:18-22*). Peter also described Noah as *"a preacher of righteousness"* (*2 Peter. 2:5*), which means Noah preached the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God (Christ's righteousness imputed) is revealed. The people refused to believe and repent. They refused to enter the ark. Yet, by God's grace, Noah believed God. When the ark was completed (before one drop of water fell), Noah willingly entered the ark. There is a decree of God and an everlasting covenant of mercy in Christ ordaining the salvation of a number which no man can number. Christ calls them his "sheep," given to Him by the Father. They are redeemed by His sacrifice, washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, and born again by the Spirit of God. They are convinced by the Spirit that there is nothing but the flood of God's wrath outside of Christ, the eternal ark of safety, the sinner's only refuge from sin and eternal death (*cf. Rom. 5:20-21*). By faith Noah built the ark, preached to his generation, and by faith Noah entered the ark. It is by faith that sinners come to Christ, and they are made willing to do so in the day of God's power. The rest of fallen humanity, though warned, preached to, commanded to believe and repent will not enter into Christ. They shall perish. Let's consider some particular points that show how Noah's ark was a type of Christ.

I. THE ARK WAS THE ONLY WAY OF DELIVERANCE - The water rose above the mountains (*Gen. 7:17-21*), so that nothing else could serve as a refuge. Christ is the only way of eternal salvation and safety from the wrath of God (*John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12*). The way of salvation is the way of righteousness, and Christ is the only way of righteousness (*Rom. 10:4*). The way of salvation is the way of holiness, and Christ is our holiness. Sinners who seek salvation based on anything but Christ and His righteousness will drown under the flood of God's wrath against their sins. The popular belief that there are many ways to God is not true. There is only one ark of safety, and that ark is Christ.

II. THE ARK WAS PLANNED AND PREPARED BY GOD - God foreordained and purposed to provide this ark for the safety of those whom He had chosen, Noah and his family, and God

gave Noah specific instructions on how the ark was to be built. Long before the flood came, the Lord provided for the salvation of His chosen people. The Lord planned and purposed the salvation of His people by Christ in His eternal purpose of grace (*2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8*). This is the redemptive purpose of God revealed in the everlasting covenant of grace which centers around and is conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ.

God told Noah the kinds of material to use and the measurements for building the ark. It was God's ark, and it was actually the power of God that built the ark. Noah was the instrument God used. In the same way Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, had a human body prepared for Him by God (*Heb. 10:4-5*). Christ is both God and man in one Person, and, in His humanity, He was sustained by the Father and the Holy Spirit for the work He had to accomplish.

III. THE ARK WAS SUFFICIENT FOR ALL WHO WOULD ENTER - There was room enough for Noah and his family, and for two of every animal. It was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, 45 feet high. Even so, Christ is the all-sufficient Savior for all who will come to God by Him, pleading His righteousness alone. Unbelievers prefer their own way because it exalts the flesh. God has never turned sinners away who came to Him seeking mercy in Christ, because God is the one who draws them to Christ (*John 6:37-45*).

IV. THE ARK WAS A PLACE OF ASSURED SAFETY - All who entered the ark were safe from the flood. Christ is the assured place of safety, the certain refuge, for all who are in Him. They are all forever safe from the wrath of God against sin because God cannot and will not charge them with sin (*Rom. 8:1; 33-39*). All who are in Him are washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, and there is no way they can be harmed by the guilt of sin or condemnation. In Christ we have the payment for all our sins, and He is our advocate to plead our case before the court of God's justice.

Again, the ark by which Noah and his family beautifully represents our salvation from sin by Christ. First, Noah was commanded to pitch the ark inside and out with pitch (*Gen. 6:14*). The word translated "*pitch*" means "to cover," or to "take away." At least 70 times in the OT it is translated "to make atonement." The pitch was a covering which sheltered Noah, and all who were in the ark, from the water outside. It kept the ship from leaking. Just as under the law of Moses the blood covered the mercy-seat, and the mercy-seat covered the broken law of God on the day of atonement, so the pitch covered the ark. This is a picture of satisfaction by Christ's blood. As long as we are legally covered by the blood of Christ, not one drop of God's wrath can come upon us due to our sins (*Psa. 32:1-2*).

Secondly, another way that the ark pictured Christ's redemptive work for our sins is that the storm and all its punishment fell upon the ark, not upon those inside. When Christ was made to be sin for us, He took the full measure of God's wrath against our sins. God's justice was brought forth upon Him without mercy (*Isa. 53*). There is absolutely no possibility of anyone perishing who is in Christ Jesus. God would be unjust to punish our sins when He has already punished them in Christ, our Ark. All who are in Christ are righteous in Him, and God shuts them in to keep them safe and secure (*Gen. 7:1,16*).

There are other things we could say - The ark only had one door. Christ is the one and only door to eternal life, the only way of salvation (*John 10:9*). The ark only had one window for light to shine in, and Christ is our light, the light of the world, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in His face, and this is the revelation of salvation by God's grace in Him (*2 Cor. 4:6*). The main lesson here is that as sinners in need of salvation by God's grace, we need to know that if we are found IN CHRIST, we are safe from God's wrath (*Matt. 24:35-39,44-46; Rom. 8:1; 33-34; Php. 3:7-9*).

(Gen. 8:20) - Everything God did in the Old Testament, including destroying the wicked in the flood and sparing Noah who found grace in the eyes of the Lord, was a preparation for the coming of Christ into the world. We saw how the ark itself was a picture of Christ. It was the one way of salvation and the safety and security from the wrath of God. Even the “pitch” that was within and without to keep it from leaking and sinking was a picture of the blood atonement of Christ. The ark’s one and only door pictured Christ Who is the one and only doorway to salvation and a right relationship with God. Its one window through which light entered pictured Christ the light of His people, the light of the Gospel. Here we see Noah, after the flood waters descended, coming out of the ark, building “*an altar unto the LORD,*” and sacrificing animals. Notice that Noah sacrificed only “*clean*” animals and presented them as “*burnt offerings on the altar*” offered unto the LORD. Noah knew the way of salvation, worship, and acceptance with God was through the blood sacrifice which pictured the blood of Christ shed for their sins. The cleanness of the sacrifices pictured Christ’s sinless purity. He was made sin only by the imputation of the sins of God’s elect to Him, and they are made righteousness by the merits of His blood imputed to them. This is the Gospel message (2 Cor. 5:21).

(Gen. 8:21-22) - The LORD accepted Noah’s offerings (“*smelled a sweet savour*”). This shows how sinners can only be accepted with God in Christ and based upon the merits of His righteousness alone. This is the grace of God that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21; Eph. 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 2:5). God, then, declared a covenant with Noah and the whole earth the terms of which are stated in Genesis 9:8-17.

(Gen. 9:1-6) - God gave Noah commandments and instructions for living upon the earth after the flood. He commanded Noah and his sons to “*be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth*” (Gen. 9:1,7). God’s purpose in creating the human race was to populate the earth because, before He created the earth, He had chosen a people (male and female, Jew and Gentile) to save from their sins forever by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is for God’s glory. God commanded Noah and his sons (including all his descendants) to live on and of the earth, even to eat the meat of animals as well as the edible plants (Gen. 9:2-3). He forbade them to eat raw meat (Gen. 9:4). God then pronounced the death penalty for murder. People who murdered other people, and even animals that killed people, were to be punished with death (Gen. 9:5-6). People today argue over whether or not the death penalty deters crime. It certainly does, but the death penalty is not simply a matter of deterring crime. It is a matter of justice. In the death penalty, God shows His own justice against sin which demands death. Only righteousness demands life. We have all sinned against God. We cannot murder God, but we, in essence, have sought to do so, and we all deserve eternal damnation and death. Our only hope of righteousness is the perfection of the law that can only be found in Christ.

(Gen. 9:8-17) - God promised Noah that He would never destroy the world by flood again. Just as the ark, wherein Noah and his family were delivered from God’s wrath, is typical of Christ, so here, too, we have a two-fold application, physical and spiritual. Seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, along with the rainbow are all physical, tangible, and visible things which point to a much higher spiritual reality. God made a covenant of promise with Noah, his posterity, and with all living things, and its fulfillment was based solely upon God’s absolute and unconditional promise and HIS faithfulness to keep that promise. None of the conditions of this covenant were placed upon Noah, nor his

posterity, nor any living creature. This covenant, in and of itself, did not concern eternal matters, but only the fact that God would never again destroy the world by flood. All who have lived since Noah, saved and unsaved, have been partakers of this covenant (*Gen. 9:11*).

Read *Isaiah 54:9-10*. In *Isaiah 53* the prophet had established the ground of eternal salvation in the substitution and satisfaction of Christ. In *Isaiah 54:8* God speaks as the REDEEMER who exercises everlasting kindness and mercy based on Christ's work of satisfaction. In *Isaiah 54:9-10*, Isaiah refers to God's oath to Noah as a SURE AND CERTAIN PLEDGE OF HIS PROMISE OF GRACE TO ALL THE OBJECTS OF HIS LOVE. The certainty that God will destroy the earth no more with a flood and the certainty of the foundations of the hills and mountains are appealed to as proof of the certainty of God's promise of eternal salvation conditioned on Christ, and that He will save sinners for Christ's sake alone. According to this promise and based on His faithfulness to fulfill it, we are to come to God who justifies the ungodly based on the imputed righteousness of Christ, repenting of dead works and former idolatry, and expecting Him to save us and bring us to final glory based solely upon that righteousness imputed.

These promises were made by God over 4,000 years ago, and the unfailing fulfillment of them yearly, all through the centuries, is a testimony to the absolute faithfulness of God in all things, especially in His promise of eternal salvation. Each time we see a rainbow, let us remember that God sees that same rainbow and remembers His promise. It is a reminder of God's righteous judgment and wrath, while, at the same time, it reminds us of God's faithfulness in His promise of mercy and grace in Christ, the believer's ark. This is the pot of gold at the end of every rainbow. And the reason that sinners cannot find that pot of gold is because of spiritual blindness - self-righteousness, self-love and religious pride that keeps them holding onto the fool's gold of their false refuges and false hopes, of their own dead works and religious experiences. And we tell all who will listen that each time they see a rainbow, remember God is faithful to destroy any sinner who expects God to bless him based on anything other than the imputed righteousness of Christ. And God is faithful to save sinners based on that righteousness. This is visible proof of God's faithfulness (*Jer. 31:33-37; 33:14-16, 20, 25-26*).

The rainbow described in *Genesis 9:12-13* is God's creation and is the seal, or sign, of the covenant God made. We naturally delight in it. There is something awe-inspiring in the appearance of a rainbow after a storm. It is good and right that we rejoice in the rainbow as a God-ordained symbol of God's faithfulness and mercy. The attempt of some to corrupt this beautiful sign by using the colors for their own sinful purposes does not diminish the beauty and wonder of what God has made.

We should all consider another serious matter. Although God has promised not to destroy the world again with a flood, this does not mean that God will never again destroy the earth. He has promised to one day destroy the earth by fire (*2 Pet. 3:10, 11; Rev. 20:9, 21:1*) in the terrible events known as "*the day of the Lord*." In *Genesis 9:12-13* we learn that the lesson to us is that when we see a rainbow, we should always be reminded of God's faithfulness and His amazing grace that can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should also be reminded that our God is a holy and righteous God Who has a holy hatred for sin and Who will not allow sin to go unpunished forever. Also, just as God provided a way for Noah and his family to be saved in the ark, He also has provided a way for us to be saved through Jesus Christ. Noah and his family were saved from the wrath of God that came in the flood, and all who are found in Christ are saved from the "*wrath to come*" (*1 Thess. 1:10*).

Lesson 9 - GOD JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY

Genesis 12:1-8

(Gen. 12:1) - Abraham is an important figure both in the Old and New Testaments. He is a prime example of how God justifies sinners in salvation by God's free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received in Him by God-given faith (*John 8:31-45*). Many of the Jews claimed to be right with God based on their physical connection with Abraham. Christ showed them that this meant nothing in the matter of being justified before God. He showed them how Abraham believed in and looked forward to Him for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and life (*John 8:46-59*). The Apostle Paul wrote of this same Gospel truth in explaining how God justified both Abraham and David, two historical figures of whom the Jews thought very highly (*Rom. 4:1-8*).

Abraham was a sinner saved by God's grace and a prime example of God justifying the ungodly based solely on the righteousness of Christ imputed to him (*Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:9-25*). He was born as a sinner fallen in Adam and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. He began life as an idolater (*Joshua 24:2*), but God had chosen him and given him to Christ before the world began. Abraham's calling from God to leave his home was by the sovereign power and grace of God. Abraham was brought by God to faith in Christ and true repentance. Abraham, like Noah, found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

(Gen. 12:2) - God made a covenant with Abraham to make of him "*a great nation*," to bless him, make his name great, and make him a blessing to others. This is God's promise that Abraham would be the father of children, but Sarai, Abraham's wife, was barren (*Gen. 11:30*). So, it is clear that this promise could not be conditioned on Abraham. It had to be the work of God. This covenant is reflective of God's grace in the salvation of His people - His elect in Christ, chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. This was a unilateral covenant (one-sided as to its final outcome), because it was not conditioned on or dependent upon Abraham at all. Like the everlasting covenant of grace which provides for the eternal salvation of sinners, it was (and is) all of the Lord's doing and conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. All the promises of the covenant of salvation are sure and certain in Christ (*2 Sam. 23:3-5; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 7:22*). Consider that whenever there is a bilateral covenant (two-sided as in God's covenant with Adam in the Garden and God's covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai), it is a total failure as far as saving man. It fails because whenever the blessings of God are conditioned on mutable and sinful people, they fail. Such bilateral covenants serve only to show our sinfulness and depravity as well as our need of God's grace in Christ and HIS righteousness to justify us (*Rom. 3:19-20; 5:20; Gal. 3:24*).

Later on, God promises Abraham that He would be "*the father of many nations*." God would make him "*exceeding fruitful*" and "*kings*" would come out of him (*Gen. 17:1-6*). Abraham is the father of many nations in a natural sense and in a spiritual sense. His natural descendants are Jews and Arabs. They are ABRAHAM'S PHYSICAL SEED (offspring). God made many promises to Abraham. Some of them are physical and temporal. Some of them pertain to all of Abraham's physical seed, including the Arab nations through Ishmael (*Gen. 21:13-19*). Most pertain to ABRAHAM'S SPECIAL, PHYSICAL SEED, the nation of Israel through Isaac (*Gen. 17:18-21*). It was through Abraham and Sarah, and specifically through the physical nation Israel, that God would provide for the sinless humanity of the seed of woman, the Lord Jesus Christ Who would accomplish the salvation of the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jew and Gentile. So, the spiritual and eternal aspects of God's promises to Abraham would be accomplished by Christ and pertain to ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL SEED, which is all sinners saved by God's grace in and by Christ. Christ is identified as ABRAHAM'S UNIQUE SEED in *Galatians 3:16* - "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*" God's elect are identified as

ABRAHAM'S SPIRITUAL SEED in *Romans 9:6-8* and *Galatians 3:26-29* (cf. *Rom. 2:28-29; 4:11-12; Heb. 2:10-18*).

It would be in the land of Canaan (the land God promised to Abraham and His special, physical seed - *Gen. 15:7*), that Christ would fulfill and accomplish His glorious mission to redeem His people by His blood and establish righteousness by which God justifies the ungodly. As God in sinless human flesh, Christ suffered unto death to save all the spiritual seed of Abraham, both Jew and Gentile. Christ had to be Divine while at the same time human without sin. He must be God the Son incarnate. In the flesh He must be born of woman. So, the first and foremost purpose of this covenant was to make known the physical line from which the Messiah would come (*Matt. 1:1-2, 17, 21-23*). It was God's promise and purpose to give the natural descendants of Abraham (the Jews) the land of Canaan as an inheritance, and to keep them in that land, in spite of their sinfulness and rebellion, as an "everlasting possession" (*Gen. 17:8*), meaning that they would dwell in that land, not forever and forever, but until God fulfilled His purpose in bringing Christ into the world through them in that land.

(Gen. 12:3) - From the time of Abraham, as the Lord dealt with the nation Israel, He sovereignly, powerfully, and unconditionally preserved them and, eventually, brought them into the land of promise. Throughout their history, they had many enemies and few allies. To preserve them, God promised that He would bless all who blessed them and curse all who cursed them. God's protection and preservation of them as a nation was never due to their goodness, faithfulness, or obedience. Like all of us by nature, they were sinful, unfaithful, and disobedient. But God's purpose to use them as the human channel through whom Christ would come in the flesh could not fail. So, nations that blessed Israel were temporally and physically blessed by God. Nations that cursed Israel were cursed by God. But, as a whole, the nation of Israel was made up of sinful, unbelieving, rebellious, and idolatrous people who broke the covenant that God made with them through Moses on Mount Sinai (*Isa. 1:1-13; Jer. 31:31-32*).

The spiritual and eternal promises of God to Abraham were only accomplished and realized in the coming of Christ and the salvation of God's SPIRITUAL people out of "all families of the earth" (both Jew and Gentile) who are blessed with all SPIRITUAL blessings in Christ Jesus (*Eph. 1:3*). This is "the blessing of Abraham" that would come upon God's elect, both Jew and Gentile (*Gal. 3:7-14*). This is how "all families of the earth" are blessed through Abraham. This is SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, made up of sinners saved by grace and, like Abraham, brought to faith in Christ and true repentance of dead works and idolatry. This is the church of the living God. The promise of blessing to all who bless the true church is fulfilled in God bringing His elect, Jew and Gentile, into the spiritual family of Christ (*Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 3:8-11*). The promise of cursing all who curse (reject and persecute) the true church is fulfilled in the condemnation and eternal death of the wicked in the end (*Psa. 37:37-38; 73:1-20; Eccl. 8:12-13*).

(Gen. 12:4-8) - Abraham left his home because he believed the Lord, i.e. the promises that God had made concerning both physical and spiritual matters. Verse 7 and 8 tell us that he built "an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD." The Bible tells us, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (*Rom. 10:13*). This is an act of God-given faith and the result of God revealing Himself to His people in the Gospel of His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:14-17; cf. Acts 2:21; Rom. 1:16-17*). Abraham calling upon the name of the Lord was evidence that God had imputed Christ's righteousness to him (*Rom. 4:1-22*). When God brings any sinner to believe in Christ and call upon His name, it is evidence that God has imputed that same righteousness of Christ to that sinner and that God has given spiritual life to that sinner in the new birth (*Rom. 4:23-25; cf. Gal. 3:9*).

Lesson 10 - WORKS VS. GRACE *Genesis 21:1-13*

We know that the Lord God had made a covenant with Abraham which depended upon Abraham and his wife Sarah having a child. We know that Sarah was barren, so the fulfillment of this covenant could not have been conditioned on Abraham and Sarah. It was conditioned upon God alone. We know the promise of a child to Abraham and Sarah was for the purpose of God bringing the Messiah into the world according to the flesh to establish salvation for God's elect (Jew and Gentile) by His grace through the righteousness of God established by the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord said, *"In Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (*Gen. 17:12; Rom. 9:7; Heb. 11:18; cf. Gen. 21:12*). We know that in a moment of weakness and unbelief that Sarah became discouraged because God had not yet given her and Abraham a child, and she gave her handmaid, Hagar, an Egyptian, to be joined to Abraham and conceive a child. Hagar conceived a son and called him *"Ishmael,"* ("God will hear"). She began to despise Sarah, and Sarah treated her harshly. Hagar, then, ran away. The Lord told her to return and submit to Sarah. This is all recorded in *Genesis 16*.

(Gen. 21:1-7) - Later, here in *Genesis 21*, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 99 years old, the Lord gave him and Sarah a son named *"Isaac,"* which means "laughter." This was due to the happiness of the fulfillment of the promise. This was different from Abraham and Sarah's laughter of disbelief before (*Gen. 17:17; 18:10-15*).

(Gen. 21:8-10) - When Isaac grew up, Ishmael, the son of Hagar the bondwoman, began to mock (laugh at and scorn) him. When Sarah saw this, she told Abraham, *"Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac"* (*Gen. 21:10*).

(Gen. 21:11-13) - This grieved Abraham because Ishmael was still his son. God told Abraham to listen to Sarah. Isaac was the child of promise, and *"in Isaac shall thy seed be called"* (*Gen. 21:12*). But God assured Abraham that He would take care of Hagar and Ishmael (*Gen. 21:13*). All of this may seem strange, and even cruel, to us, but in these events we can see the Lord God working His predestinated purpose in His wisdom and power to glorify Himself in the salvation of His chosen people by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. First, it was through Isaac that Christ would come in the flesh to do His great work as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of all whom the Father had given Him before the world began (*Gal. 4:4-6*). Secondly, in these historical events, we have a great spiritual lesson that illustrates the impossibility of salvation for sinners by works of the law and the only way of salvation for sinners by God's grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. The Apostle Paul wrote of this in the New Testament. Let's turn to **GALATIANS 4:21-31**.

(Gal. 4:21) - Paul wrote this to sinners who sought salvation, righteousness, and life by their works of the law. To be *"under the law"* is to be bound to keep its precepts and satisfy its justice by our efforts to keep the law. Paul had written that to be under the law is to be under a curse because it is impossible for sinners to be justified (forgiven of all our sins and declared righteous in God's sight) by works of the law (*Gal. 3:10-11*). The law can only condemn sinners based on their works.

(Gal. 4:22-23) - *"For it is written"* refers back to the Scriptures in the Old Testament to which we have referred above. Ishmael was born by a *"bondmaid"* (a servant or slave). Isaac was born by a *"freewoman"* (Sarah, Abraham's wife). Ishmael was born *"after the flesh,"*

which means through the physical means of man and woman. Isaac “*was by promise,*” meaning by a miracle of God’s power apart from natural means as Abraham and Sarah were both old and past the age of child-bearing. Isaac was born according to the promise God had given to Abraham.

(Gal. 4:24) - An “*allegory*” is a story, poem, picture, or even an historical event used to illustrate and teach a deeper, spiritual meaning. In this case, the two women, Hagar and Sarah, represent “*two covenants.*” Hagar represents the Old Covenant made between God and the nation Israel through Moses on “*Mount Sinai.*” This covenant “*gendereth* (generated, born, brought forth) *to bondage*” because it was a covenant of works. Its blessings were conditioned on the obedience of the people who were, like all people by nature, sinful and depraved and who could not keep the law because of sin. This covenant was not in existence when Hagar and Ishmael were alive, but this shows that it was God’s purpose all along to make this covenant with the natural descendants of Abraham. As we will see, Sarah represents the everlasting covenant of grace which is the one covenant of salvation conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. Hagar was never free, and Sarah was never in bondage. None of those under the covenant of works are free. All who live by the law are under the curse (*Gal. 3:10-13*). But the seed of Abraham by faith are free, for if the Son “*shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (*John 8:36*).

(Gal. 4:25) - This is the Old Covenant law from Sinai that corresponds and describes “*Jerusalem which now is,*” i.e. Jerusalem as it was in Paul’s day. The unbelieving Israelites (the Jewish nation), represented here by the city of Jerusalem, were all “*in bondage with her children,*” i.e. all who followed her false religion of works-salvation, salvation conditioned on sinners. As Paul wrote in *Romans 9:31–10:3*, they were all lost because they sought righteousness by their works of the law, and they rejected the only way of righteousness which is the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is God manifest in the flesh (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:4*). Israel’s life under the Old Covenant law was a testimony to the sin and depravity of all people by nature and the impossibility of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life being attained by our works of the law (*Rom. 3:10-20*). It was a testimony of our need of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life by God’s free and sovereign grace, all conditioned on Christ Who was prophesied and typified in the ceremonial laws of priesthood and sacrifice.

(Gal. 4:26) - “*Jerusalem which is above*” is the heavenly Jerusalem described in its perfected glory in *Revelation 21:9-27*. This is the SPIRITUAL city and kingdom of God manifested in the true church of the Lord Jesus Christ and where the true Gospel is preached, heard, and believed under the New Covenant as established and ratified by Christ in His obedience unto death for His people. Unlike the earthly Jerusalem, this Jerusalem is not in bondage but set free from the law and from sin by Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His church (*John 8:31-36; Rom. 6:1-7; 17-18; 7:4-6; Gal. 6:1*). The blood of Christ cleanses His people from all sin so that there is no condemnation for them in Him. Their debt to God’s justice has been fully paid and they are debt-free. Christ’s righteousness has been imputed to them so that they owe no debt to God’s law, and when they are brought to faith in Christ, they are liberated from the bondage of the law and set free to serve the Lord in “*newness of spirit,*” as willing, loving bondservants of Christ. God is the only Father of His people, and the church is the “*mother of us all*” in the sense that it is through the ministry of the Gospel from the church that the Holy Spirit applies the new birth to all of God’s elect, Jew and Gentile. Through her God-empowered ministry souls are brought by God to Christ, nursed up and nourished by the ministry of truth.

(Gal. 4:27) - Paul quotes *Isaiah 44:1* to show that the heavenly Jerusalem, or Gospel church state, is the mother of us all, and has been used of God to bring forth many souls to Christ, which was not the case for the Jewish nation under the Old Covenant. Even though the Lord was an “*Husband*” to them in a temporal and ceremonial way (*Jer. 31:32*), there were very few (a remnant) in each generation for 1500 years that were brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. But through the true church of the living God, spiritual Israel, God will give life to many, many children (all of His elect) and bring them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. Unlike the Old Covenant where very few of the Israelites came to know the Lord spiritually, under the New Covenant, as Jeremiah prophesied, “*FOR THEY SHALL ALL KNOW ME, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*” (*Jer. 31:34*).

(Gal. 4:28) - Just as Isaac was conceived and born by the promise of God and not by the works and power of man, we who are born again by the Holy Spirit are conceived and born again according to the power and promise of God to save all His chosen people by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 1:11-13*). This promise is the promise of the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed.

(Gal. 4:29-31) - The allegory to which Paul referred shows how that when it comes to salvation and religious fellowship, works and grace CANNOT mix and cannot exist together in harmony and fellowship (*Rom. 11:5-7; Gal. 5:1-5; Eph. 2:8-9*). Just as Ishmael mocked and persecuted Isaac, those who believe in works-based religion will always hate and persecute those who believe the true Gospel of God’s grace (*John 3:19-20; 15:18–16:3*). Casting out the bondwoman and her son is the equivalent of the Lord bringing His true heirs, children of the freewoman, first, to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. True believers are brought by God to count all but Christ and His righteousness as dead works and loss (*Php. 3:7-9*). The very things that children of the bondwoman hold dear and in which they have confidence are the things of which true believers repent and count but “*dung*” that we “*may win Christ*.” Secondly, it is the equivalent of being separated from the world and its false works-based religion. Having been brought by God to faith in Christ and true repentance of dead works, we as believers cannot speak peace or enter into fellowship with those who believe and promote their works-based religion. Ishmael’s attitude toward Isaac is the same attitude that legalists have toward the sons of grace today. You will never find a free-will legalist to be tolerant toward the Gospel of grace. The Gospel of grace destroys his very foundation and hope, which is merit, not mercy.

So, the spiritual lesson is that all notions of salvation by the works or wills of man must be cast out just as Hagar must be cast out as well as her son. The Old Covenant law from Mt. Sinai, which was a covenant of works, has ceased, having been fulfilled by Christ (*Rom. 10:4; Heb. 8; 10:1-10*). It cannot have a place in the redemption and reign of Christ Jesus, because “*if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain*” (*Gal. 2:21*). As the two women are types of the two covenants, so the two sons are types of those who live under each covenant. Ishmael represents the man who trusts his works and seeks righteousness before God by his deeds. Isaac represents the man justified by God’s grace based on Christ’s righteousness imputed and born supernaturally by the Spirit of God (*John 1:13*), brought to faith in Christ, and walks in the spirit, not the flesh. Isaac represents all whose wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption is Christ (*1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10*). We are all born flesh first, then born again and will live forever. Ishmael is the son of the flesh; Isaac is the son of promise by divine power.

Lesson 11 - THE GOSPEL OF MT. MORIAH *Genesis 22:1-14*

(Gen. 22:1) - *“And it came to pass after these things”* i.e. in God’s appointed time and after the events prior to this, Abraham was called upon to endure the greatest trial - to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. *“GOD did tempt Abraham”* - When we think of temptation, we often think of temptations to evil. Any temptations to evil do not come from God directly but from our own fleshly desires. God did not tempt Abraham to sin (*James 1:13-14*). *“Tempt”* here means to “test, try, or prove.” God does test the gift of faith in His children for His glory and their good. This test took place on Mount Moriah. This is where some believe the Temple of Solomon was built. Others believe it is the place that came to be called Mount Calvary where our Lord was crucified. This all portrays God’s sacrifice of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of His elect, a multitude of sinners chosen from the foundation of the world.

(Gen. 22:2) - God’s command to Abraham may seem strange and even cruel to us, but it was not. God brought this trial on Abraham for three reasons. (1) To test and prove Abraham as His child whom He loves (*Heb. 12:5-10*). When the trial was over, Abraham knew himself better than he did before, and he knew Christ better than he did before. (2) To provide a great testimony in picture of His glory in the salvation of sinners based on the righteousness of Christ, the sinner’s Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. (3) To prove once again His faithfulness and power to do all that He has promised (*Isa. 46:9-13; Lam. 3:22-23*). We must remember that God had promised Abraham that it was through Isaac that the Messiah would come for the salvation of God’s covenant people. True faith believes God’s Word!

(Gen. 22:3-4) - We can speculate what was going through Abraham’s mind through this trial. We need to be careful not to make Abraham something he is not as if he were super-human and without feelings and without the sins of the flesh with which he struggled. But we do not want to add to God’s Word and make Abraham less than what he was (and is) as a sinner saved by grace and brought to faith in Christ. Abraham knew that the *“burnt offering”* was for the Lord and that it pictured the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of His people. So, I suggest that we leave it with what is stated clearly in God’s Word - *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, (Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure”* (*Heb. 11:17-19*).

In all this we can see many parallels to God the Father giving His only-begotten Son. Christ Jesus became our burnt offering, our sin offering, our sacrifice, by the will of the Father, Who was pleased to bruise Him (*Isa. 53:10; Heb. 10:9-10*). In all of this God shows that there is no salvation, no love, no grace, no mercy, apart from justice satisfied. Righteousness must be established, else there is no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, no eternal life. God *“spared not His own Son”* (*Rom. 8:32*).

(Gen. 22:5-6) - Abraham carefully prepared all that was involved in the sacrifice. God the Father prepared all that was involved in our redemption by Christ (*Acts 2:23; Heb. 10:5-10*). Abraham commanded his servants to remain at the foot of the mountain, and he and his son went together to the mountain. Abraham said, *“I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.”* He knew that this was an act of worship to honor the Lord God, and he believed that he and his son would return. But only he and his son went to do this work. Redemption is the work of the Father and the Son. *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself”* (*2 Cor. 5:19*); yet Christ was in the hands of and under the wrath of God for our sins (*Isa. 53:4-6, 10*). This is why the righteousness revealed in the Gospel is *“the righteousness OF GOD”* (*Rom. 1:17*) and not man. It is the merit of Christ’s work, and Christ is both God and

man. It is HIS obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Notice that Abraham laid the wood upon Isaac even as the cruel cross was laid upon the shoulders of our Lord.

(Gen. 22:7-8) - Having been taught by his father of the way to worship God, Isaac asked, *"Father, behold the wood and the fire; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"* He knew that (God being righteous and just and man being guilty and sinful) there could be no acceptance, forgiveness, or communion between God and men without the blood of a lamb. Abraham uttered this great prophecy which is the very heart of all God's purpose, the Gospel, and our hope - *"My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb for a burnt offering."* He later named the place *"Jehovah-Jireh"* which means "the Lord will see to it or provide." This prophecy says many things. (1) The Lord will provide HIMSELF as the Lamb: for our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, IS GOD! (2) The Lord will provide FOR Himself a Lamb, for the Lord God is the offended majesty TO whom and FOR whom the blood was shed that He might be both just and justifier (*Rom. 3:23-26*). (3) The Lord will PROVIDE or see to it that redemption for all His sheep, the satisfaction of His justice, the fulfillment of His covenant, and the eternal glory of His Son are accomplished in full. Nothing will be left undone. *"It is finished,"* the Savior cried, and it is!

(Gen. 22:9) - Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the altar. Isaac did not resist his father, even as Christ Jesus was willing and obedient even to the death of the cross (*Php. 2:6-8*). Christ could not have come, could not have been arrested, could not have been bound to the tree, and could not have died except it pleased the Father and He Himself was willing (*John 10:14-18*).

(Gen. 22:10-13) - Here the typical lesson of Christ as the Substitute of His people shifts from Isaac to the *"ram caught in a thicket by his horns."* Isaac was spared, and this was God's plan from the beginning. When the Lord said, *"for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me,"* it was not as though God learned something He did not know before. We know that God knew from all eternity what Abraham would be, and what he would do, having determined to bestow His grace upon him, and work it in him, which would influence and enable him to do by faith what he did. God knew full well beforehand what would be the result of this trial. But this is said after the manner of men who know things with certainty only after they come to pass. Isaac was removed from the altar and a ram took his place. The ram pictures Christ, our sacrifice, and Isaac pictures all who are redeemed by Him and believe in Him. We are spared because of Christ (*Rom. 8:1,33-34*).

James wrote that this proved that Abraham had been justified before God based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. It justified him before men showing his faith to be a gift from God and genuine (*James 2:20-24*). Such tests do not create faith. They REVEAL true faith. Our success through trials do not justify us before God. Only the merits of Christ's death can justify us before God. But our success in trials show God's grace, power, and faithfulness to keep His promises and prove the validity of the faith that God has given us.

(Gen. 22:14) - *"Jehovah-jireh"* means *"THE LORD WILL PROVIDE,"* and the thought is stated in the last line, *"in the mount of the LORD it shall be seen,"* which means, *"IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE PROVIDED."* Salvation, with all spiritual and eternal blessings, is fully and freely provided by the Lord by Christ death on Mount Calvary when He established the righteousness that God has imputed to all His chosen people (*Rom. 8:32*).

Lesson 12 - A BRIDE FOR THE HEIR *Genesis 24*

(Gen. 24:1-4) - This is the historical record of Abraham choosing a bride for his son, Isaac. In this story Abraham sends his eldest servant to seek a bride for Isaac. Most agree that this servant is the same Eliezer mentioned in *Genesis 15:2* whom Abraham, being yet childless, thought might inherit his estate. As we know, this did not happen because it was in Isaac that God's promises to Abraham were to be fulfilled. This story is typical of God the Father sending His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to find His bride, chosen and given to Him before the foundation of the world. We must realize that there are limitations in any type. We cannot make every element to apply to spiritual matters. For example, Abraham represents God the Father. But, at this time, Abraham did not know who the identity of the bride who would marry Isaac. God the Father knew the exact identity of the bride He had chosen for His Son in divine, electing grace before the world began (*John 10:14,27-30; Rom. 11:2; Php. 4:3; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-10; 2:19*). So, as Abraham represents our heavenly Father, Isaac represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and the servant represents all ministers of the true Gospel. They are instruments of the Holy Spirit Who, in the new birth, empowers the Gospel Word to the salvation of God's chosen people (*John 6:44-45; 16:8-11; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17*). Rebekah, the bride, represents every true believer, chosen by God in the election of grace and given to Christ as their Surety, bought by the blood Christ, and born again and called by the Holy Spirit. As we go through this passage, we will consider how the type is fulfilled in Christ finding and marrying His bride, the true church.

Abraham was very wealthy, and his son, Isaac, was the heir of all that Abraham possessed. He sent his trusted servant to find a bride for Isaac, a bride who would share with Isaac all the riches that Abraham possessed. The Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God's love, is the heir of all things (*Heb. 1:1-3*). The Father has given all things into His hands (*John 3:35; John 5:23; Col. 1:16-18*). The glory of God in the complete salvation of all His chosen people was (and is) conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. All the promises of God to His chosen people are made sure and certain in and by Him (*Rom. 8:31-34; 2 Cor. 1:20; Eph. 1:3*). Christ is Lord and King by design, by decree, and by His death (*Rom. 14:9; John 17:1-3*). God has chosen out of every tribe, kindred, and nation a people who collectively make up the bride of His Son and joint-heirs with Him of all that He purchased and owns (*Rom. 8:14-17; Rom. 8:29-31; Eph. 1:3-7*). The Father calls and sends His servants (preachers of the Gospel) out into the world to find this bride of Christ by preaching the Gospel to all who will listen. The Holy Spirit will single them out and give them spiritual life in the new birth, bring them to faith in Christ and true repentance. They are all to be married to Christ (*Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 7:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Cor. 1:17-18,26-31; 2 Cor. 11:2*).

"Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the LORD ..." - This oath seems to be related to God's promise that Abraham would have a seed from his own body through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. So, Abraham makes this oath with reference to the coming seed, which is Christ Himself as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people. Notice how Abraham specified that the chosen bride was not to be from *"the daughters of the Canaanites"* but from his own *"kindred."* The bride of Christ is made up of God's elect, chosen by God and given to Christ before the world began (*Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 1:9*). They are called His bride, His brethren (*Heb. 2:9-17*), His church (*Acts 20:28*), and His sheep (*John 10:11-29*). As sinners saved by God's grace, we do not make ourselves His bride. We were chosen by God to be His bride. We are His kindred people by election, redemption, and calling, all of God's grace in Christ.

(Gen. 24:5-9) - The servant expressed concern that the woman might be unwilling to leave her family and give herself to a man she does not know. Abraham assured him that he was

not going forth alone but that the Lord God, Who made Isaac the heir, would go with him and reward his efforts - *"He shall send His angel before thee."* God's preachers do not go forth into the world alone to persuade men to believe in and come to Christ by their own logic or power of persuasion. The Spirit of God goes before them to quicken, awaken, and give sinners ears to hear the Gospel, eyes to see the beauties of Christ, and hearts to love Him (*Psalms 110:3; Eph. 2:1-10*). The bride had been chosen (*2 Thess. 2:13*), the servant will endure all things to tell the bride of her Beloved (*2 Tim. 2:9-10*), the bride will hear the voice of her Beloved through the message of the servant (*John 10:23-30*), and the bride will come willingly and believing the Word of God delivered by the servant (*John 6:37-45; 2 Cor. 2:14-16*).

(Gen. 24:10-14) - The servant went to the place where the women came to draw water and, knowing the impossibility of the task humanly, he sought divine help in prayer. The opening of the heart to Christ, the resurrection of the spiritually dead, conviction of sin, genuine repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus are *"impossible with men"* (*Matt. 19:24-26; 1 Cor. 2:9-12*). We preach, but the Spirit of God reveals Christ to the heart (*John 16:7-15*). God alone can give and teach the new heart (*John 6:44-45*). All who come to Christ and receive Him must be born of God (*John 1:10-13*), for true repentance and saving faith are the gifts of God (*Rom. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29*).

The bride for Isaac must be both worthy and willing, and we will see that Rachel was both. But, by nature, Christ's bride is both unworthy and unwilling. She is a sinful and rebellious bride. God's grace makes her beautiful by justifying her and clothing her in the righteous robe of His Son, Christ's righteousness imputed (*Isa. 61:10*). She is washed clean from all her sins by the blood of Christ. She has no dowry, nothing to offer the Bridegroom. She has nothing but debt, but He has paid her debt to justice and secured her eternal life and well-being. He also makes her willing in the day of His power by giving her a new heart and drawing her to Himself with cords of love revealed in the Gospel.

(Gen. 24:32-51) - The servant was welcomed into Rebekah's home, but he would not partake of their comforts until he had accomplished his mission and declared his message. Even so, the servants of Christ are men on a mission — to make Christ known (*Acts 20:33*). The servant declared to Rebekah and her kindred the glories of Isaac and his master's house. The servants of Christ have one message — Christ and Him crucified (*1 Cor. 2:1-2*). The bride must not be attracted to the servant but to Christ (*John 3:30*). Our task is to set forth the beauties of God in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*Psalms 27:4; John 1:29,37; 3:36; 2 Cor. 4:6*).

(Gen. 24:56-58) - Finally, after the case had been fully stated, the question was put directly to Rebekah, *"Wilt thou go with this man?"* And she said, *"I will go."* Faith in Christ, salvation in Christ, and a saving interest in the Lord Jesus is an individual, personal, and total commitment. Children cannot be sprinkled into the covenant and kingdom, young people are not saved because their parents know God, wives and husbands do not partake of grace because they are married to believers (remember Lot's wife), and salvation is not the result of group therapy. Knowing the true God and Jesus Christ is a personal experience as God is pleased to reveal himself to an individual (*Gal. 1:15-16; 2 Tim. 1:12*). The true bride of Christ is convinced by the Holy Spirit of the beauty and power of Christ as the Lord her righteousness (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*).

(Gen. 28:10) - It is a true blessing of God's grace to be able to read the Scriptures and find the key of knowledge revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Christ told the Pharisees, "*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and THEY ARE THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME*" (John 5:39). He told them, "*For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: FOR HE WROTE OF ME*" (John 5:46). The Lord God spoke to these Old Testament believers by the prophets, by pictures and types, and by dreams and visions to reveal His redemptive purpose and grace through Christ Jesus. With this in mind, we see how Jacob is another very important figure in the Old Testament along with his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham. When John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, prophesied of the Lord Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the covenant promises that God made to "*our fathers*," the reference here was to God's promises made to Abraham and continued through Isaac and Jacob. Jacob carried on the human lineage of Christ. It was through the lineage of one of his twelve sons, Judah, that Christ would be born in the flesh. True believers can identify with Jacob in his sinfulness and in his salvation. His original name, Jacob, means "supplanter," one who takes the place of another through force or plotting (Gen. 27:35-36). Jacob was a sinner who lived down to his name. Later, as recorded in Genesis 32:28, the Lord changed his name to Israel, which means "prevailing with God." How can sinners prevail with God? It is only by God-given faith in Christ. Jacob was a type of all sinners saved by grace. We who believe in Christ can identify with Jacob in his sin and depravity and in his salvation by God's grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. Here are some things we know about Jacob:

(1) He was one of the sons of Isaac and Rebecca. His twin brother Esau was born first, but God had revealed to Rebecca that, contrary to the law of the first-born, "*The elder [Esau] shall serve the younger*" [Jacob] (Rom. 9:12). This was to show forth God's purpose in the election and salvation of His people in Christ by His sovereign mercy and grace (Rom. 9:10-16).

(2) He was one of God's elect and God loved him but hated Esau (Gen. 25:21-23; Rom. 9:10-13; Gen. 35:9-13). Like all of us by nature, both Jacob and Esau were sinners who deserved God's wrath, hatred, and eternal death, but God loved Jacob and hated Esau.

(3) He tricked his brother, Esau, into selling him the birthright (Gen. 25: 29-34).

(4) Through his mother's influence and help, he deceived his father, Isaac, into giving him the blessing reserved for the first-born (Gen. 27:19-24).

(5) He had to flee from his father's house and from the wrath of his brother (Gen. 27:41-44).

(6) God met Jacob on his flight from Esau. And what a night that was as God spoke to Jacob, promised His presence and mercies, and revealed to Jacob the way to God - Christ Jesus!

(Gen. 28:11) - We know that Jacob's circumstances were all according to God's sovereign plan and purpose, while, at the same time, Jacob was out in the desert alone, away from his home and family, and fleeing for his life because of his own sin. Jacob's situation certainly pictures the natural state of everyone of God's elect as fallen in Adam and born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. The Bible says that our sins have separated us from God (Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:12; Col. 1:21). It is clear that Jacob was by nature undeserving and unworthy of God's love, grace, and mercy. He was a sinner saved by grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to him and which he received by God-given faith. We need to

emphasize how that we who have been brought by God to be reconciled to Him and believe in Him are identified with Jacob both in our sins and in our salvation from sin - *"Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad"* (Psalm 14:7); *"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed"* (Mal. 3:6). These verses have a limited and temporal application to the physical nation of Israel, but the spiritual and eternal application applies only to SPIRITUAL ISRAEL, sinners saved by God's grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither Jacob nor we are paragons of virtue IN GOD'S SIGHT. Neither Jacob nor we are righteous IN GOD'S SIGHT. Neither Jacob nor we are able to make ourselves righteous by our works IN GOD'S SIGHT!

(Gen. 28:12-14) - The Lord revealed His mercies to Jacob in a dream. What a blessed time it is when the Lord is pleased in His grace to speak to us on our road to destruction and reveal His mercies in Christ to the chief of sinners (Eph. 2:1-7; Rom. 5:6-8). Jacob, the sinner, was still and quiet. God spoke, revealing Christ in the dream. The ladder stood upon the earth, but the top reached to heaven. So, Christ Jesus, although He stood on the earth in the flesh, yet He is the Most High God, Who never left the bosom of the Father (Phil. 2:6-8; John 1:14). The angels went up and down on the ladder, which declares to us that we are able to ascend to God only in and by Christ Jesus (John 14:6). It is by and through Christ that God comes to us - *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"* (2 Cor. 5:19). The Lord God stood above the ladder and made all of His rich promises to Jacob. So, God in Christ and through Christ makes all the promises of spiritual blessings, eternal life, and glory to us (2 Cor. 1:20; Eph. 1:3-7).

(Gen. 28:15) - What God spoke to Jacob in this verse is His promise to all believers in Christ Jesus. *"I am with thee"* in covenant mercies, in redemptive grace, and in constant indwelling love (Rom. 8:28-39). *"I will keep thee."* None whom God has chosen, for whom Christ died, and who are brought by the Spirit to believe shall ever perish (John 6:37-45; John 10:24-30). *"I will bring thee into this land."* Canaan is but a type of salvation. Christ, our Surety, will bring to salvation and to glory all of His sheep. Every place prepared in His kingdom will be occupied by those for whom it is prepared (John 14:1-3). *"I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."* Our Lord shall not fail. The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand (Isa. 53:10-11).

(Gen. 28:16-19) - Jacob called the place *"Bethel,"* the house of God and gate of heaven. This cannot be church buildings, which men call the house of God. This can only be where God actually dwells in the presence and revelation of His glory. The house of God is where God is, where God dwells, and where God reveals Himself. The gate of heaven is the door, and Christ said, *"I am the door, by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"* (John 10:9). Christ is the Tabernacle of God wherein He dwells in the glory of Christ's Person as God manifest in the flesh (John 1:14-17), and in the power of His finished work of righteousness to insure the complete and eternal salvation of His chosen people (Col. 1:19; 2:9-10).

(Gen. 28:20-22) - Jacob responded to God's call, to God's revelation, as all of His called ones respond. *"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power"* (Psalm 110:3). Christ said, *"Other sheep I have, them I must bring and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd"* (John 10:16). The people of God are not saved against their wills but are made willing by God (Jer. 31:31-34; 2 Thess. 2:13). No man can (is able) or has the desire to come to Christ except he is taught of God, called of God, and has learned of God; but those who are called, taught, and drawn to Christ shall come (John 6:44-45).

(Gen. 32:24) - Jacob is alone and helpless. No plotting or scheming could help him now. He is shut up to the sovereign power of God. His salvation is totally in the hands of God. Those whom the Lord is pleased to save and to whom He will reveal His mercy in Christ Jesus will all be brought to the place of human sinfulness and inability. When the Holy Spirit brings us to conviction, He leaves us no room for boasting or glorying in the flesh (*Psalm 107:1-6, 11-13; 1 Cor. 1:26-31*). *"There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day"* - This was one of many preincarnate appearances of Christ. He often appeared in human form to Old Testament saints as a token and pledge of His future incarnation. He appeared to Adam and Eve in the Garden before and after the Fall. He appeared to Abraham a few times to establish and confirm the promise. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and here He appears to Jacob. Jacob was laid hold of by the Lord in sovereign power and purpose. This brought Jacob to lay hold of Christ in a physical, mental, and spiritual conflict which had to be resolved. God is sovereign. He will have His people and His people will have Him as their God (*John 6:37-39*). The Lord is King by right, decree, and by His death for all His people. He will also be the one and only Savior and King in the hearts of His people by true submission and surrender (*Psalm 110:3; Rom. 10:9-10*).

"They wrestled until the breaking of the day" - This was no brief and passing encounter. Great issues are at stake; eternal matters will be resolved as Christ personally meets Jacob. God will bless and use Jacob, but it will be a conquered, subdued, and surrendered Jacob. This wrestling is a metaphor for the warfare that goes on within our hearts and minds when the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment in bringing us to Christ by God-given faith. Having given us spiritual life, we struggle against our natural selves and the unbelief that dominates us. But Christ is omnipotent and effectual, even invincible, in this great work. By the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, He convinces us that there is no other way or hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life but in Him.

(Gen. 32:25) - *"When He saw that He prevailed not against Jacob, He touched his thigh and crippled him"* - The Lord could have easily subdued Jacob, but this conflict was ordered by God Himself, and the outcome was never in doubt. But, for His glory in Christ, God always brings His people to see their need of His grace in Christ. So, the Lord struck a crippling blow and Jacob went down. God always brings us to our knees and makes us willing to submit to Him for all salvation and righteousness (*John 6:44-45*). Through His Gospel revelation and invincible call, He brings us to see and experience the depravity, sinfulness, and frailty of the flesh, the emptiness of this world, as well as bringing us to see the glory of God in salvation accomplished for us by Christ. He causes us to submit to Christ as our righteousness.

(Gen. 32:26) - The Lord had touched Jacob and then expressed His desire to leave. But Jacob held on, crying for the Lord's blessing and power - *"I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."* What is the lesson for us here? Do we suppose that the Lord would be so cruel as to wound Jacob (wound us spiritually) only to leave us in that awful state? The Lord never brings His children in conviction to see their sinfulness and hopelessness in themselves only to leave them in the agony of sin and unbelief. It is His glory to show them His greatness, power, and grace to save them from their sins and bring them to faith in Christ. Jacob had had an unusual revelation. He had wrestled with the Lord and had been wounded. But the battle was not over for Jacob until he would be assured of the Lord's permanent blessing upon him and His peace within him. This was life or death for Jacob - a battle that would not be fought again. He had heard promises of God's blessings. Now he wanted them in truth from

the assurance of God's Word. He was still Jacob, his past clouded with sin. He was a wanderer in a strange country and must still face Esau, his angry brother. He knew he was no better off for this experience unless the Lord gave him HIS approval, acceptance, and comforting presence.

(Gen. 32:27-28) - The Lord asking Jacob, *"What is thy name?"* is the equivalent of confronting him with his sinfulness and depravity. In our own conversions, God the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we confess our name as fallen, depraved sinners (Jacobs). Like Jacob, by nature we all have tried to lay claim to God's blessings by self-righteous works and self-deception. In conversion we are brought by God to see the reality of our dead works in light of the reality of God's grace in Christ (*Php. 3:7-9*). In conversion we desire the Lord's true blessings of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life that can only be found by God's free, sovereign grace in Christ, by virtue of the merits of His righteousness imputed alone (*John 16:8-11*). The Lord changed his name from *"Jacob"* to *"Israel"* which means *"prevailing with God."* This victory and position is not one achieved by human merit, works, or will, but only by God's grace in Christ (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 8:14-16; 9:15-16; Eph. 1:3-7*).

(Gen. 32:29) - Jacob then asked, *"Tell me, I pray Thee, THY name."* Jacob has been brought by God truly to seek the glory of the Lord. The Lord replied, *"Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?"*. We can only speculate, but God had already revealed to Jacob what He wanted Jacob to know of Him. God reveals His redemptive glory equally to all His children in the Gospel (*Jer. 31:34; John 6:44-45; 17:3; Heb. 8:11*). He brings us to know Christ as our righteousness (*Rom. 10:1-4*). From this knowledge we grow as God is pleased to reveal more of Himself. In the Old Testament, God revealed only that which was necessary for the salvation of His people, but there were many things yet to be revealed and only revealed to us in the New Testament (*Matt. 13:16-17; Eph. 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:10-12*). One thing was certain - Jacob would not be carried beyond the bounds of faith prescribed for the age in which he lived, and that faith looked forward to the coming of Christ to fulfill all righteousness for His people (*John 8:56*). We believe God as He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us, and true faith demands nothing more.

(Gen. 32:30) - *"Peniel"* which means *"the face of God"* - *"for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."* When Moses asked the Lord, *"Show me Thy glory,"* the Lord answered, *"I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy"* (*Exod. 33:19*). But then the Lord told Moses, *"Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live"* (*Exod. 33:20*). But Moses wrote earlier in *Exodus 33:11* that while he was in the Tabernacle *"the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend."* The Apostle John wrote that *"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"* (*John 1:18*). Are all these verses showing a contradiction? NO! The point being made in all these verses is simply that sinners cannot see the glory of God or approach God and live apart from the revelation that God gives to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ - *"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (*2 Cor. 4:6*). This is what Jacob, by the grace of God, saw when he saw the face of God. God's face is that which identifies and distinguishes Him as the one living and true God, the God of all grace, the God Who justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of His Son freely imputed and received by God-given faith. This is the only way any sinner can see and approach God and live. To approach God without Christ is certain death.

Joseph was the first son born to Jacob by Rachel who had been barren up to this point (*Gen. 30:22-24*). Rachel name him “*Joseph*” which means “God shall add.” She believed God would give her other children. By this time Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers who resented Jacob's love for Joseph (*Gen. 37:3-4*) and the dreams Joseph had where God revealed that they would bow to and serve Joseph (*Gen. 37: 5-8*). In God's providence, Joseph wound up in prison in Egypt, where he met Pharaoh's chief butler and interpreted his dream. Later, when Pharaoh had a dream which no one could interpret (*41:1-8*), the butler remembered Joseph (*Gen. 41:9-13*). Pharaoh called on Joseph to interpret his dream (*Gen. 41:14-27*). God revealed to Joseph that there would be seven years of plenty in the land followed by seven years of famine (*Gen. 41:28-32*). God had also revealed the solution. Pharaoh should appoint a man, “*discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt*” (*Gen. 41:33-38*). Pharaoh appointed Joseph to be the ruler over Egypt, second only to himself (*Gen. 41:39-45*). Joseph began storing up provisions during the seven years of plenty (*Gen. 41:46-49*), so that the people could survive the seven years of famine (*Gen. 41:53-57*). There are so many lessons to be learned from this story:

(1) The sovereign providence and divine purpose of God in the life of Joseph, bringing him from a Hebrew shepherd boy to the throne of Egypt. God ruled and overruled all events, all creatures, and all their actions to accomplish His will and purpose toward Joseph (*Gen. 45:5; Gen. 50:20*), and, ultimately to fulfill His promise and accomplish His purpose to save His chosen people from their sins in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Isa. 46:9-11; Acts 4:26-28; John 6:37-39*).

(2) The sovereignty of God not only over men, but over the weather, crops, heathen nations, and even over men's dreams. God rules, controls, and steers the course of the world and all human beings upon it for His glory and the good of His people (*Rom. 8:28*). This is a mind-boggling truth that causes much angst and unbelief among the heathen, but it is a comfort and joy for the people of God.

(3) The faithfulness, power, and grace of God in keeping His servant, Joseph, faithful in the midst of the greatest trials and adversity, and in the worst environments in which any person could be. Joseph walked with God and maintained a strong testimony to truth and grace. Even in a heathen nation, Joseph glorified God and God blessed him. We know this was not because of any goodness or power in Joseph. He, like us, was a sinner saved by grace through the righteousness of the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, Joseph's story is a testimony to the preserving grace and power of God, not only to save His people from sin, but also to keep them unto the end (*Jude 24-25*).

Joseph is a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ. This entire story is given and revealed to praise, exalt, and reveal our Lord Jesus Christ in His redemptive work (*Luke 24:27, 44-45*). During the seven years of famine, Joseph supervised the crops and filled the storehouses of Egypt. When the famine was over the land, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold unto all who had need (*Gen. 41:56*).

(Gen. 41:33) - Joseph was the only fit man - “*discreet and wise*” - to accomplish the task at hand. “*Discreet*” has to do with knowledge, intelligence, and understanding, mainly in discernment - knowing the right thing to do to bring about a good result. “*Wise*” has to do with cunning and skillfulness to use knowledge in the right way. Joseph prophesied of the famine. No one else knew about it. Joseph planned the crops and the storehouses (*41:35-36*). Joseph gathered the corn and stored it up (*41:49*). What a great picture of our Lord and Savior! He is the only fit and qualified Person to save us from our sins. He is God manifest in the flesh (*Matt.*

1:21,23). He foreknew the fall and famine of human nature in sin and death (*Rom. 5:12,19*). He purposed and planned the everlasting covenant of mercy whereby a people would be saved from Adam's race (*Heb. 13:20-21*). He came to earth in the likeness of human flesh and obeyed unto death, even the death of the cross, in order that His people might have a perfect righteousness before God's law and stand justified in God's sight. He filled the storehouse of salvation with grace and mercy for all He would bring to eat. He is the only one who has the capacity to contain all the fulness of God, the only one who has the wisdom to distribute the fulness of God, and the only one who has the eternal fulness in Himself to continue to be our fulness and keep us throughout eternity in His grace and fulness (*John 1:14-16; Col. 2:9-10; 2 Tim. 1:12; Phil. 3:20-21*).

(Gen. 41:39-45,55) - Joseph opened the storehouses by royal authority. Pharaoh gave all things (all authority and all the food) into the hands of Joseph (*41:41, 44-45*). When people came to Pharaoh, he sent them to Joseph. By God's royal decree and design, all things pertaining to life, salvation, mercy, and heaven have been given into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 3:35-36; John 17:2-3; Eph. 1:3-4; Col. 1:14-19; Col. 2:9-10*). Before the foundation of the world, God the Father appointed His Son to be the Surety of His chosen people. Their whole salvation was (and is) conditioned on Christ and not on themselves. Like Joseph, Christ willingly agreed to do what was (and is) necessary to save His people from their sins. As our Surety, He came to this world and united with human flesh (body and soul) without sin. He was "*made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*" (*Gal. 4:4*). He became our Substitute to die in our place and establish a perfect righteousness whereby God could justify us and from which He gives us the abundance of eternal life and glory. Pharaoh gave Joseph and Egyptian name - "*Zaphnathpaaneah*" - which means "one to whom hidden things are revealed." All the treasures of God's wisdom are hidden in and revealed to us by Christ (*Col. 2:2-3*).

(Gen. 41:56-57) - Joseph opened the storehouses! Joseph filled the storehouses in order that the people might eat and live. This is why Christ became our Surety, Substitute, sin-bearer and sin-offering. It is that sinners might feed upon Him, the Bread of life, and be saved (*John 6:32-35,47-51*). Joseph had plenty and was delighted to distribute it. Our Lord is plenteous in and delights to show mercy. His chief glory is His goodness (*Exo. 33:18-19*). He says, "*Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come to the waters*" (*Isa. 55:1; John 7:37-38*). Joseph opened the storehouses when the people cried for bread. Christ opens the storehouse of spiritual food when He brings us to see our need of Him and His righteousness (*Matt. 5:6; Rom. 10:13; Gal. 1:15*). Joseph opened all the storehouses, "*and sold unto the Egyptians*" (*41:56*). Salvation by God's grace is not for sale. If it were, we would be lost forever, for we are spiritually bankrupt. But there is a redemption price which Christ paid for us by His blood. Therefore, the Gospel call is, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*" (*Isa. 55:1*).

Joseph opened the storehouses to all who came for food from all nations (*41:57*). Christ opens the storehouses of God's grace to Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free - "*Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*" (*Rev. 22:17*). He said, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (*Matt. 11:28*). And just as Joseph was able to give all the food needed to all who came to him, Christ is "*able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by Him*" (*Heb. 7:25*). Christ is the only Storehouse of God's grace (*1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:19*). Christ saves all who come to Him seeking salvation God's way (*John 6:37*). A truly seeking sinner is never turned away because that seeking sinner is the work of God's power and grace (*Eph. 2:8-10*).

(Gen. 41:57) - There was a famine not only over Egypt but all lands and all people. This pictures our natural spiritual condition - a famine of sin and spiritual death which is over all of Adam's race, even the elect of God (*Rom. 5:12; 3:23*). This is why God's elect have to be reconciled to God by the death of Christ whereby He established the righteousness that God has imputed to us. By nature, we are alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works (*Col. 1:21*), but we are reconciled to God through the death of Christ from Whom we gain spiritual life and the fruitfulness of life in Christ. The salvation of God's elect is illustrated in these verses by Joseph's dealings with his brethren, the natural sons of Jacob. God says, "*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed*" (*Mal. 3:6*). This refers, not to the natural sons of Jacob, but to the elect of God in Christ. Christ identified the elect as His brethren (*Matt. 12:46-50; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:9-18*). All for whom Christ died, all whom He brings to believe in Him and to walk by and in the grace of God, are His spiritual family.

(Gen. 42:1-2) - Jacob heard good news and called his sons together to tell them. "*There is corn in Egypt*" - We can liken this to the good news of the Gospel preached to weary, hungry, and dying sinners. We do not have to continue in spiritual poverty, hunger, and death. There is life, mercy, and grace in Christ Jesus. Christ is "*the bread of life*" (*John 6:48-50*). "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*" (*Matt. 5:6*). We can be sure the bread of life and the water of life in Christ is true because we have the sure word of God (*1 John 5:9-11*). We know that God is always faithful to fulfill His promise of salvation with all of its spiritual blessings and benefits to all who come to Him begging for mercy in Christ (*John 6:37*). We know that God is powerful enough to fulfill His promise of spiritual life and food in Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20*). We know that our Lord's grace is sufficient to save to the uttermost ALL who come to God by Him (*Isa. 1:18; 1 John 1:7-9; Matt. 11:28*). Jacob sent money to Egypt to buy corn, but God's grace is free to all who come to Christ (*Isa. 55:1-3*).

Jacob asked his sons, "*Why do ye look one upon another?*" i.e. "Why do you hesitate? Get down to Egypt and buy food that we may live and not die!" This is the urgent command of the Gospel. We are sinners who have no life or righteousness in ourselves. If we remain where we are in our sins, we will perish. There is life in Christ Who of God is made unto us "*Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption*" (*1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10*). Come to Christ and believe on Him (*Isa. 45:20-25; John 5:39-40*).

(Gen. 42:4) - Jacob sent all of his sons to Egypt except Benjamin, being the youngest and special to Jacob as he was the only son Jacob had left of his wife Rachel. Jacob named him "*Benjamin*," meaning "the son of my right hand" (*Gen. 35:18-19*). From here we read of Joseph dealing with his brothers who had hated him without a cause, sold him into slavery, and dealt so harshly and cruelly with him. Their sin must be revealed to them, and they must be brought to confess their guilt (*Gen. 42:21-23*). These proud brethren must be humble before Joseph, bow down, and beg for mercy (*Gen. 44:14*). There must be evidence of genuine repentance (*Gen. 44:33-34*). This is a great picture of God's dealing with all whom He saves by His grace freely through the Lord Jesus Christ. He reveals our sin and depravity to us, showing us that we have no righteousness and nothing to earn or deserve God's favor (*Rom. 3:10-20*). This causes us to confess our sins before Him. He shows us our need of His grace in Christ and His righteousness for all salvation and brings us to beg for His mercy in Christ (*Rom. 3:21-26*).

(Gen. 42:6) - Joseph's brethren bowed to him according to the dream he had of them earlier (*Gen. 37:5-8*). Joseph's dream was given to him by God to show how he would be their savior to whom they would bow. This is a great picture of Christ to Whom all His people bow as their Savior from sin.

(Gen. 42:7-8) - Notice that Joseph knew His brethren, but they did not know him. This is the way it is with God's chosen people. Because of our fall in Adam and natural birth in sin and death, we do not know or recognize the Lord Who chose us and gave us to Christ. Our knowledge of Him is a gift of His grace that comes to us in the power of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel wherein He reveals Himself to us. We find out, then, that He knew us in His covenant purpose and grace all along. Our names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the world began (*2 Tim. 1:9; Rev. 13:8; 21:27*).

(Gen. 42:9–43:14) - Joseph devised a plan to save his family and bring them to himself. In 42:25 Joseph gave them corn AND restored their money. This shows the grace of God in salvation as an abundance of what we need (*Rom. 5:20*), AND it is free to sinners in need. Joseph's plan involved bringing Benjamin to him, but Jacob refused. In 43:8-9 Judah convinced Jacob to send Benjamin to Egypt with them. Judah was willing to stand surety for Benjamin. This is a picture showing the great truth of the suretyship of Christ for God's chosen people. This is one of the most foundational of all Gospel truths. A surety is one who stands responsible for the safety and well-being of another. The surety agrees to fulfill whatever conditions are required to insure the safety and well-being of the ones for whom he stands. Before the world began, the Lord God devised a plan to accomplish His goal of saving His family and bringing them to Himself (*Eph. 1:1-13*). In the everlasting covenant of grace, God the Father appointed His Son to be Surety for His chosen people. The Son agreed to be their Surety and to do for them what was required to save them and bring them to eternal glory. This required Christ to pay their sin-debt to the justice of God by His death. Their sins were imputed to Him, and His righteousness is imputed to them. This required Him to be their Substitute and to fulfill the righteousness of the law by His obedience unto death in their place. He had to become incarnate to dwell in sinless human flesh to redeem them from their sins (*Gal. 4:4-6*). The assurance of our whole salvation was (and is) in Christ, our Surety.

(Gen. 43:15–44:34) - This is the account of Joseph meeting his brothers the second time, and Benjamin was with them. Joseph sent his servant to fetch them. They were afraid, but the servant spoke peace to them (*43:23-24*). We can liken the servant to a Gospel preacher preaching the good news of salvation to sinners who deserve nothing but God's wrath. Peace between God and sinners comes by the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*). In *chapter 44* we read of Joseph's scheme to bring his whole family to Egypt by placing his silver cup in Benjamin's sack, accusing him of stealing, and insisting that Benjamin be held. This is where Judah speaks up as surety for Benjamin (*44:32-34*). As our eternal Intercessor, Christ speaks for us as our Surety (*1 John 2:1-2*), therefore, our sins cannot be imputed to us and we cannot be condemned (*Rom. 8:33-34*).

(Gen. 45:1-5) - Joseph revealed himself to his brethren and spoke peace to them. Christ will in due time reveal Himself to His brethren (God's elect, chosen before the foundation of the world and given to Christ) (*Heb. 2:9-17*). The Lord seeks them out and brings them to seek Him sincerely in His Word of truth, the Gospel wherein He is revealed as "*the righteousness of God*" (*Rom. 1:16-17*). They are made by God to be sincere seekers of salvation by God's grace in Christ, and the Lord speaks peace to their hearts (*Psalms 85:7-13; John 6:37-45*).

(Gen. 48:1-2) - Jacob is now about 147 years old and on his deathbed. He is very sick and his eyesight is very dim. After hearing of his father's condition, Joseph, along with his two sons, came to Jacob. When Jacob is mentioned in *Hebrews 11* in the hall of faith, this is the incident used to speak of that God-given faith expressed here -- *Hebrews 11 - (21) By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.* Jacob's words and actions are guided by God's promise and God's sovereign providence.

(Gen. 48:3-4) - Jacob speaks his past at Bethel when he dreamed of a ladder which typified the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way for sinners to come to God. This is the significance of all history for God's people (*Isa. 46:9-13*). Notice how all these promises are based on God's sovereign will, purpose, and power, not Jacob's - "*I WILL make thee.*" In spite of all his failings, the Lord preserved Jacob through it all. Our covenant-keeping God has preserved us unto Himself. Now, Jacob is recounting the covenant promises and mercies of God in Christ that were given to his grandfather, Abraham, his father, Isaac, and to himself and his people - the people of Israel.

(Gen. 48:5-6) - Jacob now says to Joseph, "Your two sons are mine." This is more than saying, "They are my grandchildren." This is a legal act of ADOPTION indicated by, "They are mine 'AS REUBEN AND SIMEON' (Jacob's eldest sons) are mine." He is declaring Manasseh and Ephraim to be his sons by adoption. Why would he adopt them, and why would Joseph not refuse? First, it was the Lord's will that Joseph be given the double blessing of the first-born through his two sons. Reuben had forfeited this position because of his adultery (*Gen. 35:21-22; 1 Chron. 5:1-2*). Joseph was the first-born of Jacob with Rachel. Secondly, Joseph's sons were Gentiles as they were born of an Egyptian mother in Egypt. They were not citizens of Israel. How, then, could Joseph have a posterity in the nation of his father, Jacob? It was only by Jacob adopting Joseph's children. Jacob adopted them as his own for Joseph's sake. This is a picture of our adoption and salvation by God's grace in Christ. By nature, we are strangers and foreigners to the commonwealth of SPIRITUAL Israel. But we have been legally adopted into God's eternal family for Christ's sake, i.e. based on HIS righteousness imputed to us. Thirdly, it was the Lord's intention that one of Joseph's sons would receive the blessing of the firstborn from Jacob, all according to the sovereignty of God Who blesses and saves whom He will according to His sovereign grace and mercy in Christ. Jacob knew well the God of sovereign mercy and grace (*Rom. 9:10-16*).

This is how the two boys were legally introduced into the inheritance of Joseph. Joseph is the rightful heir of Jacob, so they are introduced into the heirship of someone who is living and is the heir. Now that is the precise way in which we are introduced into the heirship of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says that we are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:14-17*). He is the heir, and we share his heirship. As children of God, we share in all of Christ's rights and privileges. The adoption and blessings of heirship were given to the sons of Joseph because of Joseph who was the savior of his family (*Gen. 45:5,7; 50:20*). The blessings of heirship are given to us because of Christ Who is the Savior of His family.

This is biblical adoption, and this is also imputation. These two sons are reckoned, from this time on, to be the sons of Jacob. Now they are not physically the sons of Jacob. They are the sons of Joseph. But they are reckoned by God to be the sons of Jacob. That is precisely what happens when we who are sinners are, as children of God, reckoned righteous by virtue of the merits of Christ. Some call this a "legal fiction," but it is not fiction, and those who call it such do not understand the biblical truth of imputation. They also do not

understand the Gospel doctrine of justification before God. Jacob adopts Manasseh and Ephraim as his own sons, and they are to be accounted, not only as Jacob's grandsons, but also as his sons. Joseph does not object because he too knows that this is all according to the providence and promise of God.

There is an important lesson here for those who do not think it is possible for God to look at a person and reckon him righteous even though that person is unrighteous in himself. There are some who believe that God would be unjust to reckon or account a person righteous by virtue of the merits of another person unless God first makes that person righteous within. They call it "legal fiction." They say that God would be unjust to look at an individual and reckon to him the benefits of the merit of someone else when he is a sinner in himself. But the Bible makes a great deal of this fact, and it is the heart of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. The Bible says that by virtue of the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are justified, but the Bible also goes on to say that we are still sinners and sinful within ourselves. Christ has come as the representative man, and He has died bearing the punishment of our sins and that justly so based on our sins reckoned (imputed) to Him. And by virtue of God's grace, God reckons to those who are His people the legal benefits of the death of Christ. They stand righteous in the righteousness of the Son of God - accepted in the Beloved. Consider also that not only did Jacob legally adopt the two boys as his sons, and not only were they to be reckoned as his sons, he also gave them the blessing of Joseph. So, in the same way, not only did God legally adopt His elect as His sons, and not only are they reckoned (imputed) to be righteous in His sight based on Christ's righteousness imputed to them, they also receive the blessings of all grace here and all glory hereafter (*Eph. 1:3*).

What a blessing it is! When God looks down from heaven on His children, He does not see them condemned in their sins, though they are sinners. He sees them clothed with the righteousness of God in Christ. They have been made joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. They possess the righteousness of God because they have identified with him. In their Surety and Substitute, they have already borne the judgment for all their sins. And because they have borne the judgment for sin in their Surety and Substitute, the law can bring no charge against them (*Rom. 8:33*). Christ died for them (*Rom. 8:34*). The penalty has been paid in full (*Heb. 10:14*). This is why we rejoice and glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has borne all of our judgment, and, therefore, the Lord brings no charge against the people who are united with Christ. All who have been blessed with God-given faith stand before God in Christ. We have been legally adopted into His family and legally reckoned righteous in Him. We are justified in Christ. To justify means to declare righteous individuals who are not righteous in themselves, but stand in righteousness because someone has borne their judgment. Call it "legal fiction" if you will, but the Bible does not. The Bible calls it a reality. We do possess the righteousness of God in Christ. It is not legal fiction. As a matter of fact, the Bible is full of this truth, and we have it again right here in the adoption of Joseph's sons. This reality is what insured that Manasseh and Ephraim would receive all the blessings of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This reality for the spiritual children of God is what insures that they all receive all the blessings that come to them through Christ - even spiritual life.

(Gen. 48:7) - "*The same is Bethlehem*"—Whether these last words are the words of Jacob or Moses, we need to realize this is the Word of God. This focuses our attention of how all of this is connected with God's promise of salvation for His chosen people by sending His Son into the world for our salvation. "*Ephrath*" is the same as "*Bethlehem*" where our Savior was born (*Micah 5:2*). So this is all stated with a view to the Messiah, the famous seed of Jacob that should be born there, and was.

Lesson 18 - JACOB BLESSING JOSEPH'S SONS *Genesis 48:8-22*

(Gen. 48:8-9) - As Jacob had adopted Joseph's sons, he now proceeds to bestow the blessing upon them. We can see the spiritual parallel here in God the Father adopting His people into His family when He chose us before the foundation of the world in Christ and for Christ's sake. First, there was a legal adoption based upon a righteous ground - the imputed righteousness of Christ. And just as these boys were now reckoned to be Jacob's sons, it was necessary that they now receive the blessing. As sinners saved by grace, we are reckoned by God to be His children in Christ, and legally justified in His sight based on the redemptive work of Christ. It is necessary that we receive the blessings of adoption (*Gal. 4:4-6*). We must be personally brought into God's family through God-given faith.

(Gen. 48:10-14) - Notice how Joseph arranged the two boys so that Ephraim would be on Jacob's left and Manasseh on Jacob's right. He had in mind what all of Abraham's children would think - that Manasseh being the eldest would receive the blessing of the firstborn. But by God's sovereign purpose and providence, Jacob "*wittingly*" (knowingly, with understanding) crossed his hands. He laid his right hand (intended for the firstborn's blessing) upon the head of Ephraim and his left hand upon the head of Manasseh. This was no accident. Again, it was God's sovereign purpose and providence.

In bestowing this blessing, we see another great example of God's sovereign will, mercy, and grace. Manasseh was the firstborn, but, as with Jacob and Esau, God had determined that the elder, Manasseh, would serve the younger, Ephraim. The reason for this is explained in *Romans 9:13-16*. God did this to show His glory in saving whom He will according to His sovereign will and His sovereign mercy and grace in Christ. This shows us that salvation is never conditioned on sinners but on Christ and Him alone. It is not of our willingness or our goodness because by nature we are not willing to submit to God's way of salvation, and we have no goodness to recommend us unto God (*Rom. 3:10-20*).

(Gen. 48:15-16) - Notice that Jacob first pronounced blessing on Joseph. It was through Joseph, and because of Joseph, that the two boys would be brought into Jacob's family and receive blessings from Jacob. This is a picture of every sinner who is saved by God's grace being brought into God's family and receiving all spiritual and eternal blessings from God through Christ and because of Christ (*Eph. 1:3*). In blessing Joseph, Jacob attributes all glory, power, goodness, and righteousness to God alone. He is the God "*fed me all my life long unto this day.*" The word "*fed*" is the verb form of a Hebrew word that is sometimes translated "shepherd" as in *Psalms 23:1*. God saves, feeds, and preserves His people by His power, goodness, and grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the good, great, and chief shepherd of His people (His sheep). He died for them, He saves them, and He preserves them unto glory. Christ is the "*Angel which redeemed me from all evil.*" Our whole salvation stands firm and sure upon the blood of Jesus Christ. This is the merits of His redemptive work as our Surety and Substitute. It is His blood alone that cleanses us from all sin and evil. It is His righteousness imputed alone that justifies us and from which we have spiritual and eternal life, including all graces and gifts of the Spirit.

Jacob gave the boys his own name as well as the name of Abraham and Isaac. The adoption made them legally and truly members of his family. When God brings us to faith in Christ, we give evidence that we are identified legally and spiritually with the spiritual family of God. We are spiritually "*sons of Jacob*" (*Mal. 3:6*), the spiritual seed of Abraham (*Gal. 3:26-29*), and citizens of spiritual Israel, the family of God in Christ (*Rom. 9:6-8*). We who are sinners saved by grace have Jacob as our name as well as Israel, and we bear the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*).

In light of this, compare what Jacob stated here to what he stated before Pharaoh in *Genesis 47:9*. Notice the difference. In *Genesis 47:9* Jacob speaks of himself and his failures. It is all about Jacob. But here Jacob speaks only of God and His power and mercy towards Jacob. In *Genesis 47:9*

Jacob describes his pilgrimage on earth as “few and evil.” Like Job stated, “*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*” (*Job 14:1*). Viewing life from the human point of view, we can see all of our sins and our failures. But viewing life from God’s point of view, it is all about Christ, our Surety, our Substitute, our Redeemer, our Intercessor, and our Keeper. This is why we are commanded to walk by faith, “*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:2; cf. 2:9-18; John 16:33*). Our assurance, comfort, and peace does not come from looking within ourselves or from looking at our circumstances. It all comes from looking to Christ and resting in Him.

(Gen. 48:17-20) - As stated above, this is all the sovereign providence of God to show His sovereign glory and majesty to work HIS will in spite of what people naturally think. The right hand was that hand of blessing normally placed upon the firstborn, but here Jacob places his right hand on Ephraim. He blessed Manasseh, and Manasseh would benefit greatly in this, but the blessing of the firstborn went to Ephraim. Not only do we recognize the greatness and glory of God’s sovereign will and grace in these blessings, we see also a very important spiritual lesson here in the names of these two boys. “Ephraim” means “caused to be fruitful” (*Gen. 41:52*), and “Manasseh” means “caused me to forget” (*Gen. 41:51*). Ephraim points to the future of the fruit of God’s grace which would be brought in through Christ. These are the fruits of being justified by God’s grace in Christ. It is all the fruits of salvation - spiritual life and faith in Christ. Manasseh points to the past which is the repentance of dead works and idolatry. God says that because of Christ, “*their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*” (*Heb. 10:17*). This means that because of the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to us, and which we receive by God-given faith (*Rom. 10:9-10*), He will not charge us with our sins (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33*). God will keep no record of our sins because they have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

(Gen. 48:21) - This shows us the nature of the blessing Jacob bestowed upon Joseph through his two sons. It was connected with the promise God had made to Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, of giving his descendants the land of promise and keeping them in that land until the promised Messiah would come to redeem His people - God’s elect out of every nation (*Gen. 17:1-9; cf. 12:1-3*). This was the land of Canaan, where their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had dwelt, and which was given to them and theirs for an inheritance. It was where Joseph and his brethren had lived, and they would be brought there again as the bones of Joseph were, and as all of them in their posterity were in Joshua’s time. This is connected with the blessing of the firstborn as the one who received this blessing was given the responsibility of being the spiritual leader of the whole family. It was his responsibility to teach and to guide his family in recognizing and embracing the promises God made to Abraham, especially concerning the coming of the Messiah and the redemption of God’s people He would accomplish. For example, Esau despising his birthright (*Gen. 25:34*) meant that he had no interest or faith in the spiritual promises of God concerning Christ and salvation by God’s grace based on His righteousness.

(Gen. 48:22) - By giving Joseph this portion above his brethren, Jacob emphasized that the birthright has truly become Joseph’s and his two son’s through him. This is where Joseph’s bones were buried upon their return to the promised land (*Joshua 24:32*). This was a God-given token of His faithfulness to keep His promises, especially His promise of the salvation of spiritual Israel by His grace through Christ.

(Gen. 49:8) - Before the written Word was given, God spoke to the fathers in various ways about the coming Messiah and the great work He would accomplish as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people given to Him before the foundation of the world. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all knew this much in the true Gospel message of God's grace, of salvation conditioned on the promised Messiah and the righteousness HE would accomplish for their justification before God. We know this from God's own testimony concerning these men. In this chapter Jacob (Israel) is dying, and he called his twelve sons together for the purpose of prophesying future things relating to the twelve tribes which descended from him and from them. He had a word for all of them, but he had a special word for Judah.

The name "*Judah*" means "praise." His mother, Leah, gave him that name when he was born and said, "*Now will I praise the Lord*" (Gen. 29:35). The name "*Jew*," which came to be the name by which the Israelites were known as recorded in the book of Esther, is a shortened form of Judah. The physical Jews as a nation typified the spiritual nation of Israel, and Paul wrote of SPIRITUAL Jews (sinners saved by grace in Christ and who had been given spiritual life from Him) (Rom. 2:28-29). Here, Jacob reveals that Judah is one whom his brothers "*shall praise*" and that Judah's "*hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.*" The temporal fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the physical line of Judah whom God determined would be the kings of Israel until the Messiah, the King of kings, would come according to the flesh. As we know, according to God's sovereign wisdom and providence, later, Saul became the first king of Israel. He was not from the tribe of Judah but of Benjamin. He was popular among the people, and God gave Saul to be their king as a judgment against them for forsaking Him and desiring to be like other nations instead of remaining separate and a testimony to God as their King (1 Sam. 8:5, 19-20; 10:19). Saul was a failure, and, again, by God's sovereign wisdom and providence, David, from the tribe of Judah, was made king over Israel. It was from Judah's line, through David, that the Messiah would come into the world according to the flesh (Rom. 1:1-4).

The spiritual and eternal fulfillment of this prophecy was in and by the Lord Jesus Christ Who is both David's Son according to the flesh and David's God according to the nature of His Deity (Matt. 1:21, 23; 22:41-46). He is the one and only Lord God and Savior of sinners and is worthy to be praised. He has defeated all His enemies - sin, Satan, and the world (Heb. 1:13) - by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of all His Father's children. The Lord Jesus Christ met Satan and defeated Him (John 12:31-33; Rev. 12). He took the sins of His people, which were imputed to Him, to the cross and paid their debt in full by His own suffering unto death (Heb. 1:3; 10:10-14). He faced death and conquered it because of His righteousness established on the cross by which He was raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:55-58). He will conquer the sinful flesh of all His people by giving them life and bringing them to Himself in God-given faith and repentance. In the end, even His enemies will bow to Him (Php. 2:9-11). He is Lord by His deity, by the Father's design and decree, and He is Lord by His death and resurrection (Rom. 14:9; 10:9-10).

(Gen. 49:9) - Christ is compared to a young lion because of His strength, power, and courage. In order to be the Savior of sinners, Christ had to meet three qualifications - (1) He had to be appointed by God the Father (Eph. 1:3-11; Heb. 5:5); (2) He had to be willing to do what was required (John 10:11-13); and (3) He had to be able to do what was required - pay the sin-debt by His death and establish perfect righteousness by which God justifies the ungodly (Heb. 7:25). Christ is called "*the lion of the tribe of Judah*" (Rev. 5:5), because He is appointed, willing, and able. "*From the prey, my son, thou art gone up*" - He left heaven and

came to this earth to engage the enemy and redeem a people by His mighty arm. He has accomplished that work (*John 19:30; Rom. 10:4*) and ascended to the right hand of majesty. “*He stooped down*” - He condescended and made Himself of no reputation, took on Himself the form of a servant. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (*Php. 2:7-8*).

“*He couched as a lion, and as an old lion, who shall rouse Him up?*” - He stooped, He conquered, He arose, He ascended, He sat down, having accomplished His pleasure and work. Who shall disturb Him? Who shall even question Him? Who shall interfere or stand against Him? Like an old lion who has killed and devoured his prey, who shall rouse Him? Nothing can hinder or stop the progress of His kingdom in the full salvation of His people who were given to Him by God before the world began.

(Gen. 49:10) - “*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come*” - The “sceptre” speaks of a kingdom. “*Shiloh*” speaks of Christ. This is the word to Judah and his descendants, first, physically as they shall occupy the earthly throne of Israel (and later, Judah the nation). But the earthly kingdom of Judah will not last. The “sceptre” will only last until “*Shiloh*” comes. This speaks of Christ, the Messiah, the Prince and the King of peace! In His holy humanity, He will come through the tribe of Judah, the family of Jesse (*Isa. 11:1*), and the house of David (*Isa. 9:6-7; Rom. 1:1-4*). The name “*Shiloh*” can have many connotations, all which can refer to Christ -

(1) Shiloh can mean *sent* (*John 9:7*). Some point out the likeness between Siloam and Shiloh. Christ is truly the one sent by the Father to save His people (*John 13:20; 17:19; Gal. 4:4-6*).

(2) Some say that Shiloh can mean *the son* (*Isa. 9:6-7*). He is the true Son of God, the Son of David, and the Son of man.

(3) Shiloh can mean “*the one to whom it belongs*” (*Ezek. 21:25-27*). The “sceptre,” the crown, the throne, and the right to be worshipped belong to Him. All others are imposters (*Col. 1:14-18*).

(4) It is more likely that Shiloh means *peace*. It is said that the word comes from the same word as “*Salem, King of Peace*.” The Lord Jesus is our peace (*Rom. 5:1*). He made peace between God and sinners by the blood of His cross (*Col. 1:19-22*).

As stated, the “sceptre” refers to His kingdom and His righteous rule over that kingdom. His sceptre is a “*sceptre of righteousness*” (*Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8*). By His death on the cross as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people “*mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*” (*Psa. 85:10*). God is just (righteous) to justify His chosen people (sinners) based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them and received by God-given faith. Their sins are all forgiven by the blood of Christ. They stand before God without any charges of sin because Christ is the Lord their Righteousness (*Jer. 23:5-7; 33:15-16*). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

“*TO HIM shall the gathering of the people be*” - The object of His covenant, His coming to earth, His cross, and His resurrection was to redeem a people and gather them to Himself forever. They shall come! In God-given repentance, faith, and love, they shall come to HIM for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, peace, eternal life, and glory (*John 6:37-39; John 10:14-16; John 17:1-10*). Based on His righteousness imputed to them, He will give them spiritual life (new hearts, new spirits) in the new birth. He will give them faith to believe in Him and bring them to repentance of dead works and idolatry. He will preserve them unto the end and cause them to persevere in the faith (*Php. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25*). He will gather them unto Himself as a mother hen gathers her chicks, and He will not let them go.

(Gen. 50:15) - Even though Joseph had already spoken kindly to his brothers who had treated him so wickedly, they imagined his kindness was only for their father's sake. Because of their own guilty consciences, they reasoned that when Jacob died, Joseph would exact revenge upon them. This is the nature of the natural, sinful, and legal consciences of all people by nature. In some areas of life, we know we have greatly sinned, and we know we deserve punishment. And this is what stirs us up in our natural consciences to seek legal repentance and try to make restitution for the wrongs we have done. There is nothing wrong with this attitude when we have hurt or wronged our fellow man, but when it comes to setting things right with God, our very efforts in legal repentance and trying to make restitution for our sins by our works are sinful and wicked. Such efforts deny the glory of God Whose glory shines forth in the salvation of sinners by His grace based on the finished work of Christ. Such efforts deny the finished work of Christ by Whose righteousness sinners are justified. Such efforts exalt sinners and give them room to boast in self-righteousness and self-sufficiency.

(Gen. 50:16-18) - There is no record of Jacob telling this to his sons, so this is probably a lie to help them cover themselves from Joseph's just wrath. This too is the way of man in seeking salvation his own way rather than God's way. Man's way is a lie and, therefore, a way of death (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25*). God's way is truth, and, therefore, the only way of life; for Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (*John 14:6*). When Joseph heard the message from his brothers, he wept with tears of joy over being reunited with his family. Again, as prophesied years before this in Joseph's dream, his brothers came to him and "*fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we be thy servants*" (*cf. Gen. 37:5-8*).

(Gen. 50:19) - If there is any doubt that God has predestined and is in complete control of all the events that transpire on this earth, these verses should remove it. God is in control. He is not some cosmic chess player making counter moves against our moves or a janitor coming behind us cleaning up our sins and mistakes. He is not a crystal ball gazer who simply sees into a future He has not determined and cannot control. God is the one true and living God Who declares the end from the beginning and works all things after the counsel of His own will (*Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:11*). God works all things (good and evil) for His glory and the eternal good of His people (*Rom. 8:28*). This is a mind-boggling truth that we cannot fully comprehend in our limited minds, but it is true. Here we learn that God even controls and overrules the sinful actions of sinful people to accomplish His will and purpose.

Joseph had suffered much from the hands of wicked people, but he was always under God's protection and headed toward the goal and the place that God had set for him. There was no luck, chance, or coincidence involved. And even though God is not the author of sin, nor does He tempt any person with evil, He sovereignly overrules and controls the sinful plans and actions of people for His glory. Joseph knew this, and he told them that he was where God had placed him, expressing his God-given faith in, and total dependence upon, God. He trusted God to guide, preserve, and bless him and his family and to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph had been in places he did not want to be, but he knew now that it was God's purpose to accomplish all that God had promised.

Just as God put Joseph and his brothers in Egypt "*to save much people alive*," God has placed all persons where He wants them and has arranged all events to save His elect whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world to the praise of the glory of His grace. God the Father put God the Son in the place of preeminence as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. He sent His Son to this sin-cursed earth, "*made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law*" (*Gal. 4:4-5*). He placed His Son on

the cross to die for our sins and establish righteousness by which He has justified all His people (*Isa. 53:10; Rom. 8:32-34; 1 John 4:10*). He raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His right hand to make intercession for all for whom He died and arose again (*Rom. 8:34*).

This sovereign work of God also includes the actual application of salvation in the new birth to all of His chosen people. He sovereignly, providentially, and powerfully places each one of His elect in the place where He communicates the Gospel message to them in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18; 10:13-17*). For example, God put an Ethiopian treasurer in the desert and sent Philip to preach the Gospel to him (*Acts 8:26-40*). He put Paul in a Roman prison and sent a runaway slave, Onesimus, there to hear the Gospel from Paul (*Philemon*). God does this for all His people as He puts us in our place, the place where He reveals Himself in the glory of His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 4:6*). In this place, He gives us spiritual life, faith to believe in Christ, repentance to turn away from the idols of self and dead works, and He brings us to submit to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness.

(50:20) - After hearing this, could Joseph's brothers now joyfully proclaim, "Hey, we are off the hook. We were just simply doing the will of God." NO! Joseph told them, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me.*" The absolute sovereignty of God gives us no justification for our sin. We must still answer to God. Unbelievers see this as unjust and unfair (*Rom. 9:19*). The answer God gives is like a wise Creator putting those whom He created in their proper place - "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*" (*Rom. 9:20-21*). The reasons that we as creatures, especially as sinful creatures, cannot use God's predestinating sovereign power and will to excuse our sinfulness is two-fold: (1) Because of our limited power. We have no power to arrange and work things so as to overrule evil for good. Only God has that power. (2) Because of our limited wisdom and knowledge (*Deut. 29:29*). Only God is all-wise and all-knowing. We are commanded to trust Him alone and lean not to our own understanding (*Prov. 3:5*). We are commanded to stand in awe and bow to the majesty and greatness of God Who is high above us (*Isa. 55:6-11; Rom. 11:33-36*).

As stated, the whole purpose of God in all of this was "*to save much people alive.*" This refers to the preservation of the Hebrew children, in spite of their impending persecution and enslavement, bring them to the promised land, and keep them there as a nation until the Messiah would come. The ultimate, spiritual, and eternal fulfillment of this is found in the eternal salvation of God's elect (Jew and Gentile) by His free and sovereign grace based on the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the same way that God predetermined and controlled all the events in Joseph's life, He predetermined and controlled all the events in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ (*Acts 2:22-24; 4:26-28; Gal. 4:4-6*). It was God's sovereign determination and purpose to send Christ into the world to suffer at the hands of wicked humanity and to establish by His death a perfect righteousness by which God has justified His people according to the good pleasure of His will (*Matt. 3:15-17; Eph. 1:5,9*).

(Gen. 50:21) - Because of God's purpose fulfilled in and by Joseph, Jacob's sons could be comforted and experience Joseph's kindness and power to preserve them in love. It is because of God's purpose fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ that all true believers can experience and know the kindness, grace, mercy, and power of God to save them from their sins, to provide all righteousness and life, and to bring them to eternal glory.

(Exod. 3:1) - In the Scriptures, Moses is often a type of Christ and always a servant of Christ. In the New Testament, he is often used to represent the Old Covenant Law because it was through Moses that God gave the Law to Israel. But we must always remember two things about Moses: (1) He was a sinner saved by grace, not by works of the Law, but by the finished work of Christ to accomplish righteousness as his Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer; and (2) He was a true believer, born again by the Spirit, and brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life (*John 1:45; Luke 24:27,44-47; John 5:39-47; Rom. 10:4-10*). Through God's providence, Moses was born a Hebrew but came to be raised as a prince in the house of Pharaoh. Here, he is a humble shepherd and a type of Christ, the royal Son of God and Prince of peace Who came to earth to shepherd His people. Christ is our Shepherd to die for our sins, gather us unto Himself, and bring us to glory. In these verses, Moses is drawn to this "*mountain of God*" to meet God in a burning bush. As Moses led his sheep to the "*mountain of God*," Christ leads His sheep to where God dwells as a just God and a Savior. God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. It is in and by Christ on Mount Calvary that God reveals Himself in the glory of His justice and grace as Christ accomplished redemption for His people by His blood to bring forth righteousness by which they are all justified before God.

(Exod. 3:2) - "*The Angel of the LORD*" here is a preincarnate appearance of Christ Himself. The word "*LORD*" is the same word that we have come to pronounce as "Jehovah." This identifies God as the one true God of the covenant, the Son of God, and Who is identified in *Exodus 3:6* as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God Who saves sinners by His grace. God's promises are insured in and by Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20*). So, Christ appeared to Moses "*in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush*." Fire symbolizes God's judgment against sin and God's way of purification from sin - "*For our God is a consuming fire*" (*Heb. 12:29*). This means God is a just God, and He must punish all sin with the consuming fire of His justice unto death - "*For the wages of sin is death*" (*Rom. 6:23a*).

Notice, "*the bush burned with fire, AND THE BUSH WAS NOT CONSUMED*" - This pictures Christ on the cross when, as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, He was truly burned with the fire of God's judgment for our sins imputed to Him and was not consumed! And though He truly died for our sins, in doing so He satisfied the justice of God and brought forth an everlasting righteousness of infinite value by which all of God's people have been justified. Therefore, He was raised from the dead. By His death, He removed the sting of death and conquered the grave (*1 Cor. 15:55-57*).

(Exod. 3:3-6) - Moses's question - Why is the bush not burnt? Here is a miracle that we can liken to the miracle of Christ's resurrection. Though the bush was burning, it was not consumed. Though Christ truly died, why was He not totally consumed? HE STILL LIVES (*Luke 24:1-7*)! This question has often perplexed those who hear the Gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (*ex. Acts 17:18,31-32*). Why is Christ not in the grave? How is this possible, and what does His resurrection mean? It means that all the sins of His people have been purged, that righteousness has been established, and that eternal life will be given to all for whom He died and arose again. Notice God called Moses by name - "*Moses, Moses*." Christ knows His sheep by name because their names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. God has an elect people whom He chose in Christ.

Notice also God revealing Himself to Moses. In order for any sinner to know God, God must reveal Himself. By nature and by his own efforts, man cannot find nor will he seek the true and living God (*Eccl. 3:10-11; Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*). God reveals Himself to His

chosen people as the God of all grace Who saves sinners by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matt. 11:25-27; 2 Cor. 4:6*). God does this when it pleases Him to do so (*Gal. 1:15-16*). Here, He was pleased to reveal Himself to Moses, first, as the one true, holy, and living God - *"Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."* There is none like God and none to be compared with God. He is unique and separate from all else. The putting off of Moses's shoes is an act of God bringing Moses to take his proper place as a servant before God.

Next, God revealed Himself as the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This establishes Him as the God of promise and reaches back to the first promise of His grace in the salvation of His chosen people through Christ. This includes the promises God made to Abraham concerning his physical seed in giving the land of promise to Israel and Abraham's spiritual seed in sending the Messiah to save God's elect, Jew and Gentile. Because of the glory of the divine Majesty now present, and conscious of his own sinfulness and unworthiness, *"Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God."*

(Exod. 3:7-9) - God took the initiative to deliver the Hebrews according to His promise. It was not due to any qualifications in them or conditions they would meet. It was all of God's unconditional promise made to Abraham and in line with His promise to send Christ into the world to save His people from their sins. The Hebrews were in a pitiful state, and they were helpless to deliver themselves. This is a great picture of our salvation. We are sinners and totally unable to save ourselves from our sins, totally unable to work righteousness by which God could justify us, and totally unable to give ourselves spiritual and eternal life. But just as God promised this nation that He would freely and unconditionally *"bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey,"* God has promised that He would bring His chosen people out of the bondage of sin and bring us into the land of salvation with all its benefits and blessings by the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20; Eph. 1:3*).

(Exod. 3:10-12) - God appointed Moses to be the mediator between Him and the Hebrews in Egypt and, later on, in the establishment of the covenant at Sinai. Moses saw himself as unqualified and unable, but God equipped Moses for the task. God assured him of success in delivering His people from bondage because none of it was conditioned on Moses. It was all of God - *"I will be with thee."* Moses would go to Pharaoh, the most powerful king on earth, not in his own strength but in God's power. Next, God gave Moses a promise in a *"token"* (a sign) - *"When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain."* God would bring them back to this mountain (Horeb, i.e. Sinai) and establish His covenant with the nation through Moses, God's appointed mediator.

Here, Moses is a type of Christ Who is the *"one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (*1 Tim. 2:5*). As Moses was sent down to Egypt to deliver his people, Christ, the eternal Son of God, was sent down to earth, made in the likeness of men but without sin. The physical, Egyptian bondage of the Hebrew children is typical of the spiritual bondage of God's elect under the law and under their sins. Christ was sent by the Father to be made under the law to redeem His people who were under the law (*Gal. 4:4-6*). As their Surety and Substitute, having the debt of all their sins imputed to Him, Christ died for them and redeemed them from the law and from their sins by His death in their place. And, as stated, even though He died, He was not consumed. He was raised from the dead because of the righteousness He established to justify them before God. He ascended unto glory and is seated at His Father's right hand ever living to be their one true Mediator, insuring for them all grace here and all glory hereafter.

(Exod. 3:13) - The LORD God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush. This was none other than God manifest in the LORD Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. The LORD God commissioned Moses to deliver His covenant people (Israel) from Egyptian bondage and to be mediator between Him and the people. Moses asked the question, *“Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is His name? what shall I say unto them?”* It may seem strange that they would ask, *“What is His name?”* Would they not recognize His name in *“The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you?”* We are not certain of the implications of this, but we know that they had been in bondage in Egypt for about 400 years. It may have been that they had forgotten the God of their fathers. This kind of sinfulness was prevalent throughout the history of the nation Israel. Consider how many so-called churches today had a good beginning in the truth but have gradually fallen away into false gospels and false doctrine (cf. 2 Thess. 2:3). Notice also that Moses did use one of the names of God, which is *“Eloheem,”* meaning “God Almighty.” This is the plural name of God indicating the Holy Trinity - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, not three gods, but ONE GOD in three Persons working mightily, for example, in the creation (cf. Gen. 1:1). But as Moses had been absent for forty years, the people would want to know the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses.

(Exod. 3:14) - *“And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you”* - To understand this, we must know that a name is much more than a mere label for God. It is an expression of His whole being and nature, and this is what the word “Yaweh” (originally “YHWH”) means. This name affirms the divine SELF-EXISTENCE, ETERNALITY, and IMMUTABILITY of God, and that is the basis of who He is and what He does. There is only one self-existent being in the universe and that being is God. He is the only person who has His existence from Himself. Every one of us has our existence from Him. The whole creation has its existence from Him while He does not have anyone from whom He exists. He is the self-existent God. It is also important because it affirms His faithfulness that flows out of who He is. Because He is self-existent, eternal, and immutable, He is faithful to His promises, and He can keep them all. Not only can God keep them all, but He has determined that He will keep them all. He has assured this by His own glory (Heb. 6:17-20).

(Exod. 3:15) - God then told Moses to proclaim His covenant name - *“The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.”* This is God’s name in relation to His covenant people and His promises to them. Physically and temporally, this applies only to the nation Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham, and to the physical promises God made to them through Abraham, especially His promises of a land flowing with milk and honey and their preservation as a nation until the Messiah would come according to the flesh. Spiritually and eternally, this applies only to the spiritual nation of Israel, God’s elect whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. This spiritual nation is made up of sinners saved by grace (Jew and Gentile) who are justified in God’s sight based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. They are all for whom Christ died and arose again and whom God the Holy Spirit gives spiritual life and brings to faith in Christ, true repentance, and perseverance in the faith. They are all who will be brought to eternal glory by the grace and power of God in Christ Jesus (John 6:37-45; Rom. 5:21; 6:23).

The full significance of the name, "I AM who I AM," is seen only in Jesus Christ in its fullest sense. God the Father has *"highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name"* (Php. 2:9). *"JESUS"* means "Jehovah saves" or "Jehovah IS salvation" (Php. 2:10; Matt. 1:21). This could only be said of one who IS God, even the great *"I AM."* His exaltation applies to His glorious Person as God manifest in the flesh (Matt. 1:23) and one in whom *"dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col. 2:9; cf. 1:19). It also applies to the accomplishment of the redemption of His people as their Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver (Php. 2:5-11). God's glory is invested in the Lord Jesus Christ by Whom all the promises of God are sure and certain (2 Cor. 4:6; 5:19). It is through the Person and finished work of Christ that God reveals Himself to His covenant people in every attribute of His nature and work.

Christ claimed this name for Himself, and it would have been blasphemy for a mere man to claim this of himself. When He confronted the Pharisees who rejected Him but claimed Abraham as their father, He said, *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad"* (John 8:56). They objected, *"Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?"* (John 8:57). He answered, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM"* (John 8:58). When the Roman soldiers, led by Judas, came to arrest Him, He asked them, *"Whom seek ye?"* They answered, *"Jesus of Nazareth."* In the AKJV, it is recorded that He answered, *"I am he,"* but *"he"* was not in the original manuscripts. It was originally written that He answered, *"I AM, and they went backward, and fell to the ground."* This is all written in John 18:1-9.

In the Gospel of John, it is recorded that Jesus spoke several *"I AM"* statements that could only apply to one who is God. He said, *"I AM the Bread of life"* (John 6:35,48,51); *"I AM the Light of the world"* (John 8:12; 9:5); *"I AM the Good Shepard"* (John 10:11,14); *"I AM the resurrection and the life"* (John 11:25); *"I AM the way, the truth, and the life"* (John 14:6); *"I AM the true vine"* (John 15:1). And in fact, this use of the term *"I AM"* is designed by our Lord to cause those who are familiar with Scriptural things to make the connection, that He is the one who spoke with Moses out of the burning bush, who spoke to the fathers, spoke to the prophets, has spoken through John the Baptist and now speaks Himself through His ministry on the Earth.

Another very significant verse in John's Gospel is where Christ said to religious unbelievers, *"Ye are from beneath; I AM from above: ye are of this world; I AM not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I AM [‘he’ is in italics], ye shall die in your sins"* (John 8:23-24). Hebrews 11:6 states, *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that HE IS, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."* This is more than simply believing that "there is a god" or that "God really exists." It is God-given faith that brings sinners to believe that GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS according to His revealed Word. The problem with all false religion (even false Christianity) is that it allows people to think of God as they think of themselves and not as He is and as He reveals Himself to be (Psalm 50:21).

For example, in Isaiah 45:21, the LORD God reveals Himself as *"a just God and a Savior,"* and He commands His people to *"look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else"* (Isa. 45:22). The Gospel of God's grace in salvation for sinners is the revelation of *"the righteousness OF GOD"* (Rom. 1:16-17), and this is the merit of Christ (Who is God in human flesh without sin) as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, imputed to them and received by them in God-given faith. This is the basis upon which God is reconciled to sinners, and sinners are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19-21). This is how the great I AM reveals Himself to His people in grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Exod. 6:1-3) - God had revealed Himself to Moses as the great *"I AM"* and as the God of the covenant Who made promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant that God made with Abraham contained promises that applied to Abraham's physical descendants through Isaac and Jacob, the national Israelites who, at tis time, were in bondage in Egypt under a wicked tyrant called Pharaoh. God would defeat Pharaoh and free His people from this bondage. He would gather them as a nation, make a covenant with them through Moses, give them and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. God promised to keep them together through Jacob's son, Judah, until the time that Messiah would come and do His great work of redemption. God's covenant with Abraham also contained SPIRITUAL promises that pertained only to God's chosen people (elect, both Jew and Gentile) whom He chose before the foundation of the world and gave to the Lord Jesus Christ to save them spiritually and eternally. These are sinners saved by grace based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to them and received by them in God-given faith. They are the justified, the redeemed of the Lord, and they are known by their new birth which results in faith in Christ, repentance of dead works, and perseverance in the faith, all by the grace of God. This is SPIRITUAL Israel, all who glory in Christ (*Gal. 6:14-16*).

In verse 3, God tells Moses that He had appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *"God Almighty"* (El Shaddai), which means "God all-powerful," but He had not appeared to them, and was not known to them, by His name, *"JEHOVAH"* (YHWH - Yahweh), which is God's covenant name and identifies Him as the God Who saves sinners by grace based on the righteousness of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. In our AKJV, this name is indicated by the title *"LORD"* in capital letters. The statement that God had not appeared to the fathers by this name may seem strange because it is recorded in *Genesis* that God DID make Himself known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the *"LORD God Jehovah."* For example, Abraham used this name after the experience of almost sacrificing Isaac in *Genesis* 22. He called the name of that place *"Jehovah-jireh"* (*Gen. 22:14*). The idea behind the statement here in *Genesis* 6:3 is a comparison of HOW God revealed Himself to the fathers and to Moses and the Israelites. God revealed His name to Abraham but only in the PROMISES He made, not in the actual FULFILLMENT of those promises as He did here to Moses. There is a difference between promise and fulfillment in the way revelation is apprehended. The patriarchs were individuals who received the promises but without the fulfillment. The fulfillment could only come after the Israelites became a nation. Now, in Egypt, they were ready to become that promised nation.

This name was spoken by Jacob on his death bed and connected with the word *"salvation,"* which is *"YESHUA"* - *"I have waited for thy SALVATION, O LORD"* (*Gen. 49:18*). This connection is made by Moses in Exodus 14:13 - *"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the SALVATION OF THE LORD, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever."* A variant of the name *"YESHUA"* is the name *"YEHOASHUA"* (*Exod. 17:9*), which is "Joshua," and means virtually the same as *"YESHUA,"* which is *"JEHOVAH SAVES"* or *"JEHOVAH IS SALVATION."* In fact, the English spelling of the name *"YESHUA"* is "Joshua." But when translated into New Testament Greek it became the name translated into our English as *"JESUS"* (*Matt. 1:21*). The name *"JESUS"* means *"JEHOVAH IS SALVATION"* or *"JEHOVAH SAVES."* Seeing that all this is connected with the LORD JESUS CHRIST, we can be assured that God will perform and finish what He has promised - *"For all the promises of God IN HIM ARE YEA, and IN HIM AMEN, unto the glory of God by us"* (*2 Cor. 1:20*). The LORD JESUS CHRIST is the SURETY of the covenant of salvation.

(Exod. 6:4-9) - In these verses, having reminded Moses of His great and glorious name, JEHOVAH, the Almighty God, assures Moses that all that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be fulfilled in spite of the unbelief and rebellion of the people. God would fulfill all of the physical and temporal promises to the nation Israel, not because the people would obey and cooperate, but because of His sovereign purpose to bring Christ into the world through this nation according to the flesh. It was all ultimately to save His SPIRITUAL people, the elect, based on what the LORD JESUS CHRIST would come into the world and accomplish for the ones whom the Father gave to Him - sinners saved by grace out of every nation (Jew and Gentile). Christ would come and fulfill all righteousness by which His people are justified and give them spiritual life to believe and follow Him (*Jer. 31:31-34*). Consider some of the compound names connected with "Jehovah" that can only apply to the LORD JESUS CHRIST -

JEHOVAH-JIREH - The Lord will see or provide (*Gen. 22:8-14*) - In Christ all that God requires and all that we need is freely and fully provided for our complete salvation (*Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:30*).

JEHOVAH-NISSI - The Lord our banner (*Exod. 17:15*) - All true believers live and walk under the banner of Christ Who identifies and unifies us in Him by His Spirit and in His truth (*Psa. 20:5; 60:4; Eph. 2; 4:1-16*).

JEHOVAH-RAPHA - The Lord our healer (*Exod. 15:26*) - Christ is the Great Physician Who heals us from all sin and death by His death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, and gives us life and health spiritually as He preserves us unto glory (*Matt. 9:10-13; 1 Pet. 2:24*).

JEHOVAH-SHALOM - The Lord our peace (*Judges 6:24*) - Christ is the Prince of peace Who made peace between God and sinners by the blood of the cross (*2 Cor. 5:19-21; Col. 1:19-22*).

JEHOVAH-TSIDQENUW - The Lord our righteousness (*Jer. 23:5-6, 33:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17*) - Christ crucified and risen from the dead is the righteousness of His people. This is the merit of His obedience unto death imputed to them and which they receive by God-given faith.

JEHOVAH-SABAOTH - The Lord of hosts (*1 Sam. 1:3*) - Christ the LORD invincible Who cannot be defeated. His will cannot go unfulfilled (*Isa. 46:9-13; Rom. 9:27-29*).

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH - The Lord is present (*Ezra 48:35*) - Christ is the dwelling-place of the fullness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Sinners draw nigh to God and are accepted with God only in Christ (*John 1:14; Eph. 1:5-7; Col. 2:9-10*).

JEHOVAH-ROHI - The Lord my Shepherd (*Psalms 23:1*) - Christ is the GOOD SHEPHERD Who gave His life for the sheep (*John 10:11*). Christ is the GREAT SHEPHERD Who gathers, guards, and leads His sheep (*Heb. 13:20-21*). Christ is the CHIEF SHEPHERD Who keeps and brings His sheep to final glory (*1 Pet. 5:4*).

(Exod. 11) - The Lord had brought nine plagues upon Egypt because of Pharaoh's refusal to let God's people go. Here, the Lord announces the tenth and final plague - the death of the first-born in Egypt. In all of this, we see God's sovereign working both in Pharaoh's refusal and Israel's freedom. God had promised Abraham that He would bring His chosen people out of their bondage and give them a home. Four hundred and thirty years later this promise is fulfilled (*Gen. 15:13-14; Exod. 12:40-41*). Verse 7 states *"that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."* As God sovereignly chose Israel to be His instrument through which He would bring Messiah into the world, He sovereignly chose His people whom He would save by His grace through the LORD Jesus Christ. God's election of grace is the source and cause of salvation for His people. This is HIS glory (*Exod. 33:18-19; Rom. 9:15-16*). We all deserve God's judgment and wrath, and if left to ourselves we would continue, like Pharaoh, to reject God and harden our hearts against Him (*Rom. 3:10-12; Eph. 2:1-3*). But God chose a people for Himself upon whom He shows mercy in saving them from their sins by Jesus Christ (*Eph. 2:4-10*).

(Exod. 12:1-2) - This is where the Lord God instituted the Feast of Passover. It is one of the greatest types of the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation He has accomplished and insured for the people whom God had given Him before the foundation of the world. The Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to state this - *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even CHRIST OUR PASSOVER IS SACRIFICED FOR US"* (*1 Cor. 5:7*). It was such an important and necessary feast that God changed their whole calendar to commemorate it as the very beginning of their year in the month of Nisan. What is pictured in the Passover is salvation accomplished by Christ, the Lamb of God, and is the ground of the salvation of God's elect and the source of their spiritual and eternal life.

(Exod. 12:3-4) - The Passover Lamb is a special type of Christ, perhaps the clearest and most complete of all the types and pictures; for in it the Lord God preached to the Jews the whole doctrine of the Gospel of His grace in Christ. Just as God the Father chose His Son to be Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, He chose a lamb to be the Passover sacrifice. Christ is the Lamb of God (*Isa. 53:7; John 1:29*). God chose a lamb because it is known for its meekness as Christ was submissive to His Father's will for the salvation of His people (*Isa. 53:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:22*).

(Exod. 12:5) - Consider what God required in the Passover lambs as it applies to the glorious Person and accomplished work of Christ, the Lamb of God. *"YOUR LAMB SHALL BE WITHOUT BLEMISH"* - This signifies the absolute perfection and sinlessness of Christ (*Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21*) - the impeccability of Christ. In His Person, He was (and is) God manifest in human flesh (*1 Tim. 3:16*), but, even in His humanity, He was never contaminated or corrupted with or by the sins of His people. He COULD not and DID not sin. He lived a perfect life, and when He died, it was not for His own sins. It was for the sins of His people imputed to Him. This is how Christ, the Lamb of God, was MADE sin (*2 Cor. 5:21*). In the Old Testament sacrifices, it was required that *"the sacrifice shall be perfect to be accepted"* (*Lev. 22:21*). Of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death for His people, it is written that we are redeemed *"with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (*1 Pet. 1:19*).

"A MALE OF THE FIRST YEAR: YE SHALL TAKE IT OUT FROM THE SHEEP, OR FROM THE GOATS" - The lamb was to be taken in the prime of life (one year old) out from among the other sheep or goats. Like a young lamb, Christ gave Himself to be offered for our sins in the prime of His life. He was taken from among men (*Deut. 18:15-19; Heb. 4:15; 5:1*). He was

the seed of woman, the seed of Abraham (*Gal. 3:16*), and made of the seed of David according to the flesh (*Rom. 1:3*). His human nature enabled Him to suffer, bleed, and die for His sheep (*Heb. 2:14-17*).

(Exod. 12:6) - In the feast of Passover, the lamb had to be kept until the fourteenth day of Nisan. This could be so that they could watch the lamb and make certain there was no spot or blemish. It could also indicate the preservation of Christ during the time of His youth which was a preparation for His work of redeeming His people from their sins. The lamb had to be killed by the people. According to the determinate counsel of God, Christ gave Himself over to the hands of wicked people who represented fallen humanity, Jew and Gentile, in opposition to God's Son (*John 10:11-18; Acts 2:22-24; 4:26-28*). The lamb had to be killed as a sacrifice for the sins of the people because the penalty for sin is death. This fact had been established by God from the beginning when God gave commandment to Adam and Eve (*Gen. 2:16-17; cf. Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom. 5:12; 6:23a*). God is a just God and must punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed (charged) with eternal death. God's justice must be satisfied.

In the death of the Passover lamb, the Lord set forth in type and picture the future death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. God made it clear that the blood of animals could not put away sin in a spiritual and eternal way (*Heb. 10:1-4*). But God established the sacrifice of lambs to show forth in type and shadows the death of Christ, the Lamb of God, for spiritual and eternal salvation - the forgiveness of sins and justification of His people (*Gen. 3:21*). Just as the death of the lambs in Egypt marked defeat for the Egyptians, it marked victory for the Israelites, God's chosen people. The death of Christ is the defeat of all who live and die in unbelief, but victory and life for God's elect, all spiritual Israel (*John 3:36*).

(Exod. 12:7) - The blood of the Passover lamb pointed to the righteousness of God accomplished by Christ for His people. As the sins of His people had been imputed to Him, He died in their place to satisfy the justice of God and bring forth an everlasting righteousness of infinite value whereby God has justified them all. This is Christ's righteousness imputed to them and which is revealed by God to them in the preaching of the Gospel of His free and sovereign grace in Christ (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). Christ's righteousness imputed is not only the ground of the salvation of His people, it is also the source and power of spiritual life given to them in the new birth whereby the Holy Spirit brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. Putting the blood on the side and upper door post of their houses typifies the sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the hearts of God's people by the Holy Spirit (*Heb. 9:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:2*). This is the new birth whereby all for whom Christ died are given spiritual life from the dead (*John 3:3-7*).

Putting the blood on the door post and eating the roasted lamb were also acts that pictured faith in Christ as the Lamb of God (*John 6:53-54*). In doing this, the Israelites showed that they believed God's Word to deliver them from death, bring them out of Egypt and to the promised land. God gives the gift of faith to His people, and they express their belief in Him as the God Who justifies the ungodly through Jesus Christ (*Rom. 3:24-26; Eph. 2:8-10*). Any Israelites in Egypt who refused to slay the lamb and put the blood on their doors died with the unbelieving Egyptians. In the same way, all who refuse to believe in Christ as the only way of salvation from sin and death will die in their sins (*John 8:24*). All the Israelites in Egypt who followed the Lord's command to slay the lamb and put the blood on their doors were delivered from bondage and death. In the same way, all who believe in Christ and plead His blood and righteousness as their only hope are delivered from the bondage of sin and eternal death.

(Exod. 12:8-10) - As we continue with our study of the Lord's Passover, we have seen how the spotless lamb is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Who was slain for the sins of His people (God's elect) given to Him before the foundation of the world. They are identified in God's Word as those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the world began, and the Lamb is described as *"the Lamb slain"* (Rev. 13:8), as was the Passover lamb. This sets forth Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. By His death, the eternal salvation of all for whom He died is assured because in His death, He established a perfect righteousness whereby God has justified all His people. By His blood, their sins are forgiven, and they are declared righteous in God's sight. By His blood, they receive spiritual and eternal life in the new birth whereby they are given faith to believe in Christ and brought to repentance of dead works and idolatry.

Here, the Israelites were commanded to eat the flesh of the lamb roasted with fire. Roasting the lamb with fire could signify the manner of Christ's death. He was crucified, enduring the fire of God's wrath for our sins imputed to Him. When it comes to sin, our God is a consuming fire Who brings the fire of His wrath upon all sinners to whom sin is imputed. Our hope is to be found in Christ, not having our sins imputed to us, but having His righteousness laid to our charge (Rom. 8:33-34; Php. 3:9). Eating the flesh of the lamb is a picture of God's people feeding and living upon Christ by God-given faith (John 6:55-58). We feed upon Christ by feeding upon His Word and living in His light. This is all by God's grace and power, not our own.

They were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread. Later on, we will see that the Israelites were to eat only unleavened bread every year during Passover as a commemoration of the Exodus from Egyptian bondage. Since the children of Israel left Egypt hastily, they did not have time for the bread to rise, so it was made on that very first Passover without leaven, also known as yeast. In describing this bread and why it was eaten, the Bible informs us of the following - *"Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life"* (Deut. 16:3).

In the Bible, leaven is almost always a type of sin and false doctrine (ex. Matt. 16:6-10). Like leaven that permeates a whole lump of dough, sin and false doctrine will spread in a person, a church, or a nation, eventually overwhelming and bringing them into its bondage and eventually to death (Gal. 5:9). As Christ, by Himself, purged our sins, there can be no mixture of His merits with the works of man. Unleavened bread, therefore, can signify that those who come to Christ, the true Passover, are to come to Him ALONE for all salvation, to come in sincerity and truth, and not looking elsewhere for salvation. They are not to bring their dead works or idolatry with them. Salvation is by Christ and His righteousness alone. They were also to eat the lamb with bitter herbs, which probably shows God-given sorrow for sin and repentance in the hearts of those who come to Christ. The Lamb was not to be eaten raw nor saturated with water, that is, not boiled in wine, oil, or water. Christ endured the full wrath and judgment of God for our full justification, and nothing is to be mixed, added, nor joined to Him.

The lamb was to be roasted whole. Not a bone was to be broken, as the Scriptures declare of Christ (John 19:36). Nothing of the lamb was to remain. This says that the whole Christ is to be received and fed upon by faith. Christ in both of His natures, divine and human; Christ in all His offices as prophet, priest, and king; Christ in all His glory as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people.

(Exod. 12:11) - The Israelites were to eat the Passover dressed and ready to move out of Egypt showing their assurance that God would keep His promise - *"It is the LORD'S PASSOVER."* Christ effectually and powerfully saves His people. The world, as Egypt to Israel, is no longer our home. We are pilgrims, temporarily here but awaiting His call to move out and go to our eternal home.

(Exod. 12:12-13) - The Lord God is faithful both to His promises and to His threats. He most certainly *"will execute judgment."* We know this because it is His very nature - *"I am the LORD."* God MUST punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed. This is why, if we are to escape God's wrath and experience salvation from sin and death, we must be found in Christ - *"WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD, I WILL PASS OVER YOU."* When the Lord saw the lamb's blood on the doors of the Israelites, He passed over them. When the Lord sees the blood judicially and spiritually applied to His people, He passes over them and does not exact His wrath upon them. The blood of Christ is *"the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 2:2). Propitiation is satisfaction to God's justice. This could only be accomplished by one who is both God and man in one person - the Lord Jesus Christ. The blood of Christ is the righteousness of God accomplished and established for the justification of His people. God cannot and will not impute our sins to us because He has imputed them to Christ (Rom. 8:1,33-34; Eph. 1:7). In Christ, we are justified before God. And by Christ, His blood is sprinkled on our hearts and brings us spiritual life to receive Him and feed upon Him by God-given faith.

Consider the case of God's people whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. When did God see the blood as to their salvation? God has always, in eternity past, present, and future, viewed His people as covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. He chose them and justified them in Christ before the world began. He saved all the Old Testament saints based on the blood of Christ before Christ came in time and shed His precious blood on the cross to purge their sins. How could God do this? It was by His promise in Christ upon Whom all His promises were sure and certain to be fulfilled. When did we see the blood? We saw it when the Holy Spirit gave us spiritual life and brought us to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. God saw the blood long before we saw it, but, if we are saved, we DID see the blood. The Holy Spirit sprinkled the blood of Christ on our hearts and minds, and our song became, *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"* (Rev. 5:12).

(Exod. 12:14) - The Lord told Moses that this Passover feast was to be a continual memorial unto the Lord throughout the time of their generation to keep it *"for ever."* This *"for ever"* does not mean throughout eternity. It means as long as the Old Covenant would be in force for the nation Israel. This was until the Messiah would come and accomplish the spiritual and eternal redemption of His people by the shedding of His blood on the cross. The Lord signified the end of the Old Covenant with all of its types and pictures, including the feast days and the animal sacrifices, by tearing the veil in the temple in two from top to bottom when Christ died on the cross. All the types and pictures gave way to the glory of Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Christ is our Lamb, slain for our sins, and He is our Mediator and Intercessor before God. He pleads the merits of His righteousness on our behalf.

(Exod. 12:29-32) - Egypt has a tremendous symbolic significance in the Bible. Israel's bondage in and redemption from Egypt is a picture of our spiritual bondage in sin and death and the deliverance of God's elect from sin and death, legally through the blood of Christ (His righteousness imputed), and spiritually through God-given faith in Christ (*Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Titus 2:14*). While initially seen as a place of refuge from famine, Egypt became a place of oppression and slavery. For New Testament believers, Egypt represents our old life of slavery to sin. All people are, by nature, slaves of sin, and Satan is a much harsher taskmaster than the Egyptian overseers. The natural man labors powerlessly under the weight of sin. God redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt by the blood of the lamb on the first Passover, and He has redeemed all of His chosen people from sin by the blood of the Lamb of God (Christ Jesus), Who takes away the sin of His people all over the world (*John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18-19*). Just as God called the Israelites and brought them out of bondage in Egypt, He calls His spiritual people and brings them out of bondage to sin, Satan, and the law (*Rom. 6:17-18; 7:4-6*).

Here, the Lord brings His wrath on Egypt in the tenth plague, the death of all the first-born in Egypt. Notice that not one group or class of people among the Egyptians was spared. Where there was no blood on the doorposts, death came. This shows how God is a just God, and He must punish all sin with death. His justice must be satisfied. God's wrath abides upon all sinners to whom God imputes sin, and God imputes the sin of all sinners who are not in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. The blood of Christ alone cleanses us from all sin. His righteousness imputed to us is our only hope of escaping the wrath of God. When death came upon Egypt, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were more than ready to let the people of Israel go.

(Exod. 12:33-42) - These verses describe Israel's exodus (going out) out of Egypt. In their slavery and bondage, they had lost everything. But they came out with an abundance of wealth. The word translated "*borrowed*" in verse 35 does not mean they asked the Egyptians for a loan of materials to be returned later. It means they asked the Egyptians for these things, and the Egyptians, who were anxious to get rid of the Israelites, were ready to give them these things. All of this was due to the faithfulness, goodness, and power of God Who brought them out of Egypt with power. Left to themselves, they would have remained as poor, helpless slaves of an evil and cruel Pharaoh. But four hundred and thirty years before, God had promised Abraham that He would deliver Abraham's descendants out of slavery and into a land flowing with milk and honey. This is such a vivid picture and type of the situation with all of God's spiritual people, His elect. We started out in Adam in the Garden of Eden, but we fell with Adam into the bondage of sin. We were all born into this slavery as spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. Left to ourselves, we would remain there until eternal death and damnation. But, before the foundation of the world, God had purposed and promised to save a people of His choice in Christ, and He placed all of the responsibility of our whole salvation on Christ Who would come as our Surety (our sin-debt charged to Him), our Substitute (as Godman to die in our place - the Lamb of God), and our Redeemer (to pay the full redemption price of God's justice).

(Exod. 12:43-51) - This is where the Lord officially establishes the Feast of Passover for the Israelites as part of their national identity throughout their generations (i.e. as long as they were under the Old Covenant and until the Messiah would come). Notice the Lord's specific commandment that only those who had been circumcised could eat the Passover. They had to be full-fledged citizens of the nation Israel, and this included Gentiles who had been

circumcised. The spiritual lesson here is that only those who have been circumcised in heart (*Rom. 2:28-29*) by the Holy Spirit in the new birth and brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ can claim any spiritual and eternal benefit from the blood of Christ. Only they are full-fledged citizens of SPIRITUAL Israel under the blood of the Lamb.

(Luke 9:28-36) - These verses describe another exodus - the exodus of the cross. This is Christ's revealing the reality of SPIRITUAL and ETERNAL liberation for His people based upon His finished work to accomplish their salvation and freedom by His death. The word "decease" in *verse 31* is the Greek word for "exodus." Notice how He spoke of this as an accomplishment, not a defeat. How could His death be an accomplishment? Because in His death, He accomplished redemption for His people. In His death, He accomplished victory over sin, the law, and over death itself (*1 Cor. 15:55-57*). In His death, He accomplished righteousness for His people so that they must go free (*Dan. 9:24*). By way of His death, He went unto the Father with the merits of His blood on behalf of His people (*John 16:8-11; Heb. 1:3*). By His death, Christ has set us totally and eternally free from the bondage of sin (*John 8:31-36*). Notice again some of the parallels between the type (Israel's deliverance from Egypt) and the glorious fulfillment (spiritual Israel's deliverance from the bondage of sin) -

(1) In both cases, God purposed it long before it actually took place in time. This was true with Israel in Egypt (*Exod. 2:24*), and it is true with spiritual Israel in sin (*Eph. 1:3-7; 2 Tim. 1:9-10*). In both cases, God was (and is) faithful to His promise made to Abraham in both the deliverance of the physical nation of Israel and the eternal deliverance of spiritual Israel (*Gal. 3:15-29*).

(2) In both cases, God sent a man to deliver His people. In the case of Israel in Egypt, God equipped and sent Moses to deliver them. In the case of spiritual Israel, "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (*Gal. 4:4-5*). The Lord Jesus Christ was (and is) more than a man. He is God manifest in the flesh. The Father equipped Him with a human body without sin so that He could die for the sins of His people (*Heb. 10:5-10*).

(3) In both cases, the deliverance was accomplished by the power and will of God based on the blood of a lamb. In the case of Israel in Egypt, it was God's way through the sacrifice of lambs in the Passover. In the case of spiritual Israel, it was God's way through the one sacrifice of His Son, the Lamb of God, Who is every believer's eternal Passover (*1 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 10:10-14*).

(4) In both cases, their deliverance was based upon God's justice satisfied. In the case of Israel in Egypt, God's judgment of death fell upon the Egyptians, but God's judgment fell upon the lambs of sacrifice for Israel. In the case of spiritual Israel, God's judgment fell upon Christ for the sins of His people imputed to Him as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 5:21*).

(5) In both cases, God's purpose and intention was to save a particular people. In the case of Israel in Egypt, God's chosen people were the natural descendants of Abraham. In the case of spiritual Israel, it was God's elect whom He had chosen in Christ before the world began (*John 10:11; Acts 20:28*).

(Exod. 13:17-22) - As the Israelites went out of Egypt, they were guided and protected by God. It was God's plan not to lead them the shortest way through the land of the Philistines but through a longer way to bring them to the Red Sea. God could have defeated the war-like Philistines and protected His people, but He knew the sinfulness of the people. He knew that if confronted by such warriors, they would repent and desire to go back to Egypt. Verse 19 states how Moses fulfilled Joseph's oath to have his bones taken to the Promised Land with his brothers (*Gen. 50:22-26; cf. Heb. 11:22*). This foreshadowed the hope of resurrection revealed more clearly later on in Scripture. This was a great expression of God-given faith in Christ Who is our resurrection and life (*John 11:25*). God could resurrect Joseph no matter where Joseph was buried, but this is a spiritual lesson to teach that there is no life in Egypt, the land of bondage and death. There is only life with the people of God in Christ.

The Lord (the Angel of the Lord - *Exod. 14:19*) then went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This allowed them to travel by day and by night. This guiding body was not merely symbolic. It was a real, physical miracle of God, and later we see that God used this pillar to lead them in the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. This pillar was also a testimony to other nations concerning God's involvement with and protection of His people Israel. The pillar certainly pictures Christ's faithfulness and the safety, security, and protection of Christ for His church as He will never leave or forsake us, and He will keep us unto glory (*Heb. 13:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*).

(Exod. 14:1-9) - God again hardened Pharaoh's heart. This was God's sovereign right and His purpose to show forth His glory and power to the Egyptians. This is an issue that causes many people to deny the God of the Bible by accusing Him of being unfair and unjust. But the only answer God gives us of His mysterious ways in dealing with some in condemnation and some in salvation is found in *Romans 9:15-23*. Our response to these great truths should be to seek the Lord and seek the way He has provided for His chosen people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 9:30-10:4*). God has a people whom He has chosen to save by His grace through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us that all who reject Christ and His way of salvation shall perish. He tells us that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He tells us that all who call upon His name do so because He has given them spiritual life and the gift of faith to receive and believe in Christ (*John 1:12-13*). God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh hardened his own heart. He gathered his army and went after the Israelites.

(Exod. 14:10-12) - God had brought the Israelites to the place where He wanted them. It was a place of no hope within themselves. Pharaoh and his army were behind them and the Red Sea was before them. Their only hope of deliverance was to turn to God alone, to cast themselves upon God's mercy and power. But, like all people by nature, instead of turning to God and casting themselves upon His mercy, they complained in unbelief and even expressed a desire to return to Egypt.

(Exod. 14:13-14) - Moses's instructions to the people can be summed up very simply - TRUST IN THE LORD AND LEAN NOT TO YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. It is a message based upon what God had promised the people of their deliverance from the Egyptians and their safety with Him. "*Fear not*" means do not fear what Pharaoh and his army can do. They were to fear (respect and revere) God, not man. "*Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD*" means to cease trying to figure or work their way out of this dilemma. When they could find no hope in themselves but only in God, they would then be in a good place. God promised that

He would defeat the Egyptians, and they would “*see them again no more for ever.*” This would all be the work of God for them - “*The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*”

“*Salvation*” here is the same word, “*yeshua*,” that is translated as “*Joshua*” and, later in the Greek New Testament, “*Jesus*.” Here, we see a great picture of eternal salvation for sinners by God’s grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. By nature, we all try to figure out and work for a way out of the problem of sin and death. We become religiously busy and worry if we have believed enough or done enough to attain eternal salvation. In the Gospel, God commands us to stand still and cease from our labors. He commands us not to fear men but to fear God and enter into HIS rest which is found in the grace, power, and goodness of God in Christ (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-11*). Christ fought for His people and defeated all enemies - sin, death, Satan, and the world. God will not charge us with our sin. He will remember them no more, and we who are in Christ will never see them again as we stand before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (*Heb. 10:18-22*).

(Exod. 14:15-31) - This is the account of the final act of God delivering His people from the Egyptians by the parting of the Red Sea. This is a great example of the saving power of Almighty God in keeping His promise to Abraham. God prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would become slaves in a foreign nation for 400 years, but God promised to deliver them (*Gen. 15:14*). This great deliverance occurred as God parted the Red Sea, allowing the children of Israel to pass through safely on dry ground, but drowning Pharaoh and his army under the sea. The greater lesson we should learn from all this is the story of God redeeming His elect through the red sea of the blood of Jesus Christ in redeeming His people from their sins. This exodus from Egypt, though a real, historical event, prefigures the saving work of Christ for His people. What God did through Moses for the nation Israel was to provide physical salvation from physical slavery. What God has done through Christ for spiritual Israel is provide spiritual salvation from spiritual slavery (*John 8:34-36*). The passing through the Red Sea is a symbol of the believer’s identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 10:1-4*). Just as the Israelites were “*baptized into Moses*,” all who have been given the gift of faith in Christ have been “*baptized into Jesus Christ*” (*Rom. 6:4-7; Gal. 3:26-29*).

Just as the red blood of the Passover lamb meant death to the Egyptians and life to the Israelites, the Red Sea also meant death to the Egyptians and life for the Israelites. Here we see in picture and type the true and living God through the Lord Jesus Christ executing judgment and justice for both those who live and die in unbelief and for His chosen people whom He brings to faith in Christ. For those who die in their sin, it is the judgment of eternal damnation for their sins. For those who die in Christ, it is eternal life based on the blood of Christ. In the case of God’s elect, this is the glory of God as both a just God and a Savior (*Isa. 45:20-22; Jer. 23:5-6*). Because of the red sea of Christ’s blood, we who believe in Him have a righteousness that answers the demands of God’s law and justice. For all who stand before God in Christ, it can be said, “the sins that we have seen today, we shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord has fought for us, and we shall hold our peace.”

Verse 31 states, “*And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.*” This is what God the Holy Spirit does for God’s people in the new birth. He brings us to see with the eye of God-given faith what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross to put away our sins and establish righteousness for us. He brings us to fear the Lord with a reverence of His glory and to believe the Lord and His true servants who preach the true Gospel of His free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 28 - BITTER WATERS MADE SWEET - *Exodus 15:22-27*

(Exod. 15:1-21) - Moses praised God for delivering the people from the bondage of Egypt. This is the first recorded song (psalm) in the Bible, and it speaks of the glory and power of God. God the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to compose this song of worship as Moses was the deliverer of the nation and was a type of Christ, the Redeemer of His church (spiritual Israel). The people joined in with Moses as they were the persons delivered and typical of the spiritual Israel of God redeemed by Christ. We have seen how the physical deliverance celebrated by the people here bore a great resemblance to the eternal and spiritual redemption accomplished by Christ for His people. Christ, the Angel of the Lord, who went before the Israelites through the Red sea, and fought for them, is the principal Person concerned in it, and who is meant by the Lord throughout the whole of it, and to whom it is sung. And a song upon a similar occasion to this will be sung in the latter day upon the destruction of spiritual Egypt (antichrist) and is called "*the song of Moses*" (Rev. 15:3). The deliverance of the physical nation of Israel was all of God and none of it was accomplished by their strength or even their willingness. The salvation of spiritual Israel is all of God, and none of this eternal salvation is accomplished by our strength or our willingness. God is our strength, and He makes us willing in the day of His power.

(Exod. 15:22-23) - "*Shur*" was a desert where there was very little water. And what water they found was "*Marah*" which means "bitter." Recall in the book of Ruth how, upon her return from Moab to Bethlehem, Naomi, whose name means "pleasant," told her friends to call her Mara, which means "bitter." The waters of Marah were not fit to drink and could not quench their thirst. This is a picture of our natural state and habitation in this world as lost in our sins, spiritually depraved and dead. In a spiritual sense, this world is a dead and dry desert where there is no water and no life to save us and sustain us. This is where God brings us to in a spiritual sense to see our need of Christ for salvation and Who is the water of life. Apart from God's power and grace, we would die in this spiritual desert. We may look for water in different places (i.e. religion, materialism, etc.), but there is no water to be found in ourselves or in this world. The reason the Lord exposes our sinfulness and depravity and death is to bring us to Christ for salvation and eternal life.

(Exod. 15:24) - The reaction of the people here is typical of all of us in our natural, sinful, depraved, and spiritually dead state. Left to ourselves, we would always respond to such problems in unbelief as represented here by "*the people murmured against Moses.*" This was, in essence, complaining against God as Moses was God's appointed servant and leader of the people. Moses was only doing what God commanded him to do. This is a good lesson for all of us. If a minister of Christ preaches God's Word, and we complain against him for speaking that Word, we are complaining against God Himself. If one claims to be a minister of Christ but does not preach the Word of God, then we have every right to complain against him. But this was an act of unbelief on Israel's part. Whereas they should have simply cast themselves upon the mercy of God and trust Him to provide for them, they complained.

(Exod. 15:25a) - Moses did what the people should have done - "*He cried unto the LORD.*" This is where the Lord Himself brings all of His chosen people (spiritual Israel) for salvation. He brings us to the end of our ropes and causes us to cry out to Him for help. "*The LORD shewed him a tree*" - Trees are very significant in the Word of God. In *Genesis 2:9* we see the "*tree of life*" and the "*tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" Christ is the true and only tree of life for His people. As our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, He died for us on the cross which is called a tree (*Gal. 3:13*). Christ Himself, and His people as they stand before

God in Him and are given life from Him, are described as *“a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”* (Psalm 1:3). God’s people are *“called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified”* (Isa. 61:3). The *“tree of life”* in Revelation 22:2,14 is a symbol of Christ Who is the Creator and Giver of life to His people (John 14:6; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12). This tree that God showed Moses is a picture of Christ Who is Himself the Tree of life for His people. Sin demands death; righteousness demands life. There is no life without Christ because without Him, there is only sin. Without Christ, there is no righteousness. But in Christ, God will not impute sin to His people. In Christ, God has imputed righteousness to His people, and from Christ, Who is their righteousness, God gives them life (Rom. 5:21).

Moses casting the tree into the waters is symbolic of Christ suffering and dying on the cross. The sweetness of Christ on the cross doing the work of a Redeemer is that which saves us from our sins and sustains us amid the experiences of life that are not so good. Out of the bitterness of His death comes the sweetness of righteousness and the sweetness of the Spirit in our new birth. Christ is the water of life for His people, and He said this to His audience as He spoke from the mount - *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matt. 5:6). To thirst after the water of life is to thirst after righteousness which can only be found in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as the Lord our Righteousness. This is a God-given thirst that can only be quenched by God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ also said this to an adulterous woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria as recorded in John 4:1-29. He said it to the weary religionists upon leaving their religious celebration just as empty and thirsty for fulfillment as they were when they started - *“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:37-38).

(Exod. 15:25b-26) - The Old Covenant law, which Moses was about to receive from the Lord and place upon the nation Israel, was a conditional covenant where God promised them blessings and prosperity as a nation conditioned upon their obedience to all the statutes and ordinances as well as the threat of cursing and punishment if they disobeyed God. Hereby God put them to the test. As we know from the recorded history of the nation under the Old Covenant, they failed miserably to obey God, and they were continually punished by God. However, according to His promise to Abraham and His purpose to bring the Messiah into the world through them, God kept them together until the time He had appointed. This covenant was indicative of the test that all of us have failed, having fallen by Adam into sin and death and having been born spiritually depraved and dead. This proves our own sinfulness and depravity, the impossibility of salvation by our works of the law, and our need of salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:31–10:4). This is why the law was given (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19). Salvation comes to sinners only by the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, the Lord reveals Himself as *“Jehovah-Rapha,”* the Lord Who heals. But His healing only comes through righteousness, and righteousness only comes to sinners through and by Christ (Psalm 103:2-14; Mal. 4:1-2).

(Exod. 15:27) - After the time of testing, God had a time of refreshing for the people of Israel. He knew exactly what they needed, and He knew when to test them and when to rest them.

Lesson 29 - CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE *Exodus 16*

(Exod. 16:1-3) - As Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and toward Sinai, it became apparent that the people were totally dependent upon the Lord God for their physical survival. They found no water to drink in Shur, but God provided them water by His miraculous power in turning the bitter waters of Marah into sweet water. The Lord then led them to "*Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters*" (Exod. 15:27). Here, Moses is led of the Lord to bring the people from Elim to the "*wilderness of Sin,*" where they found no food. As usual, they complained against Moses and Aaron and, ultimately, against the Lord. Once again, we see the state of all lost, unbelieving people illustrated in the unbelief of the children of Israel. We are all by nature sinful and depraved people (Rom. 3:9-12). Just one month earlier they had seen great miracles from the Lord for their deliverance, but this did not change their hearts. Like them, by nature, we have no ability or will to believe, trust, and worship the Lord. If left to our own power and wills, we will not believe and trust the Lord. If salvation comes to us, it must be of the Lord, all conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only hope of salvation is to trust in the Lord and cast ourselves upon His mercy.

(Exod. 16:4-10) - In spite of their unbelief, God determined to provide "*bread from heaven*" for them. This was all due to God's promise, power, and for His glory. When Aaron spoke to the people "*the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.*"

(Exod. 16:11-15) - The Lord sent them quails and what came to be called "*MANNA,*" which literally means "What is it?". This manna was something they had never seen before. It was neither man-made nor touched by man. And notice that the Lord did not give them any options as if to say they could take it or leave it. He said, "*At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*" This is the way God brings His spiritual people (His elect) to salvation by His grace whereupon they feed upon Christ Who is the Bread of life (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-28; John 6:44-45). God graciously and powerfully gives us a hunger and thirst for Christ and makes us will to believe and trust Him. Like the manna in the wilderness was freely given to the Israelites ("*This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.*"), the Bread of life in salvation is freely given to God's people, all by His grace that reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Lord Himself stated clearly that this manna typified Himself as the Bread of life (John 6:31-35, 48-58). Consider some of the ways this manna typified our Savior. (1) Manna was prepared in heaven and came down to earth. The people of Israel must have food. It was impossible for them to provide for themselves in the wilderness, so their bread was prepared in heaven and sent down to earth (Num. 11:9). Christ Jesus had a body prepared of the Father that He might be food for believers (Heb. 10:5). (2) In the wilderness of flesh and sin there is no food. All the nourishment Israel needed was found in the manna from heaven, and all that a believer needs is in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 2:9-10). (3) Manna was a gift. It costs them nothing. All they needed to do was to gather it and eat it. Christ Jesus is the unspeakable gift of God's love (2 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 6:23). The bread of life, Christ Jesus, is free. That for which men labor never satisfies and, in the end, will cost them dearly (Isa. 55:1-3; John 6:27).

(4) Manna was provided for all who were hungry, and the manna met everyone's need (Exod. 16:16-18). All men, of whatever distinction, have one thing common - all have sinned, all have no righteousness, and all need Christ. He is the only Savior and the only bread (Matt. 11:28; John 6:53-54). (5) The Israelites gathered the manna daily, and the man who gathered

much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. We feed on Christ daily. There is not a day without our feeding upon Him in His Word. He is sufficient for us every day. (6) Manna was pleasant to the taste. How sweet and satisfying is the Lord Jesus to those who taste Him by God-given faith (*Exod. 16:31; John 6:54-56*). His word is sweeter than the honeycomb (*Psalms 34:8*).

As in all types and pictures in the Old Testament, we must recognize that Christ is superior to the type. Everything that applies to the type cannot be applied to Christ. So, in many ways the manna in the wilderness does not picture Christ. Manna was food for the outward man only. Christ is the bread of life for the inward man. The manna was eaten by those who later died. We eat of Christ by God-given faith and never die. The manna rotted and decayed when kept. Christ ever lives! He abides the same yesterday, today, and forever. The manna was only found in the morning. Christ is our food morning, noon, and night. The manna ceased when they entered Canaan. Christ, our bread, is our bread forever. In glory He will be our eternal Bread, the subject of our song, the joy of our heart, and the object of our worship.

(Exod. 16:16-30) - The Lord gave specific instructions on when and how much of this manna was to be gathered so that each person had exactly what they needed without any left to spoil. In *verses 22-30* we have the first mention of the sabbath which is described in *verse 23* as *“the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD.”* The point is that not only do we need bread to sustain life, but we also need rest for our bodies. Like the manna, this blessed sabbath rest is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ and the boundless grace of God given to us in Him. Christ is our Bread for spiritual and eternal life, and He is our rest (our Sabbath) as we rest in Him from all our labors. We benefit eternally from HIS labors (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-11*). But, again, as was common among them, many disobeyed the Lord. Some gathered more than needed, and it was corrupted with worms and became rotten. Others did not gather enough on Friday, sought to gather manna on the sabbath, and found none. The Lord rebuked them for their disobedience, and they obeyed the Lord - *“So the people rested on the seventh day.”*

(Exod. 16:31-36) - No one knows exactly what the manna was made of, but it is described here as being *“like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”* *Numbers 11:7* states that manna’s appearance was like *“bdellium”* or *“resin.”* *Psalms 78:24* refers to manna as *“the corn of heaven,”* and *Psalms 78:25* calls it *“angels’ food.”* So, manna was literal bread that God caused to appear miraculously each morning during the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings. The miracle of manna ceased shortly after the Israelites entered the Promised Land (*Joshua 5:12*). But God commanded Moses and Aaron to fill a pot with one *“omer”* of manna to be kept in the holy of holies (to be made later) before the Ark of the Testimony (covenant) throughout their generations (*Heb. 9:4*). The Lord kept this manna within the Ark from spoiling.

In *Revelation 2:17* the Lord told the church of Pergamum, *“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna ...”* The hidden manna is a symbolic picture of Jesus Christ. As the manna of the Exodus sustained and strengthened the Israelites for the forty years in the wilderness, so Jesus strengthens and sustains us spiritually as we walk through this life. Jesus is the “manna” from heaven—the spiritual sustenance we need—and it is promised to us. It is hidden from those who are in unbelief, wise and prudent in their own eyes (*Matt. 11:25*). It must be revealed to God’s children, and He must give them eyes to see this manna as well as a hunger for it. Only believers will reap the benefits of salvation. The unbelieving world that rejects Christ will never know the joy and satisfaction of faith in Him.

(Exod. 17:1-3) - The people of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin and camped in Rephidim. There was no water to drink, and they again murmured against Moses. If we did not know something of the evil of the human heart as revealed to us from God's Word (the Scriptures - cf. Jer. 17:9) and from our own experience (Rom. 7:24), we would be at a loss to account for the unbelief and ingratitude of these people to God's goodness and faithfulness towards them. We might also think more highly of ourselves in imagining that we would do better than they. But God's Word is clear - *"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise"* (cf. Rom. 3:9-12). They had been powerfully and miraculously delivered from Egypt. They had seen the hand of God at the Red Sea. God had changed the bitter waters of Marah into sweet water to quench their thirst. They had been fed with quail and manna from heaven. Now, they are ready to stone Moses because they have no water. Once again, we learn from Israel a needed lesson, and that is the natural tendency of the sinful human heart to doubt God. We had rather trust in ourselves and lean to our own imagination, our own human resources and wisdom, than on the everlasting omnipotent arm of God. And, even though that as sinners saved by grace, God has given us a new heart and mind, we are still plagued with the heart of flesh.

The Israelites were anxious - "What shall we eat? What shall we drink?" These questions are natural to us, but they should not make us anxious so as to cause us to distrust the Lord. Christ dealt with this in *Matthew 6:25-34*. He said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33). God-given faith answers these questions in the glory and grace of Almighty God. There is nothing that exceeds the wickedness of the human heart except the abounding grace of God. The only thing greater than our sin is God's grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ Who has saved us from our sins (Rom. 5:20). Someone once said, "Two things man has never fathomed - the depth of sin and the reality of the grace of God."

(Exod. 17:4-6) - The Lord commanded Moses to "Go out, take the elders with you and take your rod." This is the same rod Moses handed to Aaron with which he smote the Nile and turned it to blood. Then the Lord said, *"I will stand upon the rock in Horeb, and you shall smite the rock. There shall come water out of the rock. And the people shall drink."* Here is another preincarnate appearance of Christ, probably in the pillar of cloud, standing upon this rock from which He would provide water for the people. The Apostle Paul spoke of this rock as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ - **"AND THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST"** (Read *1 Corinthians 10:1-4*). Notice in these verses that Paul called the manna *"SPIRITUAL meat"* and the rock a *"SPIRITUAL Rock."* The manna and the rock were both physical objects and served to promote the physical lives of the Israelites. There was no guarantee of spiritual life from these physical elements. Paul calls them *"spiritual"* because he is making a spiritual application of these for the Corinthian believers of how these things typified Christ the Bread of life and Christ our Rock from which we have the water of life. Consider how this rock typified our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the great salvation that God provides His spiritual people in and by Christ.

(1) The people thought that they would perish. In their eyes all hope was gone because they found no water to drink. Where there is no water, there is no life. This typifies our natural state and condition as fallen in Adam and as we are born spiritually dead and depraved in trespasses and sins. We are sinners by the fall, by birth, by nature, and by practice (Rom. 3:23). We have no spiritual water and no spiritual thirst for spiritual water because there is no spiritual life within us. But then, as the people of Israel realized their physical thirst and the fact there was no water to drink, God the Holy Spirit, at God's

appointed time, causes us to realize our spiritual thirst and the fact that in ourselves and in this world there is no hope for spiritual water and life. We are totally dependent upon God's grace in Christ to quench our spiritual thirst (*Psa. 61:1-2; Matt. 5:6; John 4:10-14*). The human well is dry, the religious well is dry. There is nothing that we can do and nothing the world of flesh can do to save our souls and quench our God-given thirst for righteousness.

(2) God provided a physical rock from which He gave the people physical water to quench their physical thirst. God has provided a spiritual Rock Who is Christ Jesus the Lord for His spiritual people (*Isa. 32:1-2*). Just as the physical rock probably looked the same as so many other rocks, the Lord Jesus Christ outwardly appeared as a mere man, "*a tender plant, a root out of a dry ground,*" having "*no form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire Him*" (*Isa. 53:2-3*). Without spiritual eyes, we could never see the glory and beauty of Christ as God manifest in the flesh Who alone is the water of life.

(3) Moses had to strike this rock with his rod, else no water would come out of it. This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ being smitten ONCE on the cross, producing the life-giving waters of salvation and righteousness for the people whom God had given to Him (*Heb. 10:10,14; 1 Pet. 3:18*). So, our Lord Jesus Christ was smitten, scourged, and crucified that His precious blood might flow forth for the redemption of our souls. He was "*smitten of God and afflicted*" by the just wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him (*Isa. 53:4, 10-12*). By His death came forth the very righteousness of God upon which God has justified all His people. His righteousness imputed to us is the only righteousness that will feed our spiritual hunger and quench our spiritual thirst.

(4) The rock was smitten for a rebellious people who deserved nothing but death. They were sinful, as we are; they were thirsty, as we are; they could do nothing about it, as we cannot. God had mercy upon them providing for their physical needs, as He has done for us providing for our spiritual needs. They were given physical water and life from the rock. We are given spiritual water and eternal life from Christ Who is our Rock. The rock yielded water abundantly. It required no purification by men, no effort to pipe it, only to drink of it freely.

(5) The rock followed them (*1 Cor. 10:4*). It is encouraging to know that the Rock, Christ Jesus, is with us from beginning to end (*Heb. 12:2*). He has said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (*Hebrews 13:5*). We begin with Him at the cross. We continue with Him through this life. We travel with Him right into heaven (*Psalms 23:4*). Christ our Rock is sure and steadfast (*Psalms 18:2-3*). He is the rock and foundation of the church and the water of life for the church (*Matt. 16:18*).

Some believe that this same rock actually rolled along with them in their wilderness wanderings and is the same rock that Moses, near the end of their journey, struck in *Numbers 20:1-12*. Others believe that these were two different rocks from which the Lord gave them water and which typified Christ in the same way. Christ is our fountain of life and the source of all grace through the wilderness of this world until we are brought to heavenly glory. The rock in *Exodus 17* typified the crucified Christ dying for the sins of His people, once for all. The rock in *Numbers 20:1-12* typifies the risen Christ as He accomplished righteousness for His people, and Who is seated on the throne of grace, to Whom we now, as believers, speak to and receive daily grace. At the end of the forty years (*Num. 20:11*), God commanded Moses to SPEAK to the rock (*Num. 20:8*), but Moses disobeyed and, in anger towards the people, struck the rock twice (*Num. 20:11*). This is why Moses was prevented from entering the Promised Land. He had misrepresented God before the people (*Num. 20:12*). Christ, our Rock of salvation, was struck with God's wrath ONCE to put away all the sins of His people and establish righteousness for them. To indicate in any way that it took more than His one sacrifice denies and dishonors God. We trust Christ and His ONE sacrifice to put away all our sins.

(Exod. 20:1-2) - The Lord God brought the people to Mount Sinai where He would give them the Law covenant which would be binding upon them from this time until the coming of the Messiah to do His great work of redemption for God's chosen people, SPIRITUAL Israel, chosen of God out of every tribe and nation. It was here that God gave the 10 Commandments to show the people that they desperately needed Him and His grace for salvation and righteousness. He set a boundary around the mountain to show the people that their sin separated them from God (*Exod. 19:12-13*). He also had the people wash their clothes to illustrate that one had to be cleansed from all filth to meet God (*Exod. 19:10*).

Moses was called by God to go up in the mountain to receive God's law. He came down and told the people what God had told him. In *Exodus 19:8*, the people vowed to obey the law of the Lord - "*all that the LORD hath spoken we will do.*" Religious people have been making this vow ever since, and if they found they did not keep the law, they have vowed to do the best that they could do. It did not take long for them to break this vow. They, like us, were sinners, and could not live up to their vow to keep the perfection of the law. The law demands perfect righteousness, and no sinner can do this (*Rom. 3:10-20; Gal. 3:10-13*). So, why did God give the law? It was to expose and reveal their sinfulness and depravity (*Gal. 3:19*). The law was given to show them their need of Christ and His righteousness for justification before God. Without a mediator, without righteousness, the only thing the law can do is condemn and kill us. The law can neither justify us nor give us life. This is the work of God by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people.

Christ alone is the perfect fulfiller of all the law (*Matt. 5:17-19*). He is the one and only righteousness of His people, because His righteousness imputed to us exceeds any human efforts to produce righteousness (*Matt. 5:20*). Christ and His obedience unto death is the very righteousness of God imputed to His people and that which God brings His people to in God-given faith. "*FOR CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH*" (*ROM. 10:4*). The word "*end*" describes a completed and finished work of perfection - perfect obedience to God's law and justice that completely satisfies the demands of the law. So, God gave the law to Israel to show them their need of His grace and mercy which could only be found in the promised Messiah and based on HIS righteous obedience unto death. Here in *Exodus 20*, Moses returns to the mountain to receive the law in the ten commandments. The first four commandments show man's duty to love God perfectly. The last six commandments show man's duty to love his neighbor as himself.

(Exod. 20:3) - God spoke as the Creator and Deliverer of Israel. His first commandment is "*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*" There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. We worship ONE God Who subsists in three distinct Persons, not three gods, but ONE God, and there are no other gods. Sinful people have no knowledge of the true God and know desire to worship Him until the Holy Spirit reveals Christ, Who is the very image of the invisible God, and what He accomplished by His death on the cross to put away our sins and establish righteousness so that God is just when He justifies His people (*Isa. 45:20-25*). All other gods are idols.

(Exod. 20:4-6) - The second commandment forbids idolatry and graven images that men claim to represent God. There is nothing compared to God. God is jealous for His glory, His holiness, His uniqueness! Unregenerate people worship a god who is like unto themselves and refuse to bow to the revelation that God gives of Himself in His Word through the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason people make idols is because they hate the true and living God (*John 3:19-20*). They do not hate their own gods, but they hate the sovereign God of the Bible. Remember, idolatry

begins in the human mind (*Rom. 1:18-23*). This is one of the reasons we need the righteousness of God for salvation (*Rom. 1:16-17*).

“And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments” -

Christ said, *“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15)*. The whole law is summarized in two commandments - love God perfectly, and love our neighbor as ourselves (*Mark 12:28-34*). No sinner by nature loves God or keeps His commandments. If we love God and keep His commandments in any way, it is the product of His grace towards us by the Lord Jesus Christ. As those who have been saved by the grace of God and who have been given the gift of spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance, we do love God, but we do not love Him perfectly. How do we know this? It is because our love to God and to our neighbor and our obedience to His Word is still so pitiful and still plagued with the presence, corruption, and contamination of the flesh (*cf. Rom. 7:14-25*). The only way that we as sinners saved by grace can say we keep the commandments of God is as we plead the perfect righteousness of Christ by which we are justified before God. Christ is the Law-Keeper Who lived a perfect life of obedience and Who died for our sins on the cross. It is through God’s revelation of Himself in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ that we are brought from worshipping idols to worshipping the true and living God (*Matt. 11:25-30; John 5:23; 6:44-45; 17:1-4; Php. 3:3; 1 John 4:7-19; 5:20-21*).

(Exod. 20:7) - The third commandment forbids using His name without truth and without fear and reverence. Every time a false preacher ascends to a pulpit and preaches a false gospel of salvation conditioned on sinners, he tells a lie about God and takes God’s name in vain. They are also engaging in idolatry by telling sinners of a god who will save them, receive them, bless them, IF they will do their part. This is NOT the God of the Bible. This misrepresents the true God and dishonors His name.

(Exod. 20:8-11) - The fourth commandment concerns keeping the sabbath day. After six days of working, they were to set aside and honor the seventh day by not doing any physical labor. The sabbath was the sign of the whole Old Covenant (*Exod. 31:12-18*). This is why the penalty was so severe as to place a sentence of death upon a man who was gathering sticks on the sabbath (*ex. Num. 15:32-36*). By breaking the sign of the covenant, this man disavowed the whole covenant. The sabbath forced Israel to think about two things every week. First, the sabbath-rest reminded them of what was lost because of sin and rebellion, our fall in Adam, for which man was cursed to hard labor to make his living (*Gen. 3:17-19*). Their life of sweat and tears was a constant reminder of the life of joy they had lost because of their fall in Adam. Secondly, the sabbath was a constant reminder of the promise that one was coming who would establish a greater sabbath-rest that could not be destroyed by anything. The sabbath was a constant reminder of both the burden of sin and the hope of salvation in Christ.

As true believers under the New Covenant, our sabbath is not a day. IT IS CHRIST OUR SPIRITUAL AND ETERNAL SABBATH. We rest spiritually and eternally in Him and the work that He finished as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:1-11*). Sunday is not the Christian sabbath. Christ is our sabbath. Sunday, the first day of the week, is the day that we are to set aside as special for us to meet together and worship the Lord. And we are commanded to not forsake this time of *“assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:25)*. The Lord tells us that forsaking our assemblies of worship could be the first step of a false professor apostatizing from the faith (*Heb. 10:26*). We are not to be bound by sabbath laws and days (*Col. 2:16-17*). Those in *Romans 14* who continue to respect holy days, but not for salvation, were called weaker brethren (*Rom. 14:1-6*).

(Exod. 20:12) - The fifth commandment is to honor our fathers and mothers. *“That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”* - Rebellious children were to be stoned (*Deut. 21:18-21*). Rebellion towards fathers and mothers reflects a rebellion towards God (*Eph. 6:1-3*).

(Exod. 20:13-14) - The sixth commandment forbids killing (murder). Only God, the Creator and Giver of life, has the right to kill, and when He does so, it is not murder (*1 Sam. 2:6*). He gives this authority to civil authorities for capital punishment, but this is not murder. It is justice. The seventh commandment forbids adultery, which is sexual relations with another person's spouse. The Lord made it clear that these commandments, as is the case with all sin, are broken not only in the acts, but also in the thought and desire (*Matt. 5:21-30*). The Pharisees taught that the sin was only in the act, but Christ said, *“except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven”* (*Matt. 5:20*). We all need a righteousness that we cannot produce!

(Exod. 20:15) - The eighth commandment forbids stealing. This would include armed robbery and more subtle sins, such as taking payment for work we have not done. When sinners attribute things to themselves that belong only to God, they are trying to steal God's glory. That is why it is stated in the Bible that Christ claiming to be God was NOT robbery (*Php. 2:6*). When the people of Israel held back their tithes and offerings, the Lord said, *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me ...”* (*Mal. 3:8-9*). It is robbery when sinners seek salvation, or any part of it, based on their works and/or their decisions. God's highest glory is to save sinners by His grace based on the merits of the blood of Christ. God will not share His glory (*Isa. 42:8; 48:11*). It is stealing for one to take credit for something that he or she did not do. When sinners claim that they are saved because of their works or their decisions, they are taking credit for something that God alone does for His people (*John 1:12-13; 3:3-7; Eph. 2:8-10*).

(Exod. 20:16) - The ninth commandment forbids bearing false witness against another person. This is lying against a person in court charging them falsely and lying against a person privately by slandering his character. And we should never overlook the sin of bearing false witness against the Lord which false preachers do when they preach a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the works and wills of sinners. This is lying on God Who saves sinners, again, by His free and sovereign grace and mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. In salvation, God justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them and received by them through God-given faith in Christ. In conversion, God gives spiritual life to dead sinners and draws them to Himself through Christ. This is His glory.

(Exod. 20:17) - The tenth commandment forbids covetousness. Covetousness is a sin of the mind and heart. It is an excessive desire to possess something that belongs to someone else. It is failure to recognize that all good things are ultimately gifts from God, and that neither we nor others deserve or have earned any of these good things. We see covetousness in ourselves when, even as believers, we go through times of suffering and see the wicked prosper in comfort and ease - *“But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked”* (*Psalms 73:2-3*). This is the same as boasting that we deserve better, claiming that God is treating us unjustly. But, as believers in Christ, we know that God is good and just towards us. When we try to figure these things out from a human point of view, they perplex

us - *“When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me” (Psalm 73:16)*. We can only find the answer in God’s Word - *“Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end” (Psalm 73:17)*. The end of all things is the glory of God in Christ and the good of all His people. The wicked shall be destroyed.

It is clear, then, that God’s law not only forbids external acts of sin, but also inward thoughts and motives of sin. Paul wrote, *“for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom. 7:7; cf. Matt. 5:21-30)*, and *“covetousness which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5)*. This is an inordinate desire for material things to the point that it takes a person away from the true worship of God.

(Exod. 20:18-21) - After hearing the law and seeing the manifestations of God’s power from the mountain, the people (who had boasted that they would do all that God commanded) *“removed, and stood afar off.”* They did not want God to speak to them directly lest they die. So, they begged Moses to speak to them. This shows that WE NEED A MEDIATOR BETWEEN US AND THE LORD GOD. To meet God directly without Christ is certain death for sinners. Moses here is a type of Christ Who goes to Father on behalf of His elect (His sheep).

(Exod. 20:22-24) - The basis and ground upon which Moses could go before God as the mediator of the people was found in the altar of sacrifice upon which burnt offerings would be offered to God. It was to be *“an altar of earth”* as it typified the Lord Jesus Christ Who, in His humanity, sprang out of the earth and united His nature of deity with a sinless human body (*Psalm 85:11; Matt. 1:21,23*). *“Burnt offerings”* were sin-offerings picturing the justice of God falling upon Christ, the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. *“Peace offerings”* were thank-offerings as they typified reconciliation between God and His people accomplished by the death of Christ (*Eph. 2:13-18; Col. 1:20-23*). This is where the glory of God as both a just God and a Savior (His name) would shine forth to His people in the way of blessing.

(Exod. 20:25) - God also allowed them to make Him *“an altar of stone,”* but it could not be built or touched by sinful man, or it would be *“polluted”* (defiled). We are sinners who have broken God’s law (*Rom. 3:23; James 2:10*). Salvation is in no way, to no degree, and at no stage conditioned on our works, efforts, and/or decisions. SALVATION IS ALL OF GOD IN AND BY CHRIST! Man has no part in producing the righteousness by which God justifies His people and from which they obtain spiritual life. We who believe and are brought to serve the Lord are the fruit of Christ’s perfect work. If we had anything to do with it, we would pollute it!

(Exod. 20:26) - The justification of sinners is not something we achieve in degrees or steps that we take seeking to reach the goal of righteousness. It is not some progressive holiness whereby we gradually qualify ourselves by great strides of obedience whereby we become less and less sinful and more and more righteous. All that would do is to expose our nakedness - our lack of righteousness before God. Justification is God’s legal declaration wherein, not imputing our sins to us, He has cleansed us from all sins by the blood of Christ once and for all time and for all His people. He has declared us completely righteous in His sight based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to us. Salvation is not a matter of us taking the first step (or few steps) towards God causing Him to step towards us. The Lord reaches all the way down and lifts us beggars off the dungheap of sin and depravity. He is found of them that seek Him not because He seeks and finds them Himself. God takes the initiative and saves His people fully once and for all time.

Lesson 33 - CHRIST IN THE OLD COVENANT *Exodus 24*

(Exod. 24:1-8) - From *Exodus 21–23* we see various laws and precepts, partly of a moral, and partly of a religious, but chiefly of a civil nature, respecting the state of Israel and its political and civil good. Here, we see where the Lord God called Moses, along with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel, to come up to Mount Sinai. Moses alone was to come “*near the Lord.*” The others were to worship from afar or else die under the just wrath of God (*Heb. 12:18-21*). Here, we see Moses as the one mediator between the Lord and the people of Israel and as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and His elect. Sinners cannot come near to God or approach Him and live apart from His appointed, qualified, and willing mediator. This is Christ the Lord (*1 Tim. 2:5*)!

One of the keys to understanding the whole Bible, especially the Old Testament, is to understand the terms and conditions of the Old Covenant law given by the Lord to Israel through Moses, the mediator, and the terms and conditions of the New Covenant (i.e. everlasting covenant of grace accomplished in time) given by the Lord to spiritual Israel through Christ, the Mediator. The Old Covenant placed conditions on the people whereupon they would be blessed and prosper physically and temporally based on their obedience to the law (*ex. Exod. 15:26*). Like all people by nature, they had every intention of keeping the law (*ex. Exod. 19:8; 24:3*), like all people by nature, they continually failed to keep that law (*Deut. 9:7,24; Jer. 31:32*).

After Moses told them of what God commands, knowing that they would fail to keep the law, he “*builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.*” The altar was the place upon which the burnt offerings (which typified God’s wrath and judgment against sin), and peace offerings (which typified peace made between God and sinners by justice satisfied) were slain and burnt up. This altar was built for a specific people, “*the twelve tribes of Israel.*” The “*twelve pillars*” is a type of the complete company of God’s chosen people (spiritual Israel) given to Christ before the foundation of the world. Not one of them will perish because God has imputed their sins to Christ and His righteousness to them. They are all redeemed by the blood of Christ, and all will be regenerated and converted by the Holy Spirit in the new birth and brought to faith in Christ (*John 6:37-45*)

“*Half of the blood*” set aside in basins was to sprinkle on the people. “*Half of the blood sprinkled on the altar*” showed that it was offered unto God. All of this symbolized Christ dying for His people as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, fulfilling all the requirements of the law on their behalf and offering Himself without spot unto God. It typified peace between God and His chosen people by the blood of the cross. It showed that God could only be reconciled to sinners and sinners reconciled to God based on a propitiation, justice satisfied by a God-appointed substitute and sacrifice, which is the very righteousness of God (Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people) revealed in the Gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 5:10-21*).

In all this we see that the Old Covenant was never intended by God to be a way of salvation for sinners. It was “*added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to Whom the promise was made*” (*Gal. 3:19*). The law was given to expose the sinfulness and depravity of the people, and to show them the impossibility of salvation and righteousness being attained by their best efforts to obey the law (*Rom. 3:10-20*). The “*SEED*” that would come is Christ to Whom (as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect - spiritual Israel) the promise of salvation was made by God before the foundation of the world (*Gal. 3:16*). The terms and conditions of the New Covenant were all upon Christ and based on HIS obedience unto death for the sins of God’s elect (*2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 3:13-14*). The Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, is the preaching of the terms and conditions of the

New Covenant as fulfilled by Christ Who is the righteousness of God for His people (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

Galatians 3:21-22 states that the law was never in opposition to the promise because the law was never a way of salvation and righteousness for sinners. The way of salvation has always been by the promise of God conditioned on the faithfulness of Christ to fulfill the law (*Rom. 3:21-26; Php. 3:8-9*). *Galatians 3:23* shows how that before Christ came into the world according to God's promise, the nation Israel was "kept" (as persons surrounded in a garrison) under the law and "shut up" (enclosed together) until the time when Christ would come. "Faith" in this verse does not refer to the grace of faith which God gives to His people whereby they believe on Christ. The Old Testament believers had this kind of faith. "Faith" here is the body of truth of God's promise to send Christ into the world to fulfill all righteousness. *Galatians 3:24* shows us that the law was their overseer (tutor) up until the time of Christ by whom all of God's people are justified based on His righteousness imputed. Justification before God is by Christ Who is the object of faith, by His righteousness which God-given faith in believing looks unto and receives, and not by the law and the works of it. *Galatians 3:24* shows that after Christ has come, there is no more need for the schoolmaster of the law. *Galatians 3:26* shows that all who are true spiritual children of God are made so by the faithfulness of Christ to fulfill all righteousness for them. They were adopted by God before the world began, and they are brought to faith IN Christ by the Holy Spirit in the new birth (*Gal. 4:4-6*). *Galatians 3:27-30* summarizes the spiritual and eternal relationship of God's people, not according to the law, but according to God's grace.

(Exod. 24:9-10) - They saw the Son of God, the God of Israel, before His incarnation appearing in human form, as a pledge and prophecy of His future incarnation. Christ is the Angel that spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, as Stephen said, *"This is He, that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us"* (*Acts 7:38*). The "paved work of a sapphire stone" symbolizes the way to God worked out by the Lord Jesus Christ alone without any help or contribution from sinful men. Salvation is by God's free and sovereign grace, based on the righteousness that Christ worked out in His obedience unto death for His people (*Heb. 1:3; 10:14*). The way of salvation is paved and cleared for us by Christ.

(Exod. 24:11) - These men saw God and lived. This is all with respect to the sacrifice on the altar, and to the fact that God Himself called them and Moses up to see Him. This is another clear testimony that without Christ, without His blood to cover our sins, without His righteousness to justify us, and without God-given eyes to see Him in His glory, we who are so sinful could not look upon God and live. Without Christ, God is a God of strict justice without mercy towards all sinners to whom sin is imputed. But with Christ, we who are still so sinful can and will see God and live.

(Exod. 24:12-18) - These last words show how Moses ALONE was called up to the mount by God to receive the law. Here, Moses is a type of Christ Who went unto God on behalf of God's elect to appear before God and honor the law by His obedience unto death for His people. In the Bible, "forty" represents times of trial and suffering, such as Israel's forty-year wandering in the wilderness. Christ spent a time of trial and suffering unto death for His people as He was made under the law to redeem those who were under the law. Just as Moses would bring the law to the people (the law that they broke), Christ would bring the law to His people (the law which He had kept and fulfilled perfectly) (*John 1:17; Rom. 10:4*).

(Exod. 25:10-22) - From *Exodus 25* to *Exodus 30*, God gave Moses specific instructions on making the Tabernacle, with its furnishings, and the elements of the priesthood, required for Israel to worship God in a temporal and ceremonial way. Every part of the Tabernacle, all materials and all elements were types and pictures that foreshadowed the glorious Person and finished redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ to save His people from their sins. In these elements and the service of the priests through the blood of particular animal sacrifices, God set forth the Messiah whom He would send into the world to redeem His people by His blood, and whom He had justified by grace based on the righteousness of God imputed to them. We can read of this in *Hebrews 9:1-10*. The “*time of reformation*” is that time God had appointed for Christ to come into the world and do His great work of redemption by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect. That was a time of great change, from the Old Covenant law with its tabernacle and its priesthood to the New Covenant wherein all the types and pictures were abolished by way of fulfillment in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*Heb. 9:11-14*). Consider how the following elements in the tabernacle pictured Christ.

Aaron, Moses’s brother, was the first high priest of Israel. There was only one high priest at a time. All the other high priests were one man, descendants of Aaron, in each generation. The high priest was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our one and only eternal great High Priest. All other priests who served the tabernacle were descendants of Levi. They pictured all sinners saved by grace who have been made priests by the blood of Christ. The Bronze (Brazen) Altar and the animal sacrifices were types of Christ our Substitute and Sacrifice. The Golden Laver was a type of Christ our cleansing and regeneration. The Candlestick was a type of Christ the Light of the World. The Table of Shewbread was a type of Christ the Bread of Life. The Incense Altar was a type of Christ our Intercessor and Advocate.

The tabernacle was constructed according to God’s plans given to Moses, and it was constructed mainly to house the Ark of the Covenant. This ark was a box made of wood and covered with gold. The wood pictured Christ’s humanity and the gold pictured His deity - one Person with two distinct natures, God manifest in the flesh. The ark was to contain the tables of the law given by God to Moses. The main object on this Ark was the MERCY-SEAT. This was a lid also made of wood and covered with gold, again, picturing the two natures of Christ as both God and man in one Person. Upon this lid there were the figures of two cherubims (angelic creatures first mentioned in *Genesis 3:24* and involved in the worship and praise of God). These cherubim were placed on either end of the mercy-seat with their wings stretched towards each other covering the mercy-seat, and their faces looking downward towards the mercy-seat. They pictured God’s messengers (preachers) who continually look and point to Christ, the one mercy-seat. The Ark with the mercy-seat was placed in the inner, central chamber of the Tabernacle which was known as the Holy of Holies, or the Holiest of all. The Lord God said -

“And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:22).

The real significance of the Ark of the Covenant was what took place involving the mercy-seat. The term “mercy-seat” comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to cover, placate, appease, cleanse, cancel, or make atonement for.” It was here that the high priest, only once a year (*Leviticus 16*), entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark was kept and atoned for

his own sins and the sins of the Israelites. The high priest sprinkled the blood of the animal sacrificed on the brazen altar onto the mercy-seat to appease the wrath and anger of God for sins committed. This was the only place in the world where this atonement could take place, and this is where the glory of the Lord was revealed in His highest and greatest manifestation (the shekinah glory of God). This is where God revealed Himself as both a just God and a Savior based on the blood of sacrifice to atone for the sins of Israel.

This mercy-seat was a symbolic foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice for all the sins of God's chosen people (spiritual Israel) by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross for the remission of sins. What was merely a ceremonial, temporal, and typical atonement for the physical nation of Israel typified the spiritual, eternal, and final satisfaction of God's justice revealed and established in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of those whom God had chosen and given to Him before the foundation of the world. Christ, the true believer's mercy-seat, accomplished the righteousness that reconciled God to sinners and sinners to God (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

The Apostle Paul, a former Pharisee and one familiar with the Old Testament, knew this quite well when he wrote about Christ being the propitiation for sin in *Romans 3:24-26* - *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."* The purpose of this great work was (and is) *"to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."* *"Propitiation"* means complete satisfaction to God's justice which guarantees the salvation and eternal life of all for whom Christ, our great high priest, our sacrifice, our mercy-seat, died and arose again.

Just as there was only one place for atonement of sins in the Old Testament, the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant, so there is also only one place for reconciliation in the New Testament - the cross of Jesus Christ. As New Testament Christians, we do not look to that physical Ark, that physical sacrifice, or that physical mercy-seat. We look to and rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and the righteousness He accomplished in His obedience unto death and which God has imputed to us. Christ as our one and only mercy-seat *"is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"* (God's elect all over the world from every nation) (1 John 2:1-2; cf. 1 John 4:10). We dare not approach God without Christ, our mercy-seat. To do so is certain death, but to come to God in Christ is the assurance of sweet communion, fellowship, and blessings from God.

In *Luke 18:9-14*, the Lord told a self-righteous and unbelieving group of people of two men, one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee prayed to God thanking Him for all that God had enabled him to do as the ground of his justification before God. There was no confession of sin and no mention of his need of a righteousness that he could not produce or to which he could not contribute. There was no mention of salvation and justification based on Christ's righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. The publican, however, spoke the following - *"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13). The term *"be merciful"* is the Greek term that means *"be propitious,"* showing how this sinful man saw his need of God's grace through the blood of sacrifice sprinkled on the mercy-seat, which is Christ. The same word is translated *"to make reconciliation"* in *Hebrews 2:17*. The Lord said of this publican - *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted"* (Luke 18:14). To be *"justified"* before God means to be forgiven of all sins based on a just ground, and to be declared righteous in God's sight based on a just ground. This just ground was typified in the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat, and the type was completely fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ our eternal Mercy-Seat.

Lesson 35 - THE GLORY OF GOD IN CHRIST *Exodus 33*

(Exod. 33:1-6) - God commands Moses to lead the people from Sinai to the Promised Land. It is made clear here that the land was given because of God's promise to Abraham. Their possessing the land was of God's power and not their own. This is a picture of how salvation is by God's grace to undeserving sinners, and it is by God's power to utterly depraved sinners. It is by the merit and power of Christ.

(Exod. 33:7-11) - Before the actual tabernacle was built, Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the tent of meeting. Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. When Moses would visit this tent of meeting to intercede for the people of Israel, *"the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses"* (Exod. 33:9). Again, this is probably another preincarnate visitation of Christ speaking with Moses. Moses's position of favor with God is evident in the fact that *"the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend"* (Exod. 33:11). We see again that Moses interceding for Israel is a type of Christ Who intercedes for spiritual Israel. We also see how the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ, which is the glory of Christ's Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the glory of His finished work (righteousness established for His people) (2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 2:9-10). There is no acceptable approach unto or communion with God apart from Christ.

(Exod. 33:12-23) - Moses intercedes for the people by asking for three great blessings. These blessings reveal all that we need and all that God requires for our complete salvation!

(1) **SHOW ME NOW THY WAY** (Exod. 33:12-13) - On a physical and temporal level Moses certainly needed the Lord to show him the way to lead the people to the Promised Land. They were totally dependent upon God's guidance and power to get them to their destination. But on a spiritual and eternal level, we can see how this applies to salvation. When it comes to God's dealings with sinners, God's way is the only right way. Man's way is always the wrong way. We see man's way demonstrated in the sin and rebellion of Israel. They would have returned to Egypt and bondage. They thought this was the right thing to do. It is the same in our natural thoughts concerning eternal salvation - *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). As natural, unregenerate, and unbelieving people, we have two problems when it comes to salvation - (1) We do not know the right way, and (2) We do not want the right way. We devise and desire our own ways so that we can have some glory or reason to boast in ourselves. All the ways of the natural man are the broad way that leads to death (Matt. 7:13). When it comes to salvation, like Israel of old, our thoughts and our ways are not God's thoughts and God's ways (Isa. 55:7-8).

Because of God's grace in revealing Himself to Moses, Moses understood that God's way was (and is) the way of grace (unearned, undeserved favor) - *"if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight."* Christ told the Pharisees, *"For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me"* (John 5:46; Heb. 10:19-22). Moses knew that God's way is the way of Christ (John 14:6), the way of mercy and justice based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to His people and received by them in God-given faith.

(2) **DON'T LET ME GO WITHOUT THEE** (Exod. 33:14-17) - Moses knew that if this task were conditioned on him and the people, it would fail. He knew that it was all of God's power and grace to bring them to the Promised Land and keep them together until the time of the promised Messiah. So, he begged for God's presence because of God's grace towards him. Like

Noah of old, Moses had found grace in God's sight. Again, on the spiritual level, without grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, God's presence is not something to be desired. It is something to be feared. Without Christ, God's presence is His wrath against all to whom sin is imputed - *"For our God is a consuming fire"* (Heb. 12:29; cf. John 3:36). God assured Moses of His gracious and glorious presence - *"I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight."* When God says, *"I know thee by name,"* it speaks of God's electing His people to salvation by His grace through Christ. God knows the names of all people, but this knowledge is the intimate knowledge of a loving father to His children (2 Tim. 2:19). Their names were written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. Like the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved on the breastplate of the high priest, the names of God's elect were engraved upon Christ's heart.

(3) SHOW ME THY GLORY (Exod. 33:18-23) - God's glory is His majesty and honor in everything He is and does in creation, judgment, providence, and salvation. Delivering the Hebrews from Egypt and bringing them to the Promised Land was a matter of God's honor and glory. Exodus 33:19 shows us that God's greatest glory (His shekinah glory) is in His sovereign choice of a people (the elect, spiritual Israel) whom He saves in mercy and grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote that this proves that salvation is not by the works or the wills of sinful men but of God (Rom. 9:14-16; cf. Matt. 11:25-26). All of God's attributes are revealed, all working consistently together, in the salvation and justification of His people, sinners, by His grace in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ, their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (John 1:14; Col. 1:19-20; 2:9-10). This is the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ showing how God can be both a just God and a Savior based upon Christ's righteousness freely imputed to His people and received by them in God-given faith (Isa. 45:20-25).

God tells Moses, *"Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live."* Does this contradict verse 11? No. Most believe this is saying that Moses could not see God's face in the fulness of His perfections and the grandeur of His designs and live, as no human being could bear, in the present state, this full discovery. But the main lesson here is that if any of us are to see the face of God in His glory, it can only be as we see His glory in Christ, the Godman, and on the basis of His righteousness accomplished for us. Christ said that to see Him is to see the Father (John 14:7-10).

The Lord then shows Moses how He can reveal Himself in His glory to sinful men - *"Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock."* That place by God is where the Lord Jesus Christ sits at the Father's right hand ever living to make intercession for us as our Advocate. He is that ROCK upon whom we stand, the very foundation of His church. God puts His people in the cleft of the Rock which is in Christ Jesus, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. Christ is our hiding place who shields us from the just wrath of God. Christ took our wrath upon Himself as our sins were imputed to Him, and we stand before God in His righteousness imputed to us.

To be covered by God's hand is a metaphor for His providential protection of His people until the time that He passes by in the coming of Christ into the world and who as God manifest in the flesh accomplished is work of redeeming His people from sin. His *"back parts"* is a metaphor for His finished work wherein He reveals Himself as both a just God and a Savior. God reveals Himself in His works whereby He shows His power, goodness, justice, grace, and mercy (Isa. 46:9-13). The salvation of sinners is not assured by what God intended to do but failed, for God has never failed. But salvation is assured by what God has already done in and by Christ!

(Exod. 34:29-35) - In these verses, the Lord gives us the historical record of an event that, according to the Apostle Paul, has much to teach about Israel under the Old Covenant Law in contrast with spiritual Israel under the New Covenant Gospel. We have seen in our studies of Christ in the Old Testament how that the Old Covenant Law itself was not a covenant of salvation, in and of itself. The law was given to Israel through Moses to show the people their sinfulness and depravity showing the impossibility of salvation based on their works of the law. Even the ceremonial laws of the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the sacrifices could not accomplish eternal salvation from their sins and produce righteousness by which to justify them (*Rom. 3:19-20; Heb. 9:7-13; 10:1-4*). The law had no power to justify them before God, and it had no power to give them spiritual life (*Rom. 8:3*). The law did set forth the Gospel of Christ and salvation by Him in its pictures, types, and shadows, all foretelling of His coming into the world to establish righteousness by which God justifies His people and from which God gives them spiritual life from the dead and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works.

The only way for any Israelite under the Old Covenant Law to be saved was for God to reveal His truth in Christ beyond the types, pictures, and shadows of the law (*John 5:39-47*). Just like in the New Testament, under the Old Covenant, they had to be born again, given spiritual eyes to see beyond the ceremonies and sacrifices and look to Christ as the promised Messiah. They had to be brought by God to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works according to God's Gospel promise which has never changed. The Bible tells that during their time under the Old Covenant (about 1500 years) that very few of them truly believed the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. There was a small remnant of true believers in each generation, but the majority were blinded by their own unbelief and self-righteousness. Paul described this in *Romans 9:31–10:4*. In *2 Corinthians 3* the Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to take this event in our text and make a spiritual application to the unbelieving Israelites who could not see the glory of God in Christ and salvation by God's grace through Him.

(2 Cor. 3:1-6) - In these verses, Paul makes clear the superiority of the Gospel over the Law. As stated before, the Law had no power to declare a sinner righteous before God based on their works because the Law can only condemn sinners to whom sin is imputed (*Rom. 5:13; 1 Cor. 15:56*). The Law could not give spiritual life or change the hearts of any who were under it. The Gospel reveals how righteousness was brought in and established by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's people (*Rom. 3:21-26*). It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the Gospel and gives spiritual life in the new birth to sinners and brings them to faith in Christ and true repentance (*Rom. 1:16-18; cf. Jer. 31:31-34*). Paul stated it this way - "*for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life*" (*2 Cor. 3:6*).

(2 Cor. 3:7-11) - Here, the apostle draws a stark contrast between the Old Covenant Law and the Gospel. He calls the Old Covenant "*the ministration of death*." He admits that it "*was glorious*" in its time and administration, and he compares its glory to "*the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance*" (*cf. Exod. 34:30*). We can also consider the glory of God in all of His marvelous and miraculous works during that time. The Old Covenant truly had a degree of glory. But, like the shining face of Moses, the glory of the Old Covenant was ordained by God "*to be done away*" (*2 Cor. 3:7; cf. Heb. 8:13*). Paul calls the Gospel "*the ministration of the Spirit*" and "*the ministration of righteousness*" which exceeds in glory over the Old Covenant. Paul even goes so far as to say that when compared with the glory of God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ and the very righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel, the Law

“had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth” (2 Cor. 3:10). He wrote, “For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2 Cor. 3:11).

(2 Cor. 3:12-14) - The hope of the Gospel is the absolute certainty of eternal life and glory by God’s promise which is made sure by the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are forgiven of all our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are righteous in God’s sight because of His righteousness imputed, a righteousness in which God’s law can find no flaw (*Rom. 8:33-34*). This is the glory that is most excellent and that excels all others. This is the shekinah glory of God as He reveals Himself to be both a just God and a Savior. Unlike the glory that shone forth in Moses’s face so that the children of Israel could not steadily gaze upon it, which was eventually to be abolished, this glory revealed in the face of Jesus Christ will never diminish or be abolished.

“But their minds were blinded” - When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with a brightness showing from his face, he put a vail over his face so that they could look at him. Paul makes a spiritual application here. The vail over Moses’s face symbolizes the natural spiritual blindness of the children of Israel (and all of us by nature) that blinded their understanding of the Old Testament. By nature we are all blinded from the truth of God’s glory in Christ by our natural ignorance and self-righteousness. There is also a satanic blinding as Satan deceives the whole world (i.e. the world of unbelievers). There is also the judgment of God in judicially blinding those who have continued stubbornly and rebelliously to reject His truth (*Rom. 11:7-10; cf. Isa. 29:9-12*). It takes a miraculous, powerful, and invincible work of God’s power and grace to give blind sinners eyes to see and ears to hear the glory of salvation by His grace in Christ (*Matt. 13:10-17*). And the way God does this is by the Holy Spirit in the new birth under the preaching of the Gospel and by showing sinners their sinfulness and depravity thus driving them to Christ for all salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life - *“which vail is done away in Christ.”*

(2 Cor. 3:15-18) - Paul states here that the problem the Old Covenant Israelites had in being blinded from seeing the greater and more excellent glory of God in Christ is the same problem that plagued Israel in his own day. This is the same problem that people have today when they read the Bible. The vail of ignorance and self-righteousness is *“upon their heart.”* This is why *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14)*. This is why we must be born again else we cannot SEE the kingdom of God (*John 3:3-7*). The only way this vail can be taken away is by God revealing the light of His truth to us in the power of the Spirit to bring us to *“turn to the Lord.”* Until then, the Bible is a closed book to us. Left to ourselves, we will not see and believe the things of the glory of God (*John 3:19-20*).

When Paul states that *“the Lord is that Spirit,”* he means that the Holy Spirit, Who is the sovereign Agent in the new birth and giving spiritual sight to the blind, is Himself God. Where the Holy Spirit does this great work in turning sinners to Christ, *“there is liberty” (Rom. 6:7; 17-18; Gal. 5:1; Heb. 10:19-22)*. This liberty is unhindered freedom for all chosen, justified, redeemed, and regenerated sinners to approach God in Christ and find acceptance, blessing, and fellowship. And because the Spirit has turned us to see the glory of God in Christ, not yet perfectly, but as in a mirror (*1 John 3:1-2*), we are changed, transformed, to be like Christ, again, not perfectly in ourselves, but in that we now have the mind of Christ and have been made new creations in Christ (*1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:14-17; Eph. 2:10*). In the end of all things, we who are now righteous and secure in Christ, by God’s grace, we will be changed by the Spirit to be perfectly conformed to Christ (*1 Cor. 15:50-58*).

Lesson 37 - OFFERINGS UNTO THE LORD - *Leviticus 1:1-4*

(Lev. 1:1-4) - *Exodus 35-40* records the building and dedication of the tabernacle. This is all a picture and type of the glorious Person and finished work of Christ and the salvation God freely gives to His chosen people, spiritual Israel, based on the blood of Christ (righteousness imputed). In *Leviticus*, we see the laws for all sacrifices and offerings unto the Lord, the priesthood, laws of dedication and purification, the day of atonement, laws governing relationships, penalties for particular sins, and the feast days. This was to keep them separate from other nations (*Lev. 20:26*). The most important offering for the nation was the Day of Atonement. Once a year, the high priest entered the holy of holies with the blood of sacrifice and sprinkled the blood over the mercy-seat (*Lev. 16:1-34*) for ceremonial atonement for the sins of the nation for one year. This was repeated yearly (*Heb. 9:7; 10:3*).

There were five offerings that God required of them. Four were blood offerings for atonement teaching that no sinner is accepted with God except on the basis of justice satisfied in the death of a substitute. They could only offer unblemished animals that God prescribed (*Lev. 22:17-25*). One offering was a meal or grain offering for thanksgiving, and to be without leaven (*Lev. 2:11*). Without blemish and without leaven pictured the sinlessness of Christ who bore our sins imputed to Him. God is reconciled to us and accepts our persons and our praise, worship, and service based on the merits of Christ's blood (*Heb. 1:3; 9:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; Rev. 1:5*). Meal offerings pictured the sacrifices of praise, worship, and service that God's people offer Him in gratitude for His grace in Christ. This pictured how that God's justice must first be satisfied by the death of Christ, and how God's people (their persons and their service) can only be accepted by Him through Christ (*Eph. 1:3-7; 1 Pet. 2:5*). The first three offerings were voluntary (*Lev. 1:3*), and, thus, sometimes called "free-will" offerings. This in no way gives credence to the modern heresy of "free-willism" which says that salvation is conditioned on man's "free-will." By nature, man has no will to believe God. But these voluntary offerings were typical of the new will that God gives His people in the new birth wherein they believe in Him and desire to praise, worship, and serve Him.

I. THE BURNT OFFERING (*Lev. 1*) - The burnt offering pictured the highest aspect of the work of Christ for God's chosen people where He is seen offering Himself up entirely to God to do His will even unto death to establish righteousness by which God justifies His people. It had to be without blemish in order to typify the sinless perfection and impeccability of Christ, the spotless Lamb of God. Christ did no sin, had no sin, and was never made sin in any way other than by the imputation of the sins of His people to His account (*2 Cor. 5:21a*). The whole offering was burnt upon the altar, and all went up to God as a sweet savour (*Eph. 5:2*), meaning that Christ's one sacrifice for sins glorified and satisfied God. Christ is the propitiation for the sins of His people, and His blood (His righteousness imputed) insures their complete salvation. For Israel under the Law, this was to be a continual testimony of the fact that we are all sinners who deserve nothing but condemnation and eternal death; that we can do nothing to make ourselves righteous and save ourselves from sin; that we need God's grace and mercy in Christ (the promised Messiah) for all salvation and all eternal blessings (*Eph. 1:3*).

II. THE MEAL OFFERING (*Lev. 2*) - These offerings were not for atonement as without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (*Heb. 9:7,22*). The blood offerings pictured the ground of salvation and justification before God accomplished by the death of Christ. The meal offerings pictured Christ, the Bread of life and the fruit of salvation which is spiritual life given to spiritually dead sinners in the new birth by Christ. Christ's righteousness imputed is the ground of a sinner's justification before God, AND it is the source of spiritual

life from God. The meal offerings typified the praise, worship, and service of God's people, sinners saved, forgiven, and made righteous already in and through God's grace in Christ, all which evidence spiritual life within. God's people continually feed upon Christ and His Word, the Bread of life, as the Holy Spirit inspires and energizes them to praise, worship, and serve Him as they are motivated by love, grace, and gratitude. So, someone accepted by God, by His grace in Christ as pictured in the burnt offering, could respond in gratitude through a meal (or grain) offering (thank-offering). It usually was an offering of flour and oil with frankincense (a symbol of righteousness) in which a handful was burned, and the priests ate the rest. It was a gift to God from the best of the worshipper's grain in an act of thanksgiving for sins forgiven. An additional offering, the drink offering ("libation"), was poured on top of the grain offering as a symbol of joy (*Lev. 23:13; cf. Exod. 29:40-41*).

III. THE PEACE OFFERING (*Lev. 3*) - This offering pictured reconciliation accomplished that leads to sweet communion and fellowship between God and sinners in Christ. It required an unblemished animal from the worshipper's herd and/or various grains or breads. This was a sacrifice of thanksgiving and fellowship followed by a shared meal. The high priest was given the breast of the animal; the officiating priest was given the right foreleg. These pieces of the offering were called the "wave offering" and the "heave offering" because they were waved or lifted over the altar during the ceremony. The fat, kidneys, and lobe of the liver were burnt, meaning they were given to God, and the remainder of the animal was for the participants to eat, symbolizing God's provision. The vow offering, thanksgiving offering, and freewill offering mentioned in the Old Testament were all peace offerings.

IV. THE SIN OFFERING (*Lev. 4–5:13*) - This offering could also be called a "purification offering." It dealt with two issues: the necessity of forgiveness from unintentional sins and of cleansing from ceremonial uncleanness (*Lev. 4:2-3*). One purpose of the sin offering was to cleanse the tabernacle from human defilement, thus making possible the continuing fellowship and presence of God among His people. The special feature of this offering is in the whole bullock being burnt upon the ground outside the camp of Israel after the blood and fat were put upon the altar for God. This offering was for sin and pictures Christ who was made sin for us based on our sins imputed to Him (*2 Cor. 5:21*), and how He endured the judgment and wrath of God against sin in our stead as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. The holiness of God and the awfulness of sin are pictured in the bullock being entirely burnt up outside the camp. It pictures Christ, forsaken of God, as our Sin-bearer as described in passages such as *Psalms 22*.

V. THE TRESPASS OFFERING (*Lev. 5:14–6:7*) - This offering was exclusively a ram sacrificed as an atonement for unintentional sins. It required reimbursement to an offended party, and also a cleansing from defiling sins or physical maladies. In the act of restitution for injuring someone by fraud, oppression, or deception, the value of the item in question was to be returned, and a "*fifth part*" (20%) of the value of the item was to be added. In this way, cursing was turned into blessing. Atonement was made by the blood of the offering, and the trespasser was forgiven. This offering presents Christ who died for our sins and trespasses on the cross restoring that which He took not away (*Psa. 69:4*). He has not only answered to God for our sins and paid our debt by His shed blood, but has added "*the fifth part*," as it were, bringing more glory to God and more blessings to man than were had before sin was committed. In Christ, not only do we find our trespasses taken away, but we also see the gift of righteousness imputed to us and from which we have spiritual and eternal life (*Rom. 5:21; 8:1-10*).

(Lev. 16:1) - This was when Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, offered "*strange fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-3)*". The only fire acceptable to God was to be taken from the brazen altar where this fire fell from heaven to consume the sacrifice and was placed into the golden altar of incense in the holy place. Nadab and Abihu offered common fire against God's commandments. God's judgment fell upon them. The burnt offering, the fire, and the altar of incense, all pictured salvation and acceptance with God through the death of Christ. Without His death, His satisfaction to justice, for us, and without His intercession, there is only eternal death.

(Lev. 16:2-3) - The following verses describe in detail the Day of Atonement (*cf. Lev. 23:27-28*), which was the most solemn holy day of all the feasts and festivals for the Israelites under the Old Covenant Law. It occurred once a year on the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. On that day, the high priest was to perform elaborate rituals to atone for the sins of the people. It had to be repeated each year because this ritual involving the blood of bulls and goats could not and did not actually put away the sins of the people in a spiritual and eternal way before God (*Heb. 9:9; 10:1-4*). They only accomplished a physical, temporal, and ceremonial covering of sins by which God had determined to be the way in which He would deal with this nation in a physical, temporal, and ceremonial way (*Heb. 9:6, 13*). But the fact that this ritual was once a year signified that the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, would come in time and by His ONE SACRIFICE for the sins of God's chosen people (God's elect), which had been imputed to Him, would accomplish eternally, not a temporal and ceremonial covering of sins, but a complete purging away of all the sins of all His people forever and ever (*John 19:30; Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 10:14*).

Aaron, and all high priests descended from him, during the time that the Old Covenant was in force (*Heb. 9:10*), were to go into the holy of holies one time a year on this day of atonement. This is where and when God would reveal His glory within the veil before the mercy seat. The ritual began with Aaron coming into the holy of holies. God told Moses to warn Aaron not to come into the most holy place except on this special day once a year, and not without blood, lest he die (*Heb. 9:7*). The people were to understand that atonement for sin was to be done God's way. This shows us that God's way of our eternal salvation from sin, God's way of establishing righteousness by which He justifies sinners, is HIS way, the way of sovereign grace through the merits of Christ's blood (His righteousness imputed) (*John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:17-22*). The day of atonement pointed to the day of the cross in which Christ, as our Surety and Substitute, accomplished our complete and eternal redemption by His death on the cross. THIS WAS (AND IS) INDEED THE GREATEST OF ALL DAYS IN REDEMPTIVE HISTORY.

(Lev. 16:4) - On this day, before entering the holy of holies, Aaron had to wash himself in water and then put on special garments that God designed and ordained for the high priest. This typified the purity and holiness of Christ in the glory of His Person as God in sinless human flesh. Christ was made sin for us but He himself knew no sin. He was (and is) the impeccable Christ, the Lamb of God without spot or blemish. He was made sin only by the imputation of the sins of God's people to His account.

(Lev. 16:5-6) - Aaron had to offer sacrifice first for himself and his family because he himself, and his family, were all sinners who needed an atonement for their own sins. There are those who erroneously apply this part of the type to Christ Himself claiming that He had to first offer Himself as a sacrifice for His own sins and then offer Himself for the sins of His people.

This is not so! This is heresy! Again, Christ had no sins of His own. The proponents of this heresy say that our sins became His sins, and they quote passages such as *Psalms 69:5* where David writes of himself, and also prophetically of Christ Whom David typified - “*O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.*” As one interpreter wrote, “David might truly say this but not our Lord, unless he refers to our sins imputed and laid to his charge. He was made to be sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21).”¹ The sins of God’s elect DID become Christ’s sins, but only by the imputation of the debt of those sins to His account. Christ was never corrupted or contaminated with our sins, but He did become legally responsible for our sins. Unlike Aaron and all human high priests under the Old Covenant, Christ was not a sinner and did not have to offer Himself unto God first for His own sins. This is a major aspect of His superior priesthood over the priesthood of Aaron (*Heb. 7:22-28*).

(Lev. 16:7-10) - After this, Aaron was to bring two goats. He was to “*cast lots upon the two goats.*” The one upon which the lot fell was to be sacrificed for the people (*Lev. 16:16*), and its blood was sprinkled on the ark of the covenant on the mercy seat. The other goat was used as a “*scapegoat.*” Aaron placed his hands on its head, confessed over it the sins of the Israelites, and sent the goat out “*with a fit man*” who released it into the wilderness never to be seen again (*Lev. 16:20-23*). The goat carried on itself all the sins of the people, which were forgiven for another year (*Lev. 16:30*). “*Putting their sins upon the head of the goat*” is a clear and classic type of the imputation of our sins to Christ. That goat was not made a sinner. Sins were not transferred into that goat in any way. That goat typified Christ upon whom all of the sins of all of God’s elect were charged and for which He paid with the price of His own blood. Christ suffered “*the just for the unjust*” (*1 Pet. 3:18*), and God was just to punish His sinless Son for the sins of His people imputed to Him (*Rom. 3:21-26*). God is just to justify His people (sinners saved by grace) based on Christ’s righteousness imputed to them (*Rom 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

Leviticus 16:29-31 tells us that this day of atonement was to be a “*statute forever*” and a “*sabbath of rest*” unto them “*by a statute for ever.*” Does this mean that these sacrifices would never cease and that we should be offering animal sacrifices today? NO! The context of this passage as well as the whole Bible shows us that this meant a continual statute during the whole time of the Old Covenant. It was all to be fulfilled and vanish away by the coming of Christ to accomplish eternal salvation for His people (*Heb. 8; 9:1-14*). All of this shows us how Christ is the complete atonement for our sins and how He, by Himself for our sins, satisfied God’s justice in our stead, and brought in an everlasting righteousness which God has imputed to His chosen people for our justification. Christ, our fit Man (Godman) and our Scapegoat has carried our sins away forever and ever. Christ is our great High Priest (*Heb. 4:14*). He is also our Lamb, sacrificed for our sins. *2 Corinthians 5:21* says that Christ was “*made sin*” for us so that we “*might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*” Our sins were laid on Christ Who in Himself had no sin and remained so even under the justice of His Father’s wrath. In this work, He brought forth and finished an everlasting righteousness of infinite value to glorify God in the salvation of His people (*cf. Isa. 53*). And Christ fulfilled what the scapegoat represented - the complete removal of our sins from any record in God’s sight (*Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 8:10; 10:17*). There is no longer a need to sacrifice animals or impute sins to a scapegoat to have them carried away. Christ has been sacrificed, and He has “scapegoated” for us. Because of Christ’s death and resurrection, ONCE FOR ALL His people, our sins have been purged and have been removed never to be brought up again.

¹ Mahan, Henry, *With New Testament Eyes*, Vol. 1, page 252.

(Lev. 23:1-2) - Under the Old Covenant the Lord God required Israel to keep seven feasts. Each feast was typical of our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of His people. God began with a reminder of the sabbath, the sign of the covenant (*Exod. 31:12-18*). Each feast was associated with sabbath observance. This typified the eternal rest of His people based on Christ's finished work of redemption (*Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4*). Salvation was (and is) all of grace and not of our works but by the one work of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Under the New Covenant we are not bound by law to keep these feast days (*Col. 2:16-17*). But we do keep them spiritually when we believe in and celebrate our complete salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Lev. 23:4-5) - THE PASSOVER was the first feast to be observed. This feast was a celebration of God's great and powerful work of bringing Israel out of Egypt by His mighty power because of the blood that was shed for them (*Ex. 12-14*). The spiritual and eternal significance of the Passover feast was to picture the promised Messiah (Christ) Who would come as the Lamb of God Who would bear away the sins of God's elect (spiritual Israel) according to God's promise (*1 Cor. 5:7*). Like the blood on Jewish altars, the lamb's blood over the doorposts in Egypt could never take away sins spiritually and eternally. The blood of Christ cleanses God's people from all sin and provides all righteousness for God to justify His elect. Christ is our Passover and our Righteousness before God (*Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Pet. 1:18-20*).

(Lev. 23:6-8) - THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD was a continuation of the Passover in which the Israelites were to keep a sabbath and eat unleavened bread along with bringing an offering made by fire unto the Lord. The Passover (and the offering made by fire) typifies the GROUND of salvation and justification before God, and the feast of unleavened bread typifies the effect (result) of the blood of Christ shed for our sins. As leaven is a type of sin, this feast pointed to the sinless Christ, Who died for our sins which were legally imputed to Him, and the legal sinlessness of all for whom He shed His precious blood. We are justified by His blood, which is His righteousness imputed to us. And though, while in this body of flesh, we are still sinners within ourselves, Christ has completely taken away (purged) our sins so that God does not impute them to us or keep a record of them to hold them against us (*Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 10:14-22*). We have been judged for all our sins in Christ crucified. Eating this bread for seven days pictures the complete work of Christ as He forever purged our sins and finished the work of righteousness (*Rom. 10:4; Heb. 1:3*). Eating it also typifies our feeding spiritually upon Christ and by faith in Christ Who is the Bread of life for His people (*John 6:53-56*).

(Lev. 23:9-14) - THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS was during the barley harvest in Israel. The people were to bring the firstfruits of that harvest and offer it unto the Lord in recognition that the blessing of the harvest was totally from God and giving Him thanks for the bountiful harvest. Spiritually, this feast speaks of the resurrection of Christ (the harvest of His death which is likened to planting seed - *John 12:23-33*). His being planted in death to satisfy the justice of God brought forth righteousness (evidenced by His resurrection from the dead) and which assures the absolute certainty of the spiritual and eternal resurrection and life for all His people for whom He died (*Rom. 4:21-25; 11:16; 1 Cor. 15:20-28; James 1:18; Rev. 14:4*). Notice in verse 12 how the sheaf of the firstfruits were to be offered with the lamb of burnt offering, showing how that spiritual life can only come by the death of Christ.

(Lev. 23:15-22) - THE FEAST OF WEEKS was held fifty days (seven weeks and a day—a sabbath) after the feast of first fruits. It is commonly called “Pentecost” because it was held on the 50th day. This was held at the beginning of the wheat harvest. The first fruits of the wheat, like the first fruits of the barley, were to be offered to the Lord, but not a sheaf. The wheat offering was to be offered in the form of two loaves of bread, and it was to be leavened bread which the priests would eat. The loaves were to be offered with specific animal sacrifices, and, finally, waved with two lambs of the first year before the Lord by God’s appointed priest. This feast was a picture of the ingathering of God’s elect, all redeemed by the blood of Christ, through the work of God the Holy Spirit (*Joel 2, Acts 2*). The two loaves of leavened bread represent God’s elect (sinners saved by grace), gathered from the four corners of the earth by the Holy Ghost, and presented before him, in connection with the righteousness of Christ our Passover, who was sacrificed for us. In the Passover, we see the sacrificial death of Christ, the Lamb of God. In the sheaf of first fruits, we see the resurrection, ascension, and acceptance of Christ as our sin-atonement Substitute, and the guarantee of our resurrection unto life. Here, in the feast of Pentecost, we see the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit for the ingathering of God’s elect, which was the result of Christ’s accomplished redemption (*Gal. 3:13-14; 4:4-6*).

(Lev. 23:23-25) - THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS was held in the Fall. No work was to be done. Burnt offerings and a sin offering were to be brought before the Lord. The trumpets were calls to the people to stop their work and bring their offerings before the Lord. Spiritually, this feast was a type of spiritual joy and gladness that belongs to God’s elect when the Holy Spirit brings them to hear the joyful sound of the Gospel of God’s grace and mercy in Christ (*Psa. 89:14-18; Isa. 35:10*). Every saved sinner enters into the joyful sound of grace proclaimed in the Gospel. We hear the sweet sounds of mercy and truth, justice and judgment, righteousness and peace blended together in blessed harmony, and rejoice. We hear of justice satisfied, redemption accomplished, our sins are purged and pardoned by His blood, righteousness finished and imputed to us, God glorified, salvation secured, all of grace!

(Lev. 23:26-32) - THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (see Lesson 38) - The word “*atonement*” in *verse 27* should be plural - “*atonements*.” It would be better translated “*expiations*.” This is the same as the day of atonement described in *Leviticus 16* and typifies our perfect, complete restoration to our God through the blood of Christ sprinkled on the mercy seat. As stated in Lesson 38, this was the most important day of the year for the nation. For us today, this is the day of the cross-death of Christ when by His ONE offering He perfected forever all whom the Father had given Him before the world began (*Heb. 10:14*).

(Lev. 23:33-43) - THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES was a time when Israel was reminded that they dwelt in tents (booths) in the wilderness, that God dwelt with them in the cloudy and fiery pillar, and that God delivered them out of the wilderness and into the promised land. It was to be a time of remembrance and repentance. Spiritually, it was a type of Christ Who came to this wilderness of sin and death and united Himself with sinless human flesh to save us from our sins and bring us out of the wilderness of sin and death into the blessedness of salvation by His grace. The eighth day mentioned in *verse 36* is the day of new beginnings. It is the day that God’s children are born again and brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry (*cf. Php. 3:3-9*). Like all of the other feasts, this one pointed sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory of His Person and the power and success of His finished work of redemption for His people and the salvation God freely and fully provides us in and by Him (*cf. John 7:37-38; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 21:5-7*). These feasts were all truly meant to be celebrations of Christ!

Lesson 40 - BELIEF AND UNBELIEF *Numbers 13:25–14:25*

(Num. 13:25-33) - Israel encamped below Mt. Sinai for about a year where God gave them the law. They then moved across the desert with the cloud before them. Remember, this cloud by day (fire by night) is Christ's presence and power with them to protect and guide them on their way. Some claim this was a preincarnate visitation of Christ; others believe it was a type of Christ. Either way, we know it was the Lord Who brought them out of Egypt and to the Land of Promise. The significance of this to us spiritually is to show how the Lord has delivered us out of the bondage of sin and death by the blood of Jesus Christ and has brought us to the promised land of salvation with all its blessings and benefits. Our eternal salvation is all the work of God's sovereign power and grace in Christ (*Eph. 2:8-10*)!

Here, in our text, they came to Kadesh-Barnea (*Num. 13:26*), on the edge of the desert and on the border of the land God had promised them. The Lord ordered Moses to send twelve men to search out the land which he had given to them (*Num. 13:1-20*). Two of the men chosen by Moses were "*Caleb*" (*Num. 13:6*) and "*Oshea*" (*Num. 13:8*). "*Oshea*" is Joshua. Moses changed his name from "*Oshea*," which means "salvation," to "*Jehoshua*," which means "Jehovah saves" or "Jehovah is salvation" (*Num. 13:16*). This is the same as "Joshua," and which the New Testament equivalent is "Jesus." Joshua was later appointed by God to replace Moses and lead the nation into the Promised Land. In that capacity, Joshua was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ Who leads His people (spiritual Israel) into the promised land of salvation and eternal life. The name "*Caleb*" means "faithful dog."

The spies were in the land for forty days and returned, bringing fruits from the land and their report about the land and its inhabitants (*Num. 13: 23-27*). All of the spies except Joshua and Caleb discouraged the people from entering the land (*Num. 13:31-33*). By God's grace, Joshua and Caleb believed God. They urged the people to obey God and go into Canaan to possess the land that God had promised and had given to them (*Num. 13:30; 14:6-9*). They knew that taking possession of the land was not conditioned on their own strength. It was all of God. Joshua and Caleb represent all of God's true people, saved by grace and brought by God to believe in Christ and depend upon His grace and power in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. All whom God has brought to faith in Christ know that their whole salvation and their eternal security was (and is) conditioned on Christ Who fulfilled all conditions as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

The people of Israel would not listen to Joshua and Caleb but rather listened to the majority and would have stoned Joshua and Caleb (*Num. 14:10*). God turned them back to die in the wilderness. All who were over twenty years of age (except Joshua and Caleb) would never enter the land (*Num. 14:24, 28-33*). *Hebrews 3:7-19* shows us that the people could not enter into the promised land of safety and rest because of their unbelief. *Hebrews 4:1-2* warns us not to follow their bad example of unbelief concerning matters of eternal salvation and eternal rest as revealed in the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of God in Christ. All who are justified by God (forgiven of all sins based on the blood of Christ and accepted with God based on Christ's righteousness imputed) live by God-given faith in Christ (*cf. Rom. 1:16-17*).

(Num. 14:1-4) - The people's unbelief brought them not only to reject God but to desire to go back to their bondage in Egypt. This is a testimony to man's natural blindness and unbelief. By nature, fallen, sinful, unregenerate people see security and safety in bondage and in unbelief.

(Num. 14:5-9) - Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb grieved and begged the people not to provoke the Lord. In the same way, when it concerns eternal salvation and eternal life, the

ministers of God's truth grieve over the unbelief of so many and beg sinners to be reconciled to God in the only way that God has freely and fully provided - the righteousness of Christ imputed by God to us and received by God-given faith (*2 Cor. 5:20-21*).

(Num. 14:10-12) - The people continued in their rebellion and wanted to stone Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. God then pronounced His judgment of wrath against the people for their unbelief. This is the only just result for those who continue all of their lives in unbelief and rebellion against God (*John 3:18-20,36*).

(Num. 14:13-19) - Moses interceded for the people. These matters are difficult for us to understand. We look at this and, in our natural minds, conclude that Moses is trying to change God's mind or persuade God to do something against His will, and succeeded, but this is not the case. God is immutable and not only cannot change but has no need to change. All things are going according to God's sovereign, immutable plan, purpose, and will (*Eph. 1:11*). But God has determined for it to play out in history like this for His own glory. Moses intercedes not on the basis of any goodness or worthiness in the people; for they are sinners and deserve nothing but God's wrath. Moses appeals to God on the basis of God's glory in His promise to preserve this nation until Messiah would come. Christ intercedes for God's spiritual people (His elect) whom He knows by name and knows will be saved (*John 6:37-45*) for God's glory based on His the merits of His obedience unto death (*John 17:1-5*).

(Num. 14:20-25) - God did bring judgment upon them. He spared their lives, but this whole generation, except Joshua and Caleb, would not enter into the Promised Land. This shows us that no one will enter the blessings of salvation except those who are brought by God's grace and power to believe in Christ (*John 3:36*). These rebellious people had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. God also promised that every person twenty years old or older would die in the wilderness and would not see the land, again, with two exceptions, Joshua and Caleb. This is all by God's goodness, power, and mercy, but it is stated in *Numbers 14:24,30*, and *38*, that it was "Because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it." This would apply to Joshua also. This promise came true. After the death of Moses forty years later, Joshua led the people across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Caleb received an inheritance in the Promised Land in his old age (*Joshua 14*).

All of this shows us several things about belief (faith in God) and unbelief. (1) Man by nature is an unbeliever and will not believe the truth (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-4*), unless God does a work of grace and grants faith and repentance. (2) Unbelief is the ultimate insult to God, calling Him a liar. Faith glorifies God as it brings us to recognize, acknowledge, and submit to His revelation of Himself and His way of salvation (*Rom. 4*). (3) Faith (believing in Christ and the truth as it is revealed in Him) is the gift of God given to all whom God chose before the world began, all for whom Christ died and arose again, and all whom the Holy Spirit regenerates and converts (*John 1:12-13; Eph. 2:8-10*). (4) Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17*). God has chosen His people in Christ before the world began, and He has determined that each one of His elect will enter all the blessings and benefits of salvation when the Holy Spirit gives them spiritual life from Christ and brings them into God's kingdom by faith (*John 3:3-7; Heb. 4:1-11*).

(Num. 20:1-2) - Once again, we see the glaring sinfulness of the people of Israel. *“There was no water for the congregation”* - They found themselves in need, but rather than turning to the Lord to care for them as He had promised, *“they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.”* Lest we become puffed up and proud in our own minds, thinking that we are better than they, consider that if we are saved and preserved unto glory, it is not because we are better than the people of Israel. It is not because of any goodness or faithfulness in ourselves. IT IS ALL OF GOD’S GRACE IN CHRIST! How many times, even in our lives as sinners saved by grace, have we found ourselves in need, and rather than turning to the Lord, we lean on our own imaginations and works? We are truly the embodiment of the *“wretched man”* who struggles daily with our own sinful flesh. But, thank God that, according to His promise and by His power, He delivers us from this body of death through Christ our Lord (cf. Rom. 7:24-25). Thank God that *“there is therefore NOW no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom. 8:1). As sinners saved by grace, we thank God every day for His grace and mercy in Christ, all based on His precious blood to wash away our sins and His righteousness imputed to give us an unchangeable right standing before our God!

(Num. 20:3-5) - Here is an example of the madness and folly of unbelief. By nature, people see bondage and death as something to be preferred (Prov. 8:36). They even claim it would have been better for them to have perished with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram when they were swallowed up by the earth under God’s just judgment, and 14000 others who followed them in rebellion died (Num. 16). Had they forgotten the time earlier when there was no water, but the Lord told Moses to strike the rock, and water flowed from that rock abundantly? How we are so prone in the time of present trouble to forget the promises of God to His people, to forget His faithfulness and power to preserve us in Christ, and to forget how He has taken care of us up to now. We are such a sinful people, but our God is rich in mercy and love to save us completely by His grace in Christ.

(Num. 20:7-8) - Once again God revealed to Moses the answer to the problem - *“SPEAK YE UNTO THE ROCK BEFORE THEIR EYES; AND IT SHALL GIVE FORTH HIS WATER, AND THOU SHALT BRING FORTH TO THEM WATER OUT OF THE ROCK.”* As we have seen before in Exodus 17, the ROCK was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the water of life and who gives life to His people (1 Cor. 10:4; cf. John 4:14; Rev. 21:6; 22:1,17). When that Rock first appeared, Moses was commanded by God to STRIKE the Rock with the rod. Moses represented the law; the rod represented the justice of God which fell upon Christ for the sins of His people (God’s elect) imputed to Him. Christ Himself, as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect, was struck down unto death, even the death of the cross. He shed His blood unto death, fully satisfied the justice of God for the sins of His people, brought forth an everlasting righteousness by which God is just to justify His people and from which God gives them the water of spiritual and eternal life to every one for whom Christ died and arose again. All of this was accomplished by the ONE DEATH (SACRIFICE) OF CHRIST FOR HIS PEOPLE - *“For by ONE OFFERING He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Heb. 10:14). This was all to the praise of the glory of God’s grace in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ Who finished the work of redemption.

(Num. 20:9-11) - We can understand how Moses grew angry with the people. They had turned against him and Aaron, and they complained against Moses and against the Lord. At times, they had even threatened to stone Moses. But we are never to act out of our anger in

presenting the truth of the Lord, and Moses, out of his anger for the people, disobeyed God. God told Moses to SPEAK to the Rock. Moses, out of his anger against the people, STRUCK the Rock, not once but twice. The Lord still gave them water out of the Rock, but Moses had committed a great sin - He had misrepresented the glorious character and name of God before the people. Remember, back in *Numbers 20:6*, when the people complained, “*And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and THE GLORY OF THE LORD APPEARED unto them.*”

This shows us that whatever transpires in God’s dealings with His people, whether it be temporally with the nation Israel under the Old Covenant in their physical deliverance, or spiritually and eternally with the spiritual nation of Israel (God’s elect) under the Covenant of Grace in their salvation, THE MAIN ISSUE IS THE GLORY OF GOD. God’s name and God’s ways must be honored. His truth must be told. He will not share or deny His glory. In the salvation of sinners by the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s glory as both a just God and a Savior shines forth in the ONE SACRIFICE for the sins of His people whereby Christ finished the work of redemption and accomplished righteousness for His people upon which God has glorified Himself in their salvation (*Isa. 45:20-25; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:3-13*). For God to be glorified, Christ had to be struck down unto death ONE time, not twice. To say that Christ had to do more than what He has done in order to secure the salvation of His people is to deny and dishonor the glory of God and the preeminence of Christ (*Gal. 2:21; 5:1-5*). When men preach salvation is in any way conditioned on the works and/or the wills of men, they deny the glory of God in Christ.

(Num. 20:12-13) - Here we see that anger can sometimes sink down to an act of unbelief. This can happen even in the lives of true believers like Moses and Aaron. As one man said, “The true believer is not in a state of unbelief, but because of the remaining contamination and corruption of the flesh, unbelief is still within the believer.” We who have been so blessed of God and given the gift of faith in Christ must fight the remaining sins of the flesh, even of unbelief (*Mark 9:24; Luke 17:5; Gal. 5:17*). We fight this unbelief by continually “*looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:1-2*). To “*sanctify*” God means to set Him apart in the glory of His nature and works without our hearts and minds and before people when we tell them of our God and Savior (*1 Pet. 3:15*).

God told Moses that because of this act of unbelief, He would not allow Moses to “*bring this congregation into the land*” which He had given them. As we find out later, Joshua was the man who would bring Israel into the Promised Land. This was no after-thought with God. This was God’s purpose from the beginning. We see in this the wisdom and purpose of God to teach us a very great and vital truth. First, we need to see that the fact that Moses was not permitted to lead the nation into the Promised Land does not mean that Moses was not one of God’s true children, saved by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, and brought into the glorious and merciful presence of God when he died. Secondly, in not allowing Moses to bring them into the land and appointing Joshua to do so was one of God’s ways of teaching through types that the law cannot save or bring a sinner into the state of salvation. Only Christ, by God’s grace, can bring a sinner into the state of salvation. Moses represented the law; Joshua represents Christ - “*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*” (*John 1:17*). “*Meribah*” means “*strife*.” And even though the people “*strove with the LORD*” by their unbelief, He was still “*sanctified in them*.” God will be glorified despite the sins and unbelief of men. He will be glorified in the salvation of His people through Christ, and He will be glorified in the damnation of those who live and die in unbelief (*2 Cor. 2:14-17*).

(Num. 21:4-5) - Again we see the people discouraged and complaining. Again, we see their unbelief and animosity towards the Lord God and His prophet, Moses. We need to understand that every time this happened, they were breaking the covenant God made with them from Mount Sinai. It is the same when the next generation goes into and occupies the promised land. Their prosperity in that land was conditioned on their obedience, but they broke that covenant (*cf. Jer. 31:32*). That is why our eternal salvation and glory cannot be on terms of a covenant conditioned on our obedience. We are all sinners, and the words and attitudes of the people here are reflective of our state by nature and our weakness even as sinners saved by grace in Christ. We need a covenant conditioned on one who is perfect (impeccable) and who cannot and will not break the terms and conditions of that covenant - the everlasting covenant of grace conditioned on our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord our Righteousness (*1 John 2:1-2*).

Notice they said, *"and our soul loatheth this light bread."* This was the manna that the Lord God gave them to eat. They were not satisfied with the food that God provided. This is just like all of us by nature as to salvation. Man by nature cannot be satisfied with Christ and His righteousness alone. He has to add his own works of righteousness, his own self-willed goodness. Christ is not enough for him. And it is because he is ignorant of his condition in sin and death. The greatest evidence of spiritual death is that people by nature do not know, desire, and believe in the true Christ of the Bible and are not satisfied with God's way of salvation conditioned on Christ as the one and only righteousness that God will accept. This is why we must be born again by the Spirit Who gives us a hunger for Christ. This hunger can only be filled with Christ and His Word (*Matt. 5:6*). If this is our case, we will never get tired of this manna. We will be filled and satisfied, and, in fact, we will desire no other food (*Col. 2:9-10*).

(Num. 21:6) - The LORD brought judgment in the way of *"fiery serpents"* (poisonous snakes) that *"bit the people; and much people of Israel died."* This shows us the truth of God's judgment that had been established from the beginning and never changes - THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH; SIN, WHEN IT IS FINISHED, BRINGS DEATH. Just as a deadly poison ran through the bodies of the people, SIN is a deadly poison that we received in our fall in Adam (*Rom. 5:12*), and unless a remedy is found, it will kill us. God told Adam that in the day he ate from the forbidden tree he would surely die, and we all fell in Adam. The result of our fall is that we are all born in a state of sin and death - SPIRITUALLY DEAD!

(Num. 21:7) - The people realized that they had sinned and God's just judgment was upon them. And they realized that their sin was not just against Moses but *"against the Lord."* They asked Moses, *"pray unto the LORD, that He take away the serpents from us."* They recognized that they needed him to be a mediator between them and God. *"And Moses prayed for the people."* This illustrates what happens when God the Holy Spirit brings us to see our sinfulness and our need of a savior. He shows us that God would be just to condemn us to eternal damnation and death. God would be well within His rights to do so - *"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?"* (*Psalms 130:3*). Abraham asked, *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* (*Gen. 18:25*). The answer is an emphatic "YES"! He will deal righteously with all people. If He damns any, He will do so righteously. If He saves any, He will do so righteously. Is there any hope for sinners like us? *"And Moses prayed for the people."* Moses here is a picture of Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, the one Who intercedes with God for His people, a people who were given to Him before the foundation of the world. If there is to be salvation from our sins, if there is to be

righteousness established, we must have a Surety, a Substitute, a Redeemer, a Mediator. And he must be one appointed of God and who is able and willing to do what is required. In Israel's case under the Old Covenant for their temporal salvation from the poison of the serpents, Moses met all three qualifications. But for our eternal salvation from sin, the only one Who meets all three qualifications is God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Num. 21:8-9) - Is there any hope that these people could be spared and cured from the poison of these serpents? There is, but it is only by GOD'S WAY - *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."* This fiery serpent made of brass is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ going under the fiery wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him. Here, the picture of Christ changes from Moses to the brazen serpent showing that the only way of salvation from the condemnation and the poison of sin is Christ lifted up on that pole, which is the cross of Calvary. As Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people all over this world, Christ was lifted up to die for their sins and provide a perfect righteousness whereby God is just to justify them. They are sinners saved from their sins by God's grace (*Rom. 5:21*).

The serpent was made of brass like the brazen altar where God's wrath fell upon the sacrifice. Why did God choose they symbol of a serpent? When we think of a serpent, we usually think of Satan, of evil, of sin. The reason God chose a serpent here is because we all, even God's elect, were aligned with Satan in our natural state (*Eph. 2:1-3*). Christ had to be identified with us in our sins. He did this NOT in becoming a sinner or being made a sinner, NOT by being corrupted or contaminated with our sin, but by being *"numbered with the transgressors"* and bearing *"the sin of many,"* and making *"intercession for the transgressors"* (*Isa. 53:12*). This shows that Christ took our place under God's wrath for our sins imputed to Him (*Heb. 2:14ff.*).

Notice that the brazen serpent had the form of a serpent; BUT THERE WAS NO POISON IN IT. Our Lord Jesus Christ was man in the likeness of sinful flesh, and was found in fashion as a man, yet, He is without sin - holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. HE WAS MADE SIN AND MADE A CURSE FOR US, BUT ONLY BY IMPUTATION OF OUR SINS TO HIS ACCOUNT THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM (*2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13*). And there was but ONE brazen serpent by which the Israelites could be cured. Even so, there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There is one name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved - Jesus Christ the Lord.

The Apostle John was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use this event in Israel's history to show it typifies the salvation of God's elect by the death of Christ. *John 3:14-15* tells us that just as *"Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Just as the brazen serpent was provided for the Israelites because of God's pity, Jesus Christ was provided for the healing of perishing sinners because of God's love (*John 3:16*). The people were commanded to LOOK and live. God's spiritual people are commanded to look to Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, eternal life, and glory. This is the look of faith which the Holy Spirit brings us to in the new birth as He convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment. When He does this great work within us, we will look nowhere else and to no one else but Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead.

Lesson 43 - CHRIST, OUR REFUGE *Numbers 35:1-15*

(Num. 35:1-8) - Before Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, the Lord had instructed Moses on the arrangement of the tribes in the land. Joshua was to allocate certain territories to each tribe. Only one tribe, the Levites (the priests), was not given land to develop. Instead, they were to be the priests of the Lord and the overseers of the tabernacle and all its rites and furnishings. The Levites were given forty-eight cities throughout the land (*Num. 35:6-7*). Six were designated as cities of refuge.

(Num. 35:9-15) - The Old Covenant Law was clear that anyone who committed murder was to be put to death (*Exod. 21:14*). But there was another provision for unintentional deaths. If one unintentionally caused the death of another, the Lord allowed an “*avenger*” to exercise justice in killing that person who killed another, even though unintentionally. This “*revenger of blood*” (*Num. 35:19*) was a man (a relative) who was legally responsible for avenging a family member who was killed. The Lord set aside six cities of refuge to which the manslayer could flee (*Exod. 21:13*). As long as the person stayed in one of the cities, he was safe until he could be tried and judged to find if he acted unintentionally. If he did, he would return to the city of refuge and live there safely until the death of the current high priest, at which point he could return to his property. If the attacker left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, however, the avenger would have the right to kill him (*Num. 35:24-28*).

THESE CITIES OF REFUGE ARE TYPES OF CHRIST in whom sinners find refuge from the destroyer of souls. Just as the guilty person sought refuge in the cities of refuge, we flee to Christ for refuge from sin. By God-given faith, we run to Christ to escape the danger we are in from the curse and condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, and eternal damnation. Only Christ provides refuge from these things, and it is to Him alone that we must run. Consider the details of this great type of Christ.

(1) The sin here is manslaughter. It is not premeditated murder as this meant certain death (*Num. 35:16*). But the crime is no less worthy of death. A person has been killed, and the law is broken. The truth taught here is this - Sin is sin even if it is committed unknowingly, and all sin deserves death. Strict justice must be satisfied. We are all sinners, and the fact is that all we are in ourselves is sin (*Rom. 7:14-24*). We commit sins intentionally and unintentionally, but all our sins make us worthy of its wages which is death. This is our state on this earth within ourselves.

(2) The avenger of blood represents the law of God which demands justice. The fact is that we are all sinners, transgressors of God’s law, and no obedience that we can attempt can satisfy the justice of that law that we have broken (*Rom. 3:9-20*). If the Lord were to give us what we have earned and what we deserve, it would be certain and eternal death and damnation.

(3) The sinner here is the manslayer who is aware of his crime. This illustrates how the Holy Spirit, in the new birth, makes each and every one of God’s elect fully aware of his/her sinfulness, depravity, and spiritual death (*John 16:9*). He brings us to admit that no works we can do can satisfy God’s justice, and He brings us to take sides with God against ourselves (*Psa. 51:4; 130:3; Rom. 3:19-20*).

(4) The cities of refuge represent God’s mercy and grace sovereignly, freely, and fully provided and given to His people in and by Christ, His glorious Person and finished work of redemption. Christ is every believer’s city of refuge. In Christ we find safety and security. In Christ we find justice satisfied by His death as represented by the death of the high priest (*Num. 35:25,28*). Christ is our Great High Priest Who gave Himself a ransom for us, shedding His precious blood as the propitiation for our sins. He satisfied justice and worked a perfect righteousness which God has imputed to us (*John 16:10; Rom. 10:4*). As long as we are in

Christ, He is our Refuge. Outside of Christ, there is no refuge from God's wrath and no grace, no love, no mercy, and no eternal life. We can see various aspects of the believer's refuge in Christ in the names of these cities of refuge as recorded in *Joshua 20:7-8*.

"KEDESH" means "holy place" or "righteousness." Christ is the Holy One Who is the believer's holiness and righteousness before God (*1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21*). If He had had one sin in Him, we would be lost forever! "Kedesh" reminds us that God justifies us based on Christ's righteousness imputed to us, and when we come to Christ in God-given faith, He reveals His holiness and righteousness as our refuge against all that would come against us (*Rom. 8:33-39*).

"SHECHEM" means "shoulder," which is a place of strength. Christ is the power of God to save His people from sins. The government of the covenant of grace was placed upon His shoulders (*Isa. 9:7*). All conditions of the salvation of God's elect were placed upon Christ as the Surety of His people, and He fulfilled all conditions to secure their salvation and eternal refuge.

"HEBRON" means "fellowship." God's elect, sinners saved by grace, are brought into fellowship with the Godhead through Christ (*2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 1:1-4*). Christ is the true "Hebron" because He has reconciled us unto God by His cross-death, and He has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places." (*Eph. 2:6*). We who were once "afar off" have been "brought nigh by the blood of Christ" (*Eph. 2:13*).

"BEZER" means "stronghold" or "fortress," a "fortified place." "The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (*Nah. 1:7*). Christ is the Rock of Ages, our foundation, our chief corner-stone, and our hiding place. We cannot be removed from Him, because the gates of hell cannot prevail against Him.

"RAMOTH" means "exalted" or "heights." Because of His great work of redeeming all His people, Christ has been exalted to the right hand of the Father ever living to make intercession for His people. All His people are risen with Him and exalted in Him (*Eph. 2:4-10; Php. 2:9*).

"GOLAN" means "joy," or "exultation." Through Christ "we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (*Rom. 5:11*). Christ spoke the words of grace to His disciples that His "joy might remain in" them, and that their "joy might be full" (*John 15:11*). The exhortation of God's Word is, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (*Php. 4:4*). At final judgment, Christ will call all who are found in Him as their refuge to "enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (*Matt. 25:21*).

In *Deuteronomy 19:1-13* there are recorded laws for the cities of refuge. In verse 3 they are commanded by God to "prepare" the way to these cities. The roads to these cities were to be tended by men assigned to keep the way clean. Signs were placed on these roads that said, "Refuge, Refuge." The roads were to be kept smooth and free of any obstruction that would hinder the manslayer. This illustrates the mission of all true Gospel preachers - TO POINT SINNERS TO CHRIST, THE ONLY REFUGE OF SINNERS AGAINST SIN! His message is to be plain, clear, and free of all legal religious hindrances, personal opinions, and confusion. His message is to preach Christ crucified and risen as the sinner's only hope of salvation. He is to expose all false refuges (*Isa. 28:14-17*). He is to preach this Gospel, this refuge, to all who will listen and tell his hearers that just as the cities were open to all who fled to them for safety, it is Christ who provides safety to all who come to Him for refuge from sin and its punishment. The psalmist wrote of this in pointing sinners to the future Messiah - "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (*Psa. 9:9; cf. 46:7; 62:7-8*). It is revealed in the New Testament in *Hebrews 6:18* when speaking of the strong comfort for those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" which is Christ and His righteousness by the grace of God.

Deuteronomy is the second reading of the Law. It begins with God's command to Moses and Israel to leave Mount Sinai and travel to the Promise Land. It recounts the episode when Israel came to the border of the Promised Land and refused to enter it because of the majority report. Recall how Joshua and Caleb encouraged them to enter and take possession of what God had promised and given to them, but in unbelief they refused. God sentenced them to wander in the wilderness for forty years until that generation died in the desert (*Heb. 3:16-19*). Only Caleb and Joshua would enter into the Promised Land (*Deut. 1:35-38*). Joshua typifies Christ Who alone can bring God's people into the promised land of eternal salvation. Caleb typifies faithful followers of Christ who enter into salvation by God-given faith. In *Deuteronomy* 2 and 3, we read of their wanderings for 40 years in the wilderness.

Here, we read the account of how they were attacked by two kings - Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, both whom the Lord defeated (*Deut. 2:32-33; 3:1-3*). We see how that, even though the people were rebellious and stubborn, the Lord was faithful to the promise He had made to Abraham to give the land to Abraham's descendants. When we see how the Lord was faithful to His promise to Abraham, in spite of Israel's unbelief and rebellion, it should remind us how our possession of and life in the promised land of eternal salvation is because of God's faithfulness to His promise to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in spite of our sins and unbelief (*Lam. 3:21-22*). This is a reminder that our whole salvation is by God's free, sovereign grace in Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to us.

(Deut. 3:21-22) - After the defeat of these two enemies, and giving their land to the Israelites, the Lord through Moses told Joshua that as he had seen God's power in protecting His people and defeating their enemies, the Lord would also defeat all their enemies when they passed over into the Promised Land. Just as God defeated Pharaoh and his armies and brought the children of Israel out of bondage, He would defeat all the kingdoms in the land of Canaan, where there were many. These would be all conquered and put into the hands of the Israelites and their kings slain. This victory was never due to Israel's goodness or strength, for they had neither. It was all due to God's goodness, faithfulness, and power. Again, this is another reminder that we who are saved by God's grace in Christ "*are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*" (*Rom. 8:37*). Christ has fought for us, and He has conquered sin, Satan, the curse of the Law, and death for us (*Exod. 14:13-14*).

(Deut. 3:23-27) - As we have seen from our study in *Numbers 20:12*, God had forbidden Moses to bring the people of Israel into the Promised Land. This was Moses' punishment for his disobedience, pride, and misrepresentation of Christ's sacrifice when he struck the Rock twice instead of obeying God by speaking to the Rock. That Rock was a type of Christ Who was struck once under the wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him. His one sacrifice was enough to glorify God as both a just God and a Savior in the salvation of His people. Here, we see Moses pleading with the Lord to go into the Promised Land with the people "*and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.*" This shows that Moses was a mere human, a sinner saved by grace. The Lord would not relent and allow Moses to enter, because it was God's plan from the beginning to have Joshua lead the people into the Promised Land (*Num. 27:18-23; Deut. 31:14-16*). God did, however, allow Moses to go to the top of Mount Nebo (*Abarim* and *Pisgah*) (*Num. 27:12-14; Deut. 32:48-52*). After seeing the Promised Land, Moses, the servant of the LORD, died in Moab. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is located (*Deut. 34:1-6*).

(Deut. 3:28-29) - The Lord told Moses to appoint Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land. Joshua would *“cause them to inherit the land.”* Here we see Joshua as a great type of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what God intended from the beginning. As we have seen many times Moses was a type of Christ as he was appointed of God to be Israel’s deliverer, leader, mediator, and law-giver. But here in this situation, as compared to Joshua, Moses represented the Law. Moses himself was a sinner saved by grace who knew and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation (*John 5:39-47*). In the New Testament, the name “Moses” was sometimes used to represent the whole law. The Apostle John wrote that *“the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (*John 1:17*). The law cannot bring sinners into the promised land of salvation and eternal life. Moses himself knew this (*Rom. 10:4-10*). Only the Lord Jesus Christ by God’s grace through the righteousness of the law fulfilled in and by Him can bring sinners into salvation. Joshua is a type of Christ doing that very thing. Christ alone went in before us as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer and caused us to inherit all the blessings and benefits of salvation and eternal life. Consider several points of how Joshua typifies Christ -

(1) Joshua was made the leader of Israel by Divine appointment. God gave him the abilities to lead them over Jordan and take possession of the land, and he was willing to do so. Christ was made the leader of spiritual Israel before the foundation of the world as He was made to be their Surety. His ability to save them was in Himself as God as well as in His humanity prepared for Him by the Father (*Heb. 10:5*). He was willing to do what was required for the salvation of His people (*John 10:17-18*).

(2) “Joshua” means savior. “Jesus” is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew “Joshua” which means “savior,” “God’s salvation,” or “God our Savior” (*Matt. 1:21,23*). This speaks of the glory of Christ’s Person and the value and success of His finished work.

(3) Joshua was the servant and successor of Moses. He was a faithful servant and submissive to the will of God. Christ was God’s servant under the law. He was a faithful Servant, obedient, and submissive to the law to redeem His people who were under the law and work out a perfect righteousness for them (*Rom. 3:21-25; Gal. 4:4-6*).

(4) Joshua was the captain of Israel’s deliverance from the wilderness into the Promised Land. Christ is the Captain of our salvation. Just as God, through Joshua, conquered Jericho, God in Jesus Christ conquered sin, Satan, and the curse of the law for us (*Heb. 2:10*).

(5) Joshua led the people of Israel through the Jordan River. It was at the river Jordan that the Lord publicly magnified Joshua as the leader of the people. The Jordan River is an emblem of death. And as Joshua successfully conducted Israel through that river, so Christ conducts his flock, his army, through the river of death which separates this dark world from the inheritance of light. Also, it was at the same renowned river, that God the Father publicly magnified Jesus when He began the performance of His sacred office (*Matt. 3:16-17*).

(6) The Lord God, through Joshua, overthrew the walls of Jericho through instruments that appeared weak and even foolish to men. Christ, the man of sorrows, the tender plant, God manifest in sinless human flesh, conquered the great enemies of all - sin, Satan, and the curse of the law. Christ also conquers the hearts of His people by the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Unbelieving people call this foolishness (*1 Cor. 1:18*).

(7) Joshua led the people into a sabbath rest within the Promised Land. Their wandering in the wilderness was now over. Christ is the Sabbath rest for His people, and He leads His people into the rest of a salvation that is finished, full, and free (*Heb. 3:7-4:11*).

Read *John 1:19-28*. This is the Jewish priests and Levites questioning John the Baptist asking him, “*Who art thou?*” Notice that they asked him if he were the messiah, or Elijah come back from the dead, or if he were “*THAT PROPHET*.” John answered that he was only “*a voice of one crying in the wilderness*” as prophesied by another prophet, Isaiah. He then spoke of the Messiah as the only Savior of sinners. Their questions concerning “*THAT PROPHET*” was a direct reference to a prophecy God gave to Moses concerning a greater prophet to come who would be the fullness and the fulfillment of God’s Word for the salvation of His people. This is recorded in *Deuteronomy 18:15-22*. This is a prophecy of Christ Who is “*THAT PROPHET*” as He is Himself the embodiment of the Word of God (*John 1:1-14*) and the fullness and the fulfillment of God’s Word for the salvation of His people. The woman at the well had some notion of the messiah as that great prophet. She said to the Lord, “*I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things*” (*John 4:25*). Christ answered her by saying, “*I that speak unto thee am He*” (*John 4:26*). Christ was (and is) “*THAT PROPHET*” Who fulfilled that prophecy God gave to Moses (*cf. Acts 3:22-26; 7:37*). Christ fulfills all the requirements for a prophet in title, word, and deed. He is the ultimate prophet in that He is the very Word of God Himself. He is the subject and the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning the Messiah and salvation and righteousness (*Jer. 23:5-6*).

(Deut. 18:15-18) - As the one mediator between God and men, our Lord Jesus Christ has a three-fold office – PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING. Men who were types of Christ have held one (maybe two) of these offices, but no one has ever been prophet, priest, and king except Christ Himself. Christ, our Prophet, is “*the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us*” (*Matt. 1:23; 17:5*). He came from heaven, above all, having the Spirit without measure, declaring the whole counsel of God, and bringing life and immortality to light through His Gospel (*John 3:31-35; 2 Tim. 1:8-10*). We see the absolute necessity of such a prophet, without whom we would sit in darkness and be left in blindness (*2 Cor. 4:3-6*). But His words are true and faithful, and to hear Him is to hear God (*John 12:48-50; Heb. 1:1-2*). How blessed are those who hear and believe Him (*John 5:24*), and how inexcusable will be those who refuse to hear Him (*John 3:18*). He is the one great prophet, of whom Moses was but a type (*Heb. 3:3-6*). He is the one great eternal High Priest, of whom Aaron was but a type (*Heb. 7:21-25*). He is the one great King of kings, of whom David was but a type (*Luke 1:30-33*).

The promise declares that the Lord God will raise up this one great Prophet! All of the true prophets and faithful priests were ordained and sent of God. But this promise is of one Person - one Prophet who is the Messiah and is actually the Word of God Himself. He who has seen Him has seen the Father (*John 14:9*), and he who has heard Him has heard the Father (*John 3: 33-36*). The promise declares that God would raise up this prophet “*from the midst of thee; of thy brethren*.” He is of Israel, according to the flesh, of the tribe of Judah and the household of David (*Rom. 1:1-3; Rom. 9:4-5; Matt. 1:1*). He was “*like unto Moses*” in that He is a man, He is God’s prophet, He is a mediator between God and the people, He performed great miracles, and He delivered His people from bondage. But He is infinitely superior to Moses and to all other prophets, for He is the Son of God, and the deliverance He accomplished is eternal salvation for all whom the Father had given Him (*Heb. 3:1-4; Heb. 1:8*). Unlike Moses who led a rebellious and unbelieving people through the wilderness, Christ, THAT PROPHET, has the power, not only to save His people from their sins, but also to give them spiritual life and bring them to faith in Him as the only way of salvation (*John 6:37-45*).

God declares, *“I will put my words in His mouth”* (John 7:16; John 8:28; John 17:6-8). His words are the words of life, because when He speaks in power sinners live spiritually (John 5: 21, 24; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23), even as He spoke and Lazarus came forth. His words are the words of truth (John 1:14-17; John 14:6; John 18:37). His words are the words of grace. He is full of grace and truth. His words bring peace, pardon, life, and salvation from sin. That Prophet came not to condemn the world, for the world stood condemned; but He came that we might have life more abundantly. His word is the doctrine of grace, the Gospel which is the *“power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”* (Rom. 1:16). His word is the word of righteousness which He Himself worked out on the cross for His people and which God has imputed to them for their justification (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21). His word is the words of life by which the Spirit gives life from Christ to spiritually dead sinners and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (John 6:63-68; Rom. 6:17-18; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). No one can call on Him who does not believe Him, and no one can believe Him who has not heard Him (John 5:24; John 20:31; Rom. 10:13-17).

(Deut. 18:19-20) - Here is also a promise given to those who refuse to hear that prophet - the promise of judgment! All who will not hearken to the Gospel spoken by Christ and His ministers who are ambassadors of Christ, in the name of the Father Who sent Him, will experience the wrath and judgment of God. To despise the words of Christ is to despise Christ, and to despise Christ is to deny and despise the Father. There is no remedy for rebellion against the Redeemer (John 3:35-36). To summarize all these points, consider the following -

(1) All other prophets were inspired by Christ and sent by Christ. Christ Himself is more than a prophet - He is *“God with us”* (Matt. 1:23), and He is the Word. All true prophets speak HIS Word.

(2) All other prophets pointed to Christ and spoke of Christ (Acts 10:43). Christ is the sum and substance of their prophecies. He fulfilled and completed all that they foretold (John 1:45; Col. 2:9-10). For example, Jeremiah prophesied of Christ as *“the LORD our Righteousness”* (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16). Christ IS *“the LORD our Righteousness.”*

(3) All other prophets began the holy books and the message of grace. Christ finished and completed the books, the message, and the work (Heb. 1:1-3). All Scripture speaks of and points to Him as the one and only way of salvation (John 5:39).

(4) All other prophets spoke of God by inspiration and learning, but Christ spoke of the Father as being with Him and by Him (Prov. 8:29-30; John 1:18; Matt. 11:27).

(5) All other prophets have left their work and are gone. Jesus Christ abides in all His offices continually. As He is a Priest forever, so He is the Prophet and the King forever and ever!

(Deut. 18:21-22) - How shall we know? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if what he prophesies does not come true, then you can know that he is not speaking the Word of God. God's prophets do not speak things which may or may not come true. God's Word is a sure word of prophecy and always comes true (2 Pet. 1:19-21). There is no doubt or question about it. So, a self-proclaimed prophet who claims to speak a word from the Lord, but that word does not come true, that person is a false prophet. We do not have to respect him or listen to his word. We can apply this to the Gospel Word of salvation by God's grace in Christ. IT IS THE WORD OF GOD and originally comes from THAT PROPHET, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. We can be sure of the fulfillment of every word spoken by Him and His Word that comes through His preachers as they are tested by the written Word of God.

Lesson 46 - ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH *Deuteronomy 30*

As we come to *Deuteronomy 30*, we see Israel getting ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses reads the terms of the Mount Sinai Covenant to them to remind them of its terms and emphasize the importance of it. There are several things to keep in mind about this whole situation. First, their entering into and taking possession of the Promised Land was based on the covenant that God made with Abraham over 400 years before this. That covenant with Abraham was an UNCONDITIONAL PROMISE COVENANT. It was not conditioned on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or upon the Israelites. It was a unilateral covenant that rested totally upon God's faithfulness and power (*Gal. 3:15-20*). God had determined to give them the land and use them as the human instrument through whom the Messiah would come into the world. This is what the phrase "*salvation is of the Jews*" meant (*John 4:22; cf. Rom. 1:3; 9:5*). Their very existence as a nation, sinful though they be, was the glory of God in the salvation of His chosen people, SPIRITUAL Israel, both Jew and Gentile, by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But for the last few chapters Moses had set before them blessings conditioned on national obedience and cursing conditioned on national disobedience, showing that the covenant of Mount Sinai was different. That covenant was a conditional covenant. The Mosaic law was a covenant which guided the relationship between the nation Israel and the Lord God. So, Moses, in the name of the Lord, set forth the conditions by which Israel was to be governed during the Old Covenant Age, and they were under these conditions until the time that the Lord Jesus Christ came and took the judgment of the broken law upon Himself. Then the Old Covenant came to its end. This covenant marked a temporal, physical, and ceremonial relationship, even union, between the Lord God and the physical nation of Israel. But this union would not last. In fact, it was never intended by God to last. It was intended by God to come to its end when Christ would come and finish His work (*Heb. 8*).

God knew that Israel would never keep that covenant. They never measured up to the righteousness of the law set forth in that covenant (*Deut. 29:25-28*). So, why did God put them under this covenant? It was never a covenant of salvation. It could never make them righteous, and it could not give them spiritual life or a heart to believe, follow, and serve the Lord. It was given to show them their sinfulness and depravity, the impossibility of righteousness by the law, salvation by their works, and to cause them to look to God Who by His grace would send the Messiah to save His people from sin and bring forth the righteousness of the law to justify sinners in His sight (*Rom. 5:20-21; Gal. 5:19*).

In *Deuteronomy 29:27-28*, it is anticipated that Israel is going to break the law and be scattered to the four corners of the earth. Here in *Deuteronomy 30*, Moses speaks of the way in which they may return. In *Deuteronomy 29:29* they are told that there are many things that the Lord God knows and that belong to His infinite knowledge and wisdom, but their responsibility, Moses says, was to seek and follow that which the Lord God had revealed. For example, we know that man by nature will not seek the Lord, yet the Lord commands us to seek Him. We know that man, if left to himself, will never believe the Gospel and repent, yet the Lord God commands all men everywhere to believe and repent. Sinners will seek, find, and believe in the Lord when He brings them to do so in power, grace, and truth (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*).

(Deut. 30:1-10) - These words contain a prophecy. The question is - What is the fulfillment of this prophecy? Was it fulfilled when Israel returned from their 70-year captivity in Babylon? Will it be fulfilled in some millennial future by God bringing them back to the physical land of Palestine and reinstating the earthly priesthood and tabernacle services? *Deuteronomy 30:6* makes it clear that this prophecy concerns a SPIRITUAL gathering and return. Many people

believe this speaks of a restoration of an earthly kingdom to the land of Palestine. Even the disciples seemed to believe this until the Lord taught them otherwise, and it was made clearer at Pentecost (*Acts 1:6-8; 2:14ff.*). Later, the Lord used the Apostle Paul to reveal more of the details of this (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 6:14-16*). There are some who, because of their interpretation of statements Paul made in *Romans 11*, believe this will be fulfilled by a future spiritual restoration of the Jews who will be brought to faith in Christ and true repentance. That would be a glorious thing to behold, but this probably describes the future restoration of all SPIRITUAL Israel, God's elect both Jew and Gentile, to faith in Christ. *Verse 10* - The only way a sinner can say sincerely and truly that he hearkens unto the voice of the Lord his God, keeps the Lord's commandments, and turns unto the LORD his God with all his heart and with all his soul is by believing in and submitting to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (*Rom. 10:4*).

(Deut. 30:11-14) - God the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to cite these verses in *Romans 10:6-10*. Notice that in *Deuteronomy 30*, that in *verses 8 and 10* the word "commandments" is plural. Here in *Deuteronomy 30:11* "this commandment" is singular. What "commandment"? It is the commandment to turn unto the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. This commandment which I command you this day is not hidden from you. It is not far off. It is not in heaven, as if you should say, "Who shall go up to heaven?" It is not in the abyss as Paul would later say. It is not beyond the sea. It is a word that is near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it, meaning to believe it. And what specifically is that word? Paul tells us in *Romans 10:9-17* (*cf. Isa. 46:12-13*). It is the word of God's Gospel of grace wherein the righteousness of God (the imputed righteousness of Christ) is revealed to be believed. It is the near righteousness of God which comes near in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Deut. 30:15-20) - Moses concluded in much the same way in which Paul concluded *Romans 10* by showing how there is only death in disobedience and life in righteousness. But it is clear that no sinner can work his way unto righteousness, and righteousness can only be found in the grace of God through the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's people, both Jew and Gentile. Israel would eventually be cast out of the land of promise because of their disobedience, but there was (and is) always hope for all who turn to the Lord for salvation by His grace in Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to them by God and received by God-given faith. The command of the Gospel, then, is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for all salvation and turn from our dead works and idolatry. In their natural self-righteousness, as is common to us all by nature, the unbelieving Jews refused to believe God and insisted on seeking righteousness by works of the law. As Paul stated in *Romans 9*, they did not achieve what they were seeking (*Rom. 9:31-10:3*). But, as Paul also stated in *Romans 11*, there was (and is) always "a remnant according to the election of grace" (*Rom. 11:5*). This remnant was a small number of the Jews whom God brought to faith in the promised Messiah and to be submitted to Him as their righteousness for justification and life. So, the true chosen people of God, which is SPIRITUAL Israel, includes all who are brought by God to believe in Christ. This includes both Jews and Gentiles who are saved by God's grace in Christ. They are part of the "all Israel" who "shall be saved" (*Rom. 11:26*). Issues of life and death, then, are determined by our relationship with Christ. Sinners are either standing before God on their own and pleading their own works, which is eternal death, or they stand before God IN CHRIST, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, which is eternal life.

The reality of God's grace in the salvation of sinners is truly an astounding thing. It is a matter of amazing grace. God's Word tells us that God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to *"save His people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21). When He was criticized by the unbelieving, self-righteous Pharisees for eating and drinking *"with publicans and sinners,"* the Lord told them, *"they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Mark 2:16-17). Isaiah the prophet spoke of this amazing grace - *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). People naturally view those who are outwardly immoral as sinners who need salvation, but they consider those who are outwardly moral and religious either as having no need of salvation or less in need of salvation than others. But the fact is that we all are sinners who are equally in need of salvation by God's grace through the righteousness of Christ. The Apostle Paul, an outwardly moral and religious man, recognized this - *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief"* (1 Tim. 1:15). We need to keep this in mind when we read of one of God's sheep, Rahab the harlot. In God's sight, we are all notorious sinners who need salvation by His grace in Christ.

Rahab, the harlot, is one of the most interesting and important persons in the Bible. It may be hard to imagine that a Gentile prostitute who lived in an infamously sinful place like Jericho could have figured into God's purpose and plan of salvation for His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is true. Consider how many times she is mentioned in the Scriptures. Besides the historical event recorded here in the book of *Joshua*, Matthew identifies her as the wife of Salmon (a prince of the tribe of Judah), as the mother of Boaz who married Ruth, and great-great grandmother of King David (Matt. 1:5-6). She is among the hall of faith listed in the book of *Hebrews* along with Abraham, Isaac, and Moses (Heb. 11:31). James gave two illustrations of God-given true saving faith evidenced by obedience – Abraham and Rahab (James 2:20-25).

(Joshua 2) - As we consider her in *Joshua 2*, Israel was camped across Jordan. Joshua sent two men to spy out the land secretly. They would be taking, especially, the city of Jericho. Jericho was a large city – the city nearest to them and first in importance. Jericho had to be conquered and taken if Israel was to take possession of the Promised Land. However, as we know from God's Word, their victory over Jericho was not due to their own power. It was by God's power that this nation of vagabonds would be able to conquer and take possession of the city of Jericho. And it is an amazing demonstration of God's power and wisdom that He would use a lowly prostitute like Rahab in bringing about the fall of Jericho. Rahab's house was upon the wall which circled the city (*Joshua 2:15*). Her house was one where a person could find food and lodging. This was why the spies stopped there (*Joshua 2:1*). It is mentioned several times that she was a harlot.

The king of Jericho heard that the Israelites were seen at Rahab's house, and the king sent word to her to deliver these men to him. She hid the spies on the roof of the house and sent word to the king that, although the Israelites had been to her house, they had fled and might be overtaken if the king would send someone after them, which he did. As soon as the king's men left Jericho to pursue after the spies, the gate of the city was closed. Rahab came up on the roof where the spies were hidden and professed her faith in the living God (*Joshua 2:8-11*). She then sought the mercy of the Lord to be upon her and her household when the people of God took the city (*Joshua 2:12-13*). The men promised her that she would be spared provided that she kept faith in not telling anyone of their business (*Joshua 2:14*), that

she hang the scarlet line outside her window by which she let them down the wall (*Joshua 2:18*), and that she and her family remain inside the house while the battle raged (*Joshua 2:18*). Her house was upon the wall with the front toward the city for the entertainment of persons who came there, and the back was on the outside of the wall. She let the spies down the wall by the scarlet cord, and they fled to the mountains for safety. When Israel took the city, Joshua commanded that Rahab be spared (*Joshua 6:17, 22-25*). There are several spiritual lessons we can learn from Rahab.

1. Rahab is a picture of God's mercy and grace to sinners. She was a sinner by birth and by practice. All of the explaining by moralists and legalists will not make Rahab anything but what she was - a notorious sinner. But the Lord Jesus came to save sinners (*1 Tim. 1:15; Matt. 9:10-13; Rom. 5:6-8*). His mercy is to the miserable and His grace is for the guilty. We see so many examples of the Lord showing mercy and grace to what men by nature see as notorious sinners. Think of Zaccheus, who was a publican, along with the publican in *Luke 18*, the Samaritan woman in *John 4*, and the thief on the cross. What we must learn is that we who are moral and religious in the eyes of men and trying to do what we think is right, in God's sight we are just as sinful as any so-called notorious sinner. We are no closer to the perfection of righteousness that can be found only in Christ than Rahab the harlot. There are none righteous, no, not one (*Rom. 3:10-19*). There are none who can attain forgiveness and righteousness by their works (*Rom. 3:20*). If we truly know ourselves, we will admit that if the Lord would mark (impute) iniquities, none of us would stand (*Psalms 130:3*). Our only hope is that God justly does not charge us with sin (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 8:33-34*). Like Rahab, we need salvation by His grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ freely imputed to us and received by God-given faith (*Rom. 4:6-8*).

2. Rahab is an example of God's electing, distinguishing, and efficacious grace. It was not by accident that the spies stopped at her house. They were led there by the Spirit of God. Her speech to the spies indicates a heart enlightened and taught by God (*Joshua 2:8-11*). Knowledge and faith are not the products of natural thought and logic; they are the gift of God (*Eph. 2:8-9*). Rahab was one of the Lord's own, and her testimony is proof of her knowledge of the true God, her faith in Him, and shows her to be a believer (*John 6:44-45*). James states that Rahab's obedience in helping the Hebrew spies proved her faith in the true and living God and her rejection of the idols of Jericho.

3. The scarlet cord she put out the window is a picture of the blood of Christ, by which salvation is accomplished. That scarlet cord which she, by faith, dropped from her window is as decisive and clear a picture of Christ's blood as Abel's lamb, or the Passover blood on the door, or the sin-offering in the tabernacle. It is by His blood (God's justice satisfied and the sin-debt paid) that sinners are justified. It is by faith in His blood that we have redemption, forgiveness, atonement, safety, and protection from the avenging justice and wrath of God. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." When they saw the scarlet cord in the window of the harlot, they passed by her house and destroyed all others.

4. Rahab and her family were told to come into her house where the scarlet cord was hung, and only there would they be safe. As the Israelites were told to stay in their houses where the Passover blood was sprinkled, Rahab and her family were to remain under the protection and safety of Joshua. To venture outside was to be destroyed (*Joshua 2:18-19*). Our safety and security are to be IN CHRIST, under His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Php. 3:7-10*). Outside of Christ, there is only death.

Joshua 3 records Israel's preparation for crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land. *Joshua 4* records the completion and the commemoration of that great event where God shows Himself to be faithful and powerful to fulfill His promise made to Abraham over 400 years before (*Gen. 12:7; 15:7-15; 17:8; Acts 7:1-5*). There are four prominent entities in this event:

(1) JOSHUA leading the nation into the physical land of promise is prominent as a picture of the LORD JESUS CHRIST leading all of His people (God's elect, both Jew and Gentile) into the Promised Land of salvation and eternal life (*Jos. 3:7; 4:14; Heb. 4:8-10*). Their possession of the land was by one man, Joshua. Our spiritual possession of all the blessings and benefits of salvation is by ONE MAN, the GODMAN, CHRIST JESUS (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5*). The plurality of false religion (i.e. "there are many ways to God," or "many ways to heaven") is a lie spawned by unregenerate people promoting false religion and false gospels. Just as God appointed and equipped Joshua for the task of bringing this nation into the Promised Land, God the Father appointed and equipped His Son for the task of bringing His spiritual children into the Promised Land of eternal life and glory (*Isa. 9:6-7; Heb. 2:14-18; 10:5-14*).

(2) THE ARK OF THE COVENANT going before the nation, as the assurance of His presence and power and as a means of God setting them apart physically and ceremonially (*Jos. 3:1-6, 10-11, 14-17*), is prominent as a picture of God's spiritual and eternal mercy and grace to His spiritual children based on His justice satisfied and righteousness established by the blood of Christ - His finished work to establish righteousness for His people before God (*Heb. 9:14*). It is a picture of the assurance of God's presence and power eternally with all His people in Christ. The ark originally provided safety to the Israelites in their journey to the Promised Land. The power of the ark was manifested several times and enemies were scattered. When priests carrying the ark stepped into the River Jordan, the water stopped flowing and all the Israelites were able to cross. Recall that the Ark was covered with the mercy-seat where the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled. It represented the powerful and merciful presence and power of Almighty God. God used it in dealing with the physical nation of Israel in a temporal, physical, and ceremonial way, both as the ground of their ceremonial and temporal relationship and acceptance with God, and as a means of removing physical obstacles and providing physical power for their deliverance and victories (*Heb. 9:13*). Our Ark is Christ, our mercy-seat is Christ. We are forgiven of all our sins by His blood and justified before God by His righteousness imputed to us. We are given spiritual life by Christ Who conquered death and arose from the dead as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

(3) THE JORDAN RIVER is prominent to show without doubt that Israel's crossing was ALL OF THE LORD, ALL OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND POWER. This is a picture of the eternal salvation of spiritual Israel being ALL OF THE LORD and ALL OF GOD'S GRACE AND POWER IN AND BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Jordan River has come to be a symbol of death. When the people following Joshua arrived at the Jordan, the river was at flood stage, transforming it from its typical 100-foot width to a daunting mile-wide, raging river. Israel's entrance into Canaan was completely blocked. But as soon as the priests dipped their feet in the river's edge, God stopped the flow of water, and the people crossed on dry ground. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant stood in the middle of the riverbed until the whole nation had passed over (*Joshua 3:14-17*). God drying it up is a picture of Christ removing all the obstacles that hinder us from entering into the great salvation that He has worked out for us.

The great waters of our sins, the need for righteousness, the need for spiritual life from the dead. Again, our eternal salvation and life is ALL OF GOD and ALL CONDITIONED ON CHRIST. Like Israel was powerless to carry themselves over to the Promised Land, we are powerless to save ourselves. We cross into salvation by God's power and grace based upon the power of Christ to "dry up" all of our sins by His death on the cross and to work righteousness by which God has justified us. Like Israel had to cross over the Jordan on dry land by faith in God, we who are eternally saved have God-given faith by which we cross over from the world to believe in Christ Who brings us to repentance (*John 6:44; Eph. 2:8-10*).

So, the nation Israel, as God's chosen people, following the ark across the Jordan on dry ground into the Promised Land is prominent as a picture of SPIRITUAL ISRAEL (again, God's elect from every nation - all who believe in Christ) entering into the promised land of eternal salvation because Christ has cleared the way of every obstacle (sin, Satan, death, the Law) that would hinder them from receiving salvation and all spiritual blessings through the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*John 6:37-45*). As we shall see in a later lesson, the Promised Land is not a picture of heaven. There are no enemies in heaven. But while we are on this earth, even as sinners saved by grace, we face enemies daily - the world, the flesh, and the devil. All our enemies have essentially been defeated by our Savior.

(4) THE TWELVE STONES commemorate how all twelve tribes of the nation Israel and all the individuals in those tribes (none excepted) crossed over Jordan into the Promised Land by the power of God (*Jos. 4:1-7, 20-24*). This is a picture of how ALL OF GOD'S ELECT who make up the nation of SPIRITUAL ISRAEL will cross over into the promised land of eternal salvation by the grace and power of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. IT WAS AN EFFECTUAL DELIVERANCE OF ALL OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (*Jos. 3:17; 4:1,10,11; 5:1*), and Christ's death on the cross is the effectual redemption and deliverance of all of God's chosen people (*John 6:37-40; 12:31-33; Rom. 8:33-39*).

God gave Joshua instructions to appoint twelve men, one from each tribe. The men were each to retrieve one stone from where the priests had stood in the riverbed bearing the ark of the covenant. The stones of remembrance were not to come from the shores of the Jordan but the center, emphasizing that Israel had crossed over on dry land. The number twelve can be found in 187 places in God's word. *Revelation* alone has 22 occurrences of the number and multiples of twelve. Twelve is considered a perfect number in that it symbolizes God's power and authority, as well as serving as a perfect governmental foundation. Here, it symbolizes the completeness of the nation of Israel as a whole. It is a picture of the completeness of the whole church of Jesus Christ, the total number of His sheep for whom He died and arose again (*John 10:11-16, 27-30*). Not one of the elect, not one for whom Christ died will miss salvation and eternal glory. His death, His righteousness imputed, demands their salvation.

These stones were to be remembered and commemorated throughout their generations (*Jos. 4:4-7, 22-24*). Joshua's stones of remembrance are just one monument in a series of memorials commemorating the mighty acts of God on behalf of the people of Israel (*Ex. 13:3-6; 24:4; Deut. 27:1-8; Jos. 22:9-12; 24:24-28; 1 Sam. 7:12*). To everyone else, the stones were just a heap of rocks, but to the people of God, they were a constant and joyous reminder that God was their God and a powerful God, working wonders on behalf of His people. This is a picture of how we are continually to preach and hear the Gospel of our salvation to remember that our God is faithful. His promises never fail (*Lam. 3:22-23; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:13-20*). We see this in the New Testament ordinances of baptism (*Matt. 28:19*) and the Lord's Supper (*1 Cor. 11:25-26*).

(Joshua 5:13-15) - As the Lord appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai, He appeared to Joshua outside of Jericho. This is one of the preincarnate appearances of Christ to the patriarchs by which He assured them of His presence and His power to overcome all enemies. Christ appeared *"with His sword drawn in His hand"* as the mighty Warrior fighting for His people. Joshua asked, *"Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"* The Lord answered, *"Nay; but as Captain of the host of the LORD am I now come."* As Joshua was appointed by God to lead Israel, the ultimate leadership and power was the Lord Jesus Christ. HE is the Captain of God's army to conquer all enemies of God. Christ is the Captain of our eternal salvation. By His suffering unto death, He became the Mighty Conqueror Who went to war against sin and death and Who cleared our way to the Promised Land of salvation and glory (*Heb. 2:10; Rev. 19:11,14*). The Lord told Joshua to remove his shoes as he stood on holy ground. This was a place the Lord had chosen to reveal Himself and deliver His Word to Joshua.

(Joshua 6:1-2) - The people of Jericho were confined within the walls of the city. Here is a picture of natural man *"shut up"* in sin and death with no way out. The Lord assured Joshua of victory as He had given all of Jericho into his hands. It is the same in the salvation of God's elect. All of salvation is a gift of God's grace by the death of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Christ cried from the cross, *"It is finished"* (*John 19:30*). He was (and is) the Mighty Conqueror, and, in time, He conquers all His people by bringing them to submit to Him as the Lord their Righteousness. We who believe in Him *"are more than conquerors THROUGH HIM that loved us"* (*Rom. 8:35-39*).

(Joshua 6:3-11) - The people were to go around the city one time each day for six days, led by seven priests bearing the ark and seven priests carrying seven trumpets made from rams' horns. Rams' horns represented the sacrifice slain on the brazen altar - a picture of Christ our Lamb. The Gospel sounds forth salvation based on the sacrifice of Christ. The horn represents His power to save His people from their sins and to give them spiritual life. On the seventh day they were to go around the city seven times. Upon hearing the trumpets, they were to *"shout with a great shout,"* and the walls of the city would fall. The seventh day marked the day of victory. This was a picture of our Lord's finished work on the cross as the eternal sabbath victory for His people. It was by His finished work that the walls of sin and death came tumbling down so that we could enter the promised land of eternal salvation and life.

This method of warfare was one that made absolutely no sense according to human military intelligence and strategy. It was not man's way of warfare, but it was God's way to glorify Himself. It required total dependence on God. It required God-given faith from Joshua and the people (*Heb. 11:30*). It is the same in God's way of salvation from sin. It is not man's way. Man's way is the way of his own works to achieve righteousness. God's way is the way of His grace in Christ which makes no sense to the natural man (*1 Cor. 1:18; 2:14*). God's way requires God-given faith in Christ.

(Joshua 6:12-16) - As Joshua led the people to do what the Lord commanded, when the seventh day came, Joshua said, *"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city."* We can liken this to the call of the Gospel as the free gift of righteousness and eternal life based on the finished work of Christ for His people (*2 Tim. 1:9-10*). The trumpet blast and the shouts of the people meant destruction for Jericho, but it meant victory for God's people. It is the same with the Gospel trumpet (*2 Cor. 2:12-17*).

(Joshua 6:17-19) - God then pronounced all the city cursed, except for Rahab the harlot. God forbade the people to take of any of its cursed things, such as idols made of gold and silver, lest the people be cursed along with it. All the spoils of the victory were to “*come into the treasury of the LORD.*” We who are saved by God’s grace gain all blessings and benefits that Christ earned for us, but all the glory goes to Him alone (*1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*). In *Joshua 7* we read of a man, “*Achan,*” who disobeyed God and was stoned to death. This illustrates how all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; all who live and die in unbelief shall be damned (*John 3:36*).

(Joshua 6:20-21) - The walls of Jericho “*fell down flat,*” and the people went into the city and took possession of it. God commanded them to destroy “*all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.*” This may seem harsh and severe to us, but this judgment against Jericho came because they were in total rebellion against God and in league with the occult, as the artifacts recovered from this period demonstrate. This was a very barbaric and lawless time, and Israel had to do what was necessary to survive.

(Joshua 6:22-25) - God spared Rahab and her family inside of her house where the scarlet line was bound in the window (*Jos. 2:18*). This shows that Rahab was the object of God’s sovereign, electing love, that her house was under the blood of Christ, that she had God-given faith, that God’s promise was her security. As long as she stayed in the house where the scarlet cord was seen, she was safe. There was nothing but death outside. Our salvation and safety is to be in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness. Outside of Christ there is nothing but death.

(Joshua 6:26) - This is a prophecy given by the Lord showing that whoever tries to rebuild Jericho is cursed along with his family. It was fulfilled in *1 Kings 16:34* by a man named “*Hiel the Bethelite.*” Jericho represents everything of which God brings His people to repent when He brings them to Christ by God-given faith. It represents all the dead works and idolatry in which, after we believe in Christ, we have no confidence (*Php. 3:3-9*). We walk by faith “*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (*Heb. 12:2*), and we are never to look back.

(Joshua 6:27) - God gave Joshua the preeminence among the people. As we have seen throughout this event, Joshua is a type of Christ. In our salvation, and in all our victories, Christ has the preeminence. He alone is our glory and our righteousness. He alone is the Mighty Conqueror of all our enemies (*Isa. 9:6-7*). He alone has the power to give eternal life to His people, and He cannot fail (*Matt. 1:21,23; John 10:11-30; John 17:1-4*). We preach the Gospel to a lost world because Christ has been given all power to save His people and to subdue their enemies (*Matt. 28:18-20*). God glorified Himself in the means of sinful humans to destroy Jericho and save Rahab and her house. God is glorified by weak, sinful men preaching the Gospel. This shows that we have no power to save. It is all of God’s grace and power in Christ. Christ is our Captain; Christ is our power; His grace is our armor; His Gospel is our weapon (*2 Cor. 10:1-5*). Although God uses human instruments, He does not use human ways. HIS way is the only way of salvation (*1 Cor. 1:18-31*). Would anyone imagine on a human level that this way would work to conquer Jericho? NO! It is the same with God’s way of salvation. That is why men will not preach the Gospel and leave it to God to conquer men’s and women’s hearts. They have to devise other means to draw people in and “get them saved.” They criticize us - “All you do is preach the Gospel.” But God tells us to preach the Gospel and leave the results to Him (*Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 9:16*).

Lesson 50 - WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE *Joshua 24*

(Joshua 24:1) - Joshua was now 110 years old, and these are his last words to Israel. He reminds them of their history and that, even though they had stated their determination to obey the Lord, they would fail. But God had delivered them from their enemies and had given them the land of promise in spite of their disobedience. It was all due to His promise made to Abraham, and it was all for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world according to the flesh. Everything in their history was a testimony to God's unconditional temporal goodness towards them. This was all a picture of the grace of God in the eternal salvation of spiritual Israel through Christ and based on His righteousness (*Isa. 46:9-13*).

(Joshua 24:2-13) - Before God called him, Abraham was an idolater. God chose him to be the human instrument through which the Messiah would come. The Israelites benefited temporally and physically from their physical connection with Abraham. For all who have been brought by God to believe the Gospel, Abraham is a prime example of eternal salvation by God's grace in Christ. Abraham was justified before God based on Christ's righteousness imputed to him and which he received by God-given faith (*Rom. 4; cf. John 8:56*). Sadly, most of the Israelites did not benefit spiritually with Abraham because of their unbelief (*Rom. 2:12-29; 9:1-8*). Their physical connection with Abraham carried on with Isaac, the child of promise, through whom Christ would come (*Gal. 3:16*). Joshua spoke of Jacob and Esau showing how the Lord sovereignly chose Jacob and rejected Esau, not because of their works, but because of His sovereign choice of Jacob (*Rom. 9:10-15*). Paul used this to show how our eternal salvation is not conditioned on our wills or our works but on God's will and work (*Rom. 9:16,30-10:4*).

Joshua spoke of how God appointed Moses and Aaron to bring them out of 400 years of bondage. Moses was the prophet and law-giver; Aaron was the first high priest. Joshua spoke of the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptians. Both Moses and Aaron were types of Christ, our great Prophet, Priest, and King, Who has delivered us eternally out of bondage to sin by His death. Christ's blood is the Red Sea of our redemption by God's grace. Joshua spoke of the Lord delivering them from their enemies, a picture of how God not only saves His spiritual children by His grace, but He also preserves us and keeps us safe. Christ will bring us unto glory (*John 6:37-40*).

Joshua spoke of how Balaam tried to curse Israel, but God would not listen and caused Balaam to bless Israel instead. This shows us how God has blessed His true children and, no matter what our enemies say or do, they cannot bring us under God's curse. Christ has been made a curse for us and has redeemed us from the curse of the law (*Gal. 3:10-14*). Joshua spoke of how God brought them across the Jordan River, destroyed Jericho, and defeated other nations for them. He concludes their history with a profound statement showing that all that they possessed was not due to their goodness or works. It was all God's goodness towards them and all God's doing (*Josh. 24:13*). We learn from this that God saves sinners by His grace and power through the Lord Jesus Christ. Like Israel of old, we have no righteousness of our own. We are spiritually dead in sins, and we will not serve the Lord apart from His power and grace to bring us to Himself (*Rom. 3:9-26*). If we are truly saved, it is all of grace from beginning to the final end of glorification, all based on the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. All blessings and benefits of salvation and eternal life are freely given to us in Christ (*Eph. 1:3*).

(Joshua 24:14-15) - Joshua told the people that, in light of what the Lord had done for them, they should "*fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.*" Joshua knew that he himself and all the people were sinners. He knew that the depraved human heart is an idol factory. He knew their only hope was to turn in faith to the Lord and

repent of idolatry. This is the hope of any sinner who is truly saved by grace (*1 Thess. 1:9-10*). Joshua also knew that if left to themselves, they would never choose the true and living God. So, he said to them, “If it seems evil (undesirable) to serve the LORD, then ‘*choose you this day whom ye will serve.*’” Many use this to try to prove that man has a “free will” to choose God over idols. But the Bible teaches us that man’s will is in bondage to sin, and he will not choose God if left to himself. Joshua simply tells them that if they will not serve the Lord, then choose whatever idol they desire. It does not matter which idol, because they are all false gods and lead to eternal damnation and death. Joshua, however, by God’s grace, said, “*as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” Believing in Christ and repenting of dead works is not the product of man’s “free will.” It is the product of God’s grace and power in the new birth (*John 1:11-13*).

(Joshua 24:16-24) - Even though the people promised to serve the Lord, Joshua knew that they would fail. He was not trying to discourage them, but he was simply recognizing the reality of their sin and depravity. He had seen that many times they promised to keep the law and serve the Lord only to turn against the Lord and his prophets when trouble came. Joshua recognized that unless the Lord gives sinners new hearts, they will not believe and serve Him. We who believe in Christ recognize that if God did not give us new hearts, we would not believe and serve Him. God will not share His glory, for He is “*a jealous God.*” Salvation is all of God or not at all. And no matter how a sinner, while on this earth, has received good things from God, unless that sinner is found in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness, unless that sinner has God-given faith in Christ, that sinner will perish.

(Joshua 24:25-28) - This is a reaffirmation of the covenant God had already made with them through Moses at Mount Sinai. This stone was a memorial of their pledge to serve the Lord and would serve as a witness against them when they broke God’s covenant. We today need to be so thankful that our salvation and our relationship with God is based on an eternal covenant that we cannot break because it is not conditioned on us. It was (and is) all conditioned on Christ Who fulfilled all of its requirement in our place as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*2 Sam. 23:5; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 13:20-21*).

(Joshua 24:29-32) - Joshua then died and was buried in the land of his inheritance - that which God gave him. Verse 31 tells us that “*Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that HE had done for Israel.*” This probably refers to the very young who came out of Egypt but were now elderly. This is one of the few and brief times in Israel’s history where it could be said that the nation as a whole was in obedience to the Lord according to the terms of the Old Covenant. But it did not last long (*cf. Judges 2:6-15*). Throughout most of the 1500 years of the Old Covenant, as a nation, Israel was disobedient. This is why God purposed to save His people (spiritual Israel) under the terms of a new covenant in Christ (*ex. Jer. 31:31-34*). Here also we are told that the oath Joseph made to be buried in the promised land was fulfilled (*Gen. 50:25; Heb. 11:22*). This was a testimony to Joseph’s faith in the Lord and to God’s faithfulness to keep His promises. The mention of Eleazar’s death meant that another link with the wilderness generation had passed. Phinehas was made high priest. All of this was the Lord’s reminder to the nation that it was HE alone Who had brought them to where they were. In eternal salvation, we remember what the Lord has done through Christ on the cross to save us from our sins. We know that it is the Lord alone Who has brought us into this state of grace and eternal life.

(Judges 1) - *Judges* is the story of God preserving Israel in the promised land despite their unbelief, sinfulness, and rebellion. We see here the power and faithfulness of God Who had determined to use this nation to accomplish the salvation of His elect (spiritual Israel) by bringing the Messiah into the world through them. Israel is in the promised land, and the task before them is to conquer the other nations and take possession of the entire land. In *Judges 1:1*, after Joshua's death, *"the children of Israel asked the LORD, saying, Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites first, to fight against them?"* The answer - *"And the LORD said, Judah shall go up: behold, I have delivered the land into his hand"* (*Judges 1:2*). Just as Joshua was a type of Christ, Judah also typified our Savior. As Joshua went before them in crossing the Jordan River and conquering Jericho, Judah would go before them to defeat their enemies. This pictures Christ Who has gone before us bringing us out of our bondage to sin, Who has conquered all our enemies and put us safely and securely in the promised land of salvation and eternal life. Having finished the work of redemption and righteousness, Christ has arisen and gone before us unto the Father where He lives to make intercession for us. We also know that Judah was the tribe from which Christ would come into the world according to the flesh (*Gen. 49:8-9*).

Throughout this history, we see some victories for Israel and some failures. The victories came when they depended upon the LORD and were in obedience to the covenant. The defeats came when they depended upon themselves and other nations and were in unbelief and disobedience. In *Judges 1* we see that Israel failed to drive out all of theirs and God's enemies, and they sought to gain by placing a tax on the Canaanites - *"And it came to pass, when Israel was strong, that they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out"* (*Judges 1:28*). This was because of unbelief and greed.

(Judges 2:1-5) - This *"Angel of the LORD"* was the Lord Jesus Christ Who appeared to Moses and to Joshua before this. He is the Messenger of the Covenant. He brings judgment upon the people because they had broken the covenant they had promised to keep. But even though they broke the covenant, God would never break His promise as long as that covenant was in force, again, because of His promise to Abraham. God would keep this nation together in the promised land until the time of the Messiah. He did punish the people for their disobedience - *"Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you"* (*Judges 2:3*). Throughout their time in the land of promise, Israel was constantly plagued with opposition from their enemies. The people then wept, and they named this place *"Bochim,"* which means "weepers" or "place of weeping." And having been taught by Moses, Aaron, and Joshua what it took to appease the anger of God, *"they sacrificed there unto the LORD"* (*Joshua 2:5*). Whether or not the majority of these Israelites understood the true meaning of the sacrificial worship prescribed by God through Moses, we to whom God has revealed Himself and to whom God has revealed ourselves in our sins, know that it took the perfect sacrifice of Christ (God manifest in the flesh) to put away and cleanse us from all our sins (*Heb. 10:14*). We are so blessed by God's grace to know that our sins were charged to Christ, and His righteousness has been charged to us.

(Judges 2:6-15) - Joshua died when he was 110 years old. It seems that during Joshua's time in the promised land and immediately following his death, under the leadership of elders, the majority of the people were in obedience to the Old Covenant Law (*Judges 2:7*). But when a new generation rose up *"which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel,"* they *"did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim"* (*Judges 2:10-13*). Instead

of enjoying the temporal blessings of God within the promised land, they became objects of God's anger (*Judges 2:14-15*).

(Judges 2:16-22) - Because of His promise and His faithfulness to keep His promise to Israel through Abraham, God raised up judges (deliverers, leaders) to rescue Israel from their enemies. These were not judges as those in our law courts judging cases by the law. These were deliverers and leaders whom God was with to enable them to perform their task of preserving the people. We are told here that the people *"would not hearken unto their judges"* but went after idols, again, breaking the covenant. God did this, nevertheless, not because Israel deserved such a deliverer, but in spite of the fact that they were undeserving. This was God's way of preserving them in the land in spite of their sins - *"for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them."* The repentance here attributed to the LORD was not any change of mind or purpose in God. It merely describes God's compassion upon the people because of the oppression of their enemies. But the people continually broke the covenant and sinned against the LORD.

Throughout this period, there were fourteen judges listed, from Othniel to Eli, leading up to the time Israel would ask for a king to rule over them. Four of these judges are listed in *Hebrews 11:32*. The most famous of these judges are Gideon and Samson, but all of these judges were types of the supreme Judge of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is our Deliverer, Preserver, and our Judge - *"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him"* (*John 5:22-23*). Not only is Christ the supreme Judge of all, He is also the standard by which all judgment is based - *"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."*

We learn from this that the only way that we as sinners can appear before God and pass the judgment of God is to appear before Him IN CHRIST - washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed to us. Keep in mind that throughout the recorded history of Israel, the Lord was showing the utter sinfulness and depravity of all mankind by nature and the impossibility of sinners being saved by their works and/or obedience to the law (*Rom. 3:9-20*). He was showing OUR need of salvation by His grace based on the righteousness of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver (*Rom. 3:21-26*). The psalmist wrote, *"God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day"* (*Psalms 7:11*). We are all sinners and deserve nothing more than God's anger and wrath. But *"the righteous"* describes all sinners saved by God's grace and justified in HIS sight by the blood of Christ, His righteousness imputed. *"The wicked"* describes all sinners who are without Christ and forever lost in their sins.

We must, therefore, be aware of the certainty of God's righteous judgment - *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (*Heb. 9:27*). The psalmist wrote that the LORD *"hath prepared His throne for judgment,"* and *"He shall judge the world in righteousness"* (*Psalms 9:7-8*). *"The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands"* (*Psalms 9:16*). It is the glory of the LORD to make Himself known to His people both in judgment and in mercy. By His grace, through the Lord Jesus Christ, God is both a just God and a Savior, both just and Justifier of all who believe in Christ and are submitted to Him as the LORD their Righteousness - *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (*Rom. 10:4*).

(Judges 6:1-10) - Gideon is listed in *Hebrews 11:32-34* as one of the Old Testament judges appointed, called, and equipped by God to lead and protect Israel. He was a man to whom God gave faith to rest in the LORD and the promise of the Messiah for eternal salvation. Gideon's life as a judge in Israel is recorded in *Judges 6:11-8:32*. God's judgment was on Israel because of their idolatry. For seven years they had suffered invasions from foreigners. They cried out to God, and He sent them a prophet to remind them of how He had provided for them in the past and yet they had forsaken Him (6:8-10). Again, the nation Israel is a picture of all of us by nature in our sin and depravity. Even as sinners saved by grace, we need the power and goodness of God in Christ to save, preserve us, and keep us from falling (*Jude 24-25*). Thank God for His grace in Christ in Whom we have His righteousness imputed to justify us and His Spirit to give us life and keep us believing and resting in Him (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8*).

(Judges 6:11-23) - The "Angel of the LORD" appeared to Gideon. This Angel was preincarnate visitation of Christ (6:14,22-24). He called Gideon to be a judge in Israel. The source of Gideon's courage and strength was "*The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour*" (6:12). Like Moses, Gideon knew that his only hope was the grace and power of God (6:17; cf. *Exod. 33:15-17*). As sinners saved by grace, we know that God's presence and grace are found in Christ. Christ is our preserver and our strength Who saves and preserves us from all enemies and obstacles (*Php. 4:13*). To assure him of God's grace and presence, Gideon asked the LORD for a sign (6:17). It was common in the Old Testament to ask for signs as the full revelation of God was not yet given as we have now in the Holy Scriptures. Even in the early days of the church, the message was accompanied with signs and wonders. Now we have the full Word of God, and these things are no longer needed (*1 Cor. 13:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:14-17*). Seeking signs and wonders in the last days is attributed to Satan and his followers (*2 Thess. 2:7-10; Rev. 12:3; 13:13-14*). How can we be assured of God's saving grace and presence? It is by looking to and resting in the risen Christ for all righteousness and salvation upon the authority of God's written Word (*ex. 1 John 5:10-13*).

Gideon prepared a meal for this Divine Guest. The LORD did not eat the food but told Gideon to put it on a rock and pour broth over it. The LORD then took His staff and touched the soaked meal. Fire came out of the rock, consumed the meal, and the LORD disappeared. Miraculously, Gideon had seen "*the LORD face to face*" and lived (6:22). The LORD then spoke to Gideon a word of peace and life (6:23). This reminds us of how God gives eternal life and speaks peace to all of His people when He brings them to see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 4:6*). This is the glory of God as both a just God and a Savior based on the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. To approach God without Christ (without being washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed) is death.

(6:23-27) - To worship and honor the LORD, Gideon built an altar and named it "*Jehovah-shalom*," i.e. the LORD is our peace. Here we see a picture of peace with God based on the just ground of the blood of Christ as pictured in the sacrifice of a young bullock of seven years old, which signifies the finished work of Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. There is much speculation about why this bullock is specifically called the "*second bullock*." It may be that the first bullock of his father's herd had already been taken by his father to sacrifice at the altar of Baal, which God commanded Gideon to destroy. The LORD commanded Gideon to sacrifice the young bullock upon the altar and use the wood used to burn sacrifices to Baal. Gideon and ten of his servants destroyed the altar of Baal, cut down the grove of trees, and worshipped the LORD there by the proper altar and sacrifice.

(Judges 6:28-35) - Here is a picture of God's true ministers standing in the truth against the pagan world. These idolaters were so captivated by their idol that they wanted to kill the one who tore it down. We preach the truth of Christ Who is the one and only way of salvation for sinners, of Christ Who alone is God manifest in the flesh and Who alone accomplished redemption to secure the complete salvation of all for whom He died and arose again. We preach this truth to a lost, idolatrous, and dying world. The Bible tells us that this is the light that man by nature hates and will not receive (*John 3:19-20; Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*). But this is the Gospel that God uses to bring His people to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry (*John 3:21; Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:9*). The men who worshiped Baal gave Gideon a new name - "*Jerubbaal*," which means "let Baal plead." This name proved the helplessness of their idol (*cf. Isa. 45:20-25*).

(Judges 6:36-40) - We see here both Gideon's weak faith and God's incredible grace and patience towards His people. Gideon knew he was treading on dangerous ground by asking for multiple signs. But our God is merciful and patient with us. He knows our weaknesses. However, the story of Gideon should be for our instruction and not serve as a model for our own behavior. Christ said, "*a wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign*" (*Matt. 12:39; 16:1-4*). The Word of God itself is enough to assure us of God's way of salvation by His grace in Christ. Our advantage today over Gideon is that we have the full revelation of God in the Bible. The assurances of God-given faith in Christ are founded upon something much greater than signs. They are founded upon God's Word which cannot fail.

Chapters 7 - 8 tells us of Gideon's victories over the Midianites and others. Before the battles, Gideon's troops numbered 32,000, but in obedience to God, he reduced them to just 300 men (*7:7-8*). This was against an enemy that is described as "*thick as locusts*" with "*camels as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore*" (*7:12*). There was no doubt that Gideon's victories were not accomplished by the strength and cunning of men. It was truly the work of Almighty God. This is the way of our eternal salvation from sin, Satan, and death. SALVATION IS ALL OF THE LORD IN AND BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! It is all of grace based on Christ's righteousness imputed by which God's people are justified in His sight and from which His people are given spiritual life and glory (*Rom. 5:21; Eph. 1:3*).

With the battle finally won, the people suggested that Gideon rule over them as king, but he declined their accolades and told them the Lord would rule over them (*8:22-23*). But Gideon was not perfect in himself. He was a sinner saved by grace, justified by Christ's righteousness imputed to him. He proved his sinfulness when he went on to compromise his faith by requesting that they all contribute gold from the plunder of the battle so he could create an "*ephod*," a breastplate or mask to use in cultic worship (*8:24-26*). And, as we see in *verse 27*, it became a snare to Gideon and his family. But the LORD had already done the work. Midian was defeated, "*so that they lifted up their heads no more. And the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon*" (*8:28*). This is the case of all true children of God concerning eternal salvation. Christ's work is the work of righteousness which overcomes our sins and insures our peace and safety spiritually and eternally (*Isa. 32:17-18*).

Notice what happened after Gideon's death (*8:33-35*). We see here another proof of how the law and temporal blessings cannot save us or keep us from sin. The Old Covenant had no power to put away sin, nor could it make them righteous in God's sight (*Heb. 10:1-4*). The law could not them life or a heart to obey God. The people turned away from the living and true God to serve another idol. Again, if the LORD does not save us and keep us faithful to Him, we will all turn away from Him and worship idols. Christ is our complete victory over sin, Satan, and all enemies of His church.

The story of Samson is one of the many glaring examples of how the salvation of sinners is by God's free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. God saves us, His chosen people, from our sins even with all of our weaknesses and failings. This is true of our whole salvation all the way to final glory. Our salvation was conditioned on Christ, and (as Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of God's chosen people), Christ has fulfilled all the conditions required to enable God to be both a just God and a Savior and to save us to the uttermost (*Heb. 7:25*). We can see this in the life of Samson, but we should also be able to see this just as clearly in our own salvation. At no point in our lives can we say that we deserve or have earned any blessing or benefit of eternal life. We are all sinners, and we need to thank God every day that He does not impute our sins to us and that we are covered by the blood of Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-39*). We need to thank God every day that He has given us spiritual life and faith to believe in Christ, and that He preserves us unto glory (*Jude 24-25*). As we view the recorded history of Samson, we can see him both as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as a poor sinner constantly in need of God's mercy in Christ.

Judges 13 - 16 records Samson's birth, his life as a judge in Israel, and his tragic death. What we see is that Samson's life is one of contradiction. We see both his great feats of strength when the Spirit of God came upon him, and we see his sins and weaknesses as a womanizer and a vengeful man. We see how sin has its consequences as Samson suffered greatly, but we see God's mercy in delivering him in the end. This can be a reminder to all true believers of how God keeps us and saves us in His mercy from all consequences of sin, especially the eternal consequences, through the Lord Jesus Christ (*Lam. 3:22-23*). As stated, in Samson we see not only a glaring example of how God saves sinners by His grace in Christ, but also an example of how God uses even flawed, sinful men to accomplish His purpose and will. Samson had great victories against the Philistines, but, ultimately, he was brought down by an idolatrous Philistine woman, Delilah. Whereas he had before defeated multitudes of Philistines, now, when he stood up to fight, he was unaware "*that the LORD was departed from him*" (*16:20*). He was captured by the Philistines who gouged out his eyes and put him to work in prison.

The death of Samson is recorded in **Judges 16:23-31**. In a celebration to their idol, Dagon, whom they claimed gave them power to defeat Samson, they brought Samson forth to ridicule him publicly. In great distress and desperation, Samson prayed to the Lord - "*O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes*" (*16:28*). The Lord gave him strength to bring down the two pillars that supported the house of Dagon. Samson and about 3000 Philistines were killed. Samson killed more Philistines in his death (about 3,000) than while he lived (*16:30*). The life of Samson shows us the importance of relying on God's strength, not our own power; of following God's revealed will, not our own sinful and selfish desires; and of seeking the Lord's wisdom, not our own understanding.

Given all the sins and failings of Samson, how can we view him as a type of Christ? We certainly could not say that when Samson sinned by giving in to his sinful fleshly appetites and his pride that he typified our Savior. Christ never sinned, and the only way He personally had sin attributed to Him was by the legal imputation of the sins of God's elect to Him. Our Lord had no sin and did no sin. He was (and is) the perfect and impeccable Godman, and He remained so throughout His life and death. He was "*made sin*" and He called the sins of God's elect imputed to Him His own but only by a Divine act of imputation (*2 Cor. 5:19-21; Psa. 69:5*). Our sins became His as God the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (*Isa. 53:4-6*). So, how could Samson be a type of Christ? Consider the following points:

1. Samson typified Christ in his miraculous birth (*Judges 13*). Samson's mother was barren. The Angel of Lord (Who was Christ Himself) came to her and foretold that she would bear a son who would be a deliverer of Israel (*13:3-5*). Samson's birth was a miracle of God. So it was in the case of Christ. God sent an angel to reveal to Mary that she would conceive and bear a Son Who be the Savior of sinners (*Luke 1:30-31*). Christ's conception and birth were miracles as He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin (*Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Matt. 1:8,21,23; Luke 1:26-32*).

2. Samson typified Christ in that the people he would deliver were sinful and depraved (*13:1*). Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (*1 Tim. 1:15*). He came to call sinners to repentance (*Mark 2:17*). To show the awful sin and depravity of the people, the ones whom Samson delivered turned against him (*15:9-13*). This is the same with Christ. In our sin, depravity, and spiritual death, we all turned against the Lord. This includes His own nation according to the flesh (*John 1:11*), both Jews and Gentiles (*Acts 4:26-27*), and even God's elect who were by nature no different than the children of wrath (*Eph. 2:1-3*). By the power of His cross-death, and by the power of the Spirit, God "*hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son*" (*Col. 1:13*).

3. Samson typified Christ as, like Christ, he was separated unto God. The Angel told Samson's mother that "*no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb*" (*13:5*). Even so it was with Christ - "*He shall be called a Nazarene*" (*Matt. 2:23*). God the Father set His Son apart before the foundation of the world to be the Surety and Savior of His chosen people (*Eph. 1:3-13; 2 Tim. 1:9-10*).

4. Samson typified Christ as when he defeated the enemies of Israel, he acted in the power of the Holy Spirit - "*The Spirit of the Lord began to move him*" (*13:25*); "*The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him*" (*14:6; 15:14*). The same was true of Christ - "*the Holy Ghost descended upon Him*"; "*Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost....led by the Spirit*"; "*Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit*"; "*the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me*" (*Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18*).

5. Samson typified Christ as he was mighty to overcome his enemies. "*He found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it and slew a thousand men therewith*" (*15:15*). As Samson used a dead jaw-bone as the instrument to conquer his enemies, even so Christ, by His own death on the cross, has conquered and destroyed all of His enemies and the enemies of His people (*Heb. 2:14*). Christ is truly the Mighty Conqueror, and by Him all who believe are more than conquerors (*Rom. 8:33-39*).

6. Samson typified Christ as he was mocked and abused by his enemies and his own people. Even so Christ was "*despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (*Isaiah 53:3; cf. Matt. 27:29-31*).

7. Samson typified Christ as he destroyed more enemies by his death than he ever did in his life. "*So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life*" (*Judges 16:30*). Even so Christ, by His death, has been the death of death. He has robbed death of its sting, the grave of its terrors, sin of its power, and Satan of his authority (*1 Cor. 15:50-58*). As Samson was mighty deliverer of his people in a limited way, Christ is THE MIGHTY DELIVERER of His people in an eternal way .

All that most people know about the book of Ruth is what Ruth said to Naomi in *Ruth 1:16-17*, and they usually come away from that with high thoughts of Ruth and no thoughts of Christ. The real key to the book of Ruth is in the term kinsman-redeemer found in *Ruth 2:20; 3:9, 12, and 4:14*. The “kinsman” was the nearest relative who had the right to redeem back lands that belonged to one who had lost it (*Lev. 25:25*). The story of Ruth is a true story that took place in Israel during the time of the Judges which ends with another statement of Israel’s sin and depravity - “*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (*Judges 21:25*). The book of Ruth opens with Israel under God’s judgment (*1:1*). A man called Elimelech of Bethlehem-Judah, because of a famine in the land, sold all that he had and took his family out of the land of Israel and moved to pagan Moab. Elimelech died in Moab. His two sons married Moabite women, lived with them ten years, and then they both died. Naomi, now a very poor widow, determined to return to Judah and told her two daughters-in-law to remain in Moab with their people and their gods. Orpah departed, but Ruth clave unto Naomi and uttered those blessed words found in *Ruth 1:16-17*. Consider the following spiritual pictures found in this beautiful story of grace and love.

1. Here is a picture of man’s ruin by the fall (*Ruth 1:19-21*). Elimelech took his family from Bethlehem-Judah (house of bread and praise) to Moab (place of idolatry). When Naomi, now old, poor, and weary, came back to Bethlehem, the people gathered about her and asked, “*Is, this Naomi?*” Is this the same Naomi who left Bethlehem a few years ago rich and prosperous with her family about her? She replied, “*Don’t call me Naomi (sweet and pleasant); call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.*” She went out full and came back empty, rich and came back poor, sweet and came back bitter. This is a great picture of our fall by Adam into sin, depravity, and death (*Rom. 5:12; Rom. 3:10-19*). We look at Adam after the fall, when he sinned, sold out, and left the presence of God for his own way, and we say, “*Is this Adam?*”. The Lord said, “*Adam, where art thou*” (*Gen. 3:9*). He was not looking for information. This was a rhetorical question designed to make Adam realize the awfulness of his state now in sin, depravity, and death. Adam was created in the image of God and placed in a lush garden of plenty where he had perfect fellowship with God. His sin brought him into a state spiritual poverty, idolatry, and death. He was now under the curse of the law, and nothing he could do would be considered good or righteous in God’s sight.

2. Here is the unmerited, unsought love of Christ for His people, sinners given to Him by God the Father before the foundation of the world (*Ruth 2:1-5, 16*). Naomi and Ruth came to Bethlehem in the beginning of the barley harvest season. It was the custom to allow poor people and those without support to follow the reapers in the field and pick up what they had left. Ruth went out to glean in the fields; and by God’s providence she gleaned in the field of Boaz, Naomi’s near kinsman (*2:1*). Boaz took notice of Ruth and had compassion on her. He instructed her to glean in his field, and told the reapers to let fall some “*handfuls of purpose*” (*2:16*) specifically for her. What a great picture of God’s sovereign electing love and grace for His people. This world belongs to the Lord Jesus. It is His by design, by decree, and by death (*Col. 1:16-17; John 3:35; Rom. 14:9; John 17:2*). We live and glean in His field. The Lord Jesus in grace and love has taken notice of some of Adam’s race. He knew us though we knew Him not; He loved us though we did not love Him; and by His handfuls of purpose, we have lived and prospered to this day. God takes care of His own even in our days of unbelief.

3. Here is the kinsman redeemer (*Ruth 2:18-20*). Ruth returned home with a generous supply of grain. Naomi took note of the abundance and asked Ruth where she gleaned and who was so generous with her. When Naomi heard that Ruth's benefactor was Boaz, she said, "*Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead*" (*2:20*). Boaz was one who had the right to redeem, a kinsman-redeemer. If one had sold his inheritance and had a near kinsman, who was able and willing to stand for him and buy back all that he had lost, it would be done (*Lev. 25:25*). Christ Jesus, by God's covenant of mercy and divine grace, is the kinsman of all the elect who were given to Him by the Father. He was made Surety for His brethren (*Heb. 2:10-18*). As the Surety of God's people, He was made flesh, numbered with the transgressors, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh (*John 1:14; Gal. 4:4-5*). He willingly took upon Himself to redeem all that we lost in Adam, and He is able to do so because, though a man, He is the strong and mighty God (*Heb. 7:25; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*). All the sin-debt of His people was imputed to Him, and by His perfect obedience unto death, He has given us righteousness before the law. By his death He has satisfied divine justice, enabling God to be both just and justifier of all who believe (*Rom. 3:25-26*).

4. Here is the power, love, and grace of God working in the lives of His people (*Ruth 3:1-7*). Because of Boaz's kindness to her and Naomi, Ruth humbled herself at his feet, seeking his mercy. This is where the Lord, in His appointed time, brings all His people to lie at the feet of Christ and beg for mercy and grace (*Psa. 6:2; Luke 18:13*). Boaz accepted Ruth whom he already loved (*3:10-11*). The Lord God accepted us in Christ and loves us with an everlasting love even when we were enemies and alienated from God in our minds by wicked works (*Rom. 5:6-11; Col. 1:19-22*). Ruth began to love Boaz when she saw his kindness towards her. We who are saved by grace love Christ because He first loved us (*1 John 4:10*).

5. Here is the law that must be satisfied to make God's people free to marry another, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Ruth 3:12-13; 4:1-12*). Boaz recognized that there was another kinsman nearer than he. Under the law, this other kinsman had the first right if redemption. Here we see the law that has a legal hold upon us because of our sins. The other kinsman said, "*I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance*" (*4:6*). Whether he was unwilling or unable, we are not told, but this is same as God's law for sinners like us. The law cannot save or redeem us because we do not have the full redemption price which is perfect righteousness. Therefore Christ, our near-Kinsman, took it upon Himself to redeem us and marry us unto Himself (*Rom. 8:3-4; 7:4*). Christ paid the full redemption price for His bride, the church, and cleared the way for Him to marry her in strict accordance with the law. God justifies His people based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and He draws them unto Himself with the power of the Spirit Who gives life and with cords of love.

Ruth 4:13-22 records the marriage of Boaz and Ruth, the conception of their son, "Obed," and the generations following unto David. The significance of this is that Christ, our Kinsman-Redeemer, "*was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (*Rom. 1:3-4*). All who are brought by God to faith in Christ are married to Christ and are joint-heirs with Him because we are His and wear His name. The pagan girl became the wife of Boaz, the great-grandmother of King David, and stood in the lineage of Christ—all by God's power and grace! Boaz had all the wealth and Ruth received all the blessings and benefits of that wealth. Christ has all the wealth of our salvation, and we are the recipients of that wealth through righteousness He has provided by His death on the cross (*Eph. 1:3*).

Lesson 55 - CHRIST IS GOD'S ANOINTED 1 Samuel 2:1-10

1 Samuel is the story of the prophet Samuel. It tells us of his miraculous birth, his time as a prophet and a judge in Israel, and his role in the transition of Israel from being governed by judges to being a monarchy beginning with King Saul. It begins in chapter 1 with a godly man named Elkanah who had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. This is very similar to Jacob's situation with Rachel and Leah. Elkanah loved Hannah, but, like Rachel, the Lord had made her barren (1:5). Like Leah, Peninnah had many children (1:2). Being jealous of Hannah, Peninnah continually provoked and harassed her because she was barren. She was especially unkind to Hannah when Elkanah was away. The next time Elkanah went to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice unto the Lord, he took Hannah with him. Hannah was in much distress of soul, and she wept and prayed before the Lord that He would give her a son. She promised to give this son to the Lord all the days of his life (1:9-11). Hannah and Elkanah returned home and a son, Samuel, was born to them (1:19-20). Chapter 2 begins with Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord. Each line of her prayer sets forth the glory of the Lord which finds its full revelation and fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming Anointed One, the Messiah.

(2:1) - *"And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord;"* - Hannah acknowledged that her joy was IN THE LORD Who blessed her with a son. The living and true God is the source of all life, both physical and spiritual. The Lord Jesus is the fountain of grace and the giver of all life (*John 11:25-26; James 1:17-18*). *"My horn is exalted in the Lord"* - The horn is a symbol of strength. The change in her state and her strength to conceive was by God's power and goodness. By nature, we are as SPIRITUALLY barren as Hannah was physically barren. We have no spiritual life and no power to bring about a new birth. Those who attribute their new birth to their own free will or their own natural faith are sadly mistaken. They literally exalt their horns in themselves, not in the Lord. All spiritual life is in and by the power and grace of God in Christ (*John 1:12-13; John 5:21*). We must always remember that spiritual and eternal life comes from the righteousness that Christ worked out on the cross for us as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 5:21*).

"My mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation" - The reason Hannah could boast over this is because she rejoiced in the LORD's salvation, i.e. her boast was in the LORD. The *"enemies"* probably referred to those who mocked her in her barrenness. But, judging from *Verse 10*, she also had a wider meaning; for Christ is God's King and His anointed. It is through Christ that we have the victory over our enemies - Satan, sin, death, hell, and the grave (*1 Cor. 1:29-31; 15:25-26; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*).

(2:2) - *"There is none holy as the Lord"* - God's holiness refers to the fact that He is so unique, special, single, and separate. *"For there is none beside Thee"* - There is none who can compare with God. People speak of seeking and finding God's attributes in the glories of nature, and there are revelations of His glory in the world He created (*Psalms 19; Rom. 1:19-20*). But the full majesty and glory of God, His true holiness, can only be seen in the glorious Person and finished work of redemption accomplished by Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of His people (*Isa. 45:20-25; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9-10*). God alone is essentially, originally, perfectly, and unchangeably holy. All that God does is in accordance with and in keeping with His holiness. Christ came, lived, died, and arose that God would reveal Himself as holy, just, and the justifier of sinners (*Rom. 3:25-26*). *"Neither is there any rock like our God"* - A solid rock is a sure foundation. Our Lord Jesus is often called our Rock. He is our Rock and our salvation to hide, shelter, and support all who come to Him (*Psalms 62:6-7; Isa. 28:16; 1 Cor. 10:4*).

(2:3) - “Talk no more exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth” - We have no room to complain if we are barren and no room to boast if we are blessed (1 Cor. 4:7; John 3:27). “For the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed” - Self-righteous and arrogant words and thoughts will be judged, for God knows every heart (Dan. 5:20; James 4:6). Actions are weighed before God by the standard of Christ’s righteousness (Acts 17:31) and by the motive and principle from which they proceed. We are commanded to do all unto the glory of God (Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17). This shows us that in order to stand before God in the day of judgment we need the righteousness of Christ imputed as the ground of our salvation, and we need a new heart to praise and glorify the LORD as the fruits of our salvation.

(2:4-5) - Hannah, praising God’s grace to the humble and weak, illustrates how He exalts the humble and resists the proud. (1) Mighty men, trusting in their strength and arms, are broken to pieces, while God gives strength to those who stumble in weakness. (2) Those who have proudly lived in plenty are forced to toil for bread, while the hungry have been filled by His grace. (3) Barren Hannah, by His mercy, has born several children, while proud Peninnah (according to tradition) could bear no more and lost those she had. God’s grace is a gift to the needy and humble, not a reward for the rich (Jer. 9: 23-24; Matt. 5:3-7). Pride and self-righteousness are what keeps sinners from coming to Christ and begging for mercy. When God brings His people to Christ, He brings them down, humbles them, so that they cry out for mercy in Him (Luke 14:11; 18:9-14).

(2:6-7) - Hannah praises God for His sovereignty in all things, especially in salvation (cf. Rom. 9:15-16). It is true that the Lord sovereignly, according to His purpose, controls all things; and men live and die, succeed or fail, are rich or poor, and rule or serve by the will of God. But it is also true that before God saves a sinner and reveals Christ to his heart, He will strip that sinner of all self-righteousness, all self-hope, and all personal merit. As stated before, God brings us low to exalt us, strips us to clothe us, and shows us our poverty to reveal the riches of Christ to us (Matt. 9:10-13; Php. 3:4-10).

(2:8) - Here is a description of our state in sin—poor beggars in the dust and on the dunghill (Eph. 2:12-13). But, because of God’s free and sovereign grace based upon our Lord’s righteous obedience unto death, we are seated with Him among princes on the throne of glory (Eph. 2:4-10).

(2:9-10) - God’s word and His covenant shall not fail. He will keep His saints, His sheep, and not one shall perish (John 6:37-39; 10:27-30). He shall judge the wicked, and none can stay His hand. The Lord will give power, strength, and victory to His Anointed, the Messiah, His King (John 17:23; Psalm 24). Christ came to set the captives free, and He shall not be discouraged (Isa. 61:1-3). And though the kings of the earth declare war on God’s Anointed, He will not fail (Psa. 2; Acts 4:27). As the anointed of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity (God the Son) came to earth and united with flesh to accomplish the complete salvation of all whom the Father had given Him (Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18). When He gives life to His people, no one who comes against them can succeed. He will bring them all to glory and eternal blessedness by His power and His grace (1 John 2:20-27).

(1 Sam. 8:1-8) - Samuel, Hannah's son (whose name means "asked of God"), remained with Eli, the priest and prophet of God, and ministered unto the Lord before Eli (2:11; 3:1). Eli was quite old and had failed to discipline his sons; therefore, God slew them (3:10-14). Samuel became God's prophet and judge in Israel (3:19-21). By God's grace, Samuel was a faithful prophet of God all the days of his life (7:15-17). When he was old, Samuel made his sons judges over Israel; but, like Eli's sons, they perverted judgment, took bribes, and displeased the Lord (8:1-3). The elders of Israel came to Samuel and requested that he establish a king over Israel, like the nations around them (8:4-5). This was not the first time that the people had asked for a king. Recall that they had asked Gideon to rule over them (*Judges 8:22*), and Gideon wisely refused saying, *"I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; THE LORD SHALL RULE OVER YOU"* (*Judges 8:23*). The point that Gideon made was that whatever human instrument the Lord would use to accomplish His purpose in ruling over the nation, their true and only and ultimate King was the Lord Himself. As we will see, because the Lord would grant their request, this marks a turning point in Israel's history. But their desire for a king displeased Samuel, and he knew it was evil. As a faithful prophet of God, he took the matter to the Lord in prayer. The Lord revealed what was really behind their request - *"And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but THEY HAVE REJECTED ME, that I should not reign over them"* (8:7).

We need to understand that it was not necessarily sinful for the people to desire to have a king. First, consider their state as described at the end of the book of Judges - *"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes"* (*Judges 21:25*). Of course, God had always been their King, but they had rejected Him. He would show them that without Him, they would be destroyed. Secondly, the LORD had already promised and prophesied that there would be kings to rule over them - *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be"* (*Gen 49:10; cf. Gen. 17:6,16; 35:11; Num. 24:17*). Thirdly, provision had been made in the law of Moses for the choice of a king, and directions given concerning the manner in which the king should govern (*Deut. 17:14-20*). Fourthly, even though most of them failed miserably, God's appointed kings, which would come from the tribe of Judah, were to lead the people in the ways of the Lord, and they were established by God to be types of Christ, the King of all kings. Through these human kings the people were to learn a great lesson - THE LORD HIMSELF IS THE ONE TRUE AND ONLY KING!

Their sin in desiring a king was revealed in the kind of king they wanted and the spirit they manifested. Again, they had rejected the Lord as their King. If they had desired a king to be given them according to the law of God (*Deut. 17:15*), one who would govern them in truth and justice, one who feared God, it would have been fine. But they asked for a king *"to judge us LIKE ALL THE NATIONS"* (8:5). God, therefore, in His good purpose and providence, and in judgment upon the people for forsaking Him, let them have the king of their choice. This was Saul from the tribe of Benjamin, not from Judah. They chose Saul for all the wrong reasons. It was because he came from a wealthy influential family and because of his appearance (9:1-2). This was all well within the scope of God's sovereign will. As we know from the rest of the recorded history in 1 Samuel, King Saul was a failure, but God used him to pave the way for Israel's first godly king, David, from the tribe Judah. Even though as a sinner saved by grace he had his problems, David became the victor for Israel over Goliath and the Philistines, *"the sweet psalmist of Israel"* (2 Sam. 23:1), and one of the greatest types of Christ found in the Bible. David was the shepherd-king of Israel; Christ is the Shepherd/King of spiritual Israel (*cp. 1 Sam. 16:1-11; John 10:11-14; Rev. 19:16*). God, having

purposed to raise unto them a king of whose seed the Messiah would come, took this occasion to accomplish His purpose, so turning their evil desire unto a good end, as God can convert the evil thoughts and actions of men to serve for His own glory in the salvation of His chosen people. Christ was *“made of the seed of David according to the flesh”* (Rom. 1:3).

Again, the LORD was the ultimate King over Israel, and, although men and women by nature do not recognize Him as such, He is the Ruler of the whole universe. Also, all the promises and prophecies of a king in Israel were to be fulfilled ultimately by the coming of Christ, the King of kings. Whoever was to be king in Israel was to act in his capacity as a type of Christ, the King of kings. He was to submit to the Lord God and lead the people in serving the Lord and looking forward to the coming of the Messiah for righteousness and eternal life. Most of the time, Israel was ruled by evil kings of whom it is said, *“and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.”* There were a few kings of whom it is said, *“and he did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.”* Throughout the history of the kings of Israel, it was apparent that sinful human kings were failures. The only king who has never failed is our one and only true king, the Lord Jesus Christ. The true people of God (spiritual Israel) have no king but Jesus Christ, the Lord (Matt. 23:8-11). Truly, Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9-10; Phil. 2:9-11). Christ is our King by the Father's design and decree. He is our King by His obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. He died that He might be Lord of the dead and the living (Rom. 14:9). He is our King to bring His chosen people into submission to His sovereign rule and to submit to His righteousness as the only ground of their complete salvation (Psa. 45:6; 99:4; Isa. 9:6-7; 32; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Heb. 1:8). The mediatorial lordship (kingship) of Christ is based upon His accomplishment of redemption for His people (Matt. 5:3-12; 6:33; 16:13-20; Acts 2:34-36; Php. 2:5-11). Christ is our priest, our prophet, and our king.

(1 Sam. 8:9-18) - The Lord told Samuel to tell the people what to expect when they reject His reign and make a man to be king over them. Notice how many times the Lord says of their chosen king that *“he will take ...”* He would live in plenty while the people went without. This is so different from Christ our King Who gave Himself a ransom for all His people to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:6). Christ our King gave His life for us and arose again because of our justification by God's grace in Him (John 10:11-18). The only thing He took from us was our sin-debt as our sins were imputed to Him and became His by the legal act of imputation. He gave us in return His righteousness imputed to us whereby we are sinners saved by grace and justified citizens of His eternal kingdom (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16). He gives us eternal life and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (John 6:37-45; Eph. 1:3). We are under His reign of grace, and He rules with a sceptre of righteousness to save us, keep us, protect us, and bring us to glory (Rom. 5:21; Heb. 1:8). Christ our King gives us a heart to serve Him and give Him all praise and glory for the great salvation He has accomplished for us.

(1 Sam. 8:19-22) - The blind and foolish people only cried out more, *“Nay. but we will have a king, over us.”* Samuel told the Lord what the people wanted, and the Lord, according to His sovereign purpose and will said, *“Make them a king.”* Within the first two years of his reign Saul usurped the authority of the priests, rejected God's way of atonement, and offered a sacrifice himself to God (13:1, 8-14). Saul was a clear example of man's depravity and failure. He proved that the only hope of salvation for sinners is the grace of God in Christ that REIGNS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, THE KING OF KINGS (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14).

King Saul's reign over Israel lasted about forty years and was marked with many acts of disobedience for which the Lord rejected him. One of the first acts of disobedience was his unlawful sacrifice. Though he was neither a prophet nor a priest, rather than waiting on Samuel to bring God's instruction and offer sacrifice, Saul took it upon himself to offer sacrifice to the Lord on behalf of the people (1 Sam. 13:8-10). Among all of Saul's sins, this was his greatest offense. Lifted up with pride, he sought to come before God without the appointed priest and sacrifice. It had been well established in the Law that only God's appointed priest and sacrifice could be accepted (Heb. 5:1-5; 8:8-12; 10:11-14). This prescribed way of worship pictures our need of Christ as our only High Priest and sacrifice (Rom. 3:19-26). *"For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim. 2:5). To come before God any other way but Christ is to come before Him without a righteousness by which God justifies His people - Christ, the Lord our Righteousness. The Lord rejected Saul as king, and in God's sovereign providence, this paved the way for David to become king.

Notice how God said He *"repented that He had made Saul king over Israel (15:11,35)"*. But in 15:28-29, we find that God does NOT repent. How do we reconcile this? Many times in Scripture human attributes are assigned to God, not literally, but to make a point. Repentance is assigned to God, not to say that He changes His mind or purpose, but to show how much He hates sin. God is immutable. All of this was in accordance with His purpose that cannot change. It was always God's purpose to take the kingdom away from Saul and give it to David, God's anointed (1 Sam. 15:28; 16:1).

(1 Sam. 16:1-13) - This is the account of the Lord revealing His appointed king, David, one of the sons of Jesse. Recall that Jesse was the son of Obed who was the son of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:17-22). Here we see two great Scriptural revelations: (1) David as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd-King of Israel (Psalm 23; 24), and (2) the human lineage of Christ beginning to be realized in the line of Judah as prophesied (Gen. 49:8-12) and narrowed to the line of King David (Matt. 1:1-6; Rom. 1:1-4; Rev. 22:16). Christ was prophesied by Isaiah to be *"a rod out of the stem of Jesse"* who would establish righteousness by His death for His sheep, and how He would rule over His people (spiritual Israel) and bring peace between them and God (Isa. 11:1-6). So, this is all in keeping with the sovereign, wise, and unchanging purpose, will, and counsel of God (Eph. 1:9-11).

The Lord told Samuel to go to *"Bethlehem"* (also called *Bethlehem-Ephratah*). This would later be identified as the city of David where the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-4, 10-15; John 7:40-42). Later, Jerusalem would also be called the city of David as this was where David reigned as king (2 Sam. 5:7). Christ Who is our Shepherd-King came out of Bethlehem as to His sinless humanity, and He reigns as King over the new Jerusalem, which is His eternal kingdom populated by all sinners whom He has saved by God's grace (Gal. 4:26; Rev. 3:12; 21). All this speaks of the PERSON of the Shepherd-King Who is Christ the Lord. He is both God and man in one PERSON (Matt. 1:21,23; John 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16), and He earned the right to rule in His mediatorial glory as the Savior and Ruler of His people.

Jesse brought all of his sons except the youngest, David, for Samuel to see. As Samuel looked at them, he thought, *"Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him"* (16:6). But the Lord told him, *"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"* (16:7). Recall that the Lord had told Samuel that His choice for king was one *"better than"* Saul (15:28). It is true that David's heart was better than Saul's, but we must understand that God does not choose people because of any

inherent goodness. All of us, including David, are sinners who have nothing to recommend us unto God (*Rom. 3:10-23*). All unregenerate people, including David in his natural state, have evil hearts when it comes to salvation and a right relationship with God (*Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18; 1 Cor. 2:14*). If David's heart was good before God, it was because of God's grace in giving him a new heart, a regenerate heart of faith and repentance (*Ezek. 36:26-27*).

God chose His people to save before the foundation of the world without any consideration of who they would be or what they would do (*Rom. 9:10-15*). Salvation is all of grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to God's people and which they receive by God-given faith. If there is any goodness in any of us, it is grace, and all of grace. The Lord first identified David as "*a man after HIS own heart*" (*13:14*). The heart, love, grace, and mercy of God is the source and first cause of any goodness that God gives His people. David had qualities of character that we all desire and admire, but it was (and is) ALL OF GOD'S GRACE! But David was also a sinner who had no righteousness before God but the righteousness of his Savior imputed to him. The grace that was in David's heart was the fruit of Christ's obedience unto death as David's Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*2 Sam. 23:5*). David was (and is) a sinner saved by grace. David himself wrote of the blessedness of "*the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*" (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8*).

David's physical appearance as described in *16:12* is typical of our Savior's beauty and glory as our Shepherd-King. Consider how John described Him in *Revelation 1:12-16*. Christ is the very embodiment of the glory of God (*2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 1:19; 2:9*). David's anointing of God as described in *16:13* is typical of Christ anointing by the Father in the midst of His brethren whom He came to save (*Isa. 61:1-3; Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 4:1,18*).

(1 Sam. 16:14-23) - David was brought before Saul from whom "*the Spirit of the LORD departed*" and who was troubled by an evil spirit. Saul was under God's judgment for his sins. This would be the way of all of us if not for the grace of God in Christ. Christ, our Shepherd-King, took our judgment for us on the cross and gave us His righteousness as the result (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*). God had given David the gift of music and psalms through which he comforted Saul when he was troubled. Christ is not only our Shepherd-King, He is also our sweet Psalmist Who brings the music of the Gospel, Who sings peace to our hearts, and Who has put a song within our hearts to trust, worship, and follow Him (*Rev. 5:6-14*). David's music could only sooth Saul's troubled mind temporarily, but Christ's music soothes our troubled minds eternally (*John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 7:24-25; Col. 3:1-4,15*).

Notice the description of David given to Saul by his servant in *16:18* - This applies to David in a limited sense; for, again, we know that David was a sinful man who needed salvation by God's grace). But if we see David as a type of Christ, we can see that all of these qualities apply to Christ, our Shepherd-King, in the perfection of His glory eternally. "*Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite*" - This is Christ Person as Godman, the Messiah, Who has come to save His people from their sins (*Matt. 1:21,23*). "*That is cunning in playing*" - Christ is skillful, i.e. able, to do what He was sent to do (*Heb. 7:25*). "*And a mighty valiant man, and a man of war*" - He is a Man of courage Who willingly went to war against sin, Satan, and the world to save His people and bring them to glory. "*And prudent in matters*" - He is all-knowing and wise in matters of truth and judgment. "*And a comely Person*" - To the unregenerate He has no beauty (*Isa. 53:2-3*), but to all who have been born again and given spiritual eyes, He is the beauty of God's glory (*Psa. 27:4; John 1:14*). "*And the LORD is with Him*" - Both the Father and the Holy Spirit were with the Son incarnate and bore Him up under the pressures and persecution He endured to accomplish righteousness for us (*Matt. 3:16-17; John 1:34*).

(1 Sam. 17:1-3) - The story of David and Goliath is a factual account from the Bible that demonstrates how the Lord fights and intercedes for His people. In this story we can see David, the champion of Israel, as a type of Christ, the Champion of spiritual Israel. We can see Goliath as a type of all enemies of Christ and His people - sin, death, the devil, the curse of the law - which would kill and condemn us if not for the power of our Champion, the Lord Jesus Christ. As our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, Christ went to battle for us on the cross to purge away our sins and bring in everlasting righteousness by which God has justified all of His people. Christ, our Champion, paid our debt to God's law and justice (*Heb. 1:3; 10:14*). He conquered death and the grave for His people (*1 Cor. 15:53-58*). He defeated Satan so that all of his accusations against us would be groundless (*John 12:31-33; Rom. 8:33-34*). He removed the curse of the law from all the elect who were chosen of God and given to Him by the Father before the world began (*Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:13*). Our Champion fought a spiritual battle against principalities and powers beyond our abilities, and He spoiled them completely for us (*Col. 2:9-15*).

(1 Sam. 17:4-11) - King Saul and his men were battling the Philistines, one of which was a nine-foot giant named Goliath. Goliath was strong and well-armed. Goliath challenged King Saul to find a man to fight him, and if Saul's man could kill Goliath, the Philistines would surrender and serve Israel. But if Goliath killed Saul's man, the Israelites would surrender and serve the Philistines. Here is a situation where the victory was conditioned on ONE MAN. All the men of Saul's army were afraid of Goliath, and there was no one to stand up to him. This is the way of our salvation by God's grace conditioned on ONE MAN, THE GODMAN, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (*Isa. 9:6-7; Rom. 5:12-21*).

(1 Sam. 17:12-26) - Recall that David was a shepherd, the youngest of the eight sons of Jesse of Bethlehem. For all appearances David would have been the last person to be Israel's champion. This can remind us of how Jesus Christ, as to His outward circumstances and appearance, was never considered by the Jews as a whole to be the Messiah. They looked for a mighty warrior who would come in the clouds, conquer their enemies, set up a kingdom on earth, and rule through them. Jesus came in a lowly manger, born of Joseph, a carpenter, and a virgin. As Isaiah prophesied, He grew up as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground, with no outward beauty that men would desire or follow Him. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and not esteemed by men (*Isa. 53:2-3*). He appeared to them to be anything but a savior, a conqueror, and a king.

David asked this question - "*who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?*" He recognized that Goliath was no match for the living God. He also recognized that, ultimately, this is the LORD'S battle. It would be won by the strength of the Lord, not by the strength of men. This is a lesson that had to be repeated often to the unbelieving Israelites, going all the way back to their liberation from Egypt (*Exod. 14:10-14*). In light of this consider how our eternal salvation is by God's grace and power in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. We fight and labor, but all the battles have already been won and victory assured by Christ our Champion (*John 16:33; Rom. 7:24-25; 1 Cor. 15:54-58*). We too have to be reminded of this often as many times we try to fight the warfare of the flesh and the Spirit in our own strength and not the Lord's.

(1 Sam. 17:27-37) - David's brothers were angry that he would say such things, and David's response was very profound - "*What have I now done? IS THERE NOT A CAUSE?*" (*17:29*). The cause was the glory of God in the preservation of His people according to His promise. This is

the same cause pertaining to the salvation of God's elect by Christ. God's glory is the cause that assures all our victories - *"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness"* (Lam. 3:22-23). This is why God's elect CANNOT perish! God has promised to save them to the end, and all of God's promise are sure and certain in Christ and based on His righteousness imputed to them (Rom. 8:33-39; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:13-20).

David was brought before Saul, and because of his youth, Saul questioned David's ability to defeat Goliath. David recounts his past feats in protecting his father's sheep by killing a lion and a bear. But David also emphasized that just as the LORD had delivered him and his sheep from the lion and the bear, He would also deliver him from the hands of *"this uncircumcised Philistine"* who *"shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."* Again, David recognizes and proclaims that any victory he had in the past or would have in the future was of the Lord. What a great picture of our salvation and the victories that we have over sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. When we try to fight in our own strength, we fail. But when we look to and trust Christ, the Lord our Righteousness, we are invincible. When Israel looked to their own strength, the Lord would remind them of His own past acts to show that HE alone is their victory (Isa. 46:9-13). By God's grace, we who are saved look back to a past, finished act - Christ crucified and risen from the dead (Gal. 6:14; Heb. 10:14).

(1 Sam. 17:38-40) - Saul equipped David with armor and a sword, but David refused it. David took his staff and collected five smooth stones out of a nearby brook that he would use in his sling. This is a picture of Christ going to battle in his own wisdom and power and not with the implements of men. He did not put on armor or wield a sword. All He needed was His staff which is His Word (John 18:1-11). Many speculate as to why David chose five smooth stones instead of one. We have no biblical answer to this, so their views are simply so much speculation.

(1 Sam. 17:41-47) - By God's grace and power, David came and stood before the giant. David spoke with great boldness and confidence because he came *"in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, Whom Goliath and defied."* He said, *"This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel."* In David's mind this victory was not to bring himself fame and fortune but glorify the Lord - *"And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give you into our hands."* This was (and is) the glory of God in Christ Jesus Who saves us and brings us to glory (John 17:1-5).

(1 Sam. 17:48-58) - David used his sling to kill Goliath by hitting him at his only weak point - his exposed forehead. As in the Bible the forehead often represents the mind, it is not a stretch to draw a parallel to the idolatry of false religion when they imagine their strength is in their appearance, their strength, and their works. They are ignorant in their minds of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness by their own strength and goodness. They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God - Christ, the Lord our Righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4). Their righteousness will be exposed as evil deeds with the stone of the Gospel thrown at them as the one and only standard by which sinners can be justified before God (Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). Christ, our Champion, fought a spiritual battle for His people and conquered all of His (and their) enemies. His weapon was the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work wherein He established a righteousness for them by which God has justified them and from which He gives them life everlasting (Isa. 54:14-17; Rom. 5:21).

Lesson 59 - CHRIST WILL REIGN FOREVER 2 Samuel 7:1-17

(2 Sam. 7:1-9) - At this time, the tabernacle of Moses was in Gibeon (*1 Chron. 21:29*), and the Ark of the Covenant was in a structure that David had built for it in Jerusalem. David was concerned that the Ark was in such a plain structure while he himself dwelt in a palace made of cedar. This shows David's God-given respect for the glory of God. David consulted the prophet Nathan as to whether or not he should build a house for the Lord God. Nathan encouraged David to do so, but then the word of the Lord came telling him otherwise. God said that David was not the man to build His house (*1 Chron. 17:4*). David's son, Solomon, would be the one to build the temple (*1 Chron. 22:8; 28:2-3,10; 1 Kings 8:18-19*). The Lord told David he was not allowed to build His temple because David was a man of war (*1 Chron. 22:7-8; 28:3*). The Lord told David that his son, Solomon, would be a "MAN OF REST" (*1 Chron. 22:9*). The Lord Himself is said to be "a Man of war" (*Exod. 15:1-3*) and the "Prince of peace" (*Isa. 9:6*). Here we see a great picture of Christ in both David and Solomon. David pictures Christ going to war against all enemies and shedding His precious blood to save His people from their sins. Solomon pictures Christ in victory as His warfare is over and has brought peace, safety, and security to His spiritual and eternal temple, His church. Christ has fought our battles and accomplished peace between God and His people. We rest in Him spiritually and eternally (*Isa. 32:17-20; Col. 1:19-22*).

(2 Sam. 7:10) - God's promise here specifically applies to Israel under David's reign, and this only in a limited sense. We know this first because under the terms of the Law of Moses, Israel's security and prosperity in the land was conditioned on their obedience. Though it is true that David had his own failings and problems, on the whole, under his reign the nation was at peace and prosperous. After David and Solomon, the kingdom was divided. So, this time of security and prosperity did not last. Also, even though the Lord prohibited David from building His house (the temple), He promised to build David a house, and this was in the sense of establishing a dynasty for the house of David. This too was fulfilled only in a limited sense through the line of Judah. But this promise with all of its blessings was to be fulfilled in a spiritual and eternal sense by the coming of Christ into the world to establish the spiritual and eternal kingdom of God in the salvation of spiritual Israel by God's grace based on the righteousness of Christ Who reigns as King of kings eternally over His people. We see this in the prophecies of the New Covenant (*Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Ezek. 37:24-25; Luke 1:32-33*). This truth is further settled in the following covenant the Lord made with David.

(2 Sam. 7:11-17) - This is God's covenant with David, which is the royal covenant. This covenant was fulfilled physically and temporarily in the human kings who descended from David and occupied the throne of Israel, but it reached its ultimate eternal and spiritual fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, beginning with His birth in Bethlehem (*Matt. 2:1-2; Luke 2:8-11*). The Gospel of Matthew begins by showing Christ as "the Son of David" (*Matt. 1:1*). Peter preached that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of God's promise to David (*Acts 2:29-36*). We see then that the main point of this covenant was the fact that the promised Messiah would be a descendant of David according to the flesh (*Rom. 1:1-5*). This was another remarkable revelation of more details of the Messiah's identity, the nature of His Person and His accomplishment of redemption for His people.

We need to emphasize that this was an absolute and unconditional covenant towards David. God's promise to David was absolute, certain, and unchangeable. God repeated, "I will," and "he shall." In 7:13 God says, "I WILL establish the throne of his kingdom forever." The Lord would accomplish this eternal kingdom, not by David personally, but through the Son of David, the greater David, the Lord Jesus Christ Whose throne would be "forever and ever"

and whose rule would in perfect righteousness (*Psalm 45:6; Heb. 1:8*). David's reign (his sceptre) was generally a just government, but it was far from the perfect and righteous government of the King of kings. David himself recognized this because he admitted to being a sinner saved by God's grace based on the righteousness of the Messiah imputed to him (*2 Sam. 23:5; Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8*). This indicates that David himself knew and understood this. And consider what Peter preached at Pentecost in *Acts 2:25-31*. He quoted from *Psalm 16* which was written by David himself showing that David was speaking prophetically of Christ to come.

Notice again what God said in *7:13* - "*He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom for ever.*" He had already said that David would not be the one to build His house. Some would argue that Solomon building God's house would be the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant and prophecy. Solomon did build the temple in Jerusalem, but that temple was eventually destroyed. It was rebuilt later on but destroyed again. Many people look for it to be rebuilt again in a future millennium, but this is not the case. This is the house that Christ has built. It is His church that can never be destroyed (*Matt. 16:18; Heb. 3:1-6*). It is not a physical building that can be destroyed and rebuilt over and over again. It is spiritual house built upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.

So, the promise continues and expands. God says, "*I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*" (*7:13*), and "*And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*" (*7:16*). What began as a promise that David's son Solomon would be blessed and build the temple turns into something different—the promise of an everlasting kingdom. Another Son of David would rule forever and build an eternal and indestructible house. This is a reference to the Messiah, Jesus Christ, called the Son of David in *Matthew 21:9*.

So, the substance of this covenant had to do with the establishment of the eternal kingdom by Christ, the Savior-King. Some of these details had already been revealed, but they were few, obscure, and isolated, for example, when God revealed to Jacob that "*the scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh come*" (*Gen. 49:10*). The unbelieving Jews believed that Christ would establish an earthly kingdom and rule from Jerusalem upon the throne of David. But notice that the Lord already revealed to Jacob that the sceptre would eventually depart from Judah when the Messiah would come. Again, this royal covenant revealed that the eternal throne and kingdom would be accomplished and established by the Messiah Who would come as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of spiritual Israel, God's elect out of every nation. These are those whom God had given Him before the foundation of the world. They were adopted by the Father and justified based on the merits of Christ's righteousness imputed to them. They were redeemed by Christ on the cross, and they will all be born again and brought by God to faith in Christ, repentance of dead works, and perseverance in the faith unto glory. They are the election of grace who live by God's grace in looking to Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

By the terms of this covenant, more information was given. Even after David's death, hundreds of years later, the prophet Isaiah referred to the throne of David as a prophecy of the Messiah (*Isa. 9:6-7*). Much is made of this in the New Testament (*Matt. 1:17,20; 20:30-31; 21:15; 22:41-45*). All of this proves Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised King-Messiah Who would establish an everlasting righteousness of infinite value by which God has justified all His people and Who will reign forever and ever over His eternal kingdom.

(2 Samuel 9:1-3) - Saul, the people's king, had been rejected by God for disobedience and rebellion (1 Sam. 15:26); and David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), now reigned over all Israel. One of David's first acts as king was to ask, *"Is there yet any left of the house of Saul, that I might show him kindness FOR JONATHAN'S SAKE?"* Where the word of the king is, there is power, authority, and total sovereignty. There is no council, no conference, and no bargaining here. The king speaks from his sovereign throne, and what he decrees shall be done. Our God is infinitely sovereign over all His creation. He reigns in total authority in heaven and earth (Psalm 115:1-3; Dan. 4:34-35). Our God is sovereign in providence (1 Sam. 2:6-8; Isa. 45:5-7; Isa. 46:9-11). God is the first cause of all things (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:1-11). Our God is sovereign in salvation (Exo. 33:18-19; Rom. 9:15-18; Jonah 2:9).

David's thoughts and purpose here were the result of a covenant David and Jonathan, Saul's son, made years before as recorded in 1 Samuel 18:1-4. Jonathan loved David and recognized him as the Lord's anointed and not himself. We read in 2 Samuel 1:26 of David's lament after Jonathan's death, in which he said that his love for Jonathan was more wonderful than the love of a woman. It is sad and wicked that some use these two passages to suggest a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan, but that was not the case. What we have here is a picture of God the Father's love for God the Son, and the covenant of grace made between them in eternity past. Just as David's love for Jonathan and the covenant made between them included a particular future generation, the love of God the Father for His Son, and the Son for the Father, included a particular future generation, God's elect, for whom Christ was made Surety and for whom He would be Substitute and Redeemer.

David's purpose here was that he *"might show the kindness of God to him for Jonathon's sake"* - The word kindness is mercy. David, the king, was a man of mercy. The house of Saul was David's enemy and deserved no mercy or pity, but David found it in his heart to show mercy to some. Our God is holy, righteous, and just; and He is also merciful. He delights to show mercy (Psalm 130:3-7). Adam's race is a fallen, rebellious race and deserves no mercy FOR CHRIST'S SAKE. God is not indebted to sinners, but He has determined to show mercy to some (Exo. 33:18-19). The language of false religion is merit, rewards for service. The language of true redemption is mercy and grace in Christ (1 Tim. 1:13-16; Luke 18:13).

David learned that there was one from the house of Saul who yet lived. It was Mephibosheth. Before Mephibosheth was born, David and Jonathan made that covenant mentioned above to insure provision and protection for Jonathan's descendants. Jonathan, in essence, was surety for all his descendants. This is a picture of Christ as Surety for all of God's elect. Before any of them were born, the Father, Son, and Spirit, covenanted to insure the provision of salvation and glory for all of the elect based on the merit of Christ's obedience unto death. Mephibosheth was *"lame on his feet"* because of a fall when he was young (2 Sam. 4:4). This pictures our fall in and by our father, Adam (Rom. 5:12, 17-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Eph. 2:1-3). As we are born in sin, we cannot walk to God or even with God. All of our faculties were affected by this fall, and in our flesh dwells no good (Rom. 3:9-19).

(2 Samuel 9:4-6) - David sent for Mephibosheth and brought him out of his current state to bring him into his own house and to his own table. Notice that David did not tell his servant to go and plead with Mephibosheth to see if he will decide to come to David. *"King David sent, and FETCHED him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, from Lodebar."* This means to bring, draw, and carry him to David. King David purposed to show mercy to someone of Saul's house. When he heard that Jonathan had a crippled son in Lodebar, David sent his servant to where Mephibosheth was and fetched him; that is, the servant called and brought him to David. The Lord of glory is love, and love must be expressed. The Lord of

glory in His sovereign mercy determined to show mercy to a fallen race. He set His love and affection on lame sinners and sent His only begotten Son into the world to be our Savior (*John 3:16-17; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 5:6-10*). Christ came where we were, was made like us but without sin, and by His obedience and death honored the law, satisfied justice, and enabled God to be just and justifier of all who believe (*Rom. 3:19-26; 1 Peter 3:18*). He then sent His Holy Spirit to fetch us, call us, and make us willing to come to Him (*Gal. 1:15; Eph. 1:13-14; Psalm 110:3*). This is a great picture of how the Lord sends the Holy Spirit to empower the Gospel to bring, draw, and carry His chosen, adopted, justified, and redeemed people to Himself. The Spirit gives them spiritual life and draws them to Christ (*John 6:37,44-45; 12:31-32; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). When David called his name, Mephibosheth answered, *"Behold thy servant."* Mephibosheth knew exactly who the king was. When God reveals Himself to us, we are brought to know and understand His glory in Christ and salvation by His grace through the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith (*John 6:44-45; 17:3; Rom. 10:4; 1 John 5:20*).

(2 Samuel 9:7-9) - Mephibosheth was afraid of the king. He fell on his face, but David spoke peace to Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake. David's kindness to Mephibosheth included the restoration of all the land of Saul and the privilege of feasting at the king's table continually. Mephibosheth said, *"What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?"* This is a picture of how the Lord brings His people to Himself. He sends the Spirit to humble them by convicting them of sin, righteousness, and judgment as these pertain to Christ their Surety. In light of their sin, spiritual death, and depravity, He reveals Christ as the only Savior from sin and the only way of righteousness and eternal life and glory. He speaks words of peace, mercy, love, and grace FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

Remember that before Mephibosheth was born, David made a covenant with Jonathan where he promised to show mercy to Jonathan's sons because of his love for him (*1 Sam. 20:11-17*). Before the foundation of the world, God the Father entered into an everlasting covenant of mercy with the Lord Jesus Christ, giving Him a people of Adam's race and making Christ the Surety and Redeemer of those people (*John 6: 37-45; John 10:24-30; John 17:1-3, 9; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2-13; Heb. 13:20-21*). IT IS ALL FOR CHRIST'S SAKE (*Col. 1:14-18*). This is God's love and mercy, and it is peace with God based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer according to the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace fulfilled by Christ for us.

(2 Samuel 9:10-13) - David instructed Ziba, the servant of Jonathan, to till the land and take care of the remaining family of Saul and Jonathan, but he emphasized that Mephibosheth *"thy master's son shall eat bread alway at my table,"* and that Mephibosheth *"shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons."* It is said of Mephibosheth that he *"dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet."* David fulfilled every promise to Jonathan in the case of Mephibosheth, as God will fulfill every promise to His elect in Christ; for none shall ever perish, but shall all be made like Christ and enjoy His presence and His blessings forever (*Rom. 8:33-39*). It is stressed here that Mephibosheth was still *"lame on his feet."* God's elect are sinners saved by His grace, and while in this world, they remain sinners. But they feast at the King's table continually as they enjoy all the blessings of His grace in Christ (*Eph. 1:3*). This includes the non-imputation of sins to their account and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to their account (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34; Heb. 10:19-22*). They have been given spiritual life to walk with Christ and follow Him as they feast on the spiritual meal that Christ has prepared for them at His table (*Matt. 5:6; John 6:48-58*).

2 Samuel 11 records the sad and tragic incident in David's life when he committed adultery, murder, and deception to satisfy his own sinful and selfish lust. It is the story of David and Bathsheba who was the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Bathsheba became pregnant with David's child, and David plotted to deceive Uriah into thinking that the child was his own. As we know, David's plot did not work, so he formed another plot to have Uriah killed. He then took Bathsheba to be his wife, and the rumors began in Jerusalem. After their child was born, the LORD sent His prophet, Nathan, to confront David.

(2 Samuel 12:1-4) - Nathan began with the story of a rich man who had many flocks and herds and a poor man who *"had nothing, save one little ewe lamb."* When a traveler came to the rich man, rather than taking one of his many sheep to feed his guest, he took the poor man's one lamb. Nathan was obviously speaking of David as the rich man who had many wives, and Uriah as the poor man who had only one wife. David did not recognize this, and this indicates that he may have conveniently put the matter out of mind. Many speculate about David's thoughts and attitude over this, but this is all the Scripture tell us. But though David had not lost his salvation, which no true believer can, as we know from his psalm of repentance which came later (*Psalms 51*), he had lost the peace and joy of salvation. David was a sinner saved by God's grace in Christ, but a man who had been *"overtaken in a fault"* and needed to be restored *"in the spirit of meekness"* (*Gal. 6:1*).

(2 Samuel 12:5-6) - David's anger and judgment proved that he did not recognize himself as the culprit in Nathan's story, yet his words were consistent with the law of God - *"As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die."* It was established from the creation that all sin deserves death (*Gen. 2:17*) as the sentence of God's justice (*Ezek. 18:4,20; Rom. 6:23a*). Under the law of Moses, the sins of adultery and murder were both punishable by death with no way out for the guilty. David is an example of what all of us as fallen sinners deserve and have earned. Even if we have not committed the acts of adultery and murder, we have committed both in our thoughts (*Matt. 5:21-28*). Although we cannot be punished by the state for sinful thoughts, we can and must be punished unto death, either in ourselves or in the person of a proper substitute, by God Who always judges by truth (*Rom. 2:1-3*).

(2 Samuel 12:7-9) - Nathan said, *"THOU ART THE MAN,"* to the king of Israel. He spoke God's Word of conviction to the king. At that point the LORD reminded David of all that He had freely given to David. Nathan asked, *"Why have you despised and disregarded the commandment of the LORD, to do evil IN HIS SIGHT?"* God is omniscient. He knows and sees all that we think, say, and do. And although God does not impute the sins of His elect to them as they have all been imputed to Christ Who died for our sins (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 8:33-34*), He does see our sins and sometimes deals with us in chastisements for our good (*Heb. 12:5-11*). When the Lord tells us that He will remember our sins and iniquities no more (*Jer. 31:34; Heb. 12:17*), this means that He will never hold our sins against us so as to condemn us for them. In God's court of justice, our sins have been blotted out of His record by the blood of Christ Who died to redeem us by paying our sin-debt to God's justice.

(2 Samuel 12:10-12) - The LORD told David that he would suffer in his kingdom and in his family because of his sins. Although David was not condemned to eternal death for his sins, there were consequences that he would suffer the rest of his life on earth. We know that in David's case, his sufferings were the chastisements of his heavenly Father for David's spiritual

and eternal good. Many claim that this means that “David had to pay for his sins,” but God’s true children are never dealt with by Him in the way of legal and judicial payment for sins. Chastening means to “to train up, to educate,” but this is never as a punishment in the punitive sense of equal justice. CHRIST PAID FOR OUR SINS IN FULL!

Even though we are told specifically here the sins for which David was chastised, God’s children are not always chastised for all our sins. If this were the case, we would not be able to lift up our heads. There are many times that we do not know of specific sin(s) for which we are chastised. Many times, we do not have the knowledge or insight into God’s purposes and our brethren’s lives to say, “God is dealing with them for particular sins.” And the LORD sometimes chastises His people without respect to any specific sins as with Job (*Job 2:3*). Our heavenly Father knows what we need for His glory and our good.

(2 Samuel 12:13-14) - David sinned against Uriah, but he confessed his sin “*against the LORD.*” All sin, ultimately, is against the LORD because all sin is transgression of God’s law (*1 John 3:4*). Notice Nathan’s word to David, “*The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*” This is one of the many cases of God’s grace abounding to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:20-21*). God’s prophet did not speak words of condemnation but words of peace and comfort, words of sins forgiven as they have been “*put away.*” David would be spared the penalty of death under the Law of Moses, and, because of his Savior and Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, God would not impute his sins to him or condemn him for them. David would eventually die physically, as we all will (*Heb. 9:27*), but he would not die the second death, which is eternal death. Remember that when God puts away sin, He does it on a just ground. Because of the blood of Christ, God has freely and fully forgiven His elect and cast their sins behind His back into the depth of the sea. This is salvation for sinners by God’s grace based on the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. Like all of God’s children, David was a sinner to whom the LORD had imputed Christ’s righteousness (*Rom. 4:6-8*).

A further consequence of David’s sins was the death of the child who was born from his and Bathsheba’s illicit and adulterous relationship. And God tells him that this was because of his sinful acts. The LORD specifically states that David had “*given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.*” This is one of the worst things that often comes when God’s true children follow their fleshly appetites and bring scandal upon themselves, the Gospel, and the church. Unbelievers, especially self-righteous religionists, will use this as an occasion to speak against our God, our Savior, and our Gospel. They will say that our claim of salvation totally by God’s free and sovereign grace is worthless and powerless. Let us all remember that David’s sins are not recorded in God’s Word to serve as our example to follow or to show what we can get away with because our salvation is totally by grace. They are recorded to show the sovereign mercy of God in Christ towards sinful people, that we all continually need a righteousness we cannot produce, and to serve as a warning against giving in to our fleshly appetites and losing the joy of salvation and our credibility as followers and witnesses of Christ.

A few final thoughts that we need to consider is that even though the first child of David and Bathsheba died, the LORD blessed them with another child, Solomon, the future king of Israel, and the one through whom the LORD would bring the Messiah through according to the flesh (*Matt. 1:6-7*). We see that this whole episode was well within God’s sovereign, predestinating purpose, even though God cannot be accused of sin. It also shows how God sovereignly overrules the sins of mankind to accomplish His purpose and will in the salvation of His people to the praise of the glory of His grace (*Eph. 1:3-11*). Also, take time to read *Psalms 51*, which is David’s psalm of repentance expressing true godly sorrow over his sins in light of God’s mercy and grace to him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

(2 Samuel 23:1-2) - These are the last words of David. It begins with DAVID'S IDENTITY as described by the Lord. David was *"the son of Jesse."* This connects him with the royal line of Judah that reaches back to the promise God made to Abraham (*Gen. 17:6*), ultimately fulfilled in Christ (*Isa. 11:10; Rom. 15:12; Rev. 22:16*). Christ, the Godman and mediator between God and men, reigns upon the throne of grace with the sceptre of righteousness indicating that He conquered all enemies by redeeming His people from their sins (*Acts 2:36; Php. 2:5-11*). He *"was raised up on high,"* brought from being a lowly shepherd to being, as *"the anointed of the God of Jacob,"* the king of Israel. David was a picture of Christ Who in His humanity had a lowly and ignominious beginning. As described in *Isaiah 53:2-3* - *"a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."* He had *"no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."* He was *"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."* As the Good Shepherd He gave His life for His sheep, bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, *"yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"* (*Isa. 53:4*).

Just as David was raised up on high by the Lord God, every sinner saved by grace is raised up out of the dust of sin, death, and depravity, and lifted up from the dunghill of dead works and idolatry to be set by God's grace among princes and heirs of the throne of glory (*1 Sam. 2:8; cf. Eph. 2:1-7*). This pictures salvation by God's grace based on the blood and righteousness of Christ. David was also *"the sweet psalmist of Israel."* The Lord used him to write many of the psalms that include real confessions of sins in light of the glory of God in Christ. Christ is every believer's sweet psalmist. His Word comforts, teaches, and feeds us so that we can worship and serve Him. David was a prophet of God by whom *"the Spirit of the LORD"* spoke. All of the psalms that were written by David were by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, meaning they were God-breathed and Divinely inspired (*2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21*). These are David's final words, and they are the Word of God revealed and written for our learning and benefit.

(2 Samuel 23:3-4) - These verses show THE IDENTITY OF DAVID'S GOD, the one living and true God. It is true that these words apply to David personally as the anointed king of Israel. But we must remember that Israel's human king was to reign as a type of the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, what applies to David personally in a limited and imperfect way, applies to Christ in an eternal and perfect way. The king must be *"just, ruling in the fear of God."* The human kings of Israel were to rule in justice towards all people and with a reverent respect and regard for the God of Israel. They were to rule in light of God as the supreme just Judge of all Who judges *"according to truth"* (*Rom. 2:2*) and *"in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead"* (*Acts 17:31*).

Christ Himself is the just Person Who established righteousness for His people by His obedience unto death on the cross (*Jer. 23:5-6; Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:17-21*). His kingdom is founded upon justice, and His people are justified and sanctified based on His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. But if Christ IS God, how can it be said that He would rule in the fear of God? As God in human flesh, the one and only Mediator between God and men, and in fulfilling His duties as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of His people, Christ had in mind the honor and glory of His heavenly Father - *"For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (*Col. 2:9; cf. John 17:4*).

"And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" - Again, this applies to David in a limited and imperfect sense, but it applies

to Christ and His kingdom in an eternal and perfect sense. Such a ruler that rules in righteousness and in the fear of God is the light and glory of His people who are safe and secure because of His rule and power. His is a kingdom of light, for Christ is the *“Sun of righteousness”* (Mal. 4:2), the *“bright and morning Star”* (Rev. 22:16). In His spiritual and eternal kingdom there are no dark clouds to obscure His light and glory. *“As the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain”* - As the Shepherd-King of His people, He makes them to lie down in the lush green pastures of His Word and grace (Psa. 23).

(2 Samuel 23:5) - The foundation of true faith as stated above brought David to this confession. *“Although my house be not so with God”* - David’s *“house”* refers to his kingdom and his family. As successful as David’s reign was, for himself it ended in disaster. He suffered from a dark scandal of his own making during his reign. He also suffered under repeated family crises, under an attempted insurrection from his own son, under another civil war, and from three years of famine. This is David’s confession of his own sin, but his confession does not stop at admission of his sin and weakness. He goes on to confess his firm and sure hope of eternal salvation and final glory grounded upon the sovereignty of God and the suretyship of Christ, the promised Messiah. This is what God’s Word defines as *“the sure mercies of David”* (Isa. 55:3) which is fulfilled in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant” - This covenant by which the kingdom was settled on David and his seed, Jesus Christ, forever (Luke 1:31-33), is in line with the eternal covenant of grace made with Christ from the beginning, in which Christ is Surety, Savior, Sanctifier, and Mediator of all persons given to Him by the Father (John 6:37-39; John 17:2-3; Heb. 13:20-21; Heb. 7:22). All whom the Father chose, adopted, justified, and sanctified, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit regenerates and calls (Eph. 1:3-14). David knew that this everlasting covenant from God was not based on David’s perfection as a ruler, a husband, or a father. David himself was far from perfect. It was based on God’s gracious commitment to His everlasting covenant in the Lord Jesus Christ and based on the perfection of righteousness found only in Christ and His perfect work of redemption.

“Ordered in all things, and sure” - The covenant of salvation was set in order by God before the world began. It was made sure as Christ was appointed to be Surety of the covenant for His people (Heb. 7:22; 2 Tim. 1:9). The mercies and grace of God to save His people from sin are not left to chance, nor determined by the wills of sinful men, nor obtained by the works of men. They are predestined, decreed, determined, and purposed by God Himself based on the merit of the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ as Surety of the covenant (Isa 46:9-13). The fulfillment of all the conditions of God’s covenant accomplishing redemption and a perfect righteousness is not in the hands or the wills of men but given to Christ to accomplish (Isa. 9:6-7; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:15). This is why they are called the sure mercies of David (John 10:14-18, 27-30). Christ shall not fail nor be discouraged (Isa. 42:1-4).

“For this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow” - This, in essence, is the testimony of every sinner saved by the grace of God - “God alone is the source and power of my salvation; Christ alone is the assurance and joy of my salvation. God’s love for me in Christ, God’s choice of me in Christ, God’s righteousness fulfilled for me by Christ, and God’s acceptance of me in Christ is all my salvation. It is all of God’s grace in Christ (Eph. 2:8-10).” It is *“all my desire”* because I find comfort and peace in God’s covenant of grace in Christ, and my desire is that God’s purpose in Christ be fulfilled, and that Christ have the preeminence (Col. 1:18; Php. 2:9-11). *“Although He make it not to grow”* - Though David’s earthly kingdom and family were in shambles, no matter what transpires here on earth, whether times are good or bad, his and our salvation and eternal glory is sure because all the promises of God IN CHRIST are sure (2 Cor. 1:20).

After David's death, Solomon was established as king of Israel. Solomon reigned for about forty years. His reign was both very successful and prosperous as well as very tragic. The Lord God granted him both wisdom and riches above all the kings of the earth (1 Kings 10:23). God also gave Solomon peace on all sides during most of his reign (1 Kings 4:20-25). The Lord used Solomon to write the *Song of Solomon*, *Ecclesiastes*, and much of the book of *Proverbs* (1 Kings 4:32). He completed many building projects in Israel of which the greatest and most important was the construction of the great temple in Jerusalem according to the instructions and provisions of his father, David (1 Kings 6; 1 Chron. 22). Solomon's failures were mainly due to his have 700 wives and 300 concubines, many of them foreigners who led him into public idolatry in his old age (1 Kings 11:1-13). For this reason, the Lord told Solomon that He would take the kingdom from him, but, for the sake of David, He would not do so during Solomon's lifetime. After Solomon's death the country was divided into the northern kingdom, known as Israel, and the southern kingdom, known as Judah. Even though this division remained into the future, the Lord God was faithful to keep Judah together until He would send Messiah into the world - *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between His feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).*

(1 Kings 8:1-3) - When the temple construction was finished, Solomon and all the people gathered together *"that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion."* Just like the tabernacle of old was built mainly to house the ark (Exod. 25:22), Solomon's temple was built for this same purpose. This ark was a physical representation of the awesome shekinah glory of the Lord. The word "shekinah" is derived from a Hebrew word meaning "to inhabit, to settle, to dwell." It refers to the presence of God, where God was pleased to reveal Himself to His people. It describes the dwelling place of the Lord, where God meets with sinners for His glory in His mercy and on the ground of His justice satisfied. This was the highest and greatest manifestation of God's glory to be found on the earth.

(1 Kings 8:4-9) - Under the Old Covenant the place of the shekinah was at the mercy-seat in the Holy of Holies (Exod. 25:17-25). The high priest of Israel came into this place one time each year on the day of atonement with the blood of a lamb taken from the altar of sacrifice. He would sprinkle the blood over the mercy seat which covered the ark of the covenant. The ark contained the tablets of the law which exposed the sinfulness and guilt of man. The blood of the lamb was a type, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, as the Lamb of God. Christ is the *"propitiation"* (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10) for the sins of His people. *"Propitiation"* is a Greek word that means essentially the same as "mercy seat" (cf. Heb. 9:5) and describes satisfaction to God's justice accomplished in the death of Jesus Christ for His people. Under the Old Covenant the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies was the greatest revelation of the glory of God to be found on earth. This was typical of the fact that the greatest revelation of God's glory ever to be found in eternity or in time is in the Person of Jesus Christ as *"Emmanuel, God with us"* (Matt. 1:23), and His finished work of redeeming all of God's elect by His death on the cross - *"JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21). The *"oracle"* here describes the place where God's wisdom is found and from where God speaks to His people. This shows Christ crucified to be both the wisdom and the word of God (John 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:18-31).

The Lord Jesus Christ worked out the righteousness of God to insure and secure the salvation of all for whom He died and arose. God's redemptive character, how God reveals Himself in salvation, is His chief glory. We cannot properly identify the God of redemption, and, therefore, call on sinners to believe unto salvation until we preach the particulars revealing how He justifies the ungodly based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. Everything we preach by way of encouragement, warning, exhortation, and instruction, whether it be to lost sinners to believe and be saved, or whether it be to saved sinners to persevere in the faith, to use the means of grace and grow in knowledge and obedience, is to be preached in this light.

(1 Kings 8:10-11) - This cloud that filled the temple was the cloud of glory, seen often in the Old and New Testaments, sometimes called the cloud of Shekinah glory. It was the radiant outshining of God's character and presence manifested in a cloud. This was the same cloud that stood by Israel in the wilderness (*Exod. 13:21-22*) and appeared many times whenever God was pleased to reveal Himself to people. This was the cloud present at the transfiguration of Jesus (*Luke 9:34-35*). This was the cloud of glory that received Christ Jesus into heaven at His ascension (*Acts 1:9*). The sense of the presence of God in His holiness was so intense that the priests could not stay in the temple. This showed that in order to approach God, sinners must have a mediator who can satisfy God's justice as pictured in the high priest bringing the blood of a lamb into the Holy of Holies.

As we consider the truth of the shekinah glory of God, meaning God's dwelling place on earth, we must also consider the question Solomon asked - *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"* (*1 Kings 8:27*). Consider also that both Stephen and Paul testified that God does not dwell in temples made with hands (*Acts 7:47-49; 17:24-25*). This shows us that the temple was not a house that could contain or restrict God. This cloud within the temple, especially residing in the Holy of Holies above the mercy-seat, was a typical, symbolic representation and manifestation of God's great glory that could only be found in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redemption of His people given to Him by the Father before the world began (*2 Tim. 1:9-10*). Christ is *"Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"* (*Matt. 1:23*). Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh Who tabernacled among us so that we behold the glory of God full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*). Christ is the One in Whom dwells the *"fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (*Col. 2:9; 1:19*). He is the One in Whose face (His Person and work) the glory of God is revealed (*2 Cor. 4:6*). Christ is *"the brightness of [God's] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"* (*Heb. 1:3*).

In Christ we see the greatest revelation of the glory of God, His shekinah glory, as both a *"just God and a Savior"* to Whom we are to look for all forgiveness and all righteousness (*Isa. 45:22-25*). In Christ crucified and risen from the dead we see how every attribute of God is honored and magnified in our salvation by God's grace based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. It is by looking to Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, resting in Him for all righteousness, eternal life, and glory, that we give glory to God. It is as we see God dwelling, not as being confined and contained within a physical building, but in the revelation and fulness of His glory in the Person and work of Christ. The shekinah glory of God dwells in Christ, and God dwells with us as we see His glory in Christ (*John 17:1-5, 24-26; cf. Isa. 40:1-5*).

(1 Kings 10:1) - Solomon's fame concerning his wisdom and the prosperity and splendor of his kingdom had spread across the known world, even to the Queen of Sheba whose kingdom was about 1500 miles away. Not only had she heard of Solomon himself, she had also heard things "*concerning the name of the LORD.*" She had heard things about God Whom Solomon worshipped and served. So, it is recorded here that she made this long, arduous journey to meet Solomon, see all that she had heard of for herself, and "*to prove him with hard questions.*" This indicates that she wanted more than simply to see the sights of Solomon's kingdom. She wanted to test his wisdom by asking some serious questions. We are not told specifically what questions she asked, but the indication from what Christ Himself said of her in *Matthew 12:42* is that they had to do with issues of life, death, judgment, and eternity - "*The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here!*" (cf. *Luke 11:31*).

(1 Kings 10:2) - It is said here that "*when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.*" The indication is that these are matters laid upon her heart by the Lord. Solomon later wrote, "*I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*" (*Eccl. 3:10-11*). This describes man's natural hatred and fear of death and his natural love and awareness for life and eternity. In our natural sin and depravity, we cannot find the proper knowledge to solve these mysteries. This knowledge can only be revealed to sinners by the Lord. This is illustrated in this historical episode where the queen took the right course and came directly to Solomon.

This is what the Holy Spirit brings God's people to do when He gives us spiritual life and knowledge. He brings us directly to Christ as Christ is revealed in the Word of God (*Matt. 11:28; John 6:37-39; 7:37-39*). He does not bring us to a counterfeit under the preaching of a lie (false gospel) (*Gal. 1:6-9*). Here it becomes evident that the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon is a picture of sinners coming to Christ for knowledge and wisdom in salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternity. This is what takes place when the Lord gives us a new heart. The natural man has no heart for Christ and His truth (*Jer. 17:9; John 3:19-20; 1 Cor. 2:14*). But in our new birth (regeneration and conversion), the Lord gives us a heart convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment and brings us to desire Christ and salvation by His grace above all things (*John 6:44-45; 16:8-11; Rom. 6:17-18*). We then cherish our communion with Christ by His Spirit and His Word as we learn of His love and care for us to save us completely from all our sins and bring us to glory in the perfection of His righteousness imputed to us and received by us in God-given faith.

This is how the Lord God brings us to Christ. He brings us to a place where we HEAR the Gospel, the good news of Christ's glorious Person and finished work of redemption for the sins of His people. God the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life in regeneration and shows us the wisdom of God in Christ and the riches of God's glory and grace in Him (*John 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; Gal. 4:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14*). So, just as the Queen of Sheba had heard of King Solomon, in the Gospel we hear of the Person and work of Christ, His deity and glory, His wisdom and power, all accomplished in His death and resurrection as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

(1 Kings 10:3) - So Solomon answered all her questions. There was nothing too difficult for the king that he could not explain it to her. No one else could have answered her questions.

Solomon here is definitely a type of Christ *“in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”* (Col. 2:5; cf. John 3:34-35). As wise and as knowledgeable as Solomon was, our Lord and Savior is truly One *“greater than Solomon,”* for He is the answer to all questions of life, death, judgment, and eternity (John 1:14-17; 14:6). Christ is the wisdom and truth of God. If we would know God and the mysteries of redemption and eternal life, we must come to Christ (Luke 10:22; John 1:18). Consider some hard questions to illustrate the mysteries and truths of salvation which can only be answered in the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace in and by the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ:

- How good and righteous must we be to have and enjoy eternal life (Matt. 5:20; Acts 17:31)
- What is it to do good and be righteous in God’s sight? (Rom. 3:19-25; 10:4)
- How can sinners be just with holy God? How can he be clean that is born of woman? (Rom. 3:19-23)
- How can God be just and true to Himself and still be the justifier of the ungodly? (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:4-6)
- How can a man be born when he is old? (John 3:4-8)
- If a man die, shall he live again? (John 11:25-27)
- How does God know all things, yet does not remember a believer’s sins? (Heb. 10:11-17)
- Who and what are main subjects and themes of the Old Testament? (Luke 24:27,44-47; John 5:39-45)

(1 Kings 10:4-7) - When the queen had seen Solomon’s wisdom, the house he had built, his riches and piety, she was quite astonished, like one in ecstasy who had no power to speak because what she saw and heard so affected her. She said to the king, “What they told me of you was true, actually, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed anything I thought or heard. It was not until I came and saw that I really believed.” This is the way of all sinners whom God brings to see His glory in Christ. Though we heard of Christ’s love, mercy, grace, and glory, it was not until we came to Him in God-given faith that we saw and experienced Christ as the wisdom, power, and glory of God (Isa. 6:1-4; 1 John 1:1-4). We stand amazed in the presence of our Lord, realizing that it is impossible to put into words the fulness of the riches of His grace and glory (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

(1 Kings 10:8) - The queen exclaimed, “Happy are thy men, happy are thy servants, blessed are all who dwell in thy house, in thy presence, and hear thy wisdom.” We can say with greater emphasis, for, as stated, a greater than Solomon is here, *“Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth”* (Psalm 65:4). *“Blessed is the man whose sin is covered”* (Psalm 32:1-2). Blessed is *“the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”* (Rom. 4:6). *“Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear”* (Matt. 13:16). *“Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Lord”* (Psalm 1:1-3). Blessed are those who know Him, love Him, and dwell by faith in Him.

(1 Kings 10:9) - Then the queen blessed the Lord God Who delighted in Solomon, Who put him on the throne of Israel to do judgment and mercy. The Lord made Solomon their king. The Father loves the Son and has given “all things” into His hands (John 3:35). The Father delights in the Son and gave Him preeminence (Prov. 8:23-30; Matt. 3:17; Eph. 2:5-11; Col. 1:16-18). The Father made Christ the Surety, Prophet, Priest, and King of spiritual Israel (His elect) because He loved them all in Christ with an everlasting love. Christ came to the earth to honor God’s law, satisfy God’s justice, to do judgment and justice that God may be just and justifier of all who believe (Rom. 3:25-26).

(1 Kings 18:17-19) - After the death of Solomon the kingdom of Israel was divided into the southern kingdom called Judah (consisting of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin), and the northern kingdom called Israel (sometimes Ephraim, consisting of the other ten tribes). The northern kingdom was marked with idolatry, and none of its kings were godly men who led the people in the true worship of the Lord God. Ahab was one in a line of evil kings in Israel's history and who *"did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him"* (1 Kings 16:30). Among the events in Ahab's life that led to his downfall was his marriage to an evil woman named Jezebel who had a particular hatred for God's people (1 Kings 18:4). Because of his marriage to this pagan woman, Ahab devoted himself to the worship of the false gods Baal and Asherah in Israel (1 Kings 16:31-33).

God sent His prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, to confront Ahab and predict God's judgment upon the northern kingdom by drought (1 Kings 17:1). Instead of seeing this as God's righteous judgment against his evil and repenting of his sins, Ahab blamed Elijah for bringing trouble on Israel (1 Kings 18:17-18). This is often the way unbelievers view God's preachers when they state God's message of judgment against sin and idolatry. The Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ and based upon His righteousness alone is an offense to sinners who are entrenched in false refuges of salvation by human works and/or will (John 3:19-20; Matt. 5:20; 15:10-14; Luke 16:14-15; Acts 7:54-60; Gal. 4:16). The truth of salvation all of grace in Christ leaves men with no room to glory in themselves and exposes all hopes but Christ and His righteousness to be in vain and to be no more than dung (Php. 3:7-9).

(1 Kings 18:20-22) - Elijah called on Ahab to send for 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves to Mt. Carmel and challenged them to call on their gods. Elijah was obviously in the minority. False prophets have always outnumbered God's true prophets. Christ described this when He spoke of the strait gate and narrow way that leads to eternal life in contrast with the wide gate and broad way that leads to destruction. He said of the way of death, *"many there be which go in thereat"* (Matt. 7:13), and of the way of eternal life, *"few there be that find it"* (Matt. 7:14). Throughout Israel's history, the majority of the people forsook the Lord and His truth, but in each generation there was always a remnant of sinners saved by God's grace who trusted and serve the Lord (ex. Isa. 1:9). Later on, Elijah lamented that he was the only one left to serve the Lord, but the Lord told him that there were 7000 in Israel whom the Lord had reserved by His grace and had not forsaken Him for Baal (1 Kings 19:9-19; cf. Rom. 11:1-6). Many people see this sad truth as a discouragement for seeking the Lord. But God promises that ALL who seek Him according to His Word, and ALL who call upon Him shall be saved (Isa. 55:6-11; Rom. 10:13-17). Christ said, *"All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37). The problem is that none of us by nature will seek Him or come to Him unless we are drawn by God (John 6:44-45). And the evidence of being drawn by God to Christ is a sincere desire to seek, know, and find the truth of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ.

Elijah posed a very important question - *"How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him."* It is impossible to trust, worship, and serve the living and true God with a divided mind and divided loyalties (Luke 16:13; cf. Matt. 6:24). God will not share His glory with idols. The question posed by Elijah to the people commands faith in the one living and true God as He reveals Himself in the one true Savior, Jesus Christ, and repentance from all idols (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Php. 3:3-9; 1 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 3:9). Both faith in Christ and true repentance are gifts from God that brings His people to Christ for all salvation and brings them to turn away from and forsake all idols and all other ways of salvation.

(1 Kings 18:23-25) - Elijah told them to bring two bullocks to lay upon the altar. He told the false prophets to call upon their god, and he would call on the name of the Lord - *“and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God”* (1 Kings 18:19-24). The people then answered, *“It is well spoken.”* He told them to take their bullock, dress it, and call upon the name of their god, *“but put no fire under”* it. Fire would come down to consume the sacrifice if their god was real.

(1 Kings 18:26-29) - These verses show the failure of the false prophets to call down fire from heaven from an idol. Their prayers to their god lasted *“from morning even until noon.”* *“They leaped upon the altar,”* while Elijah stood by and *“mocked them”* (1 Kings 18:27). The false prophets continued crying aloud to their god. They *“cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them”* (1 Kings 18:28). And when they were finished *“there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded”* (1 Kings 18:29). It was spiritually dead sinners praying to a dead god. This proves that the length of prayers, sincerity, and religious activity do not mean salvation and truth (Rom. 10:1-4). All who seek salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life and glory by their works or their decisions worship a false god who cannot save. The living and true God is One Who saves His people by grace and mercy based on His justice satisfied by the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect. Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people, that righteousness which He by Himself worked out in His death on the cross for them, insures the complete and eternal salvation of all for whom He died and arose again from the dead (Isa. 45:20-25). To serve a god who saves and accepts sinners in any other way on any other ground is idolatry.

(1 Kings 18:30-38) - Elijah then took twelve stones, representing Israel and spiritually representing God’s elect. He built an altar in the name of the LORD (the God of creation, providence, and salvation, all by His grace through Christ Who is our Altar and our Sacrifice). He dug a trench around the altar, put wood under the bullock which had been cut in pieces, symbolizing the death of the substitute, because without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Elijah told them to take four barrels of water and pour them upon the sacrifice and the wood. He repeated this twice so that the water drenched the altar, the wood, and filled the trench. Elijah was not trying to be elaborate. He simply wanted them to see that the sacrifice could be consumed only by the power of God. Elijah then prayed a sixty-three word prayer (1 Kings 18:36-37). This prayer was aimed at repentance in turning the people back to God. Only the Lord God could accomplish this. *“Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench”* (1 Kings 18:38).

(1 Kings 18:39-40) - The LORD brought the people to repentance - *“The LORD, He is the God; the LORD, He is the God.”* The prophets of Baal were then executed under the righteous judgment of God, proving that without the proper substitute and sacrifice, there is only death because of sins. All of this shows how much that we as sinners need God’s grace in Christ Who is the one and only proper Substitute and Sacrifice for the sins of spiritual Israel (God’s elect). There is one true God and one true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ Who has saved His people from their sins and brings them all to glory by His grace.

Lesson 66 - OUR MANTLE IS CHRIST 2 Kings 2:1-14

(2 Kings 2:1-7) - Elijah has come to the end of his ministry as God's prophet. In *1 Kings 19:15-21* the Lord revealed to Elijah that He had chosen Elisha to take his place as the prophet of God to Israel. It is revealed here that *"the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind."* It is revealed later that when Elijah and Elisha crossed over the Jordan River that *"there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven"* (2 Kings 2:11). There is much speculation about this miraculous event. Clearly it was God's power and work alone and not man's. Some believe that Elijah was taken by God directly into heaven without experiencing death and is waiting there to return to earth as predicted in *Malachi 4:5-6*. It is probably more likely that the Lord merely removed Elijah from one place to another on earth as He did with Enoch (*Gen. 5:24*) and Philip (*Acts 8:39-40*). Christ stated that the prophecy of *Malachi 4:5-6* was fulfilled by the coming of John the Baptist (*Matt. 11:13-14; 17:10-13; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 1:13-17; 7:24-27*).

Elijah was considered to be the prime example of the prophetic message of the Old Testament (*Luke 24:27,44-47*). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the prophet who was sent of God in the spirit of Elijah and all the true prophets of God to prepare the way of the Lord (*Mal. 3:1*). When the Lord took Peter, James, and John upon a mount to pray where He was transfigured, He appeared there with Moses and Elijah. They spoke of His death which He would *"accomplish at Jerusalem"* (*Luke 9:30-31*), showing that the spirit of Moses (the law) and Elijah (the prophets) was revealed in the message of the Gospel of salvation by God's grace based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death, His righteousness accomplished and imputed to His people.

(2 Kings 2:8) - Elijah's mantle was a cloak, a covering, that symbolized his calling and authority from God to be God's appointed prophet to the nation. In biblical times, a mantle was typically a large, loosely fitting garment made of animal skin, probably sheepskin. Prophets were known for wearing mantles as a sign of their calling from God (*1 Kings 19:13*). The prophet Samuel wore a mantle (*1 Sam. 15:27*). When the Lord revealed that Elisha would follow Elijah as God's appointed prophet, Elijah *"cast his mantle upon"* Elisha (*1 Kings 19:19*), the mantle being an indication of his authority and responsibility as God's chosen spokesman. Elisha was not confused as to what Elijah was doing; the putting on of his mantle made his election of God clear.

Here we see Elijah taking the mantle and striking the waters of the Jordan River so that the waters divided and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. Unlike what we often find in the fables and myths of men, the mantle was not some kind of magical cloak. The mantle was a symbol of the power, authority, and truth of God which we find in fullness in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the power of God divided the waters of the Red Sea so that the people could cross upon dry land, the power of God symbolized in the mantle divided the waters of the Jordan so that Elijah and Elisha crossed on dry ground. These waters symbolize our sins that would drown us were it not for the power of God's grace in Christ and based on His righteousness (*Rom. 5:20-21*).

When we think of a cloak or covering, it reminds us of the righteousness of God that legally covers us so that we are justified before God and in right standing with Him. This is the imputed righteousness of Christ for every true believer. The mantle can also be seen as a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit Whom God so graciously gives to all whom He brings to faith in Christ, the people of His choosing (*1 Thess. 1:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9*). Our mantle, which is Christ, is every true preacher's and every true believer's assurance of forgiveness of all our sins by the blood of Christ whereby God will not impute our sins to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*).

Our mantle, which is Christ, establishes the authority and power of the message of the Gospel which we witness to the world.

(2 Kings 2:9) - Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before the Lord took him away. Knowing the difficulties that Elijah had faced, Elisha asked for a *“double portion”* of the grace and the gifts that God had given Elijah. This was not a request of pride and ambition, but one of humility. It was as if Elisha said, “Elijah, you are twice the man that I am. I will need a double portion of your spirit if I am to do this task.” In the ministry of God’s truth to a sin-cursed, hostile, and dying world, we ask with the apostle, *“Who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Cor. 2:16). Moses said unto the Lord, *“If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Ex. 33:15). Paul wrote, *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God”* (2 Cor. 3:5). No man naturally has the power and grace to stand firm and preach the Gospel truth that is so hated by the world (John 3:19-20; 15:18–16:3,33). The Gospel truth must be revealed to us and sealed upon our hearts.

(2 Kings 2:10-14) - When Elisha saw Elijah taken up by God into heaven, he took off his own clothes and tore them in two pieces and took up the mantle that fell from Elijah. This is a fitting symbol of true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works. When God gives His people spiritual life, a new heart, and knowledge of our sins and of the perfect righteousness of Christ, we throw off the garments of our own works and submit to Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (Rom. 10:1-4; Php. 3:7-9). Elisha took the same mantle that Elijah used to divide the Jordan, and he smote the waters and divided them. This illustrates the Gospel and the Word of God which is every true preacher’s authority, and it is the power of God unto salvation when the Holy Spirit empowers it to give life to dead sinners and bring them to Christ by God-given faith (Rom. 1:16-17). It is the same power (God’s), same Spirit (the Spirit of God), same message (Gospel of God’s grace in Christ). The same God who worked mightily through Elijah (raising the dead; standing against false preachers) must work mightily through Elisha and all of His prophets and preachers. We are just as helpless standing before dead sinners. We cannot give them life! The same God who was with Elijah all his life, who kept him faithful, must also be with us.

Notice that when Elisha smote the waters with the mantle, he asked, not “Where is Elijah?”, but “Where is the LORD GOD of Elijah?” As we thank God for His servants who were faithful to preach the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ to us, we acknowledge that it is the Lord God alone Who saves us and Whose presence in Christ we must have for all salvation - forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. Christ’s presence and power is our salvation, our life, our hope. His absence is death, vanity, and failure. Men will come and go at God’s appointing, but Christ is with us forever and ever. We will forever stand before God clothed in His righteousness imputed to us, and His Spirit will never depart from us. The psalmist cried, *“Hide not Thy face far from me; put not Thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation”* (Psa. 27:9).

We know that the Lord God is omnipresent (Psa. 139:7-10; Acts 17:24-28), but His saving presence with His chosen, justified, adopted, and redeemed children is in Christ Who is *“Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US”* (Matt. 1:23), by virtue of His righteousness imputed to us and His Spirit Who gives us spiritual life and brings us to God-given faith in Christ. He will never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”* (Psa. 34:18). His church is His holy temple (2 Cor. 6:16), as Christ is her Husband, her Head, her Foundation, Heart, and Chief Cornerstone. She is one with Him and is called by His name, *“the LORD our Righteousness”* (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).

The story of Naaman is one of the greatest illustrations of how God calls and brings His elect out of the world and into His spiritual family (*Col. 1:12-13*). The Lord said, *"They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (*Mark 2:17*). As great as Naaman was, he was sick unto death. He was a man of high rank and power as *"captain of the host [army] of the king of Syria."* *"He was also a great man with his master [the king], and honourable."* *"He was also a mighty man in valour, BUT HE WAS A LEPER."* Naaman is typical of the spiritual condition of all fallen sinners by nature (*Rom. 5:12*). We all fell in Adam and are sick unto death with spiritual leprosy which is sin (*Rom. 3:9-20,23*). Leprosy in the Bible is a type of sin (*Isa. 1:4-6*). Only the Lord God could cure this disease by a miracle. It is the same with our sin and depravity. Man's efforts are always futile, but God alone can cure the dreaded and deadly disease of sin. The significance of the story of Naaman, the leper, illustrates this great truth - It shows how that in the salvation of sinners the Lord God humbles us and brings us down in the depths of our sin, depravity, and helplessness to cure the awful disease of sin. It shows how God's way of salvation is the only way of salvation and brings us to Christ (*John 6:44-45*).

Another very important truth brought out in the story of Naaman is that as God sovereignly chose whom He would cure of this awful physical disease, He also sovereignly chooses whom He will save from the awful spiritual disease of sin. God has chosen a people from every tribe and nation, both Jew and Gentile (*Luke 4:27*), and He saves none based on their persons or works (*Rom. 9:15-16*). Consider how these truths are brought out in the story of Naaman, the leper.

(2 Kings 5:1) - Naaman had many commendable traits but something was seriously wrong which made it all useless. He was a great man among men, honorable and mighty in valour, but he was a leper! Disease and death flowed through his veins, incurable by human means. There are fleshly differences among men, but all men have one thing in common which makes all that they are and have eternally and spiritually useless - *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (*Rom. 3:23*). Sin and death are within us by birth, nature, and choice and are incurable by human means (*Eph. 2:11-12; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 5:12*). Our sinful human nature makes even our righteousnesses filthy rags (*Isa. 64:6*). Naaman's leprosy symbolizes the total depravity of all people by nature. But as leprosy is a physical disease in the blood, sin is a spiritual disease of the heart (the mind, affections, and will (*Matt. 15:18-19*)). Naaman knew his sickness was incurable. By nature we do not know the reality of our sin-sickness. We are all self-righteous and think too highly of ourselves when we imagine that salvation is conditioned on our works and/or wills. But when God purposes to call us, He brings us to realize our sinfulness and drives us to Christ, the great Physician, for the only cure, His blood and righteousness imputed (*John 16:8-11*).

(2 Kings 5:2-4) - By God's providence Naaman heard from a captive girl that there was a cure in Israel. She told Naaman's wife that he needed to go to the prophet in Israel. Naaman told the king of this news, and the king told him to go to Israel and find the cure. By nature, we are all ignorant of the Gospel of Christ by which God reveals the only cure for sin (*Rom. 10:1-4*). We have to hear God's Word to know how He saves sinners His grace through Christ (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17*).

(2 Kings 5:5-7) - Instead of going to the prophet, as he was told, Naaman went to the king. Naaman's opinion was to go to the noblest instead of a lowly prophet, but the king of Israel

had no cure for Naaman. Even the best physicians who diagnose our diseases but present no cure can only give us bad news (*Luke 8:43-48*). The good news (the Gospel) brings sinners to Christ, the great Physician, Who has the only cure for our disease. Naaman went with a letter of recommendation from his king and with gold, silver, and other gifts to buy deliverance. This illustrates our natural aversion to God's way of salvation from sin. We want salvation, but we want it OUR way so that we can glory (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:14*). It is foolish to seek salvation by our religious attempts to find favor with God by our works. The natural man wants to work and earn salvation? (*Matt. 7:21-22; Mark 10: 17*). Instead of coming to Christ as guilty sinners with nothing in our hands, we come bearing our morality, works, decisions, baptism, and church membership. God's way of salvation is Christ alone. All that God requires and all that sinners need are fulfilled in Christ (*Col. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 4:4-5*).

(2 Kings 5:8) - God's prophet, Elisha, heard of the king's sorrow, and he sent a message to the king to send Naaman to him to receive the cure. The Lord God always sends His messenger to call His people unto Himself and bring them to Christ (*John 6:44-45*). This prophet of God represents Christ, who is our prophet, priest, and king (*Deut. 18:17-19; Heb. 1:1-2*). Salvation is of the Lord in its origination, execution, application, sustaining power, and ultimate perfection. How foolish it is to turn anywhere or to anyone else. If we go to the law, it condemns us (*Rom. 3:19-20*). Christ, our Lord, is the only physician who can cure our disease. His blood alone cleanses us from all sin. His righteousness imputed to us and received by God-given faith is the only way of justification before God.

(2 Kings 5:9-12) - When Naaman finally came to the prophet of God, he came with the wrong attitude. He stood proudly outside the humble dwelling of Elisha. He wanted to be treated as a great man who happened to have leprosy, when in reality he was only a leper who happened to be a great man. Elisha knew his pride and arrogance and would not come out to meet him but instructed him to strip off his earthly garb of glory and wash in the muddy Jordan seven times. How degrading this appeared to Naaman! Sinners today want special recognition, special attention, and the praise and honor of men, even in their religious professions (*John 5:42-44*). We, like Naaman, want to be treated as great ones who happen to be sinners, instead of what we are - sinners who, for a while, may have certain status among worms. There is none good nor righteous (*Rom. 3:10-11*). Washing in the Jordan river seven times illustrates the precious blood of Christ Who took our death upon Himself based on our sins imputed to Him, went under the wrath of God for us, and finished the work of redemption (*Heb. 10:14*).

Naaman had wrong thoughts about mercy. He said, "I thought, he will surely come out to me and call on his God." Naaman's way (which would preserve his own pride and position) and God's way (which would humble the proud leper and give God all the glory) were opposites. Salvation by free grace, through the righteousness and cross of the Lord Jesus, is offensive to natural man (*1 Cor. 1:18-24*). Our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not God's ways (*Isa. 55:6-9*). Total depravity offends man's dignity, divine revelation offends man's wisdom, and the blood of the cross offends man's pride. God will humble us before Himself, or He will destroy us.

(2 Kings 5:13-14) - Naaman was finally humbled by God, and he went down. He came down from his pride and bowed to the way of God. When sinners are ready and made willing (*Psalms 110:3*) to quit trying to establish a righteousness of our own and bow to the Lord Jesus Christ to receive salvation as the free gift of God, they will be saved (*Matt. 5:3-6; Matt. 9:10-13; John 1:12-13*). This is a miracle of God's grace and power in saving His people from their sins.

(2 Kings 18:1-3) - There were a succession of kings in the northern kingdom of Israel and in the southern kingdom of Judah. It was said of all the kings of the northern kingdom that they *“did evil in the sight of the LORD.”* The same was said of most of the kings of the southern kingdom, but there were a few of whom it was said that they, *“did that which was right in the sight of the LORD according to all that David his father did”* (2 Kings 18:3). King Hezekiah, whose name means “God is my strength,” was twenty-five years old when he began to reign over the southern kingdom of Judah. He was of the line of David and of Judah. He reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His father, Ahaz, was one of the evil kings of Judah (2 Kings 16:1-4), but Hezekiah did right in the sight of the Lord. It is important that we understand the difference between those who did right in the sight of the Lord and those who did evil in God’s sight. Those who did right were not perfect men. They were sinners saved by God’s grace in Christ. They did right in that they led the nation in following the law of Moses and in setting an example of godliness and true worship. When it says of King Hezekiah that he did right *“according to all that David his father did,”* we know that King David was far from being a perfect man (Psa. 32:1-2; 51; Rom. 4:6-8). He sinned greatly against the Lord, but the tenor of his rule in Israel was that of godliness as a king who typified Christ, the King of kings. The kings who did evil were those who allowed idolatry to prevail and who neglected and even forgot the worship of God according to the law.

(2 Kings 18:4) - Hezekiah’s father, Ahaz, walked in the ways of the kings of the north in idolatry. Hezekiah purged the land of idolatry. The high places were shrines built on mountains for idol worship. The statues were, like the golden calf, idol gods. The groves were wooded areas dedicated to idolatry, where altars were erected to false gods. Hezekiah destroyed all of these high places, groves, and statues, something his father and other kings of Judah had not dared to do. One of Hezekiah’s most significant acts was that he *“broke in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.”* This was the brazen serpent that Moses had made for the people to look to and be healed of the poison of serpents who bit them (Num. 25:5-8). This brazen serpent was such a beautiful picture of Christ and His power to heal us from the poison of sin (John 3:14-15). But, like all of us by nature, if left in our sin, spiritual death, and depravity, they took that which God had made for His glory and turned into *“an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things”* (Rom. 1:18-25). *“Nehushtan”* simply means “piece of brass,” and by this Hezekiah emphasized that this serpent of brass had no power to heal or to save. It was only a worthless piece of brass. Hezekiah saw something in this piece of brass that those who burnt incense to it did not see. He saw it as a picture of Christ Who was his salvation and strength. He saw that there was no power in the brazen serpent but only in the One to Whom that serpent pointed - Christ, the power of God to save, preserve, and to bring His people to glory.

Salvation by grace with all the blessings and benefits of God’s grace, the power of the Holy Spirit and eternal life, are ALL IN AND BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST and ALL BASED ON HIS BLOOD, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ALONE. All salvation, all healing and spiritual power, all blessings and inspiration come from looking to and resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. True believers do not have any confidence in religious relics, statues, or so-called “holy” places. In the worship and service of God, Christ is all (John 14:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:12-20; 2:9-10). Believers believe, love, and worship God in spirit, not in form, rituals, nor with visual aids. They rejoice only in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh (Php. 3:3). True believers have no superstitions regarding days, hallowed places, religious relics, symbols and signs, nor ancestors (Php. 3:4-10). Christ is our sabbath, our sin offering, our High Priest, our altar, our

mediator, our prophet, priest, and king. By His blood we ourselves are made kings and priests to our God. We bow before no man, make pilgrimages to no place on earth (our God is everywhere), carry no religious symbols, and place no merit whatsoever in religious holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

The Lord gave His church two ordinances to observe until He returns - believer's baptism and the Lord's table. In baptism believers confess faith in Christ alone and identify publicly with Him in His death, burial, and resurrection. There is no saving or forgiving power in the waters of baptism. In observing the Lord's table with the simple elements of unleavened bread and wine, we show forth His death until he comes. But there is no saving power in the bread or the wine. Roman Catholicism teaches falsely that there is saving power in the bread and the wine. They and other false religions have made millions selling religious relics, even what some call pieces of the cross on which Christ died. But if we could find the actual cross on which our Savior died, it would serve no purpose and must be called a "worthless piece of wood." Paul wrote, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Gal. 6:14), but he had no piece of wood to remind or inspire him religiously or even spiritually. He had the Holy Spirit who had written the Gospel of God's grace in Christ on his heart and in his mind. He had God-given faith in the crucified and risen Lord of Glory, and he had the Word of God to keep him looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith (Heb. 12:2).

People flock to "the holy land" to find the Lord's tomb. He is not there. He is risen! The grave in which Christ laid for three days is an empty tomb, and the shroud in which he was wrapped is no more than a worthless piece of cloth. As sinners, we do not need the shroud in which our Lord was wrapped. We need His righteousness imputed to us for our complete justification before God, and we need His resurrection life imparted by the Spirit so that we can believe and rest in Him. God is a jealous God and will not share His glory. He will not share the worship and affection of His people. We trust, rest in, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and abhor any effort to rob Him of His preeminence in the glory of His Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the power of His finished work of redeeming us from our sins. Let us be done with crucifixes, religious pictures of our Lord, shrines, and uniforms of religion; and let us worship God in spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in this flesh. The Lord God, by Christ's perfect obedience unto death, has imputed unto us His perfect righteousness. We are accepted in the Beloved. Nothing needs to be added to His Person and work to bring us to God!

(2 Kings 18:5-8) - These verses speak of Hezekiah as a sinner saved by grace who ruled by the grace and power of God Who preserved and prospered him in the kingdom. He *"trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."* He depended upon the Lord and His Word, *"Nehushtan"* or idols. As stated, to Hezekiah the brazen serpent was a type of his Savior Who was promised to come and redeem all His people from their sins. *"For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses"* - He clung to the Lord in worship, obedience, and service, following God's commandments in the law of Moses. *"And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth"* - Hezekiah and his kingdom prospered because the Lord was with him. He would not bow to the heathen Assyrian king, and he fought the Philistines in and by the power of God. This was all because of God's grace and power to preserve His people unto the coming of the Messiah. Hezekiah knew that there was no strength or goodness in himself and no power in religious artifacts to which people cling. He knew that Christ was (and is) his strength.

(2 Kings 22:1-2) - Josiah was the great grandson of Hezekiah who did right in the sight of the Lord, the grandson of Manasseh, and the son of Amon, both who did evil in the sight of the Lord. Manasseh was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. As Hezekiah purged the land of idolatry and brought reforms to Judah, Manasseh reversed it all and did much worse (2 Kings 21:1-9). Manasseh began his reign when he was twelve, and he reigned fifty-five years. Amon, his son, began his reign when he was twenty-two. He followed in the evil of his father Manasseh, and he reigned for two years. He was murdered by his own servants (2 Kings 22:19-26). Josiah began to rule when he was eight years old, and he reigned for thirty-one years. Like his great grandfather, Hezekiah, *“he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.”* He led the people in following the law of Moses and brought about great reforms in Judah calling on the nation to repent of the unbelief and idolatry fostered by his father and grandfather.

The question may arise about how Josiah came to know and follow the Lord when his father and grandfather were so evil. We know that the Lord, even in the midst of the most evil times in Israel, always had His witness through prophets and priests. We do not know for certain from whom Hezekiah heard the truth of God’s law and ways, but we know he had the prophet Isaiah to advise him (2 Kings 19:1-7). We also do not know for certain as to who schooled Josiah in the ways of the Lord, but we know that he had the benefits of the prophets Zephaniah and Jeremiah. We are given more information about Josiah in 2 Chronicles 34:1-7. We know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The only way that any of us can be brought from natural unbelief and rebellion against the Lord is by the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit revealing Himself to us through His Word of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 4:6).

(2 Kings 22:3-7) - Josiah’s dedication to the Lord and the true worship of God is evidenced by his command to repair the temple which had been neglected for many years under evil kings. The temple represented everything that was holy concerning the one living and true God and everything that was significant about Israel as the chosen people of God through whom the Messiah would come into the world. It was a physical representation of the shekinah glory of God revealed in God’s way of the salvation of sinners by His free and sovereign grace based on the blood of His appointed substitute and sacrifice which would be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. It was a testimony of how a holy and just God could save and justify sinners in mercy and grace while still honoring and maintaining His justice to punish all sin with death. The temple was a picture of the glorious Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of redemption in Christ.

(2 Kings 22:8-13) - While purging and repairing the temple, Hilkiah the high priest found the book of the law. When Hilkiah read the law to Josiah, the king tore his clothes, a sign of mourning and repentance. Josiah was brought to see his own sins and the sins of the whole nation. He was brought to see that he and all the people were sinners who deserve nothing but God’s wrath (Rom. 3:10-20,23) - *“for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.”* Remember that this book of the law was NOT a manual on how to be saved by works of the law. It was a law given to expose the sinfulness of the people, the impossibility of salvation by works of the law, and to drive them to beg for mercy from God based on the righteousness of the Messiah to come (Rom. 5:20-21; 9:33–10:4).

We are told in *2 Kings 23* how that King Josiah called for a time of national repentance. The Law was read to the people of the land, and a covenant was made between the people and the Lord - *"And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant"* (*2 Kings 23:3*). Another very significant act of Josiah was to restore the Passover in Judah (*2 Kings 23:21-27*), one of the greatest pictures of Christ our Passover Lamb Who by His one sacrifice for the sins of His people turned back the wrath of God and brought in the only ground upon which God justifies His elect - the imputed righteousness of Christ (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). This restoration of the Passover, in essence, was a rediscovery of the truth of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead for the salvation of His people, God's elect out of every tribe and nation.

(*2 Kings 22:14-20*) - Obviously with Josiah's approval, Hilkiah sought counsel from Huldah, a well-known prophetess in Judah. There were other prophets in Judah such as Jeremiah and Zephaniah, but for reasons not revealed Hilkiah chose to consult Huldah. She was connected with the temple in that her husband was (or had been) *"keeper of the wardrobe,"* probably the priestly garments. *"She dwelt in Jerusalem in the college"* which is translated as *"second quarter"* in some translations, meaning a suburb of Jerusalem and probably a school or place of learning. Huldah's message for Judah as a nation was one of judgment against them for their sins and idolatry (*2 Kings 22:15-17; cf. 2 Chron. 34:23-25*). This is the Lord's testimony that sin must be punished with death. God is a just God and cannot overlook or let sin go unpunished. And when we read of the awful sins of Judah under many wicked kings, we should all admit that we deserve no better than they - *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (*Rom. 3:23*); *"If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O LORD, who shall stand"* (*Psa. 130:3*).

But Huldah's message from the Lord to King Josiah was one of peace and security even unto death (*2 Kings 22:18-20*). We need to realize that Josiah's salvation, peace, and safety were gifts of God's grace to him. God graciously and mercifully gave Josiah ears to hear and eyes to see His Word of truth in the Book of the Law. God gave Josiah a tender heart and humbled him before the LORD. God brought Josiah to repentance of sin and faith in the LORD of Glory. This was all due to God's promise concerning the coming of the Messiah into the world to save His people from their sins.

What took place with Josiah during his reign in Judah represents what must take place in every generation as time goes on until the second coming of Christ. As each generation comes and goes, the Gospel of God's grace in Christ seems to fade away until the Lord raises up preachers by whom He recovers the good news of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, of grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The true Gospel has never been popular with the majority, but God has always had His remnant by whom He has kept His message of grace alive on earth. It is rediscovering of the glory of Christ in the salvation of His people. Many people own a book called *"the Bible,"* but that book is a mystery until God reveals its truth to us. Like in Josiah's day, it is a book that is hidden among a ruined temple of false religion and idolatry. But God causes His people to find that book and rediscover its truth as He gives us ears to hear and eyes to see His glory in Christ and His righteousness by which God justifies us and from which God gives us eternal life.

(1 Chron. 13:1-4) - King David wanted to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem as he was confident that the ark was the assurance of the presence of the Lord among His people. Where the ark was, there was the glory of God (*Exod. 25:22*). As we can recall from *Exodus 25* and other Scriptures, the ark of the covenant was a chest of acacia wood covered with gold. It contained the tables of the law and rested in the holy of holies in the tabernacle of Moses along with the pot of manna and Aaron's rod (*Heb. 9:4*). It was covered by the mercy-seat that was made of acacia wood covered with gold. It was an important picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole way of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between God and sinners. It pictured how God justifies sinners through the blood of Christ as the righteousness of God that has been imputed to His people for their justification was established. In the Old Testament, the ark was the only place believers could go (through the high priest and the blood of sacrifice) to have their sins forgiven in a temporal and ceremonial way (*Heb. 9:13*). This all pointed to the glorious Person and finished work of Christ for the spiritual and eternal forgiveness of sins and reconciliation between God and His chosen people (spiritual Israel) (*Heb. 9:14; 10:14*).

The worship of God as pertaining to the ark had been neglected during Saul's reign. During the days of Samuel, the superstitious Israelites took the ark from Shiloh into battle and lost it to the Philistines (*1 Sam. 4:3-4; 10-11*). Because of the wrath of God against them, the Philistines eventually and willingly returned the ark to Israel. The presence of God to them meant God's wrath and death for them (*1 Sam. 5*). This is a great picture to show us that God's presence without Christ as our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Mediator, is nothing but wrath and death. To approach God without Christ is to approach Him without a righteousness that answers the demands of His justice, and this is certain death (*John 3:18,36*). The Philistines brought the ark back, and it rested in Kirjathjearim for fifty years.

So, David consulted with the leaders and the people, and they all agreed that bringing back the ark was the right thing to do. This was a large part of David's godly leadership as the God-appointed and ordained ruler of the people, but, as we will see, David made a great error in his way of moving the ark. God had given very specific instructions on how the ark was to be moved, and David did not consult the priests as to how this was to be done. The reason these instructions were so specific and meticulous was to show how the concept of true righteousness before God was in the perfection of the law. The law had to be kept in every jot and tittle. Man cannot do this, but Christ came to keep the law and satisfy its justice perfectly (*Matt. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:4*). This was to show that we as sinners must have the righteousness of God in Christ to be justified before God and to have eternal life.

(1 Chron. 13:5-10) - David had constructed a tent (tabernacle) that would eventually house the ark because the tabernacle of Moses had been lost or destroyed, but some of its furnishings had been recovered and were eventually placed in the temple that Solomon built. He gathered 30,000 chosen men with instruments, singers, and all of Israel, and they journeyed to Baalah or Kirjath-Baal to bring up the ark. David was well versed in the law of God, as were the priests who were with him. They all knew that the ark was only to be carried by staves on the shoulders of the Levites. But David prepared a new cart with oxen, driven by Uzza and Ahio, to transport the ark. After putting the ark on the cart, they began their journey to Jerusalem, rejoicing and singing, confident that God was pleased with them. When the procession came to the threshingfloor of Chidon, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled. Uzza put his hand out to steady the ark, and God smote him dead because he put his hand on the ark.

(1 Chron. 13:11-14) - The people were all stunned, and David was displeased because the Lord had smitten Uzza. But all of them (including David) realized, at last, that God was angry and displeased with the whole affair. So, David put the Ark in the house of Obedom, where it remained for three months. Why was the Lord displeased with David and Israel? David

intended to do the right thing in returning the ark to Jerusalem. But three months later, David gives the answer when he determined again to bring up the ark. He said to them, "You and your brethren sanctify yourselves that you may carry the ark into the place I have prepared for it. Because I ignored God's priests and put the ark on a cart, the Lord was angry with us. We sought Him not after the due order" (*1 Chron. 15:12-13*). This time David consulted the priests of God (*1 Chron. 15:14-15*). In ignoring God's priests, it was as if David ignored the need of a God-appointed mediator. The high priest (who offered the blood) was a type and picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest (*Heb. 4:14-16*). The other priests (who offered the sacrifices and ministered about the tabernacle) were pictures of God's people who come unto Him by Christ as they plead His blood, His righteousness imputed. Consider -

(1) The priests were taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God (*Heb. 5:1*). So, Christ was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, to be our one Mediator between God and His chosen people.

(2) The priests were chosen of God, and no man took this honor unto himself (*Heb. 5:4*). So, Christ glorified not Himself to be our high priest. The Father chose and ordained Him to be our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer to accomplish the duties of His priesthood in an eternal way by establishing the righteousness of God for the justification of His people, sinners saved by grace (*Rom. 4:6-8; 5:21*).

(3) The high priest offered the blood of atonement once a year, and the other priests offered daily sacrifices (*Heb. 9:6-7*). No man dared to assume this office. Those who took it upon themselves perished. Even King Uzziah was slain by the Lord when he attempted to burn incense at the altar of incense without God's appointed and ordained priest (*2 Chron. 26:16-21*).

Christ, our Lord, is our High Priest and our mediator by Whom God is reconciled to us and us to Him (*2 Cor. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 2:5*). No man comes to the Father but by Him and based on the righteousness that He alone established for His people (*John 14:6*). David and the people sought to approach God, move and set up the ark, and establish worship of the Lord without God's priest. This is a serious error. Without question, this was David's error, and the Lord dealt severely with him and his friends. Disregarding God's commandment for the priests alone to carry the ark, it did not matter how sincere David was or how good his intentions were. God is to be obeyed. We see an application for us in that it does not matter how sincere we may be in desiring to worship, know, serve, or approach God. He is only worshipped, known, and approached in the Lord Jesus Christ and on the basis of His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. God's Word says that without faith it is impossible to please God (*Heb. 11:6*). Faith involves believing and resting in Christ and His merits alone as we come before God. Without Christ, there is no pleasing God (*Matt. 17:5; Eph. 1:3-7*).

(1 Chron. 15:14-29) - Here we see how David sought to bring up the ark and how he came to God the right way. The priests carried the ark. God was pleased and helped the priests who bore the ark. They offered the blood sacrifice before the Lord. When David sought the first time to return the ark to Jerusalem, these two things were missing — the priests and the blood sacrifice, both which are necessary to please God (*Heb. 10:19-22; Heb. 9:22*). This was the equivalent, in picture, of approaching God without Christ, not having His righteousness imputed, seeking His favor and blessings without God-given humility and faith evidenced by pleading His blood as our only merit and only ground of salvation.

(2 Chronicles 26:1-15) - 2 Chronicles 26:1-15 describes the reign of King Uzziah which began when he was sixteen years old. *“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD”* (2 Chron. 26:4) - He was faithful to seek the Lord and lead the people in God’s ways.

“Zechariah” was a prophet during Uzziah’s reign (2 Chron. 26:5). Isaiah was called of God to be a prophet during Uzziah’s reign (2 Chron. 26:22; Isaiah 6:1). Uzziah reigned for fifty-two years, and Isaiah wrote of this from first to last (*Isa. 1:1*). This was around 750 years before Christ. Uzziah’s fame spread, and he was helped by God *“TILL HE WAS STRONG* (2 Chron. 26:15).” Uzziah began his reign trusting and walking in the strength of the Lord. But, at some point in his success, he began to turn from God’s help and began to trust in his own strength. He failed to realize that the reason for his success was God’s power and help. He failed to continue to listen to the words of his ancestors King David and King Solomon (*Psalms 121:1-2; Prov. 3:5-6*).

(2 Chronicles 26:16) - We are told here specifically what Uzziah did in his own pride, self-righteousness, and strength. His sin was the same as with us all especially when, in our own sinful human nature, we think about eternal salvation and all blessings and benefits of salvation. We become so proud and self-righteous that we refuse to admit that all salvation, with all its blessings and benefits, is by God’s grace and power in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. We foolishly and proudly think that salvation (in some way, to some degree, and at some stage) is conditioned on our own power and goodness rather than all by God’s grace based on the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Uzziah *“was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.”* Here, Uzziah committed a serious and fatal sin which led to his utter destruction and death. *“When he was strong,”* he trusted in his own strength and became proud of what he imagined to be his own accomplishments. His heart was so overcome by his own importance that he went into the temple, into the holy place, where the altar of incense stood, and into which none but the priest were allowed to enter, to offer incense himself upon the altar. Uzziah ignored and violated God’s law of the priesthood and true worship. He also violated what had become a general principle in God’s dealing with Israel - that no king should also be a priest, and that the offices of prophet, priest, and king should not be combined except in one man, the Messiah, Who fulfilled all three offices.

(2 Chronicles 26:17-18) - Azariah, the priest, and eighty priests of the Lord withstood King Uzziah, declaring unto him the seriousness of his act. Only the priests of God, the sons of Aaron, were consecrated by God to burn incense to the Lord. No man, not even a king, was permitted to offer sacrifices for sin (*Heb. 5:1-5*). They told Uzziah that such an act could not honor him before God. No matter how sincere nor how great and successful a man may be, it is folly to violate the holiness of God.

(2 Chronicles 26:19-23) - Instead of listening to the priest and leaving the temple, Uzziah became angry and held to the censer to burn incense. God struck the proud king with leprosy, took away his office, and he died in disgrace as a common leper. When they buried him, they said, *“He is a leper.”* It is obvious that in this matter, being lifted up with pride and self-righteousness, Uzziah did not do *“that which was right in the sight of the LORD.”* For any sinner to take it upon himself to approach God in that sinner’s own merits is death. The Apostle Peter said, *“Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him”* (Acts

10:34-35). “*Worketh righteousness*” is NOT approaching God based on our own works which are far from the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ. “*Worketh righteousness*” is approaching God as a sinner seeking mercy and grace in the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith. This is what Uzziah failed to do when he disregarded God’s commands, ignored the priests, and took it upon himself to burn incense before the Lord. Isaiah evidently learned much from the death of King Uzziah. It is recorded in *Isaiah 6:1-7*.

(Isaiah 6:1-4) - Isaiah must have thought much of King Uzziah. In the year of Uzziah’s death, the Lord God revealed Himself to Isaiah in the glory of His sovereignty and holiness. The Lord is on His throne and in complete control of all matters. His “*train*” represents His royal majesty and divine sovereignty. He is also the righteous judge Who judges according to truth. The seraphims (ministers and messengers of the Lord, bright and glorious, fervent in zeal for God’s service and glory) covered their faces out of profound reverence, covered their feet, owning their own imperfections, and did fly to execute God’s commands. They cried, “*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*” God is infinitely, eternally, and immutably holy in all His ways. It is repeated for the greater assurance and establishment of the fact. If there is one attribute used most frequently or one word to emphasize the nature of our God, it is “*God is holy*” (1 Tim. 6:15-16), unapproachable by sinful creatures.

(Isaiah 6:5) - Isaiah responded to the vision, “Woe is me, for I am cut off from God. I am an unclean branch of an unclean tree. I am a great sinner, especially by my lips, which reveal my heart. There is no hope for me nor those about me, before God’s awful holy presence.” In light of God’s holiness and justice, Isaiah saw his sinfulness and depravity. He saw that he deserved nothing but condemnation and death. He saw that he had no righteousness to recommend himself unto God. He saw that God is unapproachable except through God’s appointed Mediator and based on His righteousness. He saw that this held true for all people who are fallen in Adam and born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. We are all sinners, and there are none righteous or good in God’s sight (Rom. 3:10-12,23).

(Isaiah 6:6-7) - Isaiah then saw that there is a way to God! Our God in mercy and grace has determined to redeem, sanctify, and receive a people of His choice out of every nation but only in a way consistent with His holiness, righteousness, and truth. He will be both just and justifier; He will be both merciful and righteous; He will be a just God and a Savior (Isa. 45:20-25). This way is symbolized in the “*live coal ... from off the altar,*” which represents the way God takes away the iniquities of His people and purges their sins - the sacrifice of our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. CHRIST IS THE WAY! Jesus Christ came to earth, was made of woman, made under the law to redeem. He is our Surety by divine decree; He is our righteousness by obedience unto death; He is our sacrifice, sin-offering, and God is reconciled to us and us to Him by His death; He is our risen justifier and our great High Priest who intercedes at God’s right hand. No man can come to God but by Christ Jesus and the ground of His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith (John 14:6). The seraphim laid the live coal on Isaiah’s mouth indicating a change heart and a change of message - the Gospel of God’s grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. When King Uzziah tried to usurp the authority of the priest and burn incense to God in the holy place, he ignored God’s promise of forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life by His grace through the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. God destroyed him, as he will all who reject the Redeemer. Would you approach God for mercy, forgiveness, and acceptance? Then receive, bow to, and confess Christ Jesus. Do not come any other way (Heb. 10:11-22).

2 Chronicles 36 is an historical account of the fall of Jerusalem by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar. Babylon was God's unwitting instrument of judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sin and rebellion. The Babylonians destroyed the city and the temple, and they took what was left of the people in three stages captive in Babylon where they remained for 70 years. All this was told to them in the prophecy of Jeremiah (v. 21). After the 70 years, God sent Cyrus, king of the Medes and the Persians to conquer Babylon and to deliver and restore the Jews to their homeland. *2 Chronicles* concludes with a word about the first year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia (vv. 22-23), and the Book of Ezra begins with virtually the same word (*Ezra 1:1-2*). Ezra was a priest and a scribe who was brought back to Israel and who led the people in the ways of the Lord. He also wrote about the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel who was appointed governor of Judea (*Ezra 1:8*). "Sheshbazzar" was the Persian name for Zerubbabel who was a descendant of David and whose name is recorded in the human genealogy of Christ (*Matt. 1:12-13; Luke 3:27*).

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are the last three history books of the Old Testament (*Joshua–Nehemiah*). They tell us what happened to the Jewish people after the 70-year Babylonian captivity and give details of the three stages of their return to Jerusalem. While in captivity in Babylon, many of the Jews were distressed, desperate, and miserable, longing for their homeland. This is expressed in psalms such as *Psalms 137*. The people were told before their captivity by Jeremiah and during their captivity by Daniel, Obadiah, and Ezekiel that their hope of deliverance and restoration was in the Lord God and a matter of His mercy, not their works. The prophets who encouraged them in this same message upon their return from captivity were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries who led them in their return, and they both wrote about the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

The book of *Ezra* is actually two books, *Ezra 1-6* and *Ezra 7-10*. Between *Ezra 6* and *7* there is a time gap of about 58 years in which the events in the book of *Esther* took place. Then *Ezra 10* is immediately succeeded by the events in the book of *Nehemiah*. Nehemiah was a cupbearer in the court of Artaxerxes, and when we first learn of him he had not yet gone to Jerusalem. But by the providence of God, Nehemiah was appointed governor of Jerusalem, and he supervised and wrote concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

(Ezra 1) - Here we see that even though Cyrus was a heathen idolater, he was used greatly of the Lord in delivering and restoring the Jews to their home. And even though the Lord brought Cyrus to testify of the greatness of Israel's God, we are told in Isaiah's prophecy that Cyrus was not a true believer (*Isa. 45:1-5*). This is a testimony to God's sovereignty in all things and His working "all things after the counsel of His own will" (*Eph. 1:11*). Cyrus is a great example of the Lord's testimony in *Proverbs 21:1* - "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will." In all this, we can see how that Cyrus was not only God's instrument of restoration for the national Jews to return and rebuild their physical home, but also how he is important as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Deliverer and Restorer of God's spiritual people, the election of grace. Consider how this is so.

(1) Cyrus was purposed and appointed to this position and task before he was even born. In one of the most amazing prophecies of the Bible, the Lord revealed Cyrus's decree to free the Jews to Isaiah. One hundred fifty years before Cyrus lived, the prophet called him by name and gave details of Cyrus's benevolence to the Jews (*Isa. 45:1,4; 41:2-25; 42:6*).

Before the world was created, the Lord Jesus Christ was purposed and appointed of God the Father to be the Savior and Restorer of God's chosen people. According to the everlasting covenant of grace, He was chosen to be the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of a people chosen by God and given to Him. He agreed to do all that was required to insure their full salvation according to God's justice, mercy, and grace (*Eph. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-20*).

(2) Cyrus was the subject of Biblical prophecy to be a deliverer and restorer of Israel so that God would accomplish His ultimate purpose of bringing Christ into the world for the salvation of spiritual Israel. In the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work, Christ was also prophesied as the Deliverer and Restorer of God's chosen people (*Isa. 46:9-13*).

(3) Even though Cyrus was not himself a righteous man, God raised him up as an instrument of righteousness, meaning as an instrument of God's judgment against the Babylonians and as an instrument to aid the Jews in rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple (*Isa. 45:13*). The Lord Jesus Christ was (and is) a righteous Person (God manifest in the flesh) and was sent of the Father to do judgment and justice in establishing righteousness for His people, God's elect, and insure their salvation unto glory (*Jer. 23:5-6; Rom. 10:4*), and by which to judge the wicked for their sins (*Acts 17:31*). Christ is the builder of the heavenly Jerusalem and the temple of God which is His church. Christ is the Liberator and Restorer of God's elect who are by nature captive to sin.

(4) In *Isaiah 44:28* God identifies Cyrus as "*MY SHEPHERD*" who "*shall perform all MY pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*" The Lord Jesus is identified as the "*Shepherd of Israel*" (*Psa. 80:1*), and as the Shepherd of His people Who will do for them all that is required and provide for them all that they need (*Psa. 23*).

(5) Cyrus's decree releasing the Jewish people, in fulfillment of prophecy, is recorded in *2 Chronicles 36:22-23* and *Ezra 1*, and this was certainly good news to the Jews. God's decree of the salvation of His people by Christ is proclaimed in the preaching of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace based on the blood and righteousness of Christ (*Isa. 61; Luke 4:16-21; Rom. 1:16-17*).

(6) King Cyrus actively assisted the Jews in rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. Cyrus restored the temple treasures to Jerusalem and allowed building expenses to be paid from the royal treasury (*Ezra 1:4-11; 6:4-5*). Cyrus's beneficence helped to restart the temple worship practices that had languished during the 70 years of the Jews' captivity.

Christ is not only the Savior and Restorer of His people, but also the Provider and Preserver of His people. We who are saved by His grace persevere in His grace because He preserves us and provides all that we need to bring us unto glory (*2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:24-25; Jude 24-25*).

(7) In *Isaiah 45:1*, Cyrus is called God's "*anointed*" who is upheld by the Lord to conquer nations, defeat kings, and "*to open before him the two leaved gates*" which cannot be shut against him. This means that no obstacle could prevent his victory in doing God's work. Christ was (and is) God's true anointed (Messiah), who has conquered sin, Satan, and the law to open the way of salvation for all His people. And He cannot be defeated. He is the mighty Conqueror and Restorer of God's people (*Rom. 8:34-39*).

(Ezra 4:1-2) - These “adversaries” were early Samaritans who had been brought into the lands of the former Kingdom of Israel after its fall to the Assyrians. Notice that God is referred to in v. 1 as “*the LORD God of Israel*,” which is God of all grace, God of salvation, and God of the covenant. But when the Samaritans spoke of God in v. 2, they referred to Him only as “*God*” (Elohim), the almighty God of creation. God IS Elohim, but He is more to His children as He has revealed Himself as God of salvation Who saves His chosen people by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and based upon His righteousness alone. These Samaritans had committed many offences against the God of Israel. They had intermarried with those left behind from the exile, and their worship was mixed with idolatry (*2 Kings 17:25-41*). *2 Kings 17:33* describes their attitude - “*They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.*” Their claim that they feared the LORD was a lie as indicated by their idolatry.

These Samaritans wanted to become partners in the building work of the temple, yet they were still adversaries. They wanted to partner in the work either to ruin it or to influence it to their benefit, and probably corrupt it with their idolatry. They did this on the claim that “we seek your God as you do.” They probably genuinely believed that they sought the same God in the same way, yet they also added, “and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria.” This means they sacrificed without either a temple or a priesthood, which was obviously against the commandment of God. This completely contradicted their claim, “we seek your God as you do.” They were like those who call themselves “Christian” today but who deny the truth of God’s grace in salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ and preach salvation conditioned on sinners rather than on Christ alone.

(Ezra 4:3) - Zerubbabel, Joshua (the high priest), and the leaders of Israel refused to let these Samaritans join them in rebuilding the temple. It may seem that the leaders were mean and unkind, not showing what people today call “Christian” love and kindness. But what Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the others were showing here is the very “*holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD*” (*Heb. 12:14*). It is separation from the world that God commands His people to maintain (*Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:14-18*).

As He has always done since the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden, Christ has been building His temple, the church. This church is made up of God’s elect, chosen before the foundation of the world by God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was chosen to be their Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver to establish the only ground upon which God justifies, adopts, saves, and brings them to glory. Christ has established the foundation upon which His church is built by His obedience unto death on the cross, dying for their sins imputed to Him, and establishing a perfect righteousness which God has imputed to them. This is confirmed by His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into glory where He sat down on the right hand of the Father and ever lives to make intercession for them. He continues in building His church by calling His people to Himself by the power of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel truth, giving them spiritual life and faith to believe in Him and submit to His righteousness as their only ground of salvation with all its blessings and benefits. He saves and preserves them by His grace and not by their works or their wills (*Eph. 2:8-10*). He does not build His church upon or with lies that deny the glory of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. His church is “*the pillar and ground of the truth*” (*1 Tim. 3:15*).

Just as Zerubbabel and the leaders told the unbelieving Samaritans, “*Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God,*” the Lord commands His people, as members of His church, to reject any offers of fellowship and aid from false Christians who claim to be our brethren but who deny the doctrine of Christ. Christ uses His people and His truth to build

His church into “*the church of the living God*” (1 Tim. 3:15). The true church of the living God, true believers who know and love the doctrine of Christ, cannot be in fellowship with, receive support from, or be in support of those who deny that same doctrine -

2 John (7) For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (8) Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. (9) Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (10) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (11) For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Believers are commanded by God to strive to maintain the purity of God’s grace and truth as it is in Christ, the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work of redemption. It is not an issue of minor differences in doctrine among true Christians. It is not an issue of “Calvinism vs. Arminianism.” IT IS AN ISSUE OF THE TRUE GOSPEL VS. ALL FALSE GOSPELS. It is an issue of HOW GOD SAVES SINNERS. Is salvation conditioned on the works and/or the wills of sinners, or is it conditioned on God’s will and Christ’s work alone? God’s word says that all of salvation is conditioned on the will of God and the merits of Christ’s work as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people who were chosen and given to Him by the Father before the world began (Rom. 9:15-16; Eph. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). There is no godly fellowship between those whom God has brought to believe this Gospel truth and those who claim to be saved but who deny this Gospel truth. To deny this, or compromise this, in the name of love and kindness is to deny Christ and the purity of His grace and truth. It is to corrupt God’s grace and truth as well as the godly love which God’s true children are commanded to express towards one another. It is to be a partaker (partner, fellowshipper) of their evil deeds rather than the holiness without which no man will see the Lord.

(Ezra 4:4-6) - The response of the unbelieving Samaritans to Zerubbabel’s refusal to accept their fellowship and help show not only their true evil motives but also their hatred for God’s truth and God’s people. If they could not enter into the fellowship and subvert it stealthily from within, they discouraged the workers, troubled the builders, and lobbied against them in the court of King Cyrus. They wrote letters to the king falsely accusing them as troublemakers and rebels against the king.

Here we see how the natural man responds to Gospel truth that exposes him for what he is (John 3:19-20; Rom. 16:17-18; Gal. 1:6-9; Jude). But we must remember that this kind of persecution is common to all true believers when we stand firm against the unbelieving world (John 15:18–16:3). We must also remember what the Lord said in the Sermon on the Mount - “*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you*” (Matt. 5:10-12).

Nehemiah was one of the Jewish captives in Babylon, and he was a cup-bearer to the king. Many of the Jews had already been freed to go back to Judah and rebuild the temple under Zerubbabel. Upon hearing that those in Judah were in distress and that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, Nehemiah asked the king for permission to return and rebuild the city. This was around twenty years after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem. The king sent Nehemiah to Judah as governor of the province with a mission to rebuild. Once there, Nehemiah, like Zerubbabel, defied the opposition of Judah's enemies on all sides—Samaritans, Ammonites, Arabs and Philistines (*Neh. 2:20*). Under Nehemiah the walls were rebuilt within 52 days (*Neh. 6:15-19*).

Ezra and Nehemiah were contemporaries, and they both wrote about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which occurred approximately seventy years after it was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. Ezra wrote about the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel, while Nehemiah wrote concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.

(Neh. 8:1-4) - Ezra led the people in a time of thanksgiving and worship by bringing *"the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel."* He *"stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose,"* along with the other elders, and he read the Word of God to *"all that could hear with understanding,"* meaning all who were of age and could understand what was read.

(Neh. 8:5-6) - This was more than a simple religious gathering. It was a true worship service. *"And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God,"* and the people responded in agreement (*1 Pet. 3:15*).

(Neh. 8:7-8) - The elders were diligent and *"caused the people to understand the law."* *"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading."* Notice the order of service here in the reading of the law. First, they read God's Word as set down in the law of Moses. They read *"distinctly,"* which means "clearly" and without adding their own words and personal ideas (*1 Cor. 2:1-2*). THEN, they *"gave the sense,"* (meaning) of God's Word as given to Moses in the law. This is not their own opinions and ideas about God's Word. This is where so many go wrong today in reading the Bible. They fail to use the proper rules of Scriptural interpretation so as to be *"rightly dividing the word of truth"* (*2 Tim. 2:15*). The preacher must communicate the sense of the passage of Scripture, and not his own agenda or favorite personal topics. The people must leave understanding God's Word better, not understanding the preacher's opinions better.

Then they *"caused them to understand the reading"* as far as man by nature can understand God's Word. We know that the *"natural man"* (unregenerate man) *"receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (understood)"* (*1 Cor. 2:14*). There is no salvation without spiritual understanding as given and revealed by God. The book of *Proverbs* (especially in the first chapters) says much about the necessity of spiritual understanding as that which ought to be the foremost pursuit of our lives - *"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths"* (*Prov. 3:5-6*). It tells us that *"evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things"* (*Prov. 28:5*).

Spiritual understanding is a gift from God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ and leads us to a saving knowledge of Christ. Sinners must be born again by the Spirit and taught of God in order to understand God's Word savingly (*John 3:3; 6:44-45; 2 Tim. 3:14-17*). But true

preachers of the Gospel of God's grace are responsible to preach God's Word and tell their hearers the truth of God's Word, whether the hearers believe it or not. And what we pray for and desire for ourselves and our hearers is SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING of God's Word so that we are made "*wise unto salvation*" (2 Tim. 3:15). Apart from the Spirit of God working in our new birth, the Word will fall upon deaf ears (*Matthew 13:13-15; Acts 7:51*). God-given faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 13:16; Rom. 10:13-17*). The most important rule of proper Scriptural interpretation is the rule of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Consider the following:

(1) The Lord Jesus Christ sends the Spirit of God to His people to give them spiritual life and reveal Himself in opening our understanding to know and believe in Him (*John 10:27-30; 17:1-2*). "*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life*" (1 John 5:20). Eternal life is to God through the Person and work (righteousness) of Christ (*John 17:3*).

(2) The Word of God, even the law of Moses, is ultimately and finally a revelation of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-giver, and Preserver of His people. Spiritual understanding comes from Christ and leads us to Christ as our only hope of forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and all of salvation. Consider the preaching of Philip when the Spirit sent him into the desert to preach to an Ethiopian who was reading *Isaiah 53* (*Acts 8:30-35*). Consider what our Lord said to the Pharisees who claimed to be experts in the law of Moses but had no spiritual understanding (*John 5:39-47*).

(3) Spiritual understanding is given for us to know God's way of salvation in and by Christ so that we may glorify God in our lives (*Rom. 1:16-17; Jer. 9:23-24*). It shows us how God is just to justify the ungodly based upon a righteousness worked out by Christ's obedience unto death as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people. This understanding comes from the wisdom of God revealed in His Word as He leads His people to Christ, the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work (*2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Cor. 1:18-24*). It is God's gift to His people - "*For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding*" (*Prov. 2:6*). When the glory of God is revealed to His people in Christ, "*then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path*" (*Prov. 2:9*). This understanding is the revelation of "*the righteousness of God*" which is the merit of Christ's obedience unto death imputed to His people (*2 Cor. 5:21*).

(4) Spiritual understanding equips God's people to live for His glory in Christ (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*). By this understanding, believers are enabled to live by faith in Christ out of His power and grace so as to run the race of grace "*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*" (*Heb. 12:2*). This understanding establishes our hearts with grace and motivates us to live in obedience by grace, love, and gratitude to God for the gift of salvation with all blessings and benefits freely given us in Christ. This understanding gives us the confidence to approach God at His throne of grace because we have Christ as our Great High Priest, and we stand in Him, not having our sins imputed to us, but having His righteousness imputed to us so that we are secure and accepted in Him (*Rom. 8:34-35; Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22*).

The events of the **Book of Esther** took place within the 58 years between **Ezra 1-6** and **Ezra 7-10**. The Jews returned to Jerusalem from captivity in three waves of people. The **Book of Esther** records the events during this time of many of the Jews who remained in Babylon. The main characters in this book are Esther, a beautiful Jewish maiden, her cousin Mordecai, a Benjamite Jew, who was also Esther's guardian (*Esther 2:7*), the Persian king, Ahasuerus (Xerxes), and an evil man named Haman. One of the main truths that shines forth in this book is the amazing providence of God working in history to preserve His chosen people against all who would have destroyed them. All of God's providence was determined to fulfill His promise of salvation by sending the Messiah into the world through the Jewish nation. It was God's purpose to preserve this nation, in spite of their sins and all opposition, to fulfill His promise to save His elect, Jew and Gentile, by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see God's power and providence in several ways. First, Mordecai, a Jew, held an official position in the Persian government (*Esther 2:19*), and he had discovered and exposed a plot to kill the king, saving the king's life (*Esther 2:19-23*). Also, it was by God's sovereign and amazing providence that Esther became the king's wife. As queen of Persia, she rescued the Jewish people from a murderous plot to annihilate them by an evil man named Haman whom the king appointed over all his affairs and who hated Mordecai and all the Jews (*Esther 3:6*). Because of his hatred of Mordecai and all Jews, Haman had deceived the king into having a letter written and sealed by the king's ring and circulated throughout the land decreeing that all the Jews were to be killed and all that they had (their spoils) were to be taken. When Esther found out about Haman's plot, she sent a messenger to Mordecai to find out what was wrong. Mordecai sent her a copy of the edict and asked her "*to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people*" (*Esther 4:8*).

Esther agreed to approach the king and intercede for her people, but there was a problem. To approach the king and be accepted, the king had to bid the person to come to him, and this was symbolized by the king holding forth his golden sceptre (*Esther 4:11*). If the king did not hold forth the golden sceptre, the person who came in uninvited would die. Esther knew this and agreed to go to the king for her people (*Esther 4:16*). When Esther approached the king, she was literally risking her life. But Xerxes "*was pleased with her and held out to her the gold scepter that was in his hand,*" a sign that he accepted her presence (*Esther 5:2*). Haman continued to plot to kill Mordecai and the Jews, but, again, by God's providence, his plot was exposed, and he was hanged on the very gallows he had built for Mordecai (*Esther 7:7-10*).

(Esther 8:1-14) - After Haman was dead, Xerxes gave Esther all of Haman's estate and gave Mordecai his signet ring, essentially giving Mordecai the same authority in the kingdom that Haman previously had. The law of the king's decree that had gone out from Haman, however, was irrevocable. We see in the next verses how Esther intercedes for her people, the national Israelites, and this is a picture of Christ's intercession for His people, spiritual Israelites. Consider the following -

(1) Esther interceded on behalf of her people as she entered the inner court of the king. Esther had said, "I will go in and if I perish, I perish." In the everlasting covenant of grace, our Lord and Savior, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, took on the responsibility for His people and agreed to become incarnate in time and to go willingly to the cross of Calvary and actually die to pay the penalty before God's justice due unto their sins. And though He died, He did not perish. He was raised from the dead showing that, having perfectly satisfied all

that was required for their salvation, He and all whom He represented were accepted before a holy God. Oh, what beauty the Father sees in the Person and work of the Son to so accept Him and all He represented.

(2) Consider the golden scepter of the king. The beautiful Queen Esther risked her life to enter into the king's inner court. The law said that in doing so, Esther must die being condemned by the law of the land. But, instead, she found favor in the sight of the king who held out his golden scepter, sparing her life, declaring her accepted before the king. And this acceptance ultimately led to the deliverance of all her people for whom she interceded. A scepter is a staff held by a sovereign as an emblem of authority by which he rules. In the same way, there is an authority upon which the kingdom of God is established and upon which acceptance into God's presence is entered into. In *Hebrews 1:8* we read, "*But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.*" So, we see that righteousness itself is the basis upon which this eternal kingdom is established, upon which it is entered into, and through which grace itself reigns in this kingdom. This illustrates God's grace - His favor based solely on the merits of Christ's finished work, His righteousness (*Rom. 5:21*). This eternal kingdom, inhabited by God's chosen people from every generation is based upon that which was finished and accomplished when God's justice was satisfied by Christ's obedience unto death (His righteousness) some 2000 years ago - the very righteousness which God has imputed to all for whom Christ lived, died, and arose again. And it's on that basis, the scepter of righteousness, that all of God's chosen people in Christ shall not perish, but rather are found accepted in the One Who interceded and still intercedes for them - in the beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 8:33-34; 1 John 2:1-2*). It is on that same basis - His righteousness - that they are eternally delivered!

(3) Esther again pleaded with the king to intervene. Xerxes ordered another decree to be written to counter the first. This one gave the Jews the right to defend themselves against any who would attack them. Now there was joy throughout the provinces. Many even became Jews out of fear. Some enemies did attack on the previously appointed day, but the Jews were victorious over them. The king had issued a decree for the benefit of Esther, Mordecai, and the rest of the Jews. He sealed this decree with his ring (*Esther 8:8*). In the same way, any who have the seal of the King of Kings have an assurance of salvation that none can reverse (*Eph. 1:11-13; cf. Rom. 6:17-18*). To be "*sealed*" here speaks of having confirmed in our minds the absolute certainty of salvation by the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ wherein He truly redeemed a people, meeting every condition of their salvation through His shed blood, i.e. by His obedience unto death. And this confirmation is the work of God the Holy Spirit upon all those that God saves whereby they have a promise of the inheritance of life everlasting. This divine seal cannot be reversed (*John 10:27-29; Rom. 8:35-39*). Like the decree of the king, all who come to Christ for all salvation are accepted in their Mediator, based on the scepter of the kingdom - His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. They are sealed for all eternity!

(*Esther 8:15-17*) - The state of Mordecai and all the Jews is a picture of God's elect robed in the righteousness of Christ and filled with the joy and peace of salvation. This is all the work of God providentially and savingly through the merit of Christ, our Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, Preserver, and our Intercessor forever and ever.

Lesson 76 - CHRIST AND THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION *Job 25*

Job was a sinner saved by God's grace according to God's promise to send a redeemer to save him from his sins (*Job 1:1,8; 19:25-26*). When Satan challenged the Lord concerning Job's faith, the Lord allowed Satan to afflict Job physically. Job suffered greatly.

(Job 25:1) - Job had three friends who came to comfort him - Bildad, Eliphaz, and Zophar. Their assessment was that God would not afflict "good" people but always blessed them with "good" things. Their conclusion was that Job must have committed some great sin to bring this misery upon himself, and he should confess his sin and repent to get God to bless him (*Job 8:5-6*). Their council was totally wrong and brought no comfort to Job who called them "*miserable comforters*" (*Job 16:2*). Job knew he was a sinner, but he maintained his innocence. From their discussions came some of the most profound and important questions that we all, as sinful people, should consider in light of the justice of God.

(Job 25:2-3) - Job and his three friends all agreed that is great and awesome. God is to be feared, and He is the God Who makes peace and establishes order in the heavens. It is not man who rules but God. God is also invincible, and His light shines on all without exception so as to expose good and evil.

(Job. 25:4-5) - God's Word tells us that all people by nature are legally deserving of condemnation and death and spiritually defiled within. So the question of all questions is asked - "*How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?*" This is a matter of God's justice which must be satisfied fully and God's power to give spiritual life and cleanse us within. God is a just God, and He must punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed (charged). God makes Himself known, not only in love, grace, and mercy, but also in justice (*Psalms 9:16*). Later on, the Lord sent a young man named Elihu to Job and his friends. Elihu offers a response to Job that lifts up the Lord, condemns Job's three friends, and rightly confronts Job with the reality of God's justice (*Job 34:10-12*).

Many today do not understand this major issue because they emphasize God's love, grace, and mercy apart from God's justice, holiness, and truth. In verse 5 Bildad uses the metaphor of creation to show that God is so infinitely just and holy that He cannot deny Himself. Many do not understand that if salvation from sin, true forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life are to be shown by God towards sinners, this must be in accordance with and in honor of His strict justice. God cannot and will not pervert justice in order to save sinners. God IS love, and He IS a God of mercy and grace, but the question above presents us with a mystery that no human being can answer. How can God act according to His strict justice in punishing sinners and yet show love, mercy, and grace towards sinners? How can He be both just and the Justifier of sinners who deserve nothing but His wrath and the punishment of death for their sins? No religion or philosophy of man has even come close to answering this question. The answer comes from the wisdom of God Who is the source of justification, and it is the very heart of the Gospel of God's grace towards His chosen people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"*Man*" here refers to fallen, sinful, spiritually and depraved man who has no righteousness to recommend himself unto God (*Rom. 3:10-20*). "*Justified*" has to do with being righteous in God's sight. To be "*clean*" is to be "*pure*," i.e. without any defilement of sin so as to be condemned under God's justice. All who are "*born of a woman*" are born into this world as spiritually dead and depraved. By nature, we have no understanding of or desire for the things that glorify God in Christ. We have no righteousness within ourselves, and we cannot make ourselves righteous by our works. If God were to judge any of us by our works, we would all be condemned. We have earned and deserve nothing but eternal death. Job stated this earlier (*Job 9:2-3*). Job stated that if any of us would try to plead our case before God in His court of justice, that for every "*ONE*" argument we present to justify ourselves, God could answer with a "*THOUSAND*" charges against us.

(*Job 25:6*) - Bildad used the metaphor of two different worms to make a point. (1) "*How much less man, that is a worm?*" "Worm" here refers to a "maggot" which feeds on dead things. It is descriptive of all of us in our sin and depravity with no ability to save ourselves or justify ourselves before God. (2) "*And the son of man, which is a worm?*" "Worm" here refers to a crimson worm from which was derived a red dye used to color materials such as the red color in the priestly robes and in the red color in the curtains of the tabernacle. Whether or not Bildad had this in mind, "*the son of man*" is a messianic title often referring to the sinless humanity of Christ (*cf. Matt. 12:32; 13:37; Luke 12:8; John 1:51*). Looking back on this from our New Covenant perspective, we can see the connection with Christ as God manifest in the flesh for the purpose of His death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. To support this understanding of this passage, consider *Psalm 22:6* which is a messianic psalm describing the sufferings of Christ to redeem His people. He refers to Himself as the crimson worm - "*But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*" This crimson worm is a picture of Christ Who humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross for the sins of His people. This is also stated prophetically in *Isaiah 1:18* - "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson [the crimson worm], they shall be as wool.*"

Here we find the greatest of mysteries solved in a most glorious way. How can a sinful man be justified with God, and how can people who are born spiritually dead and depraved be given life and cleansed within? It is by God's grace grounded upon the merits of the glorious Person and finished work of redemption accomplished by Christ for God's chosen people (*Rom. 3:21-26*). Before the foundation of the world, Christ, the Son of God, was made to be the Surety of all whom God chose to save. All of their sins were laid to His account, i.e. imputed to Him, and He willingly agreed to be responsible to pay their sin-debt (*Rom. 8:33-34*). To do so He had to become incarnate and unite Himself to sinless human flesh to shed His blood and die for their sins (*Heb. 2:14-17*). As the sins of His sheep were imputed to Him, His righteousness, the very righteousness of God, has been imputed to them as the only ground of their justification before God (*Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). All their sins are forgiven, and they are all declared righteous in God's sight based on Christ's blood, His righteousness imputed to them. God is both "*A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOR*" (*Isa. 45:21*) through the Lord Jesus Christ. God's love, grace, and mercy, all reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (*Rom. 5:21*).

Again, how can a just God save sinners in love, mercy, and grace, and still be true to Himself in justice? It is only upon the ground of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead. It is based on His righteousness imputed that God justifies His elect, and it is from Christ that He gives spiritual and eternal life. This glorious truth is described as a "*PROPITIATION*" (*Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10*), which means God's justice satisfied in the blood of Christ. This truth is exclusive to the Gospel of salvation by God's grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. All other religions teach a false god who must be appeased by something sinners do in order to earn his/her favor and blessings. But the true Gospel of God's grace is the revelation of the "*righteousness of God*" (*Rom. 1:16-17*), which is a revelation of God's justice fully satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver of His people. And His people are identified by God-given faith that brings them to believe, trust, and rest in Christ as their only righteousness by which God has justified them and from which God gives them spiritual and eternal life (*Rom. 6:17-18; 10:4-10; Gal. 6:14-16; Php. 3:3,7-10*). Their hearts are purified and cleansed by the Spirit's application of the blood of Christ to their consciences in bringing them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. This does not mean that they are sinlessly perfect within themselves. It does not mean that their works measure up to the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ. But it means that they continually look to Christ and plead His righteousness by faith - "*looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith*" (*Heb. 12:2*).

Lesson 77 - CHRIST, OUR RANSOM *Job 33:16-28*

Up to *Job 32*, a young man named Elihu had listened to the exchange between Job and his three friends. He had kept silent out of respect for their age, but now they are silent. God moves Elihu to speak with so much wisdom and truth. He first admonishes Job's friends for judging Job in a completely self-righteous way that misrepresented God and Job. Here in *Job 33* he begins to admonish Job for justifying himself and accusing God of being unjust in punishing him. Job was a justified sinner, a sinner saved by grace, a true believer who looked to and rested in the Messiah who was to come, but he did not understand why God would bring such suffering upon him. Why do the righteous suffer? Such suffering is not a token of God's hatred towards His children or any sign that He has forsaken His people. It is the chastisement of a loving Father meant to wean us away from this world and drive us more and more to Christ for righteousness, life, peace, and joy.

(Job 33:16-18) - God has spoken by His loving chastisements. "*Instruction*" here speaks of correction, admonition, and chastisement which is common to all of God's true children (*Heb. 12:5-8*). This is meant to turn man away from His natural thoughts and purposes which only end in death and hell. Man by nature thinks that in all of his endeavors he is seeking righteousness and eternal life by his deeds, but he is deceived until God speaks and reveals Himself in Christ. And if God does not speak and turn us away from our natural thinking, we will perish.

(Job 33:19-22) - Pain and suffering wean us away from the pleasures and joys of this life. It makes us hate the bread of this life and long for Christ, the Bread of eternal life (*Heb. 12:11*). It makes us hate the best meats of this world and causes us long for the meat that perishes NOT - "*Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed*" (*John 6:27*).

(Job 33:23) - This and the following verses point us to Christ as the Angel, the "*messenger*," of the Covenant of grace. He is an "*interpreter*," which means "one who intercedes" for others. Elihu is reminding Job that God is not against him, nor is God his enemy, but God is with him because of this Messenger and Interpreter. He is "*ONE AMONG A THOUSAND*." This speaks of the uniqueness of Christ, the "*chiefest among ten thousand*" (*Song 5:10; 1 Tim. 2:5*). Christ is unique in the glory of His Person - God manifest in the flesh. He is unique in the redemptive work that He accomplished for His people - righteousness established whereupon God is just to justify them. He shows "*unto man his uprightness*." This does not mean that He shows man as already upright or righteous. It means He shows man the way of uprightness (righteousness) which is by God's grace through Christ. Man by nature is not righteous (*Rom. 3:10-20*), but Christ is the righteousness of God to everyone who believes.

(Job 33:24) - Salvation is by the grace of God by virtue of "*A RANSOM*." The truth of this ransom presupposes that man by nature is held captive by sin, Satan, and death. This is the state of all mankind by nature as fallen in Adam and born into this life as spiritually dead and depraved. This ransom is the full and just payment Christ made for all the sins of God's elect. Elihu states, "I have found ONE who has met the price of my redemption!" "*For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (*Mark 10:45*). It is the nature of a ransom, like redemption, to deliver and insure, not a mere possibility of life, liberty, and salvation. It delivers and insures the certain reality of life, liberty, and salvation.

But does the Word of God not say in *1 Timothy 2:6* that Christ "*gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*"? Yes, but "*ALL*" in this verse is not all without exception. The context shows us that the apostle is speaking of the fact that we as believers are to pray for the salvation of all of God's elect, no matter what their race or station in life, because

God's elect consists of all sorts of persons, both kings and paupers, Jew and Gentile. This speaks of *"God our Saviour; Who will have all men [all without distinction, not all without exception] to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God's Word teaches us that no sinner by nature will *"come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (the Gospel of God's grace in Christ) until God gives spiritual life and reveals Christ to them.

God's Word teaches us that if the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom for many, that many (whoever they are) must be saved eternally. That many must be set free because they have been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Their sin-debt was charged to Christ, and they cannot be charged with that debt. They have His righteousness charged to their account, and they must go free. This is the heart of Elihu's message, and it is the heart of the Gospel for all of God's elect. It is a free gift that comes to us without any cause within us and without any conditions upon us. It is all in and by the Lord Jesus Christ Who fulfilled all conditions of salvation by giving Himself a ransom for many.

(Job 33:25) - Some object to the truth of the success of Christ's giving Himself a ransom as being the guarantee that all for whom He died shall be saved. They claim that He died for all without exception and sinners must believe and receive the gift, else they will perish. But the Scriptures teach us that man in his natural, sinful, and spiritually dead state will not receive Christ and believe in Him (1 Cor. 2:14). And consider these next verses that show the fruits of Christ giving Himself a ransom for many. First, *"His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth."* This speaks of a new beginning, a new birth. Christ said of His elect that they must be born again from above (John 3:3-7). It is written that it is only those who are born again by the Spirit who will receive Christ for salvation (John 1:11-13). God must give us a new heart, new spiritual eyes and ears, else we will not receive Christ.

(Job 33:26) - Next, *"He shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He will render unto man His righteousness."* This speaks of God-given faith wherein a sinner, having seen by revelation from God the glory of God in Christ, prays and turns to God pleading the merits of that ransom paid by Christ, which is His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. This is the joy and peace that believers have by looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. This is the hope that gives assurance of all the blessings and benefits of eternal life and glory.

(Job 33:27-28) - Some interpreters view this as God looking upon men and upon seeing their confession of sin and unprofitableness in seeking salvation by their works, God will deliver their souls from the grave, and they will live in the light of salvation. But the Bible tells us in other verses of all people by nature - *"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (Psalm 14:2-3; cf. Psalm 53:2-3; Rom. 3:10-12). So, it is clear that if the Lord simply looked down upon men to see if He could find any who would repent and believe in Christ, He would find no one, and all men would be doomed forever. Therefore, if this passage is speaking of God looking upon men, and any repenting and believing, this is simply an acknowledgment of God's power and grace in bringing His elect to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works. In other words, this is not attributed to man's goodness or "free-will," but to God alone Who has mercy and grace upon who He will have mercy and grace (Rom. 9:15-16).

If this verse is speaking of regenerate, believing men looking upon other men who are unregenerate and unbelieving, as evidenced by their perverting the way of salvation and righteousness, then it speaks of witnessing the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ to them, and God making it effectual as the power of God unto salvation to them, delivering them from death, darkness, and the grave. Either way, this is a glorious testimony of God's grace, mercy, and power to save His people whom Christ gave Himself for ransom.

Lesson 78 - CHRIST - THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS Psalm 1

This first psalm sets the tone for all the psalms as it establishes the way of the righteous as opposed to the way of the ungodly. Some argue that these verses can only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Others claim these verses apply to justified sinners, saved by the grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, as it applies to any personal work and perfection of righteousness, it could only apply to Christ. But it can also apply to sinners saved by grace as we stand before God in Christ and as we have been brought by Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit to believe in and look to Him for all righteousness and eternal life.

(Psalm 1:1) - "BLESSED" - Many Hebrew scholars translate this word as "happy." This is not necessarily incorrect, but we must understand that this is not happiness due to our feelings or circumstances. It is true happiness that comes from knowing and looking to Christ for all salvation even when our feelings and circumstances bring us to sadness - *"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost"* (Rom. 15:13). "Blessed" here describes one who is favored and in good standing with God, the Judge of all. It is the opposite of being cursed by the law of God which condemns all sinners to whom sin is imputed to death. As God manifest in the flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ was certainly favored by and in good standing with God the Father - *"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17). At the same time, Christ is called *"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isa. 53:3). A sinner saved by God's grace in Christ is most certainly "blessed" of *"God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). Those who are truly "blessed" are described in the following verses -

He *"walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly."* Christ ate with publicans and sinners, but He did not walk in their ungodliness and take their advice. He came *"not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"* (Mark 2:16-17). The *"ungodly"* describes all unregenerate and unbelieving persons, both irreligious and religious. As Christ did not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, when, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, He gives His people spiritual life, knowledge, and brings them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works, they no longer walk in the counsel of the ungodly. They walk in the light of Christ and His truth. They still struggle with sin within themselves, but they look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of their faith.

"Nor standeth in the way of sinners" - We are all sinners. There are only sinners still lost in their sins and sinners saved by grace. But the *"way of sinners"* is the false ways of salvation that people devise and in which they stand firmly entrenched and rooted. It is the way of self-righteousness, which is the greatest of all sins. Christ Himself certainly did not stand in these false ways. He Himself is the only way of true salvation by God's grace (John 14:6). And because of our fall in Adam, we ourselves are born spiritually dead and depraved as evidenced by our being rooted in the false ways we devise of salvation conditioned on ourselves (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). We would all continue to stand in this false way if God had not bestowed His grace in Christ upon us and brought us into the right way which is Christ.

"Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" - This is the false comfort and rest that unbelievers who place no value on Christ and His righteousness sit. Obviously, the Lord Himself did not sit in this kind of seat. He valued His Father's glory above all things, and this is why He obeyed unto the death of the cross to establish a righteousness by which God is just to justify the ungodly (John 17:1-4). And by God's power and grace, He lifts His people out of

this seat of scorn in their unbelief and self-righteousness. He brings His people to value Christ and His righteousness above all things in salvation and eternal life.

(Psalm 1:2) - It was Christ's "*delight*" to think of and obey the law of the LORD. He is the perfect Godman Who never sinned. He always kept the law perfectly for His people. He is the very righteousness of God and the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. How can we who are sinners delight in the law of God and make it the subject of our meditations without being beat down and condemned? It is only as we see the law perfectly fulfilled in and by Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. He satisfied the law and justice of God in our stead so that the law cannot condemn us (*Rom. 8:33-34; 10:4*).

(Psalm 1:3) - This is the success of Christ in His work of redeeming and saving His people from their sins. By His work on the cross as He died and arose again, He paid our sin-debt in full and established righteousness that has been imputed to us. Sinners saved by grace are the fruit of His obedience unto death (*John 12:24-33*). Also, in and by Christ, we are prosperous to bear the fruit of grace and eternal life and to bring forth fruit unto God (*John 15:1-8; Rom. 7:4-6; Gal. 5:21-22*). Because Christ cannot and did not fail, we who are in Him cannot and will not fail (*Rom. 7:24-8:1; 1 Cor. 15:55-57*).

(Psalm 1:4) - Now, the psalmist turns to "*the ungodly*," sinners lost in their sins, spiritually dead and depraved. They are "*like the chaff*," the worthless leftovers after the grain harvest has been brought in. It is good for nothing but to be driven away, i.e. tossed aside and burned. Let us remember that we are all by nature "*ungodly*" (*1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3*). If we are now part of the wheat harvest of God's people, it is all because of God's grace in Christ. We have nothing to boast of in ourselves (*Psa. 130:3-4; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3*).

(Psalm 1:5) - Those who die in unbelief are the "*ungodly*" who will appear before the LORD under the charge of their sins. Because they continued self-righteously to stand in the way of sinners and died in their sins, they will not "*stand in the judgment*." They will be cast down and exposed to be workers of iniquity (*Matt. 7:21-23*). They have no savior, no mediator, and no righteousness to plead before holy God. Their sins are charged to them, and they are judged accordingly - as deserving of eternal death and damnation. They will not be counted with "*the congregation [assembly] of the righteous*," i.e. those who are found before God in Christ - washed from their sins in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed to them. They stand in the way of Christ, the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory - "*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (*Rom. 4:6-8*).

(Psalm 1:6) - "*For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous*" - The LORD knoweth this way because it is HIS way. He made and paved this way by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who is the Way of Righteousness for His people. This was (and is) God's way from the beginning, devised in the everlasting covenant of grace made before the world began of which Christ is the Surety. Christ opened this way for all whom the Father gave to Him by His obedience unto death and resurrection from the grave. HE IS THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS! "*The way of the ungodly*," which is any other way other than the way of Christ, "*shall perish*." How thankful we who are objects of God's grace should forever be!

Psalm 22 is commonly called “the psalm of the cross” as it typifies and foretells of the obedience and suffering unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s elect people. It begins with one of the seven sayings of Christ on the cross - “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*” (*Psalm 22:1; cf. Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34*). It presents the Lord as the crimson worm that shed His blood as the complete payment for all the sins of God’s people imputed to Him (*Psalm 22:6; cf. Isa. 1:18; Eph. 1:6-7; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 7:14*). It concludes by showing the success of our Savior’s suffering unto death - a righteousness by which God has justified His people and from which God gives all of them spiritual life, the resurrection life of Christ - “*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*” (*Psalm 22:30-31*). That is exactly what *Psalm 23* sets forth.

(Psalm 23:1) - “*The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want*” - If the Lord is YOURS and MY Shepherd, this means we belong to Him. We were given to Him before the foundation of this world by God the Father in eternal, electing love and grace (*Eph. 1:3-7*). Having been given to Him by the Father, He was made our Surety, and, therefore, He had to purchase with His own blood the sheep of whom He is their Shepherd (*John 10:14-18*). This means that our sins were imputed to Him, and He died, not for all without exception, but for us, His sheep (*John 10:11*). Why did God the Father forsake His dear Son? It was because Christ was “*made sin*” because God did not impute our sins to us but to Him (*2 Cor. 5:19; cf. Rom. 8:33*). This means that His righteousness has been imputed to His sheep (*2 Cor. 5:19; cf. Psalm 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8*). This means that because of HIM, and as we stand before God in HIM, Who is our Shepherd, we “*shall not want*,” i.e. in and by our Shepherd, we have everything the God requires and everything that we need to be saved unto final glory (*Eph. 1:3; Heb. 7:25; 10:14*). The salvation of His sheep was all conditioned on Him, and He alone fulfilled all conditions to secure their salvation. Not one of His sheep can ever perish (*John 10:27-30; 17:1-5; Rom. 8:32; Col. 2:9-10*).

(Psalm 23:2) - “*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters*” - Christ our Shepherd knows all of His sheep by name, and He calls us to Himself and causes us to lie down in the green pastures and beside the still waters of His Word in the Gospel. This is His call to the sheep in the power of the Holy Spirit as, in the new birth, He gives us spiritual life, knowledge, eyes and ears, to hear His voice by which He brings us to Himself (*John 10:16,27-30*). Does this mean that He forces us against our wills? NO! He changes our wills and makes us willing to rest in Him for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. He keeps us feeding upon and drinking from His Word as the Spirit leads us to feed upon Him, the Bread of life, and drink from Him, the fountain of life. We continually rest in Him Who is our good Shepherd, our great Shepherd of the sheep (*Heb. 13:20*), and our chief Shepherd (*1 Peter 5:4*). Our Shepherd is our eternal rest (*Matt. 11:28-29; Heb. 4:1-11*).

(Psalm 23:3) - “*He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake*” - Our good and great Shepherd restores our souls initially in the new birth by raising us from spiritual death unto spiritual life. He continues to restore us as we walk by the grace and power of God in our walk of faith when we grow weary and would quit if He did not preserve us unto glory. It is not in our nature to know and follow the path of righteousness. All we know by nature is seeking to establish our own righteousness which is a

complete failure. Christ, our Shepherd, is the fulfilling and perfection of the law for righteousness to all who believe. He leads and guides us in the way of righteousness which is walking by God-given faith in the assurance of His righteousness imputed by which God has justified us, continually looking unto Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and walking according to His Word as we strive against the flesh realizing that our victory is secured in and by Him. It is all for His name's sake, i.e. for His glory (*Matt. 5:16*).

(Psalm 23:4) - *"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"* - As we walk through this dying world, as we face the reality of physical death, we do not have to fear because of the gracious, saving, justifying, and powerful presence of our good, great, and chief Shepherd. No sin can be charged to our account, no condemnation shall come upon us, and nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus (*Rom. 8:28-39*). We are secure in His righteousness imputed to us, and we are sealed by His Spirit Who will never forsake us and because of Whom we can never forsake Him (*1 John 3:9*). His rod and staff refer to His Word and His power. By these and in the power of His sovereign purpose working all things after the counsel of His own will (*Eph. 1:11; cf. Rom. 8:28*), He controls and manages all things for His glory and our eternal good. By these, He rules and directs us, defends us, and comforts us.

(Psalm 23:5) - *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over"* - It is the nature of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ to present to sinners a salvation that is fully and freely furnished and provided by the work and power of God. It is a table that is fully prepared and leaves no room for sinners to bring their own works. Because of the glorious Person and finished work of the Shepherd, the sheep shall not want for provisions even in the presence of their enemies. Their Shepherd shall supply all their needs (*Php. 4:19*), and it is an affront to His glory for anyone to bring their own merits and works to His table. This is why all who come before God pleading their works or their decisions as making any difference in their salvation are rejected (*John 1:11-13; Rom. 3:19-20; 9:15-16*). And we must realize that as HIS sheep, His enemies are our enemies (*John 3:19-20; 15:18-16:3; Eph. 6:12*). Our enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil, but as Christ is our Shepherd, we do not have to fear, and we sit down with our Lord and feast as though the enemy did not even exist (*Isa. 26:3-4*).

(Psalm 23:6) - *"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"* - This is the grand conclusion for all of Christ's sheep. They cannot fail to be eternally blessed of God because the Shepherd cannot fail. They are HIS sheep who are saved, preserved, protected, and finally glorified in Him. Their eternal dwelling in the household and family of God forever was never, and has never been, conditioned on their power, goodness, faithfulness, or works. Their security is in and due to the Shepherd of the sheep (*Lam. 3:22-23; Mal. 3:6; Jude 24-25*). The sheep are in continual need of God's goodness and His mercy in Christ, and according to God's promise, this will follow them all the days of their lives. We must each ask ourselves, "Am I one of HIS sheep?" We can only answer and be properly assured based on God's Word. Do I hear HIS voice in the preaching of the true Gospel of God's grace wherein the righteousness of God is revealed, the imputed righteousness of Christ? Have I been reconciled to God based upon the merits of HIS obedience unto death? All who have been brought into the sheepfold of Christ realize that HE alone is their righteousness before God, and they forsake all else as dead works and idolatry (*Php. 3:7-9*).

(Psalm 32:1) - This psalm begins with instructions about the blessedness of one who is forgiven by God and how God forgives our sins in a just way so that He is not dishonored and His justice denied. God forgives the sins of His people, and He does so on a just (righteous) ground. He is both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the ungodly. *"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered"* - Sin is transgression of the law in that it consists of rebellion against God and His Word. The guilt of it charged upon the conscience of a sinner is too heavy a burden for him to bear, and the punishment of it is intolerable. Forgiveness is the complete removal and pardon of sin, guilt, and punishment by God on a just ground. It means sin is "lifted up" and "carried away." It was first taken off and transferred from the sinner to Christ as He was made and stood SURETY for God's elect given to Him before the world began. The elect's sins were imputed to Christ, laid upon Him really and judicially, as the sins of the people of Israel were put upon the scapegoat typically. Sin being "covered" is not being covered over as if to hide from view; for nothing is hidden from God (*Heb. 4:12-13*). It is covered by the blood of Christ by Whom God's justice is satisfied in the way of propitiation (*Rom. 3:21-26*).

(Psalm 32:2) - *"Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity"* - God forgives the sins of His people and provides them with righteousness to be justified in His sight by imputing their sins to Christ and Christ's righteousness to them. The non-imputation of sins to His elect means their sins were imputed to Christ and His righteousness imputed to them. God the Holy Spirit reveals this in *Romans 4:6-8* when, by quoting David, Paul wrote of *"the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* Read *2 Corinthians 5:19-21* - Christ was "made sin" by Divine declaration as God charged the sins of His elect to the account of Christ their Surety. God's elect were "made the righteousness of God" by Divine declaration where God imputed Christ's righteousness to them. This imputation is judicial and real. It is not a "legal fiction." Based on the sins of God's elect imputed to Him, Christ was made in the likeness of men and suffered unto death to redeem His people from their sins. Their sin-debt was charged to Him, and He paid it in full by His obedience unto death (*Heb. 2:14-17*). His righteousness imputed to them is judicial and real. It is no "legal fiction." By Christ's righteousness imputed, sinners are justified before God and cannot be condemned (*Rom. 8:32-34*).

"And in whose spirit there is no guile" - Christ's righteousness imputed to His people is the source and power of their new birth. When God the Holy Spirit comes forth as sent by Christ to apply the knowledge of the merits of Christ's obedience unto death to the heart, that sinner is convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment as it is in Christ (*John 16:8-11*). It is then that spiritual life, knowledge, faith, repentance, are imparted within his restored soul, and the dishonesty of unbelief and self-righteousness are exposed for what they are. He is then enlightened to his natural state of sin and depravity and made aware of his need of God's grace in Christ. Looking to Christ for all salvation, he is cleared and set free in the court of his conscience, reconciled to God (*Heb. 10:19-22; cf. Isa. 26:3-4*). He is then made to be a "servant of righteousness" (*Rom. 6:17-18*), which is a bond-slave of Christ and who serves Christ as motivated by grace, love, and gratitude (*Rom. 7:4-6*).

(Psalm 32:3-5) - By nature, we will not confess the reality and depths of our sins and our depravity, but when the Spirit of conviction comes, He brings us to know ourselves as the Lord sees us (*Rom. 3:10-20*). But the Spirit does not leave us in misery. He brings us to know the

way of forgiveness by God's grace in Christ. This confession of sin is not the cause of forgiveness. It is the evidence of forgiveness brought about by the blood of Christ. The *"iniquity of my sin"* describes the reality of sin in that it lies not only in the sins we by nature recognize but also in the fact that even our best efforts to fight sin and to obey God's law do not measure up to the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ (*Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 16:15; Rom. 3:23; Php. 3:3-9*).

(Psalm 32:6-7) - By nature we are all ungodly. This means we are ignorant of our true state in sin and depravity as well as the only way of salvation and righteousness by God's grace in Christ. As a result, we go about seeking to establish our own righteousness before God either by our works or our character (*Rom. 10:1-3*). But when the Holy Spirit brings us to conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (*John 16:8-11*), He brings us to pray unto the Lord God of all grace for forgiveness in and by Christ through His blood alone. This is the nature of true godliness, which is faith in Christ. The flood of God's wrath will not come near those whom God has made godly - sinners saved by grace to whom God will not impute sin (*Rom. 8:1,32-34*). Christ is their *"hiding place"* as they stand before God in His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. Christ will *"preserve"* them and keep them from any *"trouble"* that could condemn them (*John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:35-39*). He will surround them with *"songs of deliverance"* which are the sweet sounds of His Word of grace in Christ.

(Psalm 32:8) - All whom the Lord God saves by His grace in Christ are instructed in the way of grace and righteousness by the Lord in His Word. He will lead His people under His watchful eye (*Psalm 33:18-19; 34:15; 1 Pet. 3:12*).

(Psalm 32:9) - This verse sets in contrast the motivations to obedience under which the ungodly and the godly operate. The ungodly are like a wild horse or a stubborn mule which obey and come near to their masters only under the threat of punishment and/or the promise of earned reward. This is the nature of legalism that genders unto self-righteousness because there is no understanding of God's grace in Christ. But the godly have been given an understanding of salvation totally and freely by God's grace in Christ. They seek to obey and come near to God, not motivated by legalism but by grace, love, and gratitude. And even though as sinners saved by grace, that evil spirit of legalism still resides in their flesh, they have an understanding of the freeness of God's mercy that enables them to fight the flesh and look to Christ for all salvation, righteousness, fitness, and worthiness to enter God's presence.

(Psalm 32:10-11) - The wicked here are sinners to whom the Lord imputes sin and who have no understanding of God's grace that would bring them to faith in Christ. They are in unbelief and subject to *"many sorrows"* which ultimately conclude in eternal damnation and death. But sinners saved by grace as evidenced by their trusting in the Lord, though they are subject to *"many sorrows"* here on earth while they dwell in physical bodies, God's mercy in Christ surrounds and protects them from separation from God and eternal death. And so this exhortation is to rejoice in the Lord as they look to Christ and rest in Him (*Heb. 12:1-2*). They are forgiven of all their sins by the blood of Christ and righteous before God in the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. They are *"upright in heart"* as they have been given spiritual life, knowledge, faith to believe, repentance to turn away from sin and self. They believe in Christ for all salvation, righteousness, eternal life, and glory.

(Psalm 45:1) - Some scholars claim that “*Shoshannim*” was a musical instrument upon which a particular tune was played in singing this psalm. Others say it is literally the word for “lilies” which could refer to Christ and His church as we stand in Him by God’s grace (*Song 2:1*). Of all of the psalms in the Bible, eleven are attributed to “*the sons of Korah*.”

“*Maschil*” indicates that this is an allegory that uses earthly images to instruct us in spiritual and heavenly matters. It is called a “*Song of loves*” because the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to express a spirit of great love, gratitude, and humility to the Lord God and to express a longing of deep devotion and worship. The grand subject is the glory of Christ and His church, His bride, whom, by God’s grace, He saves and blesses in His own glory - the glory of His Person and power of His finished work of redemption as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

“*My heart is inditing a good matter*” - Literally, “my heart is overflowing, or “bubbling over” a matter that pertains to the goodness of God Who alone is good (*Matt. 19:17*). Whenever we meditate upon a right relationship with and blessings from God, our focus cannot be on any natural goodness of our own (*Rom. 3:10-12*). Our focus must be on Christ, the Good Shepherd, and His goodness, grace, and truth as it leads us to God our heavenly Father. This is stated as, “*I speak of the things which I have made touching the King*.” This is our Shepherd-King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and knowing Him makes us eager, ready, and willing to write and speak of Him, the glory of His Person and the power of His righteousness - “*my tongue is the pen of a ready writer*” (cf. *Psalm 22:30-31*).

(Psalm 45:2) - “*Thou art fairer than the children of men*” - Christ was born the “seed of woman” by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although His human nature was never contaminated with the sins of His people which He bore to the cross, His beauty was not in outward physical appearance (*Isa. 53:1-3*). His beauty and glory were in the constitution of His Person as God manifest in the flesh, and as the sinless Godman Who perfectly submitted Himself to the will of His Father for the salvation of His people. Although He ate with publicans and sinners, He never became or was made a sinner Himself. Although He was made sin by the imputation of the sins of God’s elect to Him, and He suffered, bled, and died justly under the wrath of His Father for their sins, He remained within Himself “*holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens*” (*Heb. 7:26*). We are all born in a state of sin, spiritual death, and depravity. Christ was born of the Spirit. We are children of the dust; Christ is the Lord from heaven. We are darkness; He is light. We are spiritually empty; He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily and has the Spirit without measure. “*Grace is poured into Thy lips*” - All grace is found in and by Him (*John 1:17*). And all grace is revealed in Him and from Him in power and in His Word, the Gospel of grace. “*Therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever*” - As Godman and Mediator of His people, the Father blessed Him as He earned all grace here and all glory hereafter for His people. All spiritual blessings for His people are found only in Him (*Rom. 8:31-32; Eph. 1:3*).

(Psalm 45:3-4) - Christ’s “*sword*” is His Word (*Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17; Rev. 1:16*). By His Word the worlds were created and are governed. By His Word His enemies are defeated. By His Word sinners are conquered and slain and brought to submit to Him as the Lord our righteousness. His cause is “*truth and meekness and righteousness*” - Christ is Himself the truth, and He comes in obedience to His Father to work righteousness for His people through His death and resurrection and against His enemies in divine justice to condemn them for their sins. His “*right hand*” refers to His just acts to do both, and these teach us “*terrible*” (awesome) things.

(Psalm 45:5) - His “arrows” always hit the target of our hearts, either to convict and bring us to salvation by His grace, or to condemn in His strict justice. He aims for the heart of His enemies, so they are brought to fall at His feet in worship and love (*Rom. 5:10; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21*). The arrows of His judicial wrath are sharp, but the arrows of subduing grace are the sharpest of all (*John 6:37; John 10:16*).

(Psalm 45:6-7) - These words are repeated in *Hebrews 1:8-9* and show that this is describing our Savior-King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is God manifest in the flesh Who established an eternal throne with His sceptre of righteousness. His kingdom is of grace. His subjects are all the elect of God given to Him before the foundation of the world and whom He redeemed righteously by His blood. He is the very righteousness of God Who loves righteousness and hates wickedness. And because of His effectual and powerful work of righteousness He is given the place of eternal preeminence as Lord and King (*Col. 1:14-18; Php. 2:9-11*).

(Psalm 45:8) - His garments of righteousness are a sweet-smelling savour unto His Father and His people to whom He has revealed His glory in salvation (*2 Cor. 2:14-16*). The “ivory palaces” are His heavenly abode, where He is made glad in the presence of the Father and by the faith of His saints (*Isa. 53:11; Luke 15:7*). His people are clothed in His righteousness imputed to them for their justification and from which they are given the gifts of spiritual life and blessedness (*Eph. 1:3*).

(Psalm 45:9-12) - This is the church of the Lord Jesus Christ that shares His honor and happiness. She is His bride, and she bears His name (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*). He sets her in the place of dignity “upon Thy right hand” and clothes her with the best, the priceless, and the beautiful garments of His righteousness and all salvation (*Isa. 61:10*). They hear and follow His voice and their own natural kinships when it comes to a right relationship with God in Christ and with their new spiritual and eternal family. This is because HE is her Lord, and she worships Him

(Psalm 45:13-15) - She is “all glorious within” because of Christ’s abiding presence within her by His Spirit and His Word. “Her clothing” is more valuable than gold as it is His righteousness imputed to her and all the garments of salvation and glory (*Isa. 61:10; Eph. 6:11-17*). The bride’s new name is “the king’s daughter” because she is born of God and espoused to the Son of God. Her companions are all the chosen, justified, redeemed, and called of all ages. The bride’s home going is “to be brought into the King’s Palace: (*John 14:1-3*). Her reception shall be “with gladness and rejoicing.” There is no secret entrance but a triumphant and joyful acclaim (*Psalm 24:7-10*).

(Psalm 45:16-17) - The ancient fathers, such as Moses, Abraham, and Isaac, are all gone, but their children and grandchildren are made kings and priests. And the name of Christ is remembered, exalted, and magnified in all generations and among all nations.

(Psalm 130:1-2) - This psalm, along with fourteen other psalms (*Psalm 120–134*) is called a “*Song of Degrees*,” meaning “song of steps.” The probable origin of this name was the circumstance that these psalms came to be sung by the people on going up to Jerusalem to attend the three great festivals (*Deut. 16:16*). It may also refer to how these psalms build from a low point to a glorious highlight of Gospel truth. This one starts out expressing a sinner’s low estate in sin and depravity - “*Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD.*”

When the Lord God brings us to see our utter sinfulness, spiritual deadness, and depravity, He also brings us to see that there is absolutely no hope of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life within ourselves or by our best efforts to obey God. He brings His people to see that their only hope is to look to Him alone and cast themselves upon His mercy - “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (*Luke 18:13*). This is what it means to be slain by the law or slain by the Spirit. This is how we begin to know that the Holy Spirit is working true conviction in our hearts in our new birth.

(Psalm 130:3) - The Spirit brings us to realize that no matter how much we try to be sincere, dedicated servants of the law of God, if the Lord would keep an account or a record of our sins, we would be condemned. If God were to judge any of us, the worst of us and the best of us, based on our best efforts to keep the law, we would be eternally condemned and perish under the curse and guilt of the law. Here is a realization and confession that by nature and practice we ARE sinners, workers of iniquity, and we cannot rise above this state, neither of our own wills nor by our best works. Our only hope of attaining a right standing with God Who hates all workers of iniquity (*Psalm 5:5*) and Who must punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed (charged) is to turn to God. This realization brings forth the question of all questions as stated by Job and his friend, Bildad. Job asked -

Job 9 - (2) I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? (3) If he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand.

Job was saying that if he himself tried to defend himself before God, for every point Job would try to offer in his own defense, God could and would respond with a thousand charges that would prove Job to be guilty and deserving of condemnation. Bildad asked -

Job 25 - (4) How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? (5) Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in His sight.

The problem with all of us in our state of sin, spiritual death, and depravity is that we cannot answer this question of how we can have a right standing with God and how the problem of sin and death can be cured. But in our new birth (regeneration and conversion), the Holy Spirit does not leave us in a state hopelessness and misery. He shows us the promise and reality of forgiveness based on a just ground - the merits of Christ’s work of redemption as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

(Psalm 130:4) - The rest of this psalm sets forth the God of all grace and mercy Who is sure to forgive all of His chosen people in a way that honors and magnifies Himself as both a just God and a merciful Savior. This verse following verse 3 shows us that the forgiveness of sins must be connected with the non-imputation of sins to the persons of God’s elect and in a way

that justifies and honors God (*Psalms 32:1-2; Rom. 8:33-34*). There can be no forgiveness of sinners where sin is imputed to them. This is why the biblical truth of imputation is so important and such a blessing for sinners saved by grace - "*Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*" (*Psalms 32:2*). In the Bible, the non-imputation of sins to the persons of God's elect means that God has imputed their sins to Christ (*2 Cor. 5:21a*). And this means Christ's righteousness has been imputed to God's elect (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21b*). Where Christ's righteousness is imputed to sinners, they will be born again by the Spirit and given the gifts of spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance. They will be brought by God to be honest concerning themselves in their sins as stated in *verse 3*.

When God the Holy Spirit reveals God's way of forgiving us of our sins, it brings forth such a reverence and respect for the true nature of God that it inspires God-given faith, repentance of dead works and idolatry, true worship and godly obedience. When the Holy Spirit applies this truth to our consciences, it produces the love and respect for God as our heavenly Father and Redeemer (*Rom. 5:5; 7:4-6; 1 John 4:9-19*). The sense of true forgiveness by God's grace in Christ is the greatest encouragement and motivation for obedience and godliness (*Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27; Php. 2:12-13; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 13:21*). This is the assurance of forgiveness based on the just ground of the blood of Jesus Christ Who has put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (*Acts 5:30-31; 13:38; Rom. 3:21-26; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 1:1-3; 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:4-5*). Forgiveness claimed on any other ground does not honor the true and living God and does not inspire true reverence for His name (His glory).

(*Psalms 130:5-6*) - In the Bible, waiting on the Lord and hoping in His Word is a God-given act of faith (*Psalms 27:4*). All of the Old Testament believers were brought by God to wait on the Lord as they looked forward to the fulfillment of God's promise to send Christ, the Messiah, into the world to do His great work of redemption (*ex. Isa. 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 9:24*). Their hope was in the promise of God as all those promises were sure to be fulfilled in and by the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. To "*watch for the morning*" means they looked for a new day, the day of fulfillment where all their hopes would be finally realized in Christ (*John 8:56-58; Heb. 6:13-20*).

(*Psalms 130:7-8*) - The name "*Israel*" was the name the LORD gave to Jacob to identify him as one of the spiritual children of the God of all grace (*Gen. 32:22-32*). The name means "those who prevail with God," and the only way that sinners can prevail (succeed) with God is by God's grace in bringing them to Christ for all hope and assurance of salvation. This name was given to the physical descendants of Jacob, the physical nation of Israel, who were commanded by the LORD and encouraged by the prophets to "*hope in the Lord*" and not put their trust in themselves or other nations (*Exod. 14:11-14; Prov. 3:5-6*). Throughout their history under the Law of Moses, they failed to trust the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and stubbornly turned to their own ways. They sought righteousness by works of the law and not by God's grace in and by the promised Messiah (*Rom. 9:31-10:3*). But true, spiritual Israel, the elect of God, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and made up both of elect Jews and elect Gentiles, are brought by God to hope in the Lord God of all grace Who saves sinners in mercy based on the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Php. 3:3; Gal. 6:14-16; cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29*). God has provided for spiritual Israel (His people) "*plenteous redemption*" in the Lord Jesus Christ Who, by His obedience unto death, has redeemed His people, the true Israel, "*from all his iniquities*." Here, we see the love of God to His elect who are just as sinful as all workers of iniquity whom God hates (*Psalms 5:5*), but who are not charged with iniquity because of redemption by the blood of Christ.

(Prov. 8:1) - This chapter presents wisdom personified, and it is fulfilled in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, all determined by God in the eternal covenant of grace made before the world began. Christ is the very Wisdom of God. All sinners saved by grace are *in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord* (1 Cor. 1:30-31). *“Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?”* Wisdom cries out or proclaims and preaches the Gospel, which directs sinners in the way of peace, acceptance, and eternal happiness. The truth of God is not hidden in some secret code. Truth boldly puts forth the voice of knowledge that all whom God has chosen and redeemed may hear and understand the wisdom of God in Christ to save sinners by His grace so as to honor His justice and mercy (John 6:37-45). This wisdom is connected with understanding that God gives His people through the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit - *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life”* (1 John 5:20).

(Prov. 8:2-3) - Our Lord's voice is heard in His word of salvation. The Gospel is to be proclaimed to all who will listen in all places where God sends it (Mark 16:15-16). This is God's way of bringing His lost sheep into His fold (John 10:11-27; Rom. 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:18-31). Men foolishly reason that God can save people with or without the preaching of the Gospel, but it is God's wisdom and way to glorify Himself in making the Gospel of Christ *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”* (Rom. 1:16). God reveals His truth of righteousness accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ in His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. And as God has imputed Christ's righteousness to His people, it is His wisdom and way to bring them under the preaching of the Gospel and give them spiritual life and faith to believe and live in and by Christ (Rom. 1:17).

(Prov. 8:4) - There is a general calling that any sinner may hear but not respond in faith (Acts 7:51; Heb. 4:2). If left to our own natural wills and desires, this would be our case (Prov. 1:24; John 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14). We are all by nature *“sons of man,”* i.e. sinners born into the world spiritually dead and depraved (Rom. 5:12). But the Lord God here is speaking of His effectual, powerful, and invincible call to His elect whereby He not only brings us to hear the words spoken but also begets us in new birth by the word in power (Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18; Gal. 1:15-16; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). This is where the Holy Spirit imparts the resurrection life of Christ to His people. So, these are the elect, *“the sons of man,”* whom God has loved and redeemed. These are called effectually with a holy calling (2 Tim. 1:8-11). This is the wisdom of God in Christ so that no sinner saved by grace can boast except in the Lord. And this calling is to every sinner whom the Holy Spirit has brought to see their need of God's grace in Christ based on His righteousness imputed (Isa. 55:1-7; Matt. 5:6; John 6:37; Rom. 10:4-17).

(Prov. 8:5-6) - The Gospel of God's grace in the salvation of sinners by Christ Jesus is the wisdom of God in a mystery, which the unregenerate (simple-minded) cannot figure out (1 Cor. 2:1-9). The highest wisdom is to know how God can be just and still justify the ungodly through Christ and Him crucified. All of us by nature are simple and foolish without understanding of spiritual truth, but in Christ the wisdom and understanding of God's will, purpose, and way are revealed to us (1 Cor. 2:10-16). The things of Christ and the Gospel excel all knowledge and light (1 Cor. 12:31; Heb. 1:4; Heb. 8:6). They are excellent in their Author, their content, and

their promises. God speaks right things that are agreeable to the very righteousness of God, His mercy consistent with His justice and manifesting the glory and honor of all the attributes of God (*Psa. 85:7-13; John 17:1-5; Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 4:6*).

Consider how the wisdom and glory of God is accomplished and revealed in the salvation of sinners by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. In *Proverbs 17:15*, God states clearly, “*He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.*” How do we understand this as it applies to our situation before God? God condemned His Son Who is holy and sinlessly perfect in Himself. Christ did no sin, and He knew no sin. How, then, could God justly condemn His Son without perverting His law and justice? By the same token, we are sinners who deserve and have earned nothing but God’s wrath, yet God identifies Himself as One Who justifies the ungodly (*Rom. 4:5*). If one who justifies the wicked and condemns the just is an abomination to the LORD, how can God condemn His holy Son and justify the ungodly without being an abomination to Himself? Did God simply ignore or set aside His justice and truth? NO! He cannot deny Himself. Can He elevate His love, mercy, and grace above His truth and holiness? NO! He identifies Himself as both “*a just God AND a Savior*” (*Isa. 45:21*). If God condemned His Son unjustly, or if He were to save sinners in mercy, love, and grace apart from His justice satisfied, He would be an abomination to Himself. How can this problem be solved? How can sinful man be just with God, and how can God be just and remain true to Himself and justify sinful men? BEHOLD THE WISDOM AND GLORY OF GOD IN CHRIST!

Proverbs 17:15 shows us that in a human court of law, for a guilty man to be declared innocent and a just man to be condemned, each would be a horrible miscarriage of justice. Sinful men cannot do either without breaking the law and perverting justice. However, that which men must not and cannot do is the wisdom, the message, the miracle, and the glory of God in the Gospel (*Matt. 19:25-26*). The Lord God, Who is both a just God AND a Savior, can and does this without any breach of His law and justice. He can and does this to the glory of His grace and the honor of His justice. The way God JUSTLY condemned His Son was by the imputation of the sins of His elect to the account of Christ. He made Christ the Surety of His people, and He condemned Him to die for crimes which were His only by imputation. Christ willingly accomplished this work for His people (*John 10:17-18*). In the exact same way that our sins became Christ’s sins, by imputation, His righteousness became ours by imputation (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*). Because God made Christ sin by imputation, Christ had to become incarnate and suffer the full penalty of all the sins of God’s people given to Him before the world began. And because of Christ’s righteousness imputed to His people, they receive and experience all grace here and all glory hereafter in the joy and peace of salvation accomplished for them by Christ.

(Prov. 8:7-8) - How many preachers open their mouths and speak thinking they are speaking truth when they are speaking lies? The Lord always speaks truth - “*let God be true, but every man a liar*” (*Rom. 3:4*). Christ Himself IS the Truth (*John 14:6*), and His truth sets us free (*John 8:31-32; Rom. 6:17-18*). We must, as much as we can, speak God’s truth and not our own ideas (*1 Cor. 2:1-5*). False gospels are the height of “*wickedness*” and are an “*abomination*” (disgusting) to God and to His people. All the doctrine(s) of Christ are agreeable to the scriptures and to the glorious character of God (*2 John 9-11*). The Gospel of Christ is called the word of truth (*Eph. 1:13*). The words of His mouth are agreeable to “*righteousness*” that is measured by and found in the Lord Jesus Christ (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 10:4*). This is His righteousness imputed to His people (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). The necessity of righteousness for eternal life, the insufficiency of man’s righteousness, which is “*filthy rags*” (*Isa. 64:6*), and the excellency of Christ’s righteousness is the righteousness of which He speaks (*Psa. 22:30-31; Rom. 3:21-22; 10:4*).

(Prov. 8:9) - In verse 8, wisdom speaks and tells us, “*All the words of My mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.*” As we have seen, this speaks of Christ, the Lord our righteousness, the very “*righteousness of God*” (Rom. 1:17), in whom the glory of God in the salvation of sinners by His grace is revealed. All that Christ is and all that He did to redeem us from our sins are in strict accordance with the glory, majesty, and honor of God Almighty as both “*a just God AND a Savior*” (Isa. 45:21). This is Christ Who is the wisdom of God as He is our Surety, having our sins imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed us, our Substitute, having taken unto Himself a perfect sinless human nature in order to die in our stead, and our Redeemer, having paid our debt to God’s justice in full by the price of His own blood.

These glorious truths “*are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.*” When our understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God through the Word of God, when we are blessed of God to have ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand the Gospel truth, the mysteries of the Gospel are plain and right to us. We see how that God’s way of grace in Christ and His righteousness imputed is the only right and good way. The Bible is a sealed book and the Gospel foolishness to all natural men, learned or unlearned, until God gives understanding (2 Cor. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 2:9-14; 1 John 5:20).

(Prov. 8:10-11) - When God reveals Himself in Christ to us, He teaches us this knowledge that is more to be desired than all that the world can offer (John 6:45; 2 Cor. 4:6). Nothing can be even slightly compared with the riches of God in Christ (Col. 2:2-3; Heb. 11:24-26).

(Prov. 8:12) - All the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and judgment dwell in Christ. He knows the hearts of men, their thoughts, schemes, and devices. He knows the wiles and craftiness of Satan and makes them known to His people, so that they are not deceived (Matt. 24:24; Eph. 6:10-18). False gospels of works salvation or salvation conditioned on sinners are the most evil “*witty inventions*” of men. They all deny the glory of God and the power of His grace in Christ. They measure righteousness and holiness on the sliding scale of sinful man’s standards rather than the one standard that matters to God - the righteousness of Christ freely imputed and received by God-given faith (Acts 17:31).

(Prov. 8:13) - The fear and reverence of the Lord make His people to hate evil, even when it is found in themselves, especially pride and arrogance (Prov. 3:7; 16:18; 6:16-17). A “*froward mouth*” speaks things contrary to the truth, to the glory of God, to the Gospel truth, and to the good of His people. The Lord brings us to hate every other way than the way of His glory and grace in Christ (Psa. 119:104, 128). All other ways but Christ are ways of death and damnation.

(Prov. 8:14-16) - These words are all of Christ! He is the subject of God’s counsel, and He is the great and wise Counselor (Isa. 9:6). He counsels His people in the ways of truth, righteousness, and grace. He is the summation of all wisdom and understanding in life, death, judgment, and eternity. He is the fountain, author, and giver of understanding. He has all strength, power, and authority (Matt. 28:18; John 17:2). By Him all things consist, exist, and are held together. Even kings, princes, judges, and magistrates rule by His sovereign power; and they are accountable to Him (Rom. 13:1; Prov. 21:1).

(Prov. 8:17) - This is not to say that God’s love for His people is His response or reaction to their love for Him. None of us by nature love God. As we are naturally born into a state of

sin and spiritual death, we actually hate the true and living God Who saves sinners by His sovereign grace through Christ. If we hate His truth, we hate Him (*John 3:19-20; Rom. 3:18; 1 Cor. 2:14*). This also is not to say that sinful, unregenerate people will seek the Lord of their own “free will.” If left to ourselves, none of us would seek the true and living God according to His revelation of Himself in Christ (*John 6:44; Rom. 3:10-12*). The Bible is clear that if any of us truly love God, it is because He first loved us (*1 John 4:10,19*)

God has set His love on those whom He gave to Christ before the foundation of the world. They are His elect people. God loves them in Christ and sends the Spirit to draw into His family with cords of love (*Hos. 11:4*). The Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in their hearts when they are born again from above (*Rom. 5:5*). Christ loves those who love Him, for He loved them before they loved Him, and they love Him because He loved them. Our love to God in Christ is the evidence, not the cause, of His love for us in Christ. Those who seek Christ are those who see their need of Christ and know the worth and glory of Christ. They shall seek Him early and find him.

(Prov. 8:18-21) - True riches and the honor that comes from God are found in our Redeemer. All else fades away with the fashion of this world. Christ leads us in the paths of righteousness as a shepherd leads his sheep. The “*way of righteousness*” is the way of the cross that leads to eternal life through Christ Who gave Himself for His sheep. As we stand in His righteousness imputed to us, and as we follow Him in His Word, we are revealed to be joint-heirs with Him. All who have been saved by His grace and brought to believe in and know Him will “*inherit substance*,” that is, the reality of life, glory, and eternal riches as opposed to the vain, shadowy, temporary things of this life.

(Prov. 8:22-31) - Read these verses carefully and note the eternality of the Lord Jesus Christ, His glory and majesty, His oneness with the Father, and the affection the Father has for Him (*John 3:35*). Christ is the Word of God and was in the beginning with God (*John 1:1-14*). He was made Surety of the covenant of grace (*Eph. 1:1-13; 2 Tim. 1:8-10*). If one can grasp the person, power, position, and glory that Christ has with the Father, he can rest and hope with great assurance for the glory that shall be ours in Him (*John 17:20-24*).

(Prov. 8:32-34) - As Christ in the Gospel is the wisdom of God revealed to His people, they all hear, believe, and keep His ways - His ways of salvation, righteousness, and the obedience of faith, are blessed above all people. They are all taught of God and brought to be wise in the things of God (*John 6:45; 2 Tim. 3:14-17*). The Lord brings them to hear, watch, and wait by faith in Christ and under the teachings of His Word of truth and righteousness.

(Prov. 8:35-36) - To find Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work of redemption is spiritual and eternal life. To stand before the Lord God washed in the blood of Christ and clothed in His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith is to obtain the “*favour of the LORD*” (*cf. Eph. 1:6; Heb. 10:19-22*). But all who sin against Him, i.e. who believe not in Christ does violence to “*his own soul*” and, without realizing it, “*love death*.” This is the wisdom of God found only in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ.

Lesson 85 - CHRIST, OUR REASON FOR LIVING *Ecclesiastes 1–2*

(Eccl. 1:1-11) - The principal doctrine of this book is that compared to the things of salvation and eternal life in Christ, the world and all things in it and of it are vain things. *“The fashion of this world passeth away”* (1 Cor. 7:31). Our Lord said, *“What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?”* (Mark 8:36). What remains of this world (its labors, glory, relationships, titles of honor, wealth) after we are dead? Nothing at all! These all die with us. We go naked out of this world as we came into it. At the end of this book, the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to bring all of these thoughts to a grand conclusion - *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Eccl. 12:13-14).

(Eccl. 1:12) - Solomon was a man of whom it could be said that he had all that humans desire in life. As King of Israel, he had power and riches. As God’s appointed king and preacher, he had knowledge and wisdom that qualified him to teach others, especially in matters of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life by God’s grace in and by the promised Messiah. And though Solomon was a sinful man who showed great weakness in his life, he was a sinner saved by God’s grace. As king, Solomon judged in Israel righteously, but he did not always, in his personal life, act righteously. It is clear that the only righteousness he had before God was (and is) the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to him and which he received by God-given faith. If there was anyone who could speak first-hand of the vanities of the world and the true riches of God, it was the preacher-king, Solomon.

(Eccl. 1:13) - God the Holy Spirit inspired Solomon to give his *“heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven”* (cf. 1 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 4:29-31). *“This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith”* (cf. Eccl. 3:10-11). Mankind has a God-given desire for life, knowledge, and wisdom, but because of spiritual death and depravity, none desire or can attain to the knowledge and wisdom needed. This can only be given to us by God in His revelation of Himself in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Gospel (Rom. 1:16-17). God gave this revelation, along with much wisdom in other areas, to Solomon.

(Eccl. 1:14-18) - Recognizing the vanity of *“all works that are done under the sun,”* and the impossibility of man being able to fix or even number the problems in the world due to sin, Solomon looked within his own heart rather than seeking council from other sinful men. We need to understand that Solomon’s heart was guided by God’s wisdom revealed to him. *“I gave my heart to seek and search out wisdom.”* Solomon made himself master of the arts and sciences; he gained knowledge of trades and vocations; he studied politics, philosophy, education, and history. He pursued human wisdom; not just superficial knowledge, but he penetrated into the depths of all that men can know. He concluded that when it comes to the best that men can attain - *“Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit ... in much wisdom is much grief.”* The more a man knows of life here on earth, the more sensible he becomes of his ignorance and the insufficiency of such knowledge to make him eternally happy. All that worldly knowledge and wisdom can do, ultimately, is cause vexation of spirit and promote grief and sorrow. The wisdom of men is foolishness with God and only serves to take a man farther from God and promote misery of soul.

(Eccl. 2:1-11) - Solomon reasoned that since he could not find happiness in natural wisdom, he would seek it in all that this sinful world could offer. His conclusion - *“all was vanity and*

vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." There is no solid and substantial happiness nor lasting peace in any of it. It is a road that has no end and a hunger and thirst that is never satisfied. It always brings us to want more and more. This was (and is) a great testimony that nothing in human experience or human works can save us from our sins, make us eternally righteous or happy, nor gain for us eternal life. Salvation is not by the experiences or works of man. IT IS ALL OF GRACE BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE AND WORK OF CHRIST AS OUR SURETY, SUBSTITUTE, AND REDEEMER! God's Word says, *"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"* (Matt. 5:6). Christ is the well-spring from which flows rivers of living water to quench our spiritual thirst. In and by Him our cups *"runneth over,"* and we are satisfied. We can truly rest our souls in Him and His finished work.

(Eccl. 2:12-23) - Wisdom is better than foolishness, but the wise man, like the fool, dies and leaves it all behind. Solomon's view of natural life here on earth was, "Therefore, I hated life, I hated my labor; for in itself, it is vanity and affords no peace nor rest." Here is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is a good life here and a greater life hereafter, if these things are put in their proper place. We can enjoy the good things God gives us in this life, but we do not overvalue them and trust in them.

(Eccl. 2:24-25) - Is it wrong for a man to study, to improve his mind, acquire an education, become a teacher, a mechanic, a builder, or an artist? Is it wrong to marry, build a house, plant a garden, raise a family, and enjoy our friends and life? No! *"There is nothing better for a person than to eat and drink and enjoy his labor,"* for it is all from the hand of God! All that God gives us is to be received with thanksgiving and enjoyed. *"Who knows that more than I,"* says Solomon. God made me wise, God made me king, and God gave me what I have.

(Eccl. 2:26) - "God gives to the man who is good in His sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy."

1. Who is the man that is good in his sight? *"There is none good,"* say the scriptures. This is the man who is righteous and good in Christ because God has justified him by His grace based on the blood of Christ and His righteousness imputed (Rom. 3:20-26; 2 Cor. 5:21), and who has been given faith to believe, rest in, and follow Christ and live for the glory of God (1 Cor. 1:29-31; 10:31).

2. God gives him that wisdom, knowledge, and joy that enables him to properly enjoy the good of his labor. He is not spiritually wise by nature but made so by the regenerating grace of God. He has been made wise unto salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. *"I am what I am by the grace of God."* What he knows and what he has, both temporally and eternally, are gifts of God (James 1:17)!

3. God gives the believer wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24-30; Col. 2:3). This enables him to understand the mysteries of grace and life, to understand what true riches are, to remember that a man's life is not in meat and drink, to look on things which are NOT SEEN, and to hold lightly to all material possessions and relationships; for they are temporary (Matt. 6:19-24; John 6:27; Luke 12:13-21).

4. God gives the believer knowledge (2 Tim. 1:12; John 17:3). He knows the source of all mercies and blessings. He knows how to use them and not be used by them. He knows how to be a generous and good steward. He knows how to be abased and to abound. He knows that the earth is the Lord's!

5. God gives the believer true joy (Rom. 5:11). Our eternal joy is not in this world nor in anything it holds; our joy and rejoicing are in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:13). We rejoice that our names are in His book, and we are in Him (Php. 3:1-3).

(*Eccl. 12:1*) - All through this book of wisdom, the preacher, Solomon, has set forth the vanity of all life here on earth without knowing, worshipping, and serving God as He is revealed in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Life without Christ, His grace and truth, ends in eternal damnation and death. The last two verses of chapter 11 set the stage for chapter 12. Read *Ecclesiastes 11:8-10*. So - *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."* *"Thy Creator"* is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. One cannot remember, worship, nor know one without the other. Our creation, existence, and life are attributed to all three Persons of the Godhead (*Mal. 2:10; John 1:1-4; Job 33:4*). This God should be remembered. The word *"remember"* is to recognize, think upon, and be mindful of God. Remembering our Creator is not a casual thought nor an indifferent glance, but to set Him always before us in truth, love, fear, and worship and never forget Him (*Psalms 146:1-2*). We are mindful that there is a God of great and glorious perfections (omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, true) Who will judge the world in righteousness by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Isa. 46:9-13; Acts 17:31*). If we know and remember Him, we will run to and rest in Christ for all righteousness and salvation. We are mindful that God is, in Christ Jesus, a God Who is gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity and sin by His obedience and death. We are mindful that the end for which we are made is to glorify Him (*Rev. 4:11*). If we are saved, resurrected on that great day, and conformed to the image of Christ, it will be by His grace, according to His mercy, through His own work, and for His glory (*1 Cor. 1:30-31*).

The *"evil days"* that are sure to come mean the days of old age. They are called the evil days not because sins of old age are any more evil than sins of youth, but because old age is attended by trouble, disease, and affliction. There are weakness of body, decay of intellect, and inability to discern, desire, or put together the hopes and mysteries of spiritual truth. Men and women who live their lives without God come to old age with no pleasure in thinking of death and eternity! Contrary to this, because of his standing in Christ, Paul viewed the past, present, and future with joy and delight (*2 Tim. 4:6-8*).

(*Eccl. 12:2-8*) - In these verses, Solomon metaphorically describes the infirmities of old age and the troubles that come upon us in order to encourage the young to seek the Lord early. *"The sun, light, moon, and stars will be darkened"* - This is the understanding, mind, judgment, and memory. All of these are greatly impaired or lost in old age. *"The clouds return after the rain"* - In youth troubles come, then there is sunshine and a clear day; but in old age as soon as one cloud arises and departs, another follows. *"The keepers of the house shall tremble"* - The house is the body, and the keepers are the arms and hands which in old age become weak. *"The strong men"* are the legs and feet which have supported the house. *"The grinders which cease because they are few"* are the teeth. *"Those that look out of the windows be darkened"* are the eyes.

"The doors be shut" must be the lips which are opened for speaking and eating; but in the aged they are shut more than opened for either. *"They rise up at the voice of the bird."* - Old men usually retire early and rise early. *"The daughters of music shall be brought low."* These are the lungs, throat, mouth, teeth, and lips, all of which are weakened by old age. *"They shall be afraid of high places,"* such as mountains, hills, and towers because of the feebleness of their limbs. *"The almond tree shall flourish."* - This is the white hair which looks like an almond tree in bloom. *"The grasshopper"* is a very light thing, but the lightest load is a burden to the aged. *"Desire shall fail"* -- Desire for almost everything is weakened by old age. *"Man goeth to his long home."* - The grave is the home of the body.

"The silver cord" is the bond between soul and body. *"The golden bowl"* is the brain, which stops functioning; and *"the pitcher broken at the fountain"* is the heart, which is the

fountain of life. The body, which is dust, shall return to the earth; and the spirit or soul shall return to God Who gave it. Now, when you consider all this vanity of the world and the flesh, is it not wise to remember, be mindful of, and seek to know the living God with whom we have to do? How foolish to invest all in decaying flesh!

(Eccl. 12:9-14) - *"The preacher was wise."* God taught him and he taught the people the words of God. *"The preacher sought to find acceptable words,"* words of truth, delight, and promise. *"The preacher's words are like sharpened sticks"* to prick sinners in heart and direct them in the true way, also like nails to fasten us to Christ. The conclusion of the whole matter, the sum and substance of the whole book is reduced to two things: (1) **"FEAR GOD,"** and (2) **"KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS."** And he concludes it with, *"for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."* When this life comes to its end, the only thing that will matter is our relationship to Christ. The issue at judgment will be whether or not we are in union with Christ, both legally and spiritually, by God's grace, or found standing before God on our own merits without Christ. To be IN CHRIST is to be forgiven of all sins by His precious blood and to be declared righteous by His righteousness imputed to us. To be IN CHRIST is to be found in God-given faith, looking to and resting in Him as our only ground and hope of salvation. To be standing before God on our own merits is to be found in sin and deserving of eternal damnation and death.

Fearing God describes sinners saved by grace who are looking to and resting in Christ by God-given faith. It is to know, worship, and serve the true and living God as He has revealed Himself to them through the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. Keeping His commandments, again, describes sinners saved by grace who believe in and follow Christ for all salvation. Their best efforts to obey Christ still fall short of the perfection of righteousness found only in HIM, but they rest in and follow Him as their only hope of salvation and eternal life. This is truly *"the whole duty of man"* as it pertains to salvation and eternal life.

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10) - This is not teaching that believers will be judged BY or BASED ON their works. If this were the case, the only way we could be qualified to enter heaven is if our works equaled the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ. God never judges goodness and righteousness on a sliding scale. The Bible tells us plainly that God *"hath appointed a day, in the which He will JUDGE THE WORLD IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY THAT MAN WHOM HE HATH ORDAINED; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). We know that *"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 10:4).

This speaks of the judgment OF our works as to whether or not they are good works or evil deeds and as to whether or not they evidence a state of grace in Christ or a state of depravity and condemnation. Compare this with *Matthew 7:21-23* where Christ judged their works to be *"iniquity."* Their works did not equal the righteousness that can only be found in Christ. When they presented their works seeking God's favor, this evidenced that they were unbelievers walking after and minding the things of the flesh (*Rom. 7:5*). The works of true believers evidence, not what they have earned and deserve from God, but what God has done through them by His grace and power to glorify Himself in their lives (*Gal. 2:19-21; Php. 2:12-13*). Their works are evidence of *"fruit unto God"* (*Rom. 7:4*).

The purpose of the Song of Solomon is to show through types and metaphors the greatness and power of the eternal, spiritual love of Christ (the Bridegroom) for His church (His bride) and the church's love for Him. This is altogether a book about fellowship and communion with Christ. It is not in any sense to be interpreted literally. It is an allegory, a spiritual dialogue between Christ and the church.

(Song 5:8-9) - Here the bride charged the women of Jerusalem that if they found her beloved to tell him that she was love-sick for him. This is the equivalent of a sinner who has been convinced of sin longing to find Christ for salvation, peace, and joy. We can do without a lot of things, but we must have Christ, else we perish. True believers in Christ Jesus worship, love, rejoice in, and glory only in Christ Jesus, our Beloved (1 Cor. 1:29-31; Gal. 6:14; Php. 3:3)! *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"* (1 Cor. 16:22). As sinners saved by God's grace in Christ Jesus, we know the glory, beauty, and value of Christ, our Beloved. The women of Jerusalem respond, *"What is thy beloved more than another beloved?"* Consider this question as the world poses it to us - "Why is Jesus Christ any better than Buddha, Mohammed, or any human philosopher or system?" The answer comes next.

(Song 5:10) - *"My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand."* "White" speaks of the spotless purity and the righteousness of Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work for His bride. He worked out for His people by His death on the cross a perfect righteousness by which God is just to justify them. This is His righteousness which the Father has imputed to His people. "Ruddy" is red which speaks of His bloody sacrifice and sufferings unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His bride. White also speaks of His glory as God, and ruddy speaks of His incarnation as it is the same word used for "man" in Genesis 1:27 (man means "red earth"). White speaks of salvation which is all in and by Christ. Red speaks of justice which He satisfied for us on Calvary. *"The chiefest among ten thousand"* describes His preeminence, for He is above and over all people and things for the glory of His Father and the salvation of His people (Col. 1:16-19). In His church, He is the Rock upon which it stands, the Head and the chief cornerstone. Among His brethren, He is the firstborn. Among the resurrected, He is the first-begotten from the dead and the first-fruits of them which believe. None of this can be said of any sinful human being. This applies only to Christ, our Beloved.

(Song 5:11) - *"His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven"* - "Gold" most always in the Scripture, when used of God, speaks of the brilliance and value of deity. Christ is God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh to dwell amongst us, and He is *"Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"* (Matt. 1:23). Applied to *"His head"* speaks of His absolute sovereignty and authority over all things so that we can be assured that He is able to save us to the uttermost in spite of all that would come against us. As we know how "black" often refers to the dark sinfulness of a person (i.e. Song 1:5), it could not refer to Christ as a sinful person. For though all the sins of God's elect were imputed to Him, He washed that debt completely away by the sacrifice of Himself for His people. He had no sin and knew no sin within Himself, and sin could never be said to have been transferred to Him except by imputation. Here is a description of our Savior in the glory of His finished work wherein even our sins imputed to Him have been completely erased. Here, "black" is used in line with His deity. It, therefore, describes the blackness or darkness of a mystery and can apply to Christ in the depth and height of His glory as Godman. Although He has revealed to us much about Himself in the glory of His Person, He is such a great and glorious Person that we can never

reach the full depths and heights of all that He is and all that He does in His sovereign providence (*Rom. 11:33-36*).

(Song 5:12) - *“His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set”* - Our Beloved’s eyes are set upon us in peace which provides life and sustenance to our souls for eternal life. His eyes are pure and clean and set upon the glory of His Father and the eternal good of His people. He watches over us to keep and protect us and never takes His eyes from us. He sees our needs and provides us spiritual water and bread when we thirst and hunger.

(Song 5:13) - *“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh”* - In this verse the church joins together two features of her Beloved in describing Him, namely, His cheeks and His lips. His cheeks describe the beauties of His Person. His lips describe the blessedness of what Christ has delivered to His church in His Word of truth. To those who have seen the King in His beauty and heard the gracious words which proceed out of His mouth, recorded in His Holy Word, nothing can more strikingly set forth the Person, finished work, and mediatorial offices of Christ.

(Song 5:14) - *“His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires”* - The *“hands”* (the arms) speak of His power to save and His power to rule over and work all things for the glory of His Father and the good of His people, the redeemed of the Lord. The word *“beryl”* is viewed by various translators as one of the stones associated with the breastplate of the high priest and, so, speaks of Christ high priestly work as the one Mediator between God and His people. His *“belly”* is probably His heart (His compassion) which is towards His people and is as precious stones because of what it brought Him to do for His people (*John 13:1; 1 John 4:10*).

(Song 5:15) - *“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars”* - These images describe the Lord’s strength and stability. He is a firm foundation, a Rock, for His people upon which they stand invincible because of who He is and what He has done to save them from their sins. He stands upon the strength and power of His deity, and, as God in sinless human flesh, He worked out the sure salvation of His people. His appearance is as beautiful as the cedars of Lebanon. When the bride sees Him in His glory, there is no beauty like His beauty.

(Song 5:16) - *“His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem”* - His *“mouth”* is the sweet fellowship and closeness He has with His bride, and it describes His Word. ***“HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY.”*** There is none to compare with Christ. He is perfect and beautiful. We see His beauty now, but when we are broken free from the shackles of this sinful flesh, we will see even more of His beauty and glory (*1 John 3:1-2*). And with all of this beauty and glory that we see in Him, we can also say that He is our Friend. The Lord Jesus Christ was, and is, the friend of sinners. The Pharisees accused Him of this, but they meant it as an insult (*Matt. 11:19*). But He made it clear that He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. And all whom He brings to faith in Him and true repentance, He calls them His friend, and they call Him their Friend. The wise man wrote, *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (*Prov. 17:17*). Christ is every believer’s friend at all times, and He is every believer’s elder brother born out of His sufferings unto death to put away our sins and work out righteousness by which we are justified, sanctified, and preserved unto glory.

(Isa. 1:1) - In Old Testament prophecy, a “*vision*” is God’s Word revealed to His prophets. Isaiah’s prophecy was a “*vision*” that God revealed to him. He foresaw and he foretold (2 *Pet.* 1:20-21; 2 *Tim.* 3:16; 1 *Pet.* 1:10-11). Isaiah prophesied in Judah and Jerusalem through the reign of four kings. What follows in the next verses is not only the Lord’s indictment against Judah and Jerusalem but also a graphic description of the state of all people by nature as fallen in Adam and born into a state of sin, spiritual death, and depravity (*Rom.* 3:9-20).

(Isa. 1:2-3) - Isaiah calls upon the whole creation to hear the Lord’s charge against Judah and Jerusalem. The Lord said, “I have made them My people (*Deut.* 7:6-8), I blessed and sustained them above all nations, I gave them the law and the prophets, and they have rebelled against Me.” Even the animals know their owner’s and masters. They know who leads and feeds them. But man who was originally created in the image of God has rebelled against his Creator and Master. God chose Israel, delivered them from bondage, formed them into a nation, sustained them throughout their journeys, but Israel rebelled against Him. The people of Israel had degenerated into a state of depravity and ignorance. They did not know the true and living God, and they did not even think upon Him, nor worship and obey Him. Again, these are statements that apply to all people by nature (*Rom.* 3:23).

(Isa. 1:4) - “*Ah sinful nation*” - The majority of these people were religious, but they were still “*laden with iniquity*.” The word “*laden*” means heavy, full and thick, as full of sin. God’s Word tells us that without Christ and His righteousness imputed, without spiritual life given by the Holy Spirit from Christ, all that we are and all that we do is sin. Sin can only be measured by the standard of the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ and bestowed upon us by the grace of God. “*A seed of evildoers*” - Their history and their heritage were evil. They were children of rebels (*Rom.* 5:12) who had forsaken the Lord and gone their own way (*Isa.* 53:6). They “*provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger*” - This is metaphorical language describing God’s displeasure with them (*Psalms* 7:11; *Heb.* 10: 30-31). “*They are gone away backward*” - Instead of making progress, they grew worse.

(Isa. 1:5-6) - They were so depraved and rebellious that even afflictions and the judgments of God had no effect upon them (*Amos* 4:6,9-11). “Why should I chasten and correct you? You are so mentally depraved (head is sick) and spiritually dead (heart is faint) that even correction brings out rebellion. Judgment will not produce repentance in a depraved sinner (*Rev.* 16:9; *Rom.* 2:4). This is the result of Adam’s fall, a description of total depravity! From the very sole of our feet to the top of our heads there is no life, no truth, no light, no goodness in us (*Rom.* 7:18, 8:8; *Eph.* 2:1-3). These wounds and sores of sin are open and ugly and have no remedy by the power of men.

(Isa. 1:7-8) - Because of your rebellion and disobedience you lie desolate, destroyed by the enemy, bruised, broken, and afflicted. You have no true peace, rest, nor happiness. Men without God are without hope in this world or in the world to come (*Eph.* 2:12).

(Isa. 1:9) - If the Lord of hosts, by His infinite grace and goodness, had not chosen a people, defeated our enemies in the Person and work of His Son to redeem us from our sins and work righteousness whereby God justifies us, and called us effectually by His Spirit, no one would be saved. We would have all been cut off as were the people of Sodom (*Rom.* 9:27-29). Salvation is of the Lord in its origination (2 *Thess.* 2:13), in its execution (*Gal.* 4:4-5), in its

application (*Gal. 1:15*), in its sustaining power (*Jude 24-25*), and in its ultimate perfection (*Rev. 21:3-6*).

(Isa. 1:10-15) - Religious rituals and activity, no matter how sincere, will not save us from sin. These people were religious (*Matt. 23:25-28*). They kept the outward forms, ceremonies, and holy days; yet they did not love, obey, nor worship God in truth and heart. It is so often true that the less a man knows of God and the farther he departs from the true and living God, the more of the outward form of religion he adopts. The less internal devotion, the more emphasis is placed on the external ceremony and the outward rules and regulations. Their outward show of piety, prayer, sacrifice, and sabbaths were an abomination to God (*Luke 16:15*).

(Isa. 1:16) - “*Wash ye, make you clean.*” Notwithstanding their sacrifices and ceremonies, they were unclean (as all men are). God had established from the beginning that the only way sinners can be washed and cleansed from all sins is by the blood of the Lamb. Like all of us, these people needed to be washed in the blood of Christ (*Psalms 51:7; 1 John 1:7*). The blood of animals cannot put away sin, nor can the deeds of the law nor religious works. “Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes.” Not only put away the doing of evil, but also the evil of doing, which is an attempt to be justified before the eyes of God by our works (*Matt. 7:21-23; Rom. 10:1-4*).

(1:17) - “*Learn to do well*” - Doing well is, first, to come before God, not pleading our works for salvation, but pleading the righteousness of Christ for all salvation. This is all of God’s grace and not by our works which contribute absolutely nothing to the righteousness by which God justifies us, the imputed righteousness of Christ. But grace does not relieve us from our responsibility to follow and obey God’s Word. The Spirit gives us spiritual life from Christ and inspires and motivates us to seek justice and help those who are oppressed (*Gal. 5:22*).

(1:18) - This is the call and command of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. It is not a leap in the dark. It is the result of God’s power, goodness, and truth revealed to His people as He teaches us of the only way of salvation by His grace based on the blood of Christ (*John 6:44-45*). It is reasoning, not based on the logic and intellect of men, but on God’s logic in Christ. It states that though our sins are evident and blatantly manifest in God’s sight, “*they shall be as white as snow,*” and “*shall be as wool.*” This means that by God’s power and grace, the sins of His chosen people will be washed away, and they shall be righteous before God. That way is the way of God’s grace through the blood and the righteousness of Christ. We are sinners and our sins are double-dyed, as scarlet and red like crimson. Only Christ can put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself (*Heb. 9:26; Heb. 10:12-14*). Only Christ can accomplish a righteousness by which God can justify us and from which He can give spiritual life (*Rom. 3:21-26; 10:4*).

(1:19-20) - “*If ye be willing*” - No sinner by nature is willing to believe and bow to God’s way in Christ (*1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 3:10-12*). But God makes some willing in the day of His power. A willingness to believe in and follow Christ is an evidence of the power of God’s will and grace, not our wills. So, if you are made willing to come to Christ in repentance and faith, you shall eat the good of God’s great land; if you refuse him, you shall be devoured, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

(Isa. 9:6) - "FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN:" - This is one of the greatest of all mysteries revealed to us by God - the incarnation of God the Son! God the Son took on Himself *"the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men"* (Php. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:16). The gift of Christ is called *"unspeakable"* and the riches of Christ are called *"unsearchable"* (2 Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:8). The Ancient of Days became an infant of days. He who created man and woman was *"made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem"* God's chosen people from condemnation, sin, and death (Gal. 4:4-5). God the Son Who is spirit actually was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). *"A CHILD IS BORN"* speaks of His holy, sinless humanity created for Him by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin. His human nature was fully human with all the infirmities and weaknesses of human flesh, yet without sin. An angel sent from God informed Mary of this miraculous conception and birth (Luke 1:35).

"A SON IS GIVEN" - The Son was not born; He was *"given"* by God the Father. This speaks of His deity as the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity, Who is equal to the Father and the Spirit in every attribute of deity. The angel informed Joseph that the baby was to be named *"JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins"* (Matt. 1:21). To express Jesus's ability to save His people, the angel told Joseph - *"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"* (Matt. 1:23). This is quoted from Isaiah 7:14. Jesus Christ is not only man and called the son of man, He is also God and the Son of God. The Son of God can have no human father. He was conceived in the womb of the virgin by the Holy Ghost. We all were born of man and woman and born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ had no human father, and He was not born in sin. He is the seed of woman, and, as God manifest in the flesh, was (and is) the sinlessly perfect Godman (Heb. 7:26).

"AND THE GOVERNMENT SHALL BE UPON HIS SHOULDER" - This refers to the government of the kingdom of God that would be realized in the salvation and final glory of God's elect through Christ. The establishment, management, and success of this kingdom was (and is) upon Christ's shoulders. All of salvation was (and is) conditioned on Him as established in the everlasting covenant of grace made within the Godhead before the world began. This means that the salvation of God's elect was never conditioned on them. Here we see that His miraculous conception, virgin birth, and incarnation were not simply matters for argument or amazement but of necessity. God the Father chose a people to save and gave them to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who would come into the world to save them from their sins. They are called His brethren. In order to save them from their sins, He had to become incarnate -

"Wherefore in all things IT BEHOVED HIM TO BE MADE LIKE UNTO HIS BRETHREN, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17).

"Behoved" is the Greek word for "debt." As God the Father chose a people to save and gave them to His Son, His Son was made, and willingly agreed, to be their Surety and took responsibility to pay their debt to God's law and justice. To pay that debt, Christ had to die as their Substitute and Redeemer. In order to die, He had to have a human body capable of shedding blood (Matt. 26:26-28), for *"without shedding of blood is no remission"* (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). God's law and justice must be satisfied when He shows mercy to His people. He must be both a just God and a Savior, both God and man in one glorious Person. God is reconciled to His people, and His people are reconciled to Him on the ground of Christ's

righteousness imputed which was produced by His obedience unto death as God manifest in the flesh - *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim. 2:5).

"AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL" (miracle) - Christ is wonderful in His eternality (Prov. 8:24-31); in His person—the Godman; in His everlasting, infinite, and unchanging love; in His perfect, holy life; in His substitutionary death and the righteousness He established to enable God to be just and Justifier; in His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:1-4).

"COUNSELOR" - The knowledge and wisdom of God are found in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ. Any good advice concerning a right relationship with God and eternal life is found only in the revelation of God in Christ (1 Cor. 1:29-31; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 2:9-10).

"THE MIGHTY GOD" -- Every attribute of deity is found in Him (omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, along with all the other attributes of God). The righteousness He worked out for us on the cross is called *"the righteousness of God"* (Rom. 1:16-17), because although He is perfect man, He is also God. This is the righteousness that we need to be justified before God.

"THE EVERLASTING FATHER" - Each Person of the Godhead is distinct - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - ONE GOD in THREE DISTINCT PERSONS. Each Person has a distinct office and work in the salvation of sinners. Isaiah is not saying Jesus is the Father. He is talking about Christ's relationship to the people He came to redeem, not His relationship within the counsel of the Trinity. Christ is a father with respect to God's elect who were given to Him as His children and offspring in the covenant of grace. They are called His *"seed"* or offspring (1 John 3:9).

"THE PRINCE OF PEACE" - Christ is the author of peace between God and sinners (Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20). He is our peace of heart and conscience (John 14:27). He brings to us everlasting peace; for His government, His peace, His kingdom are established on principles of judgment and justice.

(Isa. 9:7) - "OF THE INCREASE OF HIS GOVERNMENT AND PEACE THERE SHALL BE NO END" - The success of the government of the kingdom of God in the salvation of His chosen people is sure to be realized in Christ. He cannot fail (Isa. 42:4). All whom the Father gave to Him will come to Him, and He will raise them up in glory at the last day (John 6:37-40; cf. 17:1-5). His people whom He redeemed cannot be charged with their sins and cannot be condemned because He Himself was charged with their sins, He Himself satisfied the justice of God, and He Himself established the righteousness by which God has justified them and from which God gives the spiritual life (Rom. 8:32-34).

"UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID, AND UPON HIS KINGDOM, TO ORDER IT, AND TO ESTABLISH IT WITH JUDGMENT AND WITH JUSTICE FROM HENCEFORTH EVEN FOR EVER" - In His humanity, Christ was *"made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"* (Rom. 1:3-4). His kingdom of grace was ordered by God and established with justice by Christ Who brought forth righteousness as the foundation of His kingdom.

"THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS WILL PERFORM THIS" - The fervent desire and will of God, Who cannot fail or be defeated, is His purpose to glorify Himself and His love for His chosen people. This zeal of God insures the success of the covenant of grace in the salvation of His people through the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh. God must be glorified, and His love for His people must achieve His goal of their complete salvation by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:35-39).

Lesson 90 - CHRIST, GOD'S WAY OF JUSTIFICATION *Isaiah 45*

(Isa. 45:1-7) - This chapter contains prophecies concerning the Medo-Persian king Cyrus (deliverer of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity) and the great things God would do for him and by him. Though Cyrus was an idolatrous king, he was a type of Christ, the Deliverer of spiritual Israel from captivity to sin, Satan, and the condemnation of the law. The reason God would do these things was for the sake of Israel and that He might be known as the only true God, the maker and owner of all things.

(Isa. 45:8-10) - A declaration is made of the Messiah as the author of salvation and righteousness. The ultimate reason that God chose the nation Israel and preserved them from all enemies in spite of their sins and rebellion was to bring Christ into the world in the flesh to save His people (spiritual Israel, God's elect, Jew and Gentile) by accomplishing their redemption and working out a righteousness on which God justifies them and from which He gives them spiritual life. *Verses 9-10* describe the contentious complaining of the unbelieving Jews against God's promised Messiah and God's way of salvation.

(Isa. 45:11-14) - Christ is the antetype of Cyrus. The Lord says, "Ask of Me and expect great things to be done by me through the Messiah, whom I have raised up in righteousness. He shall build my city." As Cyrus commissioned and enabled the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, the Lord God commissioned and enabled His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to build the heavenly Jerusalem and the spiritual temple of God which is His church. *Verse 14* is a prophecy of the salvation and conversion of God's elect among the Gentiles. They shall come over to the church, subdued and conquered by the grace of God, saying, "God, the only God, is in thee."

(Isa. 45:15-16) - God is sovereign in mercy and will reveal Himself as Savior when and to whom He will. But the makers of idols and worshippers of false gods shall be confounded and ashamed forever.

(Isa. 45:17) - "*But Israel shall be saved in the Lord.*" The word "Israel" is used in the Bible over 2500 times. Most of the time it refers to the nation Israel, the typical people. But here, and in many other places, it refers to spiritual Israel—the true people of God among all nations. True Israel are the sons of Abraham in Christ, the seed (*Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7, 16, 29*). Paul wrote that he is not a Jew (Israel) which is one outwardly (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:7-8*). All who are given to Christ, for whom He died, who are called to repentance and faith, are Israel and shall be saved "*with an everlasting salvation*" (*Mal. 3:6; Rom. 11:29; John 6:37-39*). They shall never be ashamed nor put to shame, forever!

(Isa. 45:18) - This is no idle promise! God's creation is not in vain. He created the heavens and the earth; and out of all of it will come His new heaven and new earth, which He will form to be inhabited by a people conformed to the image of Christ (*Rom. 8:19-23, 29-30*). The end of all things is decreed and determined by our God before one stone was laid in the earth's foundations (*Isa. 46:9-11; Eph. 1:3-6*).

(Isa. 45:19) - This covenant of grace and plan of redemption is no secret plan! God said, "I did not whisper the way of life in secret; I did not hide it in a dark place, nor did I say in vain to the sons of Jacob, 'Seek ye the Lord.'" God, the Lord, speaks in righteousness and justice to all the earth. He has made known His law, His righteousness and holiness, and His mercy to sinners by His grace through the one great mediator, high priest, and reconciler, which

enables Him to be both just and justifier (*Rom. 3:19-26*). The Scriptures are clear to all who read them, but we all by nature are so blind and self-righteous that we will not of our own wills come to Christ (*John 5:39-40; 6:44; Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*).

(Isa. 45:20) - Men who turn from the Almighty God to their own gods and ways of salvation have no knowledge, for they pray to and preach an impotent god who cannot save. The god of men cannot do his will but must wait upon the will of the creature. The living God cannot lie and can do nothing contrary to His nature; but He can save sinners, for in His infinite wisdom and power He has provided in Christ a righteousness which enables Him to justify the ungodly and still honor His justice.

(Isa. 45:21) - God has declared this glorious salvation from ancient times, from before the foundation of the world (*Eph. 1:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Matt. 25:34; 1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8*). Who can do this? Who only can declare the end from the beginning? Only the sovereign, almighty, omnipotent God; and there is none beside Him. But here is a key—a truth to be learned—He is a *“JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR.”* In saving sinners God cannot, will not, and does not compromise His holiness and justice. That is why Christ, the God-man, must come, must obey the law, must die on the cross. By His death, He is the way that God is just as well as merciful (*Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 1:16-17*). It is upon the ground of Christ’s righteousness imputed to God’s elect that God can be both just and justifier.

(Isa. 45:22) - To whom must we look if we would be saved? We must look to Him Who is both a just God AND a Savior. This means we must look to Christ, the Lord our righteousness (*Rom. 10:1-4*). The word is *“LOOK,”* not work, labor, nor serve. These things are the results of salvation, but salvation and eternal life is the gift of God through the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. This is the look of God-given faith. As sinful persons, we by nature are spiritually blind and unwilling to look to the God of all grace. Any who look to Christ with the eye of faith have been given spiritual life, spiritual eyes to see, spiritual ears to hear, in the new birth (*Matt. 13:15-16; John 1:11-13; 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 4:3-6*). This message of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ goes to *“all the ends of the earth.”* God has a people from every tribe and nation. He will save them and bring them all to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. He is not willing that any of them should perish but that they all should be brought, by His grace and power, to repentance (*2 Pet. 3:9; John 6:37-40; 10:27-30*).

(Isa. 45:23) - Christ, being the true God manifest in the flesh, can swear by no greater (*Heb. 6:13*). This shows that what follows is of the greatest importance. *“The word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness,”* concerning how sinners are to be saved, agreeable to truth and justice, *“and shall not return”* or be changed. Unto Christ Jesus shall every knee bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord (*Php. 2:9-11*). Men will repent, believe, and own Christ to be their Lord now and be saved (*Rom. 10:9-10*); or they will, in the day of judgment, confess it in their utter damnation.

(Isa. 45:24-25) - This is the confession of all believers - *“In the Lord Jesus Christ we have righteousness, acceptance, and strength.”* We came to Him; and in coming to Him, we came to God (*1 Peter 3:18*). We were at one time *“incensed against Him”* and are ashamed of our unbelief, and those who continue to reject Him shall eternally be ashamed. All of spiritual Israel, whether Jew or Gentile, given to Christ, represented by Christ, redeemed by Christ, and interceded for by Christ shall be justified in Him and shall glory in Him, not in themselves but in Him Who is made unto us all we need (*1 Cor. 1:30-31*).

Lesson 91 - CHRIST, OUR VICTORIOUS SUBSTITUTE (1) *Isaiah 53:1-9*

(Isa. 53:1) - “Who hath believed our report?” - Isaiah was called by the Lord to be one of His prophets to speak the Word of God to the people. His main message was the promise of eternal salvation for God’s elect, Jew and Gentile, that would be accomplished and secured by the Messiah in His death and resurrection as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God’s people. Isaiah preached the Gospel of God’s grace found only in the glorious Person and finished work of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah (*Isa. 9:6-7*). Isaiah’s message to the people was that they should not look to themselves nor their works for salvation. They should look to the God of all grace who promises salvation to all who believe in this Messiah and who look forward to His coming. Isaiah’s “report” (message, doctrine, announcement) was the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel by Jesus Christ the Lord.

When the Lord called Isaiah, He told him that the majority of the nation would not believe him (*Isa. 6:8-13*). By nature, men will not believe in Christ (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*). So, the prophet asked, “to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed.” The “arm of the Lord” is a symbol for God’s power to save His people and bring them to faith in Christ. It takes the power of God to reveal the truth to sinners and make us willing to believe (*John 1:11-13; 6:44-45; Rom. 1:16-17*). God told Isaiah that even though the number of the people would be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant would be saved (*Isa. 1:9; 10:20-34*). The fact that God would be merciful to any sinner was to be an encouragement for all who heard the Gospel to believe it. The following verses describe how the Messiah would save His people.

(Isa. 53:2-3) - The Messiah would be God manifest in the flesh (*Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7*). This union of the two natures of Christ (deity and sinless humanity) was necessary for Him to save His people (*Heb. 2:14-18*). Having been made their Surety, having their sin-debt imputed to Him, He had to be made flesh, made under the law, to die for their sins and bring forth the righteousness of God by which they are justified. “Tender plant” describes the natural infirmities of His humanity without sin. “Root out of dry ground” reveals the condition of David’s house (from whom whose seed He came - *Rom. 1:3-4*) and the nation of Israel at the time of His birth. “No form ... no comeliness ... no beauty” all describe His outward appearance and shows that salvation is not by sight but by faith in Him (*2 Cor. 5:16*). “Despised and rejected of men” shows the spiritual deadness and depravity of all of us by nature (*John 1:11; Eph. 2:1-3*). It was the light of His message for which men hated Him (*John 3:19-20*). “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” - Christ knew and experienced the infirmities and sufferings of the flesh without sin (*Heb. 4:15*), and He suffered the sorrows and griefs of dying for our sins imputed to Him.

“And we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not” - Again, this is the response of all of us by nature. Left to ourselves and our own natural wills, we turn away from Christ and count Him as one who is loathsome and repugnant in our sight. By nature, we hold Him in contempt and place no value upon His Person or His work. It takes a sovereign and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth to bring us to believe in, value, and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Isa. 53:4-6) - Christ gave His life for His sheep (*John 10:11-18*). “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows” - Having been made sin for us, meaning our sins imputed to Him (*2 Cor. 5:21a*), He had to bear our pain and suffering. It was not for Himself that He suffered unto death. It was for His people, sinners, whom the Father had given Him. He had no sin, and He knew no sin in Himself. He was (and is) our Substitute and Redeemer. “Yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” - The unbelieving Jews, as all of us by nature, looked upon all His sorrows and troubles in life, and at death, as the just judgment of

God upon Him for some gross sins of which He Himself had been guilty. But He is the spotless Lamb of God Who suffered as the innocent sacrifice for the sins of His people imputed to Him. And though He was under the just judgment of God, it was not for His own sins but for the sins of His people - *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities."*

"The chastisement of our peace was upon Him" - This speaks of our justification based on His righteousness imputed to us. The punishment required under God's justice that would bring peace between God and sinners was upon Him (2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:19-22). *"With His stripes we are healed"* - By His death, our sins are purged away, and we are given spiritual life (John 17:1-5). God is reconciled, the debt is paid, justice is satisfied. He reconciled us to God by His death (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" - This is the lost state of all of God's elect, fallen in Adam and born spiritually dead. This describes the lost *"SHEEP,"* God's elect who are born lost and cannot find their way. The Good Shepherd has to come and get us, bring us back into the fold and keep us from straying (Luke 15:1-7). We have all *"gone astray"* and turned to our *"own way"* which is the way of salvation by the works and wills of men. But before the foundation of the world, God chose to save His elect, a remnant according to the election of grace. And the ground upon which He saves us is the merits of Christ's righteousness imputed. To accomplish this righteousness, *"the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."* This is the language of imputation and substitution. The Lord imputed the sins of His elect to Christ and imputed the righteousness of Christ to them (Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21). This is God's way of salvation in Christ (John 14:6).

(Isa. 53:7-9) - These verses speak of Christ's actual experience of suffering unto death for the sins of His people. *"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted"* - There is no way that we can adequately describe the pain and agony Christ went through because of our sins charged to His account. God's justice, finding the sins of His elect on Christ, laid on Him by imputation, and voluntarily received by Him, demanded satisfaction from Him. He, being the Surety of His people, was responsible for them, and did answer for them by accomplishing the satisfaction demanded by the justice of God. The debt they owed was made His own. The payment of it was called for, and He accordingly answered. He paid the whole of it and cancelled the debt. He drank damnation dry. The punishment of the sins of His people was exacted on Him, and He submitted willingly to bear it. He bore it in His own body on the tree. This clearly expresses the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, which is propitiation (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

"Yet He opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth" - This shows that Christ was a willing Redeemer (John 10:14-18). Though He spoke glorious words on the cross, during His trial and His crucifixion He did not speak to defend Himself. The judgments of sinful men against Him were wrong and unjust, but the judgment of the Father against Him was just and true because of the sins of His sheep imputed to Him. This is why the doctrine of imputation is so important. Christ died *"the JUST for the unjust"* (1 Pet. 3:18), but God was just in punishing His sinless Son, all based on the sins of His elect imputed to Him. God did not pervert justice when He punished Christ in the place of His people.

"He was taken from prison and from judgment" - His life was taken away in a violent manner, under a pretense of justice, but men wrongfully accused Him. All of the events of Christ's death were by the sovereign predestined decree of God. God meant it for His glory and the good of His people, but sinful men meant it for evil - *"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"* (Acts 2:23; cf. 4:26-28).

Lesson 92 - CHRIST, OUR VICTORIOUS SUBSTITUTE (2) *Isaiah 53:8-12*

(Isa. 53:8-9) - “Who shall declare His generation?” - There is some difficulty in translating these words. It seems to indicate that even though no one in the generation of people at that present time spoke up for our Lord, and no one considered that even though He was “cut off out of the land of the living,” it was “for the transgression of My people was He stricken.” The people judged Him to be a malefactor (criminal) and crucified Him as a blasphemer (*John 18:28-32*). But they did not consider that the death He died was what they (and all of us) deserved and earned because of our sin, and that it was for the transgression of God’s chosen people (Jew and Gentile) that He was cut off out of the land of the living.

“And He made His grave with the wicked” - Christ was crucified between two thieves, although “He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.” Even though He suffered for the sins of His people imputed to Him, He remained sinlessly perfect within Himself. He was “made sin,” but only by the Father imputing the sins of His elect, as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, to His account. “And with the rich in His death” - He was laid in the borrowed tomb of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea (*Matt. 27:57-60*). This denotes that even though He suffered and died the death of sinners, His death brought forth the spiritual and eternal riches of a righteous king, the King of glory.

(Isa. 53:10) - This speaks of the success of His work of redeeming His people from sins (*cf. Matt. 1:21*) and the assurance of salvation for all whom God the Father chose and gave to Christ, making Him our Surety. “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; HE hath put Him to grief: when THOU shalt make His soul an offering for sin” - Christ’s death for His people was according to the sovereign purpose and will of the Father (*Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28*). He could not fail (*Isa. 42:1-4; 52:13*). The pleasure the LORD had in bruising His Son was not some sadistic delight in inflicting pain and suffering. It was the Father’s satisfaction in that Christ satisfied the justice of God against His chosen people whom He loves, and He secured their salvation to the praise of the glory of God’s grace (*Eph. 1:3-12*). By His suffering unto death, God is glorified in every attribute of His nature, and the people of God are secured in salvation unto final glory. Also, the Father did not make His Son to be a sinner or to be corrupted with our sins. But He did “make His soul an offering for sin.” The Father did this by the imputation of the sins of His elect to the account of Christ, the Surety of His people, and sending Him to die for them (*2 Cor. 5:19,21*).

“He shall see His seed” - His seed is His spiritual offspring which are all those whom the Father gave Him and all for whom He died and arose again. He shall see them all as He saves them and gives them the blessings of eternal life and glory. They are all justified by His righteousness imputed, and they shall be born again by the Spirit and preserved unto glory (*Psa. 22:30-31; Heb. 2:12-18; 1 John 3:9*).

“He shall prolong His days” - Though Christ died, He is alive and will live forever more. He was raised again because of the justification of His people by His obedience unto death as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 4:25*). He brought in everlasting righteousness which demanded His life and demands the life of His people. This is the righteousness which God has imputed to His chosen people (*Rom. 4:6-8*). His resurrection and life insured the resurrection and eternal life of all for whom He died and arose again (*Psalms 89:29,36; John 6:37-40; Rom. 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:20-49*).

“And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand” - This is God’s desire and will which shall be fulfilled in the hands of Christ upon whom all salvation is conditioned. Christ fulfilled all the conditions of salvation for His people (*2 Cor. 1:20*). Many today who call themselves “Christian” believe in a god of unfulfilled desires. They claim that God wants to save people but cannot or will not unless they believe. But this is not the God of the Bible.

The true God saves all His chosen people in and by Christ, and He is not willing that any of them should perish but that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

(Isa. 53:11) - *“He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied”* - Christ would be successful in saving all for whom He died. His *“travail”* is His great suffering that brought Him to death for the sins of His people imputed to Him. This word is often used to describe a woman suffering through childbirth. A woman who suffers through such agony in bearing a child can only be truly *“satisfied”* when the result of her suffering is a healthy living child. And this is the satisfaction that our Savior experienced in that all for whom He suffered unto death will be spiritually healthy and spiritually alive (John 12:24, 32-33).

“By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities” - In salvation, the Lord gives us a knowledge of His grace in Christ (John 6:44-45; 17:1-3; Heb. 8:11). But it is not our knowledge of Him that justifies us. It is His work alone by which we are justified. What this statement means is that by Christ’s first-hand knowledge in that He experienced this suffering unto death, as He bore our iniquities imputed to Him, He brought in the only ground upon which sinners are justified (Heb. 2:10; 5:8-9). Christ had first-hand knowledge of all the pain, suffering, agony, and death that it took to bring forth an everlasting righteousness of infinite value by which God has justified us and from which He gives us life, knowledge, faith, repentance, and eternal life unto glory.

Our Lord did not suffer in vain. He is *“satisfied”* and even SEATED, having finished His work! All for whom He suffered are justified, for He bore their iniquities (Rom. 8:29-32). And He did all this for His sheep willingly, even zealously. Christ was a willing participant in this great transaction (John 10:15-18). He willingly was made our Surety in the everlasting covenant of grace; He willingly took on Himself the form of a servant; and He willingly laid down His life for His sheep.

(Isa. 53:12) - *“Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great”* - Christ’s successful work of redeeming His people from sins will be rewarded with all power and glory in heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Php. 2:5-11). This is the *“portion”* that Christ earned by His obedience unto death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. As God the Son, absolutely considered and along with each Person of the Godhead, Christ was already high and omnipotent in all things. But here is His mediatorial glory that has insured the complete salvation of all whom the Father had given Him (John 17:1-5).

“And He shall divide the spoil with the strong” - This refers to our oneness with Christ, not in and by our own strength, but as we stand in Him Who is our strength. We are strong in and by Him (2 Cor. 12:9-10). We have no power in ourselves, but IN CHRIST we cannot be defeated, and we will receive all the reward of God’s grace in and by Him (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2-3). This *“spoil”* was earned for us by Christ, and it is freely given to us in Him (1 Cor. 2:12).

“He hath poured out His soul unto death,” even the death of the cross. As the innocent sacrifice, He suffered the full measure of God’s wrath for His people. *“He was numbered with the transgressors”* - Christ could never be made or become a sinner. Yet, He was numbered with the transgressors. Their sins were imputed to Him so that *“He bare the sin of many.”* He suffered on behalf of and in the place of *“many”* sinners who are the elect of God. Christ *“made intercession for the transgressors.”* Some claim this means that Christ simply *“made salvation available to sinners.”* But this devalues the merit and power of His death. Christ secured the salvation of all for whom He died, was raised again, and now intercedes in heaven (Rom. 8:33-34). If He only made salvation possible for sinners if they would believe, no one would be saved (Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14). This whole passage shows the glory of His grace, goodness, and power to save all His people from their sins.

Jeremiah prophesied in Jerusalem through the reign of the final five kings of Judah leading up to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. This destruction was God's judgment upon the people for their sin and idolatry as described metaphorically in *Jeremiah 2:13* - "*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*" Forsaking God as "*the fountain of living waters*" means rejecting God's way of salvation by His grace through the promised Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ) Who is the water of life (*John 4:14*; *Rev. 22:1-2*), meaning that Christ is the only way of salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. Digging "*out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water*" means seeking their own ways of salvation by their works and their wills, which can never bring salvation to sinners. After Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, the people were carried away into captivity to Babylon for 70 years. Jeremiah was taken to Egypt and died there. The following verses are words of judgment from God and words of encouragement to believe God.

(Jer. 23:1-2) - Jeremiah pronounced great sorrow and distress to come upon false prophets and false pastors. These false preachers are like those today who sincerely believe they are telling the truth and helping their hearers when, in reality and unwittingly, they are trying to destroy and scatter "*the sheep*" of God's pasture. So, the LORD promises that destruction and death would come upon these false preachers. We know that the TRUE sheep of God's pasture (God's kingdom, spiritual family, the true church) cannot be destroyed. They are all safe in Christ and will be brought to salvation and final glory because He protects and preserves them from all danger from Satan and his false preachers.

In all ages there have been false prophets and false preachers - "*wolves in sheep's clothing*" (*Matt. 7:15-16*). Here is what Jeremiah said of them in his day: (1) He charged them all with greed and covetousness (*6:13*); (2) He said they give people a false peace (*6:14*); (3) He charged them with denying God's judgment against sin (*14:13-14*); (4) Their message was not the word of God but rather their own thoughts (*23:16-17*); (5) They preached their dreams and visions and kept God's word from the people (*23:25-32*). The sad thing about this is that, because of the depravity and deceitfulness of the human heart, like today, the people preferred to hear the words of the false preachers rather than the word of God (*Jer. 5:31*; *17:9*; cf. *John 5:43*; *2 Tim. 4:3*).

(Jer. 23:3-4) - When we look about us at the vast religious landscape steeped in tradition, idolatry, and false doctrine, we see multitudes of people who claim to be Christians but who have no knowledge of the living God. They have no love for the Lord Jesus, and we know this because they have no love for the doctrine (truth) that identifies and distinguishes the true Christ in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work (*1 John 4:1-3*; *2 John 9*). We see that they give no evidence of the new birth, and no commitment to true holiness when they follow all of the popular preachers with their messages of salvation by works and free-will. We sometimes are made to wonder with Elijah, "Am I the only one left?" or to ask with the apostles, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" But here is the good news. God has an elect remnant whom He gave to Christ (*John 6:37-39*; *17:2,9*). They were chosen and given to Him in eternity past (*Eph. 1:3-6*; *2 Thess. 2:13*). Christ loved them and gave Himself for them (*John 10:14-16*). They are all justified, called, and shall be glorified (*Rom. 8:28-31*). God promises that they will be called out of all nations, and true shepherds and godly pastors would feed them with the truth, especially the truth of the Gospel of God's grace in Christ.

This is much like our day. There are many more false preachers than true preachers. And God has a remnant according to His election of grace who He will gather out of all nations and bring them to hear the true Gospel. He will give true pastors to lead them according to God's Word. Those whom the Father has chosen, those whom the Son has redeemed must be quickened by the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 2:1*) through the word (*James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23*) preached by faithful preachers (*Rom. 10:13-17*). All must be brought by God to hear the Gospel, repent, and believe that Gospel (*2 Thess. 2-13; Eph. 1:13-14; 1 Cor. 1:21; John 5:24; Rom. 1:16-17*). The true pastors shall comfort them with God's promises of grace and glory in Christ, establish them in the word of God. They shall all grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ through the word (*Eph. 4:11-15*).

(Jer. 23:5-6) - Here is the Gospel revealed in a prophecy of the glorious Person and accomplished work of the Messiah to come. Here is the summary of redemption and the one way that God can be a just God and a Savior (*Rom. 3:21-26*). "*Behold the days come*" - These are the days that God has appointed to send the Messiah into the world to do His great work (*Gal. 4:4-6*). The Lord will raise up "*unto David a righteous Branch*" - This refers to Christ's sinless humanity which will come from David's line (*Rom. 1:3*). He is God and man in one Person (*Isa. 7:14; 9:6-9; Rom. 1:4*). He "*shall reign and prosper*" as the King of kings. His kingdom will be established as He will "*execute judgment and justice in the earth.*" This describes His work as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of all whom the Father gave to Him before the foundation of the world. "*In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely*" - True Judah and Israel is not that Old Testament nation which was but a national people and a picture. True Israel, the true seed of Abraham, are the elect of God in Christ out of every nation on earth (*Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:7, 16, 26-29*). These shall all be saved and "*shall dwell safely*" forever and ever in the glory of God's eternal kingdom.

The Messiah's name "*shall be called, 'THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.'*" This defines the salvation of sinners by God's grace based on the merits of Christ's righteousness imputed to them and which He accomplished by His obedience unto death as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). This is also the name of Christ's bride (His church) and describes her union with Him (*cf. Jer. 33:15-16*). We who are saved by God's grace have no other righteousness upon which we can boast of salvation (*Gal. 6:14-16; Php. 3:3-9*). It is upon this one ground that God justifies the ungodly and by which God and sinners are reconciled (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*). This righteousness is the perfection of the law that can only be found in Christ (*Rom. 10:4*). It is applied to us by God imputing (charging) it to us (*Rom. 8:32-34; 4:6-8*). All true believers (sinners saved by grace) stand before God washed in the blood of Christ and clothed in His righteousness imputed. It is Christ as "*THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*" from Whom God the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life, knowledge, faith, and all the blessings and benefits of salvation that are applied to us in our new birth (*Rom. 5:17-21; 8:10*). It is this righteousness by which all people will be judged (*Acts 17:31*). All who are IN CHRIST shall be glorified with Him forever and ever. All who are without Christ shall be condemned and perish forever and ever.

(Jer. 23:7-8) - "*Behold the days come*" and are here in Christ when the people of God, redeemed by Christ and rejoicing in His grace, shall no more talk of the deliverance out of Egypt by the hand of Moses, but shall speak only of the Lord Jesus Christ our righteousness, Who has delivered us from the wrath to come by His precious blood. What is the earthly and temporary deliverance of slaves from Egypt when compared to the effectual spiritual and eternal deliverance of God's elect from the bondage of sin, from the curse of the law, and from the sting of death, through the Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 15:55-57*)?

(Jer. 31:31-32) - *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord”* is a prophecy of two great events in redemptive history: (1) THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT BY THE FINISHED WORK OF CHRIST; and (2) THE ABOLISHMENT OF THE OLD COVENANT BY THAT SAME GREAT WORK. A covenant is a binding agreement or promise between two or more parties. *“That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah”* - This is the New Covenant established for God’s SPIRITUAL people in and by Christ. *“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt;”* - God made the Old Covenant with the Hebrews at Mount Sinai when He gave them the Law by Moses, the mediator of that covenant. It was a BILATERAL covenant between God and the Hebrews. God promised blessings and benefits to Israel conditioned upon their national obedience. The New Covenant is a UNILATERAL covenant where the promises are conditioned on one, the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the Lord God and His chosen people (spiritual Israel). God promises spiritual and eternal blessings to the elect conditioned on Christ, the Surety and Mediator of the New Covenant.

The Gospel of salvation by God’s grace sets forth the terms of the New Covenant - SALVATION FROM SIN CONDITIONED ON CHRIST AND HIS WORK OF REDEMPTION FOR HIS PEOPLE. The Old Covenant was not a covenant of salvation. It was a legal covenant having to do with temporal blessings for Israel conditioned on their obedience. *“Israel”* and *“Judah”* in this prophecy are not the physical nation under the Old Covenant, which was divided into two nations. They are SPIRITUAL Israel, God’s elect out of every nation, under the New Covenant and united under one king - the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:26-29; 6:14-16*).

“Which my covenant they brake” - The Old Covenant promises were conditioned on the people who broke the covenant by their unbelief and idolatry. Much of their history under that covenant for 1500 years was the story of people being punished with famine, captivity, and destruction. *“Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD”* - God continued with them because His purpose was to bring the Messiah into the world through this nation in spite of their sinfulness. When the Messiah came and finished His work, God divorced Himself from them, first, from the Northern Kingdom, Israel (*Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:6-8*), and later from the Southern Kingdom, Judah. It was prophesied in *Genesis 49:10* that the *“sceptre”* would depart from Judah when *“Shiloh”* (the Messiah) came (*Heb. 8; 10:9*).

(Jer. 31:33) - The Old Covenant was a burden imposed upon a rebellious people. It was written on tablets of stone but not in the hearts of the people. It could show them their sinfulness, but it could not provide the remedy for sin. Paul called it the ministration of death and condemnation (*2 Cor. 3:7,9*). But the New Covenant was a better covenant because of the better Mediator (Christ) and better promises - forgiveness of sins, righteousness, spiritual and eternal life (*Heb. 8*). Paul called it the ministration of the Spirit and righteousness (*2 Cor. 3:8,9*). All of its blessings and benefits are the work of the Lord - *“GOD WILL”* and *“THEY SHALL.”* God says, *“I WILL put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”* - This is the invincible and effectual work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth to give spiritually dead sinners spiritual life and the gift of faith in Christ (*John 3:3-7; Rom. 2:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:3,6,17*). The law is written on our hearts when we see it fulfilled perfectly by Christ Who has worked out a perfect righteousness that God has imputed to us for our justification (*Rom. 3:19-31; 10:4*). This law is the Gospel of God’s free and sovereign grace grounded upon the righteousness that Christ accomplished as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer (*Rom. 1:16-17; 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

In the New Covenant God says, *“I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”* This is the language of a marriage union that cannot be broken (*Rom. 7:4-6*). There can be no bill of

divorcement in this covenant because its conditions are not upon the bride but upon the Husband who cannot fail (*Heb. 10:16-17*). Because their sins were imputed to Christ and He paid the full redemption price for their sins, their sins cannot be imputed to them (*Rom. 8:33-34*). They have Christ's righteousness imputed to them, and they cannot be separated from the love of God in Christ (*Rom. 8:35-39*).

(Jer. 31:34) - "*For they shall all know Me*" - Although God was ceremonially and temporally joined to Israel, the vast majority of the people did not know Him savingly (*Isa. 45:20; Jer. 5:4; Hos. 4:1,6; John 16:1-3*). But under the New Covenant, all of the people will be brought by God to know Him savingly as He reveals Himself to them in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 6:44-45; Rom. 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 4:4-6*). "*For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more*" - Even though the animal sacrifices in the Old Covenant pictured the one sacrifice of Christ for the sins of His people, there was no remission or forgiveness of sins by the blood of animals (*Heb. 10:1-4*). But in the New Covenant, because of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, God has forgiven our iniquity, and He will not impute our sins to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; Heb. 10:18*). When God says He "*will remember their sins no more*," it does not mean that God forgets their sins, for God is immutable. It means He will not hold our sins against us, and bring them to mind at Judgment. We have already been judged completely for all our sins as we were judged in Christ on the cross.

(Jer. 31:35-36) - The New Covenant is virtually the same as the eternal covenant of grace made before time as it is the establishment of that covenant in time. This covenant is as permanent as the fixed order and cycles of creation which was set in order by God and will not change until His appointed time when He will make all things new. By God's decree the Gospel covenant of God's grace will never end.

(Jer. 31:37-39) - This is a prophecy of the restoration of Jerusalem fulfilled in SPIRITUAL Jerusalem (*Gal. 4:21-31; Heb. 12:18-29; Rev. 21*). As man cannot measure the heavens, God cannot cast off His spiritual people. He has promised to save us and cannot lie (*Rom. 11:1ff.; Lam. 3:22-23; Mal. 3:6*). This city will extend beyond the physical Jerusalem as God's grace goes beyond the Jews to all His elect people. The "*measuring line*" shows that all IN CHRIST, under His blood and righteousness imputed, measure up and are qualified to live eternally in this holy city (*Acts 17:31; Rev. 21:15*). Those who seek to measure up by their works or their wills will not enter and live in this city (*Matt. 7:21-23; John 3:36; Rom. 9:31-10:3*). All who are found IN CHRIST fully measure up as they are righteous in and by Him (*Php. 3:7-9*). They enter the city BY HIM, and they are eternally secure IN HIM. The walls of the earthly Jerusalem were constantly breeched by enemies, but the walls of this holy Jerusalem will never be breeched because of Christ, "*the Captain*" of our salvation (*Heb. 2:10*), the "Author and Finisher of our faith" (*Heb. 12:2*).

(Jer. 31:40) - The entire city, including the graveyard and ash dump in the valley, and all the fields out to the Kidron Valley on the east as far as the Horse Gate, will be holy to the LORD. The city will never again be captured or destroyed. Obviously, this does not speak of physical Jerusalem which was destroyed in A.D. 70. Some believe it refers to a future physical Jerusalem, but this is speaking the spiritual and eternal city and kingdom of God as established by Christ for His people. When Christ returns in His glory, whatever is left of physical Jerusalem will be destroyed with the whole earth. But this SPIRITUAL city and kingdom will never be destroyed!

(Lam. 3:1-20) - The whole book of *Lamentations* is mainly a chronicle of Jeremiah's sorrow and mental anguish over the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. He truly cared for the people to whom he preached. He spoke the truth concerning their sins and of the impending judgment of God that they were soon to face. His warnings went mostly unheeded, and he responded to Judah's rebellion with tears of mourning (*Jer. 13:17*). Jeremiah has been dubbed "the weeping prophet" because of the gloomy nature of his message and the grief he expressed for his people. In His humanity, our Lord wept for the people (*Luke 19:41-42*). He had pity on them, but remember, though He wept over Jerusalem, He executed just vengeance upon it. He will surely bring to pass His justice on those who neglect His salvation. By weeping He showed us that we need to recognize that our salvation is totally by God's grace, and we are no different than those who perish in their sins. God chose us, justified us, adopted us, redeemed us, and gave us life all by His grace and power in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to have compassion on the lost. We have nothing of which to be proud and nothing in ourselves in which to boast. We glory in Christ and His cross alone (*Gal. 6:14*).

When we consider human suffering in this sin-cursed world, we need to make proper distinctions. There is suffering common to all humans. All men suffer as this is the consequence of sin and the infirmities of the flesh (*Job 14:1*). There is suffering common and unique to all believers. This is suffering sometimes for their sins and sometimes for Christ's sake, for righteousness's sake (*Matt. 5:10-12*). The difference between suffering common to all humans and suffering unique to believers is that for the unrighteous, those who live and die in unbelief, it is a manifestation and foretaste of God's eternal wrath and damnation (*John 3:36*). For the righteous, those who believe in Christ, it is the loving chastisements from our heavenly Father for correction, growth, and to wean us away from the world and drive us more and more to Christ and His Word for our peace and comfort (*Heb. 12:5-15*).

(Lam. 3:21) - It is truly a sovereign and powerful work of God's grace within us as His people that throughout our lives here on earth, He always brings us to remember to focus on Christ in Whom we have hope. This is the certain assurance of full salvation, deliverance from all that would harm us, and the certainty that Christ will bring us to final glory (*Php. 1:6; 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*). Our prayer and desire are that the Lord will cause our suffering to lead us to and make plain the HOPE WE HAVE IN CHRIST (*Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 12:2*).

(Lam. 3:22) - This is that "peaceable fruit of righteousness" that God always brings to our minds in showing us that if not for His grace given us through the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to us and received by God-given faith, we would surely perish (*Heb. 12:10-13*). Salvation is of the LORD, and it is given to us out of His compassion. It is not of our works or our wills. "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (*Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15-16*). We are also assured that as we stand IN CHRIST (washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed) we cannot be charged with sin, we cannot be condemned, and we cannot be separated from God's love which is our salvation (*Rom. 8:33-39*). We must realize continually that if the LORD would impute our sins to us, we would not stand (*Psa. 130:3-4*). Our hope is in Christ Who suffered in our place for our sins and purged them away on the cross. Our hope is in Christ Who is our righteousness by Whom we are justified and from Whom we have spiritual and eternal life.

(Lam. 3:23) - The Gospel truth is always new and fresh to God's children. We never tire of hearing of God's compassions, His grace, mercy, and love for us in Christ. It reassures us that our salvation is secure because great is HIS faithfulness. We are commanded to be faithful to the LORD, and, by His grace and power, we will be faithful (*Php. 2:12-13; 1 John 2:20-3:9*). But the assurance and hope of our salvation is because of HIS faithfulness. Christ has always been faithful to His covenant promises to save us, keep us, and bring us to glory (*Rom. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:22; Php. 3:8-9; Heb. 10:23*)

(Lam. 3:24) - Christ as our Savior, husband, brother, and friend, has undertaken our total care spiritually and eternally. He even cares for us physically in this world as we are HIS sheep and dwell in HIS pasture. He ever lives to make intercession for us so that no harm can separate us from His love (*Rom. 8:33-39*). Christ is our "*portion*," i.e. our part and inheritance from Whom we receive all spiritual blessings and benefits by God's grace (*Matt. 6:31-34; Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3*). If the Lord indeed by His own choice and by God-given faith is my "*portion*," and He is so for every true believer, then I will "*hope in Him*" alone and in no one else but Him.

(Lam. 3:25) - The certain evidence that we are objects of God's love and goodness is that we have been given the gift of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Waiting for Him is the equivalent of believing and resting in Him for all goodness and blessing. This God-given faith is given to all who "*seeketh Him*." No sinner by nature, or of his own will, will seek the Lord. But God the Holy Spirit brings God's elect to seek Him in His Word, and, ultimately to seek Him in Christ as Christ is revealed in the Gospel of God's grace conditioned on Christ and by Whom all conditions are fulfilled for His people. All who seek Him shall find Him (*Jer. 29:13*).

(Lam. 3:26) - Man's natural measure of goodness is much too low. God's Word tells us that, in his natural spiritual deadness and depravity, man will always call good evil and evil good (*Isa. 5:20*). We see, then, according to God's Word, that among men and women by nature, "*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO, NOT ONE*" (*Rom. 3:10-12*). Given this is the state of all men and women by nature, there are three things that we must see in order to seek, find, and wait upon the LORD:

(1) All goodness must be measured by God's standard, not man's. God's standard is Himself as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness and goodness can only be measured by Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and by His perfect work of redemption for His people (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 10:4*).

(2) All goodness must come from God by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Any goodness that comes through us is by God's grace in Christ and is only accepted with God by the merits of Christ imputed to us (*Eph. 1:6-7; Heb. 4:14-16*).

We see, then, that "*it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD*." This is the work of God in us by His Spirit through Christ Who our only righteousness before God. This is the fruit of Christ's righteousness imputed to us and from which we receive spiritual life.

Lesson 96 - CHRIST OUR SUPREME WATCHMAN *Ezekiel 3*

Ezekiel, whose name means “strengthened by God,” grew up in Jerusalem, where he trained to be a priest in the temple. He was among the second group of captives taken to Babylon in 597 BC. While in Babylon the Lord God called, commissioned, and equipped Ezekiel to be a prophet of God (*Ezek. 2*). He is the only prophet who never prophesied in the promised land. In *verse 17* the Lord calls upon Ezekiel to be a “*watchman unto the house of Israel.*” Watchmen in the Bible were guards responsible for protecting towns and military installations from surprise enemy attacks and other potential dangers. Ancient Israelite cities often stationed watchmen on high walls or in watchtowers. Their job was to keep watch and warn the townspeople of impending threats.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the SUPREME WATCHMAN, for He is the Great Shepherd who watches over His sheep. He gave His life for His sheep, and He now lives to make intercession for them and to protect and preserve them unto glory. He watches over them. One of the means by which He watches over His sheep is to provide them with under-shepherds who watch over them to guide them in His Word and warn them of danger. These are God’s prophets, pastors, and preachers. God’s Word says, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you*” (*Heb. 13:17*). These are ministers of Christ and His people. Their only authority is the Word of God.

(*Ezek. 3:1-3*) - The first requirement of a true watchmen is that he must know, believe, and love the Word of God (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; Gal. 1:15-16*). To eat the scroll means to possess himself fully of the message and digest it in his mind and heart. That which is by nature distasteful to him becomes “*as honey for sweetness.*” It is so much a part of him that he cannot lose it or leave it (*1 John 2:20ff.*).

(*Ezek. 3:4-11*) - The way Ezekiel was received with opposition and hatred would cause us to think he was preaching to unlearned heathen who had never heard the law of God, but this was not the case! Ezekiel was preaching to people who should have known better than to reject the Lord and His Word. They were people who had the law and who had heard the warnings of Jeremiah, and yet they were determined to ignore and oppose God’s Word. This is the way of all of us by nature. Some might use *verse 6* to conclude that the Bible teaches that man has the natural ability within himself to choose the things of the Spirit of God, but the Bible teaches otherwise (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3*). We are all by nature described in *verse 7* (*cf. Jer. 17:9*). This is why we must be born again and given a new heart by the grace of God in Christ (*Matt. 13:10-16; John 3:3-7*). If salvation were conditioned on the wills and cooperation of sinful people, then those who do believe and follow Christ could boast that they were saved because they were better than the Jews to whom Ezekiel preached. This is not the case. Salvation, including our willingness to believe and follow Christ, is all of grace (*Eph. 2:8-10*)!

(*Ezek. 3:12-14*) - The message and ministry of a true minister of God, a true watchman, is about God’s glory, not man’s felt needs. This is the shekinah glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and accomplished by His obedience unto death as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. *Verses 13-14* describes the ministers of God’s Gospel going forth in the providence and power of God to preach His Word and in fulfillment of His sovereign will (*2 Cor. 2:14-17*).

(Ezek. 3:15-21) - God's prophets and preachers have always been compared to watchmen (lookouts) who stand a post on the wall and warn the people when danger is coming (*Isa. 62:6-12; Hab. 2:1-4*). The faithful watchman is one who tells the people the truth as God reveals it to him. He speaks peace ("all is well") only when there is true peace as proclaimed by God. He speaks of danger when the enemy is coming, warning the people to prepare or to flee to a proper refuge for safety. As God's true ministers, faithful watchman, we point the people to the only safe refuge - the Lord Jesus Christ. When sinners are seeking salvation by their wills and works, we cannot speak peace to them because there is no peace for sinners except in Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Peace with God and safety can only come through Christ and His righteousness (*Isa. 32:15-20*).

"At the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me" sets the true watchman's message. The seventh day is the Sabbath which represents the finished work of Christ for the sins of His people - *"IT IS FINISHED"* (*John 19:30*). The Gospel is the glorious Person and finished work of Christ to establish righteousness by which God justifies His people - the imputed righteousness of Christ.

The watchman is sent *"to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life."* All ways but the ONE way of God's grace in Christ are wicked and deadly (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25; Matt. 7:13-14; John 14:6*). Ministers of Christ cannot save sinners, but they point sinners to Christ Who is the one and only way of salvation. When a minister fails to point a sinner to Christ alone, and that sinner dies *"in his iniquity,"* his blood is on that minister's hands - soul murder! If the watchman warns him of the danger and calls on him to repent, and the sinner refuses, the minister is clear of his blood.

Verse 20 does not speak of one who is truly righteous, or justified by the righteousness of Christ, because one who is truly righteous and has been born again by the Spirit can never turn from Christ (*1 John 3:9*). He can never be in an unjustified state because God will not impute sin to him, and the righteousness of Christ has been imputed to him. The one who is described here has a claim of righteousness based on his own works. His righteousness is sham outward appearance and not the reality of God's grace in Christ. *"And I lay a stumblingblock before him"* - God puts him in a hard place where he cannot escape. God never does this to His people made righteous in Christ. If the watchman fails to warn him, and the unbeliever continues in that state, *"righteousness which he hath done"* will count for nothing. He will die in his sins, *"but his blood will I require at thine hand."* This shows us the conditional nature of the Law. Sinners cannot meet its conditions and will always fail. It shows our need of God's grace and the righteousness of God in Christ. It also shows how false preachers will have a lot for which to answer at the Judgment.

(Ezek. 3:22-27) - Christ, the Supreme Watchman, speaks to Ezekiel whom the Lord set as a watchman over the people - the prophet alone with the Lord, receiving instruction. The Lord tells him that the people are rebellious and will reject the message of grace (*John 3:19-20; 15:18ff.*). God's judgment will be to let them go on in their own ways of death and destruction; but then He will open Ezekiel's mouth to speak His Word. And as God always has a remnant according to the election of grace, He says, *"He that heareth, let him hear."* But he who refuses, let him go on refusing because they are rebellious and unbending. The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Do I have ears to hear?" If I do, I recognize this is the result of God's power and grace to give me spiritual life in the new birth that I will hear and believe His Word in Christ, the Gospel of God's grace through the blood and righteousness of Christ.

(Ezek. 37:1-2) - This is the vision that God, by His Spirit, showed to the prophet Ezekiel concerning the valley of dry bones. These dry bones are a picture that describes all of us by nature, as we are fallen in Adam and naturally born into a state of spiritual death and depravity. As there was no physical life in these dry bones, there is absolutely no spiritual life in any of us as we are born of sinful flesh (*John 3:6*). This is why that, in salvation, we must be born again of God from above. This means we must be given spiritual life and all things that accompany spiritual life (*John 3:3-7*). Apart from this new birth, we have no will or desire to believe in Christ and follow Him. Faith in Christ is not natural to us, and it is not the product of our so-called "free-will." It is the gift of God given to us through Christ (*Eph. 2:8-10*).

(Ezek. 37:3) - There are two great questions that man by nature cannot answer. One is the question of how sinners can be justified before Holy God - *"I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?"* (*Job 9:2*). To be *"just with God"* is to be righteous in God's sight, and it includes the complete forgiveness of our sins on a just (right) ground. The next question is what is what is posed to the prophet here - *"And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live?"* There was no question that *"these bones"* were dead. So, this question is so important as it applies to spiritually dead and depraved sinners. Can such people live spiritually and eternally? Ezekiel immediately admits that the answer can only come from the Lord God - *"And I answered, O Lord GOD, Thou knowest."*

Sinful man's answer to these questions always involves salvation conditioned on the works and wills of men. This is always utter failure. But God's answer for both questions is by His grace through the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver of His chosen people. Just as sin demands and brings death, righteousness demands and brings life (*Rom. 5:21*). The righteousness of Christ, revealed in the Gospel of God's grace, is the ground upon which God justifies His people. Their sins are forgiven, and God declares them righteous based on the merits of Christ's obedience unto death imputed to His people (*Rom. 4:1-8*). And it is from Christ as the Lord our Righteousness that He gives spiritual life by the Spirit in the new birth as applied to all for whom He died and arose from the dead (*John 6:37-45; Rom. 8:10*). Christ is our justification before God, and our Life-Giver from Whom we receive spiritual and eternal life.

(Ezek. 37:4-6) - As stated, in salvation we must be born again, from above, given spiritual life from Christ. We must be *"quickened"* by the Holy Spirit Who is the sovereign Agent to give us spiritual life. This is a sovereign, irresistible, and invincible work of the Spirit that cannot fail. It is not accomplished by man's works or decision. It involves the work of *"regeneration"* (*Titus 3:5*) where the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life, knowledge, faith (a willingness to believe in Christ and repent of our dead works and idolatry), and convinces us of the truth that God reveals (*John 16:8-11*). And the instrument the Spirit uses is the preaching and the call of the Gospel wherein the righteousness of God is revealed (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; James 1:18*).

So, the Lord commands Ezekiel, *"Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."* Our natural reasoning always questions God's wisdom and way. Why preach and command dead people when they cannot hear or believe? But what is impossible with man is truly possible and sure with God - *"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I WILL CAUSE BREATH TO ENTER INTO YOU, AND YE SHALL LIVE."* All of

salvation is of the Lord, and no part of it is of man's power or will. The Holy Spirit empowers the preached word to give spiritual life to spiritually dead sinners. Some may ask, "Then shouldn't we only preach to the elect?" God's way of calling and identifying His elect is through the preaching of Christ whereupon they are given spiritual life to believe in and rest in Him (*John 10:11-27; 1 Thess. 1:4-5*). Just as Christ's Word to Lazarus brought him out of the grave, His Word to His elect brings them to spiritual life (*Ezek. 36:22-31*).

How, then, can it be said that people "*resist the Holy Ghost*" (*Acts 7:51*)? This is the general call in which the Spirit does not give life and faith to believe. It leaves sinners to their own sinful wills and becomes to them "*the savour of death unto death*" as God's judgment against them for their unbelief. But to God's elect, it is "*the savour of life unto life*" to the praise of the glory of God's grace (*2 Cor. 2:16*). So, what then should we do when the true Gospel is preached? We should seek the Lord and believe on Him knowing that if we do, it is not our work or goodness but God's alone in Christ our Life-Giver.

(Ezek. 37:7-10) - This is the building of the true church upon the Rock Christ Jesus by bringing all of God's elect into His kingdom. We see here the effectual calling of God's people by the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. For salvation to be fully accomplished by the grace of God in Christ, first, God must choose His people because man by nature will not choose God. Secondly, as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's elect, Christ had to assume sinless human nature, obey unto death to redeem them from sin and bring in righteousness by which God justifies them. Thirdly, Christ must send His Spirit to bring His sheep under the preaching of the Gospel and give them spiritual life. Fourthly, Christ must intercede for them and preserve them forever in bringing them unto eternal glory.

(Ezek. 37:11-14) - The Lord tells Ezekiel that "*these bones are the whole house of Israel.*" Although this has a limited and temporal application to the physical nation of Israel, it ultimately refers to SPIRITUAL Israel under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, the physical nation of Israel had been divided into two nations since the end of Solomon's reign. The northern kingdom called "*Israel*" had already been destroyed and scattered. The southern kingdom called Judah would be brought back to the Promised Land and be preserved in that land until the Messiah would come and do His great work. Secondly, the name "*Israel*" literally means "those who have prevailed with God." The majority of national Israel rejected the true and living God and did not prevail with Him. The only ones who have spiritually and eternally prevailed with God are those sinners who have been circumcised in heart (born again by the Spirit) and who come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 2:28-29*). Thirdly, the people of Judah, while in captivity in Babylon, cried that their "*hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts.*" This is where the Spirit brings God's elect when He convicts us of our sin, our inability to save ourselves and give ourselves life, and drives us to Christ for all salvation by His grace.

Fourthly, although the nation would be taken out of the death of captivity and brought back into the Promised Land, this ultimately can only apply to spiritual Israel, God's elect, being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life and being brought into the eternal kingdom of God through Christ. *Verses 13-14* can only ultimately describe born-again people who have been brought to know the Lord savingly through Christ and in whom the Spirit of life resides permanently (*John 17:1-3*). Being taken out of our graves can and does refer to the first resurrection, our new birth, but it can also refer to the last resurrection when Christ comes again and takes us up unto Himself in our glorification (*John 5:24-29*).

(Dan. 5:1-4) - Daniel, whose name means “God is my Judge,” was one of the many Jewish noblemen who had been taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. By God’s sovereign providence and wisdom, Daniel was given the gift of interpreting dreams, and having interpreted dreams of the king, he was put in high position as one of the king’s advisers. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar’s son (or grandson) Belshazzar was king, and Babylon was under siege by the Medes and Persians. Believing the city to be invincible, Belshazzar was lifted up with pride and gave a great feast for himself and his nobles. His greatest sin was to show disrespect to Israel’s God by commanding the vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple of Jerusalem after he had the Temple destroyed, to be brought to his feast so that they could use them to drink their wine. These vessels were holy vessels, sanctified and set apart by God, to be used only in the worship and service of the true and living God by the priests of Israel. Belshazzar had seen what the Lord had done to humble Nebuchadnezzar (*Dan. 4:28-37*), but he still disrespected the God of Israel and used these vessels to give tribute to his idols.

(Dan. 5:5-9) - There appeared “*the fingers of a man’s hand*,” and it wrote a message on the wall. This frightened the king so much (*5:6*), and he cried out for his advisers to interpret the words for him (*5:7*). He promised riches and high position to any who could interpret the writing, but none of them could understand what had been written. This made the king angry. This is a testimony to the natural ignorance of sinners in our spiritual death and depravity. We cannot savingly understand the Word of God, especially in the Gospel message of salvation by God’s grace based on the righteousness of Christ (*Rom. 3:10-12; 1 Cor. 2:14*). Christ must send His Spirit to bring us to the Word of God and give us an understanding of how God justifies the ungodly by the blood of Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead (*John 6:45; 16:8-11; Rom. 1:16-17; 6:17-18; 10:13-17; 1 Cor. 1:26–2:12; 1 John 5:20*).

(Dan. 5:10-12) - The queen (probably his mother) had been aware of Daniel who had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams. Daniel was probably about eighty years old at this time. The queen said, “*O king, live for ever*” - This reveals the vain thoughts and desires of all unbelievers. Light and immortality only comes through Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the Gospel of God’s grace (*John 14:6*). Only righteousness can bring eternal life, and righteousness can only be found in Christ (*Rom. 5:21*). It took a man gifted and sent from God to interpret the writing on the wall, and this is how God brings the Gospel to His people (*Acts 8:26-35; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; 1 Pet. 1:22-25*). It is by the preaching of Christ crucified and risen from the dead, which is the preaching of righteousness by Him, that the Spirit of God applies the truth to the hearts and consciences of God’s people.

(Dan. 5:13-17) - The king attributes Daniel’s gifts to the idols of Babylon rather than the true and living God. He promises Daniel wealth and position if he can interpret the writing. Daniel agreed to tell the king the meaning of the writing, but he refused the king’s gifts. This reminds us of how Christ saves us from our sins and reveals life and light to us freely and unconditionally. None of the blessings and benefits of salvation come to us because we give gifts to God or because of anything we do for God. It is all of grace. Also, we who are saved are to serve God, not for the gifts He gives and not to attain or maintain our salvation, but as we are motivated by His grace and glory, and by love and gratitude.

(Dan. 5:18-23) - Daniel then reminds Belshazzar of what happened to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. He became proud and haughty, but God brought him down and humbled him (*Dan. 4:28-37*). This is a picture of how God saves sinners. We are all by nature proud and haughty in that we imagine we can do or decide something to get God to save us. But God brings us down and humbles us to know that salvation was (and is) all conditioned on Christ Who alone fulfilled those conditions for His people as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. We have no righteousness before God with which to bargain with Him. All things are given to us freely from God in Christ (*Rom. 8:32-34; Eph. 1:3*).

(Dan. 5:24-31) - Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall - *"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN"* - *"MENE"* means *"God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it."* God had numbered Babylon, and her number was up! We have all heard the saying, "Our days are numbered." The psalmist wrote, *"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."* (*Psa. 90:12*).

"TEKEL" has to do with a measure of weight. The meaning is, *"Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting"* (lacking). This is the message God has for all of us in our natural state of sin and depravity, no matter if we are kings or servants, rich or poor, male or female (*Rom. 3:10-20*). Belshazzar and all of Babylon had been weighed in God's divine scales of justice, and the scales were tipped against them. They did not measure up to the perfection of righteousness that God requires in justice.

"PERES" (singular form of *"UPHARSIN"*) - The meaning is, *"Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."* God's judgment was about to fall on Babylon.

All of this should be a solemn reminder to us, sinners saved by the grace of God, that were it not for Christ and His righteousness imputed to us and received by God-given faith, God's judgment would fall upon us for our sins. Based on our best efforts to keep the law, we too are weighed in the balance and found wanting. The question then is this - How can we stand before God and not be lacking? What is the balance? This is God's balance, and it is a true and just balance. Man's balances are always false and unjust (*Prov. 11:1; 20:23*). It is by false balances and unjust weights that man measures himself and claims to be righteous, but his claim of righteousness is an abomination to God (*Luke 16:15*).

The true measure in God's balance is the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness (*Acts 17:31*). All who do not measure up and balance the scales of God's justice shall be found wanting and shall perish. What, then, is our hope of salvation? How can we who are so sinful balance the scales of a perfect righteousness? Our only hope of salvation is to *"be found in HIM [Christ], 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"* (*Php. 3:9; cf. Rom. 3:21-26; 4:6-8; 5:21; 8:3-34; 2 Cor. 5:21*). Christ's righteousness imputed to us and received by God-given faith is the only way we can balance the scales of God's justice and be found whole in God's sight. Our works will not balance the scales (*Matt. 7:21-23; Eph. 2:8-10*). *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (*Rom. 10:4*).

(Dan. 5:30-31) - God's judgment came down upon Belshazzar and Babylon that very night. God is faithful both to His promises and His threats. He promises to save sinners by His grace in Christ. They are all who come to Him begging for mercy and pleading the merits of Christ (*Luke 18:13-14; John 6:37-40*). And God will condemn all who come any other way but Christ (*John 14:6*).

(Daniel 9:20-23) - *Daniel 9:1-19* records Daniel's prayer of faith where he cried out to God for mercy and forgiveness according to God's Word and righteousness. He prayed for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham and for God to bring the people back to Jerusalem and reestablish them as a nation. Daniel acknowledged his and the people's sins, and he acknowledges God's justice in punishing them. There is no place in the Bible that mentions any specific sin of Daniel, but Daniel himself knew the truth of the sinfulness of all people by nature (*Rom. 3:10-20,23*). Daniel had in mind God's mercy and grace that comes to His people through the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ (*9:16-19*). Like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Daniel knew that his only hope of salvation and righteousness was the sovereign grace of God in the righteousness of God's promised Messiah (*Isa. 45:20-25; Jer. 23:5-6*). It was in this context that God sent a messenger, "*the man Gabriel*." Gabriel, whose name means "God is great" was a messenger sent with an answer to Daniel's prayer. Gabriel was an angel who appeared in the form of a man. His message was a prophecy of God's whole purpose in forming and preserving the nation of Israel - to bring Messiah into the world to fulfill all righteousness on behalf of God's chosen people, true spiritual Israel. In this prophecy, God reaffirms to Daniel that all salvation, all mercy, all forgiveness is founded upon and found in the Lord Jesus Christ - the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, Life-Giver, and Preserver of God's elect.

(Daniel 9:24) - Here begins Daniel's prophecy of the Messiah. "*Seventy weeks are determined upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city*" - Before the foundation of the world, the Lord God had appointed a specific time for Christ to come into the world and accomplish His work of saving His people from their sins (*Gal. 4:4-6*). The changes and events that take place in this world had no bearing upon that time. God has determined all times for His glory and the good of His people. "*Seventy weeks*" is literally "seventy weeks of years," which would equal seventy times seven (70 x 7), which is 490 years. Remember that the nation of Judah was to be held captive in Babylon for seventy years. From the time that God gave the commandment to build and restore Jerusalem to the time of the Messiah's arrival would be 490 years. All of this revolves around the number seven which represents God's complete work of judgment. This shows the justice of God against all sin as the punishment fits the crime. Under the Old Covenant law, Israel was to allow the land to rest every seventh year (yearly Sabbath). But they disobeyed God's commandment for 490 years. Therefore, they owed the land seventy years' worth of Sabbaths (*2 Chron. 36:21*).

"*Upon Thy people, and upon Thy holy city*" - This is descriptive of God's elect, His chosen people whom He chose in Christ before the foundation of the world. They are made up of all people (Jew and Gentile) whom God brings to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry. They are Christ's sheep, His church, and He brings them into the heavenly and spiritual Jerusalem, which is the eternal kingdom of God.

Recall that it was Gabriel who announced to Joseph that Mary was with child by the Holy Spirit and that the child's name would be "*JESUS*" meaning He would save His people from their sins (*Matt. 1:21*). Here in this prophecy, Gabriel described the complete work of the Messiah to save us from our sins in all of sin's power:

"*TO FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION*" - "*Finish*" means "to restrain in prison, shut up, confine." "*Transgression*" means "rebellion, law-breaking." God's Word tell us that "*sin is the transgression of the law*," and that Christ "*was manifested to take away our sins*" (*1 John 3:4-5*). Having all of the transgressions of His people imputed to Him, Christ went to the cross and died to arrest, bind, and put our transgressions away completely. They are confined so

well that they cannot be charged to us - for "*in HIM is no sin*" (1 John 3:5; cf. Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34). Taken literally, this also means establishing an entirely new order in the new earth with an end to man's rebellion against God.

"AND TO MAKE AN END OF SINS" - Christ came to "seal up" sins so that they cannot, as stated, be charged to us. God told Cain that without the blood of Christ to satisfy God's justice and bring about reconciliation, sin would put an end to him (*Gen. 4:7*). Sin, when it is finished brings death (*James 1:15*). But, again, having the sins of His sheep imputed to Him, by His death on the cross, Christ put an end to their sins. Christ suffered the full punishment due unto all the sins of His sheep imputed to Him.

"AND TO MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY" - This means to "cover or make atonement for" our iniquity. In the Old Testament this points us to the blood of atonement in the death of sacrifices which were pictures of the blood of reconciliation accomplished for us by Christ (*Rom. 5:8-11; Heb. 2:17*). The truth taught in the Old Covenant sacrifices was not that sins and iniquity could be covered over or hidden from view, nor did it teach that we could act as if our sins and iniquities did not exist. The truth taught was that the iniquities of God's elect must be reconciled to God's justice and holiness. This work was clearly accomplished at the cross. God is both a just God and a Savior.

"AND TO BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS" - The merit of Christ's work of redemption for His people is His "*everlasting righteousness*," the righteousness of God revealed in the Gospel (*Rom. 1:16-17*), which is Christ's righteousness imputed to His people and which they receive by God-given faith in Him (*Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*). This is the perfection of the law of God and the complete satisfaction to that law that can only be found in Christ (*Jer. 23:5-6; Rom. 5:18-21; 10:4; Php. 3:7-9*). This is Christ's righteousness by which the saints in all ages from the beginning of the world are justified and which endures, and will endure, throughout all ages, to the justification of all that believe. It is described by the metaphor of "a robe of righteousness" that will never wear out and can never be contaminated. Its virtue to justify will ever continue, being perfect; it will answer for the justified ones in a time to come. It is the source and power of all spiritual and eternal life.

"AND TO SEAL UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY" - "*Seal up*" means "to fulfill, bring an end to." Christ fulfilled all Old Testament types and prophecies (*Luke 9:30-31; 24:25-27, 44-49; John 5:39-47*). All prophecy is sealed up in Christ and by Him. He is the sum and substance of it. The visions and prophecies of the Old Testament relate to Him and have their accomplishment in Him. Some relate to His person and office; others to His coming into the world, the time, place, and manner of it; others to the great work of redemption and salvation He came to accomplish. Others pertain to His miracles, sufferings, and death, and the glory that should follow, but all were fulfilled in and by Him.

"AND TO ANOINT THE MOST HOLY" or "*the most holy place*," which is Holy of Holies where only the high priest of Israel could enter on the day of atonement with the blood of a lamb. This way was barred to anyone else. Christ fulfilled this earthly type and literally made the way into the holiest of all, the very presence of God, open to all who believe in Him and plead His blood as their only right to enter into God's holy presence (*Matt. 27:50-53; Heb. 10:19-22*).

(Daniel 9:24) - As we considered this verse in our last lesson, it is worth reading again so that we may appreciate the greatness of Christ our Lord and Savior and what He Himself accomplished for us, and all of God's chosen people, to save us from our sins. As the Lord Jesus Christ was (and is) the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people, He "FINISHED OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, MADE AN END OF OUR SINS, MADE RECONCILIATION FOR OUR INIQUITIES, BROUGHT IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS, SEALED UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY, and ANOINTED THE MOST HOLY. All of this describes the fullness of the salvation that God fully and freely gives to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ Who is identified in the next verse as *"Messiah the Prince."* All of this was determined by God before the foundation of the world (*Acts 2:22-23; 4:26-28; Heb. 10:7-10*). In doing all of this for His people, Christ fulfilled all righteousness and revealed Himself as the righteousness of His people. It was on this ground that God saved His elect who lived in the Old Testament age before Messiah the Prince came in time. God justified them before the work was actually accomplished by Christ at the cross in time, but it was not without, or apart from, this work that Christ came in time to accomplish at the cross (*Heb. 10:14*). We see in this and the following verses that God's thoughts and determination before time did not (and will not) ignore, deny, or negate God's accomplishments in time by the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of God the Holy Spirit to give spiritual life to His people. What God determined before time began will have its accomplishment at God's appointed time (*Gal. 4:4-6; 1:15-16*).

(Daniel 9:25) - Gabriel made certain that Daniel would know that all this great work of God's grace would be accomplished by *"Messiah the Prince"* Who is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The time span would be from the time *"of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem"* (*Ezra 1:1-4*) to the time when Christ would come into the world and begin His earthly ministry. There are divisions of times here, and not all agree on how to view these times. Some claim that the numbers here are totally symbolic and cannot be traced historically in calendar time. Others disagree on this and claim we can trace these numbers historically. Whatever view you take on this, the important issue here is to know that all of these numbers refer to the coming of Christ into the world in time and events surrounding His finished work in time. This is not a prophecy of some future time when Christ would secretly rapture His church out of the world and begin a seven-year period of tribulation. The whole time of the New Covenant that continues until Christ returns (finally and publicly) is a time of tribulation for the true church in the world. It may be that these numbers cannot be pinpointed specifically with calendar time, but I believe they come close. I also recognize that there is truth symbolized in these numbers.

Consider that the first *"seven weeks"* equal forty-nine years, and this is about the time it took for the people who returned to rebuild the Temple, the walls of Jerusalem, and to be settled in the city. All this was done in *"troublous times,"* times of much sin, rebellion, and persecution. From that time, there were *"threescore and two weeks,"* which is sixty-two weeks of years and adds up to 434 years. Add this to 49, and it comes out to 483 years, and we can say that this is about, not of His birth, but the time when He began His earthly ministry at His baptism.

(Daniel 9:26) - After this, Christ was *"cut off"* (*Isa. 53:8*), *"BUT NOT FOR HIMSELF."* This describes Christ's death for the sins of His people and His fulfilling all things stated in verse 24. This happened in the midst of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (9:27). And it is made clear here that Christ did not die for His own sins, for He had no and knew no sin (*2 Cor. 5:21*). He died for the sins of His people imputed to Him. This is made clear in the Biblical

revelation of the doctrine of imputation as it is concerned in the justification of God's people (*Rom. 8:32-34*). To be justified before God involves the forgiveness of all our sins on a just ground and God's declaration that we are righteous on a just ground. God is the only source of justification. God's elect are the only objects of justification. Christ's righteousness is the only ground of justification. Imputation is the only means and instrument of justification. This is the sins of God's elect imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness imputed to them (*Psa. 32:1-2; cf. Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). The work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, which includes the gifts of faith and repentance, is the fruit of justification.

"The people of the prince" who would come and *"destroy the city and the sanctuary"* refer to the Roman emperor, Titus, and the Roman legions who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70. This was God's judgment upon unbelieving Israel and their rejection of Christ. This historically marked the fact that had been established in time before this by Christ on the cross that God was finished with this nation, as a nation, under the terms of the Old Covenant law. God's dealings with this nation as a physical people under the Old Covenant was finished when Christ finished His work of redeeming His people who are spiritual Israel (*Heb. 8*). SPIRITUAL Israel (God's elect out of all nations) has always been the object of spiritual and eternal salvation by God's grace in Christ. Each member of this spiritual nation is identified by their God-given faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (*1 Thess. 1:2-5*).

(Daniel 9:27) - And Christ *"shall confirm the covenant with many for one week."* This covenant already existed, the everlasting covenant of grace ratified by the blood of Christ. This covenant was *"confirmed"* (established in time) by Christ when He established the New Covenant by His finished work on the cross. The New Covenant is the fulfillment in time of all the conditions of the everlasting covenant of grace made before time. This confirmation took place *"in the midst of the week,"* which would be about three and one-half years after His public ministry began. The *"many"* describes His elect children for whom He died and arose and on whom the Holy Spirit was poured out bringing them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works (*ex. Acts 2*). *"And for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate"* is literally, *"And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate."* Again, this describes the Roman onslaught to destroy the city and the temple. Obviously, this did not happen in the seventieth week of the prophecy, but it took place later as God's judgment upon the nation Israel and because of events that took place within the seventieth week. These events culminated in the majority of the Jews rejecting Christ and persecuting true believers so severely that these believers were scattered throughout the world and went about preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles (*Acts 8:1-4*).

So, in the middle of the seventieth week (three and one-half years) the Messiah was crucified and accomplished all that was necessary, as described in *verse 24*, to save His people from their sins. What happened in the next three and one-half years? The unbelieving Jews rejected the Gospel of God's grace and persecuted Christ's disciples even unto the death of Stephen and the scattering of them all *"throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria"* (*Acts 8:1*). And, of course, we know that all of this was purposed by God to bring the Gospel to the elect Gentiles (*Acts 8:4*).

The Book of Revelation shows us also that the three and one-half years symbolically speak of the whole period of time in which the church would be exiled and persecuted in the earth by Satan and the unbelieving world. In *Revelation 11:2-3*, John speaks of forty-two months and then of 1260 days. He does the same thing in *Revelation 12:6* and *13:5*. In *Revelation 12:14*, John speaks of *"times," "a time" and "half a time"* (three and one-half years). John applies this time reference to circumstances after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ and which would last up to the second coming of Christ.

(Hosea 1:1) - Hosea was one of God's prophets in the northern kingdom of Israel. He prophesied for about forty-five years at the same time as Isaiah and Micah prophesied in the south. Even though he was in the north, his message mainly concerned the southern kingdom of Judah (1:7). The reason for this was to show that even though as a sinful people (both north and south) they deserved God's judgment of wrath, the hope of salvation for sinners would come out of Judah. This is Christ Who would come from the tribe of Judah (*Gen. 49:8-10*). The background of Hosea's prophecy was spiritual and moral depravity, unbelief, idolatry, and decline for Israel. The nation was politically and materially prosperous, but spiritually and morally poor. The nation here was a picture of fallen, sinful humanity which began in Adam as spiritually rich and full. But as Adam fell into sin and depravity, so did the whole human race. We who are God's true spiritual children have been brought by God from spiritual death and poverty to spiritual life and prosperity by God's grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Hosea 1:2) - The name "*Hosea*" means "salvation." The LORD gave Hosea a very strange command. He commanded His prophet to find and marry a prostitute, a notoriously great sinner! This does not fit with man's views and ways of salvation and righteousness. Man's way is salvation for those who do or decide something to deserve salvation. But God saves sinners and justifies the ungodly. Christ came into the world to save sinners! He told the Pharisees that the righteous need no savior. The well need no physician. Christ is the great Physician Who heals sin-sick people. He came not to call the righteous, but SINNERS to repentance (*Mark 2:17; cf. Luke 5:30-32; 7:36-39*).

Why would God give such a strange command? "*For the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.*" God gave Hosea this strange commandment to illustrate graphically the sin, unfaithfulness, and spiritual whoredom of the nation Israel. This also illustrates our own spiritual death, depravity, and whoredom. Unregenerate people will admit that they are not perfect and need a little help to be saved, but God the Holy Spirit brings us down in conviction to know and confess that we are the worst of sinners, even spiritual prostitutes who have willingly sold ourselves to idols and turned away from the true and living God. If salvation is to come our way, it cannot be upon any merit or willingness in us. It must come by the free, sovereign, and powerful will and grace of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:20-21; Eph. 2:1-10*).

As this book describes Hosea's love for Gomer, her infidelity, despising his love and goodness toward her, and the gracious triumph of his love over her, it also describes God free and sovereign love for His elect. God loves us with an everlasting love, and He sent Christ to die for us because of this love (*John 3:16; 1 John 4:10*). His love is redeeming love, and we do not earn or deserve His love. Christ saves and will possess His bride, God's elect, His church.

(Hosea 1:3) - As "*Hosea*" means "savior," he was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ Who was commanded by the Father (and Who agreed willingly) to come to this fallen earth and take a wife from among the fallen spiritual harlots of humanity - God's elect people who had been given (betrothed) to Christ before the world began. "*Gomer*" means "consumption." She represents God's elect consumed with sin and by sin. It also means "consummation," for as we in ourselves are the consummation of sin and depravity, in Christ, according to God's purpose and will, we are the consummation of His great unconditional love. Gomer was the "*daughter of Diblaim*" whose name means "dried" or "dead." This illustrates how we by nature are dead children from a dead father, Adam.

(Hosea 1:4-5) - The Lord prophesies to Israel through Hosea's three children. First came "Jezreel" which means "God will scatter." In this name God reveals that Israel would soon be scattered in exile by a conquering Assyrian army. Jezreel refers to the Valley of Jezreel, where Jehu massacred all the descendants of Ahab, thus establishing his throne (2 Kings 10:11). God directed Hosea to name his son Jezreel to confirm His promise to avenge the bloodshed of Jezreel by judging the house of Jehu. God "*will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.*" This illustrates God's sure judgment against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. Our hope of salvation is to not have sins imputed to us but to have Christ's righteousness imputed to us (Rom. 4:6-8; 8:32-34).

(Hosea 1:6) - Next came a daughter named "*Lo-ruhamah*" which means "no mercy." This shows the nature of the conditional covenant God made with Israel. The law demanded perfect obedience, and it provided for no mercy when its commands were broken. The law said, "Do and live, disobey and die." What a solemn reminder that for sinners such as us, there is no salvation, no mercy, no grace in the law. Mercy and grace come to us by virtue of another covenant, the everlasting covenant of grace, conditioned on Christ, the Messiah (John 1:17; Rom. 3:19-26). The perfection of righteousness required by the law can only be found in Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. This is HIS righteousness imputed to us and which we receive by God-given faith in Him (Rom. 10:4).

(Hosea 1:7) - Here is a prophecy of Christ Who would come in His human nature through the tribe of Judah. God purposed to "*have mercy upon the house of Judah.*" WHY? We know that Judah had a few faithful kings (ex., 2 Kings 18:1-8); but Judah was essentially no better than Israel. There were some brief times of national obedience in Judah, but it did not last. And by its very nature mercy cannot be deserved. If you deserve leniency and blessings, it is a matter of justice, not mercy. Mercy can only be shown to the guilty. Therefore, it is within the wise and loving heart of God to show mercy to whom He will show mercy (Rom. 9:15). So, this show of mercy was not a testimony to Judah's goodness but of God's purpose of grace that would come to His chosen people through Christ (Gen. 49:10).

(Hosea 1:8-9) - Hosea and Gomer then had another son named "*Loammi*" which means "not my people." Again, we see the nature of the law covenant which provided for no salvation, no eternal life, no eternal fellowship with God. God said, "*for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God.*" God would eventually divorce Himself from this nation (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8). This conditional covenant would be abolished by the fulfilling work of Christ for God's spiritual people.

(Hosea 1:10-2:1) - This speaks of THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL. Both Paul and Peter, by Divine inspiration, apply this prophecy both to believing Jews and Gentiles within the true church (Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). There is a direct reference to God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 22:17 - cf., Gal. 3:13-14; 3:26-29; 6:14-16), which would be fulfilled in spiritual Israel in and by the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6ff.; Eph. 2:11ff.). "*For great shall be the day of Jezreel*" - Where and when God sows His grace for and in His people through Christ, not His wrath; where God scatters His people, His children, as seed throughout the world to preach the Gospel of His grace in Christ, THIS IS A DAY OF SALVATION AND RESTORATION. God calls His elect in Christ "*Ammi*," which is "MY PEOPLE" and "*Ruhamah*," which means "HAVING OBTAINED MERCY" (cf., Isaiah 62:1-5; Jer. 31:31-34).

(Hosea 2:2-5) - When the Lord chose the nation Israel as His bride under the Old Covenant law, He chose a sinful people. His union with them was only temporal and ceremonial, and it continued by His forbearance until the appointed time of the Messiah Who would come into the world through the tribe of Judah. The Lord called His prophet, Hosea, to marry a sinful woman and take unto himself *“a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms”* (1:2). This strange commandment was meant to illustrate in type and picture the relationship between the Lord Himself (as typified by Hosea) and the nation Israel (as typified by Gomer, Hosea's wife).

The Lord called on the children to *“plead with your mother, plead”* which literally means to “contend” or “bring charges against” their mother. This is a legal scene as Gomer had broken the law of marriage and deserved the punishment of death. Under the law of Moses, Israel had done the same as Gomer - *“for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD”* (1:2). The Lord proclaimed, *“for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband.”* This is the language of divorce as, under the conditional law covenant, Israel's temporal and ceremonial union with the Lord was conditioned on their obedience. So, we see how that God would grant her a bill of divorce because of her sins (*Deut. 24:1; Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8*).

Ultimately, we can see how Hosea, whose name means “salvation,” is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Gomer is a type of all of us, God's elect, who are eternally saved by God's grace. Hosea loved Gomer unconditionally, and that is how Christ loves His bride, the church. We have all sinned and departed from the Lord in our fall in Adam (*Rom. 5:12*). We have committed great whoredom in our sin and idolatry. But before the foundation of the world, the Lord chose us and loved us in Christ. In time, having imputed all of our sins unto Christ, God the Father sent Him into the world to obey unto death to put away our sins and work out a perfect righteousness by which we are justified in His sight. We need to understand that when we read of God's dealings with national Israel and of His divorce from them, it is all due to that temporal, ceremonial covenant of law and works that was conditioned on them. It was never intended to be eternal. The covenant of eternal salvation towards God's elect, spiritual Israel in Christ, was (and is) an everlasting covenant of grace, all conditioned on Christ.

(Hosea 2:6-13) - Here is a description of punishments that the nation deserved. This is what we all by nature deserve if God were to judge us based on our works. We are all sinners who have earned and deserve nothing but eternal death. Notice in *verses 5-8* the extent of Gomer's idolatry and adultery. Hosea was providing her with all that she needed to live, but she attributed this to her lovers. Israel did the same. Even though the Lord justly punished them, He continually kept them together, preserved and provided for them throughout the time of the law, but they forsook the Lord and went after idols. It is the same with us as God's elect as we are born naturally into the world before God brings us to faith in Christ and repentance of our own dead works and idolatry. God takes care of and provides for us, but we attribute this to a false god of our own imaginations and not the true and living God.

(Hosea 2:14-15) - Here we see Hosea going after and drawing Gomer back to him with cords of love. We see this in a very limited sense in God's dealings with the nation Israel historically. Throughout their existence as a nation under the law they were mostly and generally rebellious and idolatrous. But God kept them together and continually drew them back to Himself until the time He had appointed to bring Christ into the world. After this, His union with them under the law was totally abolished. But in Hosea's love and wooing of

Gomer, we see a great picture of the Lord drawing us, His elect, unto Himself with cords of love, mercy, and grace in Christ. He brings us into an eternal union which cannot be broken as it is all conditioned on Christ our Husband (*Jer. 31:3*).

Hosea loved her, allured her, brought her, and spoke comfortably to her. This is the story of Christ and His church, His bride. It is a story of sovereign grace based upon His death for us (*Rom. 5:6-8*). Gomer had nowhere else to go. Her lovers had forsaken her. Hosea was her only hope. This is our state under the law - no hope, no way of salvation. Christ is our only hope of salvation. Notice how God's will is the cause and power of all salvation. This is the nature of the covenant of salvation - GOD WILL, and WE SHALL. Gomer did not seek Hosea, but Hosea sought her. And, by nature, we did not seek the Lord (*Rom. 3:10-12*), but He has sought and found us (*John 10:11-25; 12:32*). "*The valley of Achor*" is the "valley of trouble" where Achan's sin was discovered and judged (*Joshua 7:26*). Christ's restoration of His people is so great that He will transform the "valley of trouble" into "*a door of hope*" - the hope of salvation by grace, righteousness, eternal life (*Rom. 5:21*).

(Hosea 2:16-20) - Here Gomer is restored to Hosea. "*Ishi*" means "husband" and reflects the love relationship between husband and wife. "*Baali*" is a Hebrew name for "my lord," and in this context reflects the legal relationship between master and servant. Although Christ is our sovereign Lord and Master, we are not legal slaves but willing and loving bondservants of Christ. And this is reflected in the marriage union of Christ and His bride whom He bought out of slavery with His own precious blood. This also speaks of repentance of dead works and idolatry (*verse 17*). In *verse 18*, he describes by metaphors of nature a time of peace, not between men on earth, but between God and His elect. *Verse 19* shows how the relationship of Christ and His bride is restored according to the Gospel. All legal obstacles have been removed by Christ in His cross-death. All necessary works have been accomplished - the righteousness of God imputed to His people (*2 Cor. 5:21*). *Verse 20* shows how that spiritual life and knowledge is given from the Lord as a result of Christ's work of redemption (*Jer. 31:31-34*).

(Hosea 2:21-23) - In the day of the Lord, the day of Christ, God will hear as He sends the Gospel throughout the earth, and the blessings of His grace will be poured out to all His people (*Eph. 1:3*). "*And they shall hear Jezreel*" - As in *1:4* "*Jezreel*" had a negative connotation of being scattered by God's judgment, it has a positive connotation here. It means scattered as the witnesses of Christ and the Gospel seed will be sent throughout the world to call out Christ's sheep all over the world (*Matt. 28:19-20*). This includes God's elect among the Gentiles who, under the Old Covenant, were not His people, but under the Covenant of Grace and the New Covenant are His people along with the elect Jews (*Rom. 9:22-29; 1 Pet. 2:9-12*). "*Thou art My people; and they shall say, Thou art My God*" - This is the language of marriage covenant as in the marriage vows which cannot be broken.

(Hosea 3:1-5) - These verses tell us of Hosea going to the slave market to redeem his wife who had sold herself into slavery. He compares it with Israel who sinned against God and were slaves to foreign nations. This is all a picture of our natural bondage to sin and the law and our need of redemption with the price of the blood of Christ. *Verse 3* describes the permanence and the faithfulness that God's people would enjoy by His grace, power, and righteousness. *Verse 4* tells of the awful state of Israel up to the coming of Christ, and how the Lord would accomplish His purpose in the return of His true people, spiritual Israel, to Him in God-given faith, repentance, and worship. All of this is pictured in the historical account of Hosea and Gomer.

The prophet Joel prophesied in the southern kingdom of Judah, possibly around 835-830 B.C. His name means “Jehovah is God.” He preached the word of the Lord to the people when Judah was devastated by a vast horde of locusts that destroyed everything and was followed by severe famine. This was God’s just judgment against the nation for her sins. In *Joel 2* we see a further account of God’s judgment (2:1-11). All this is a testimony that we are all sinners and cannot be saved by our works, that the Jews who sought righteousness by their works failed miserably (*Rom. 9:31–10:3*). In *Joel 2:12-20*, the people are called to repentance urged from the goodness of God. Again, we see that there were times of national repentance and obedience, but they did not last very long. This shows that no matter how hard we try, we cannot make ourselves right with God. We are in need of a righteousness we cannot produce (*John 6:44; Rom. 3:10-20; 1 Cor. 2:14*).

(Joel 2:21) - “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.” Joel begins to prophesy of good things to come, mainly pointing to the time of the Messiah, which is the ultimate day of the Lord, the day of Christ. How could people not be fearful and even “*be glad and rejoice*” given their current circumstances under God’s judgment? The answer is they must look to the Lord and consider the promise of God to keep them in tact for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world to save all of God’s chosen people, Jew and Gentile. They must look to Him for salvation, righteousness, and eternal life (*Rom. 10:4*). Salvation is of the Lord, and their current situation did not reflect the spiritual state of those who trusted in Christ as the Lord their righteousness. “*For the LORD will do great things,*” mainly, in sending His Son into the world to save His people from their sins by His death as their Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. This day of the Lord would be a great day of judgment of all the sins of all of God’s people as their sins had been imputed to Christ and His righteousness imputed to them.

(Joel 2:22) - As the “*beasts of the field*” and the trees and vines suffered from the effects of God’s judgment upon the earth, in times of God prospering Israel, these animals too would have no reason to be afraid. John Gill makes a spiritual application of this showing how the “*beasts*” can bring to mind the Gentiles who would also prosper because of Israel’s prosperity, and this could certainly apply to God’s elect among the Gentiles spiritually who prospered by the work of Christ which came first to the elect of the Jews - “*the fig tree and the vine*” (*cf. John 15:1-7*). So, this can remind us of the great fruitfulness produced in the wilderness of the Gentile world, through the preaching of the Gospel in the times of Christ and the New Covenant, which are more clearly described in the next verse.

(Joel 2:23) - “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God” - The blessing of joy and gladness is for those who rejoice in the LORD (*Rom. 14:17; 15:13; Php. 3:3; 4:4; Psalms. 32:11*). This refers both to elect Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. “*For He hath given you the former rain moderately*” - This is an interesting expression and is appropriately translated by some as “the early rain for your vindication,” and “He has given you a teacher for righteousness.” Now certainly the Lord God took care of physical Israel in the land when they prospered by giving them both the early and latter rains to quench their thirst and water their fields. But the expression here points to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as the teacher of righteousness both in His first and second coming. He

is the one who worked righteousness for His people whereby God justifies them, and He is the water of life for them. He is also the one who will return to vindicate Himself and His people before the world.

(Joel 2:24-27) - This describes much more than physical blessings and prosperity which at times fell temporarily upon the physical nation Israel. This is the abundance of all spiritual blessings secured by Christ and given to His people because of His death on the cross to save them and provide all the blessings and benefits of grace and glory.

(Joel 2:28-29) - This speaks of the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Peter quoted this to show the fulfillment of this at Pentecost (*Acts 2:14-21*). The Holy Spirit has always been active as the powerful applier of spiritual life, knowledge, faith, and all spiritual graces in the new birth and His indwelling of God's people. He did not begin His work at Pentecost. But at Pentecost He was poured out in a more special and wider way in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham - *"In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"* (*Gen. 12:3*). And here we see a prophecy of the many ways God would communicate the Gospel to His people until the revelation would be complete and the written Word be sealed (*Rev. 22:18-19*). This was the inauguration of the New Covenant church age.

(Joel 2:30-31) - These are cosmic events that will mark the New Covenant Age. Some claim this refers to events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, which was at the beginning of the New Covenant Age. Others claim this refers to events leading up to the second coming of Christ, which is the final end of the New Covenant Age. It could be both, but the main point of this prophecy is the certain destruction of all who reject the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Savior of His people and the only righteousness whereby sinners can stand before God and be accepted and blessed. The Day of the Lord will truly be *"a terrible day"* for all who are without Christ. We must be washed in His blood, clothed in His righteousness, and brought to faith in Christ! This is salvation for sinners.

(Joel 2:32) - The only way of deliverance from this destruction and of salvation from sin and death is the Lord Jesus Christ. And this salvation is for *"whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD."* What is it to call on the NAME of the LORD. It is the fruit of Holy Spirit conviction under the preaching of the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace wherein the LORD is identified and distinguished as the God Who justifies the ungodly by His grace through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is to call out of our sinfulness upon the Lord Jesus Christ as He is revealed in the Word as God manifest in the flesh upon all of our salvation was conditioned and Who fulfilled those conditions as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, thus, securing our complete salvation and eternal life. *"Mount Zion"* and *"Jerusalem"* are the true church of Christ and the spiritual city of God, His kingdom and family, whereunto all who call upon His name are brought by the power of the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:13-17*). And all this is true and certain for two reasons: (1) *"The LORD hath said"* - This is God's Word, and He is always faithful to His promises which are sure and certain in Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20*); and (2) It is for *"the remnant whom the LORD shall call"* - As people by nature will NOT call upon the name of the Lord and will NOT come to Christ for salvation, God has a remnant according to the election of grace whom He, by His power and grace, will call and bring into His kingdom without fail (*John 6:37-45; 10:11-16; 1 Cor. 1:18-24; 2 Pet. 3:9*).

(Amos 5:1-3) - Amos was a shepherd and farmer whom the Lord called to be a prophet (7:14). He was from the southern kingdom of Judah, but the Lord called him to prophesy in the northern kingdom of Israel. Like all prophets of God, he proclaimed God's judgment of wrath against the people for their sins, while proclaiming the hope of sinners who seek the Lord's grace in the future promise of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The false prophets in Israel saw him as their enemy and tried to get him to leave their country and go back to his own (7:12). These verses show the sad and sinful state of Israel and the judgment she would face for her sins. This is a graphic picture of the fallen state of all of us in our natural sin and depravity. By nature, we have no goodness, no power, no desire to seek the Lord and His salvation (*Rom. 3:10-12*). Human works and free-will religion, no matter how dedicated and sincere we are, cannot help us to be cleansed from our sins or to be righteousness in God's eyes.

(Amos 5:4-6) - God commands them, "*Seek ye ME, and ye shall live.*" Their only hope of salvation, and this is true of any sinner, is to seek the Lord and turn from their idols and their dead works in repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Whom God revealed then as the promised Messiah Who would save His people from their sins. All other ways, no matter how religious or moral in the eyes of man, are death and destruction. God's word commands us to seek the Lord for salvation (*Isa. 55:6*). It tells that all who seek Him shall find Him (which is to find salvation) when they seek Him with all their heart (*Jer. 29:13*). Christ said, "*All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*" (*John 6:37*). We learn from God's Word that to seek the Lord truly and rightly is to seek Him IN HIS WORD as He reveals and identifies Himself as opposed to idols that we create with our own natural thoughts and imaginations. To seek Him in His Word always leads us to Christ Who is the only way of salvation (*John 14:6*). Salvation is by grace through the righteousness that Christ worked out for His people on the cross in the glory of His Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the power and success of His finished work of redemption (*Rom. 5:21; Eph. 2:8-10*). To seek the Lord is to seek Christ, and to seek Christ is to seek righteousness by faith in Him (*Rom. 9:31-10:4*).

But does not God's Word tell us that man by nature, of our own wills and desires, WILL NOT seek the Lord? YES! Consider the following verses that describe the spiritually dead and depraved of all people by nature and the fact that if left to ourselves we will not seek the true Lord according to His Word of truth --

Jeremiah 13 - (23) Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

John 6 - (44) No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Romans 3 - (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

1 Corinthians 2 - (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

All of these verses, along with many others in the Bible, show us the total depravity of all people as fallen in Adam (*Rom. 5:12*) and as born spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (*Eph. 2:1-3*). If left to ourselves, our own power and wills, we will not seek the Lord for salvation. Why, then, does God command us to do what we cannot and will not do? It is because it is God's purpose to glorify Himself in bringing all whom He chose to save before the foundation of the world, all whom He sent Christ to redeem, to seek and to find Him. All whom God chose to save before the foundation of the world, His elect, WILL, by His power and grace, seek Him and find Him by the power of the Holy Spirit under the preaching of the Gospel. Remember that Christ said, *"and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."* But who are they who will come to Him? He said, *"All that the Father giveth me SHALL COME TO ME."* When were these seekers given to Him? They were given to Him before the world began in sovereign, electing grace (*John 17:1-3; Rom. 9:13-16; 10:13-17; Eph. 1:3-13; 1 Thess. 1:4-5; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:8-10*). All who do seek Him find out that He has already given them spiritual life by the Spirit (a new heart, new will and desire, new knowledge) else they would never have sought Him (*Jer. 31:31-34; John 3:3-7; 16:8-11*). So, God's command is, "Seek Christ and live," for there is life only in Christ. Seek righteousness by God-given faith in Him (*Rom. 10:4-10*).

(Amos 5:7-9) - To *"turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth"* is to pervert justice. It was common in Israel then, as it is common today in our time, for there to be crooked judges and magistrates who judge civil matters unrighteously for their own selfish gain. In our Lord's earthly ministry, the Pharisees were known for this. But all sinners who seek salvation conditioned on themselves and who seek righteousness by their works for justification before God turn judgment into wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth. To seek Christ is to seek Him as the Lord our Righteousness. It is to seek the forgiveness of our sins and the perfection of God's law and justice that can only be found in Christ (*Rom. 10:4-10*). We can be justified before God on in Christ's righteousness imputed to us and which we receive by God-given faith in Him (*Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

(Amos 5:10-13) - Both wicked judges and self-righteous religionists hate prophets and preachers who tell them the truth (*John 3:19-20; 15:18-16:3; Gal. 4:16*). This state of things had become such *"an evil time,"* as it was so prevalent in the land, that those who are smart *"keep silent."* God's prophets and witnesses do not keep silence, but most of the people who want to stay safe keep quiet.

(Amos 5:14-17) - This is another statement of warning that if they refuse to *"to seek good, and not evil,"* they will die under the judgment of God for their sins. Notice the phrase, *"it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph"* - Throughout the Old Testament, even in the worst of time for Israel, God always had a *"remnant"* of people whom He chose according to the election of grace (*Isa. 1:9; Rom. 9:29; 11:1-7*). Who are these people? Am I one of them? Consider - Do you desire to seek the Lord and find Him, not as you think Him to be, but as He is in His Word? Do you see that if salvation comes to you, it is totally by God's free and sovereign grace, power, and will, all conditioned on Christ and His work of righteousness alone? Do you desire THIS great salvation and repent of all the idols of false religion, even false "Christianity," and reject all your works aimed at the ground of attaining and maintaining salvation? This is where the Lord God brings His people in their new birth when He reveals Himself to them in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ.

(Obad. 1-2) - Obadiah was a prophet of God sent of the Lord to pronounce judgment upon the nation of Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, and the Israelites were descendants of Jacob. Tension between Jacob and Esau began with God's sovereign purpose in the election of grace. Read *Romans 9:10-18*. The Lord God revealed that the salvation of sinners is by His free and sovereign grace and mercy through Christ. It is by His sovereign will and work through Christ, not man's will or works. God chose Jacob, not Esau. Jacob represented God's people chosen before the foundation of the world and given to Christ (*Mal. 3:6*). Esau represented the non-elect who live their lives in unbelief and die in their sins. Many who hate the doctrine of election claim that this passage refers to the two nations, Israel and Edom, and not individuals. But this does not solve their problem, because nations are made up of individuals. The quarrel between Jacob and Esau had affected their descendants for over 1,000 years. This division caused the Edomites to forbid Israel to cross their land during their Exodus from Egypt (*Num. 20:14-21*). Obadiah received a "rumour," literally an announcement, that the LORD would bring nations against Edom in battle. God would make Edom small among the nations and greatly despised.

(Obad. 3-4) - "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*" (*Prov. 16:18*). Edom was a small, relatively poor, and insignificant nation. Yet, like all people by nature, they found things by which to feed their pride. They lived in an area of great natural fortifications and strength, so they boasted in the clefts of the rock around them. So, the Lord God would bring them down from their pride in their own destruction. This is an illustration of the pride of all people by nature, especially in matters of salvation. This pride of the heart is deceptive - "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (*Jer. 17:9*). This is seen in its highest degree in what people ignorantly call salvation, faith, grace, and righteousness. Before God brings us to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry, we ignorantly believe that salvation is conditioned on ourselves and not totally on Christ. We measure righteousness on a sliding scale comparing ourselves with ourselves. We highly esteem our human efforts and sincerity in religion, and it takes a powerful revelation from God to bring us down from this pride. God does this in His chosen people by revealing Himself to them in His Word as He shows us His glory in salvation by His free and sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ - the glory of His Person (God manifest in the flesh) and the power and success of His finished work of redemption as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people (*Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 4:6*). God brings us down and humbles us to see our sinfulness and our need of Christ and His righteousness for salvation (*Luke 14:11; 18:14*). God shows us that what we by nature highly esteem is an abomination in His eyes (*Luke 16:15*). He shows us the glory of Christ and His righteousness by which we are justified in His sight and from which we receive spiritual life unto glory (*Php. 3:3-10*).

God's judgment and power to bring Edom down and destroy them shows that this is the destiny of all people who raise themselves up in pride, continue in unbelief, and die in their sins. Thank the Lord that He brings us as His elect down from our pride, shows us our utter sinfulness and depravity, and drives us to Christ for all things in salvation before we die (*Rom. 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 10:5*).

(Obad. 5-6) - This describes the fullness of God's judgment upon Edom. There will be no one and nothing left after the Lord is through with them. It will be worse than thieves who do leave something after they have stolen all they want. It will be worse than "grapegatherers" who leave a few grapes after they have harvested. This illustrates the completeness of God's judgment against all sinners to whom sin is charged. Our only hope of a complete salvation is

for God in His grace not to charge us with our sins and to charge us with Christ's righteousness (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34; 2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

(Obad. 7) - All of Edom's so-called allies will turn against them in this destruction, and no one in Edom is aware of this coming destruction. This is the same with self-righteous unbelieving sinners. They believe they are protected and secure from God's wrath because they ignorantly believe they have done what is required (*Isa. 28:14-15; Rom. 10:1-3*). But God will take away their refuge of lies and show them that without Christ and His blood, His righteousness, all they deserve is eternal damnation and death (*Isa. 28:16-20; Matt. 7:21-23; John 3:18-21; 8:21-24; Acts 17:31*).

(Obad. 8-16) - Even the wisest and strongest of people would not be able to help in the day of God's judgment. Edom's destruction was due to their ill treatment of Israel which reflected their hatred of the true and living God. It is important that we see that all of this foreshadows the awful eternal destiny of people who stand against Christ and persecute the true church of the living God. The day of the Lord's judgment was near when Obadiah declared this prophecy. This day is near for all of us today (*Heb. 9:27-28*). For those who, like Edom, stand against Christ and His church, this will be a day of terror (*2 Cor. 5:10-11*). For those who are saved by God's grace and brought to faith in Christ, all who appear before God washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed, it will be a day of glory.

(Obad. 17-20) - There shall be deliverance and holiness upon Mount Zion. The house of Jacob will possess all that Edom had. We must know that Israel did not earn or deserve their own deliverance and the possession of all that Edom had. It was given to them because they were God's chosen people through whom the Messiah would come into the world. They too were a sinful people, just like their father, Jacob, was a sinful man, but God had determined to choose them and keep them in tact until Messiah would come and bring salvation to God's spiritual Israel, His elect out of every nation. We can see a parallel here in Christ and our own salvation as this is the work of the King of kings and nature of His kingdom. Christ accomplished in His death on the cross all that God requires for the salvation of His people, spiritual Israel, spiritual sons and daughters of Jacob. The reward of all the possession of the heathen was given to Christ as He alone deserved and earned this glory (*Psa. 2*). And we, as His people, partake of this possession, this inheritance, because of the merits of Christ our Savior and King. "Mount Zion" is an emblem of Christ's kingdom, His church, wherein by Him there is deliverance. All who stand against Him and His church, like Edom, will be completely destroyed.

(Obad. 21) - The idea here is not that there are many saviors in an ultimate sense. There is only one true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, the word "saviors" has the sense of "deliverers." The contrast is plain - Edom will be completely destroyed, and no saviors shall help her, but saviors shall come to Mount Zion. Some apply this to Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Joshua after the future return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon. They were deliverers, or restorers, used of God in a temporal and physical sense. But the ultimate application is that these saviors are the apostles of Christ and especially of the preachers of the Gospel in the latter days. They are called "saviors" because they proclaim salvation in the one and only true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. They preach the Gospel of salvation by God's grace in Christ and show unto people the way of salvation. They and the word preached by them are the means and instruments of the salvation of God's elect. Christ is the only Savior Whom God appointed and sent, and He came to bring salvation and is become the Author and Finisher of it.

(Jon. 1:17) - The Lord had commanded Jonah go to a heathen Gentile nation, Ninevah, to announce God's judgment against them for their sins. But Jonah disobeyed and ran the opposite direction to Tarshish. *Jonah 1:3* tells us that he ran to "*flee from the presence of the LORD.*" Jonah was acting in the flesh, thinking he could flee from God's presence and avoid preaching to idolatrous Gentiles, especially ones who were Israel's enemies. But we cannot flee from God (*Psa. 139:7-13*). "*Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*" It was God's purpose and intent to bring His chosen people in Ninevah to repentance (*Jon. 3:6-10*). This shows us that God's sovereign will cannot be thwarted, not even by our own sinfulness and disobedience (*Isa. 46:9-13*). God is not willing that any of His elect, Jew or Gentile, should perish (*2 Pet. 3:9*). He intended for Jonah to go to Ninevah as His instrument to deliver His message, and He worked all things after the counsel of His own will by preparing this great fish to swallow Jonah and deliver him on the shore near Ninevah (*Jon. 2:10*).

In *Matthew 12:38-41*, Christ spoke of the "*sign of the prophet Jonas*" (Jonah) as a typological metaphor for His future death, burial, and resurrection. The Pharisees remained unconvinced of Jesus' claims about Himself, despite His having just cured a demon-possessed man who was both blind and mute. They asked for a sign from Him. He answered, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" (*Matt. 12:39-40*). Then He said, "*The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, BEHOLD, A GREATER THAN JONAS IS HERE*" (*Matt. 12:41; cf. Luke 11:32*). Jonah's experience is a picture of the greater Person of Christ and the greater accomplishment of our redemption by Christ.

In his natural fear and sinfulness, Jonah showed himself to be like all of us by nature who are sinners saved by God's grace in and by Christ. By His power and grace, and in His providence, the Lord preserved Jonah from himself and brought him back where he was appointed by the Lord to be. This is how God preserves all of us in spite of our sins and disobedience. He saves us and keeps us by His power, grace, and providence. He will not let us "*draw back unto perdition*" (*Heb. 10:39*).

(Jon. 2:1-3) - Jonah's crying unto the LORD is like Christ crying to His Father out of His own suffering for our sins (*cp. Psa. 22; 69:1-4*). We cannot imagine the agony of our Savior's suffering when in Gethsemane He sweat "*great drops of blood*" and cried out, "*O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt*" (*Matt. 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46*). Christ suffered both in His body and His soul. He was alienated from His Father as He cried out, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" This was a legal separation from the Father that Christ actually experienced and felt in His own body on the tree.

As Jonah was swallowed up by the great fish that the Lord had prepared for him, Christ was swallowed up by the wrath of God for the sins of His people imputed to Him and for which He agonized and was swallowed up in His suffering unto death to satisfy God's justice and bring forth everlasting righteousness for His people (*Psalms 22:14-15; 69:1-3*). And this is what God had prepared for Him before the foundation of the world and worked out in providence that brought Him to the cross to die, be buried, and be raised from the dead. Christ was in the grip of our sins imputed to Him by God's sovereign design and decree (*Acts 2:22-23*).

What an awesome thought this is for us ponder! Our Lord Jesus, when He was made to be sin for us, was swallowed up in the sea of God's wrath and slain as our Surety and Substitute. As a dead man, His body was cast into the heart of the earth, the tomb of death. But three days later, the Son of God, our Redeemer, arose from grave - victorious over death and everlasting righteousness established. His resurrection is the proof that He has put away all the sins of all His people, imputed to Him, and that His righteousness is imputed to them for their justification. So, Christ is greater than Jonah. Jonah's situation and his descent into despair was due to his own sin and disobedience. Christ's descent into despair was NOT due to His own personal sin, but to our sins imputed to Him.

(Jon. 2:4-7) - As Jonah in the belly of the great fish was totally dependent upon the Lord God to deliver him, Christ in the grip of our sins charged to Him made Himself totally dependent upon His Father for His deliverance as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer - *"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost"* (Luke 23:46). Looking toward the Lord's holy temple meant that he looked upwards and heavenwards; he looked up to God in His holy temple in heaven.

"Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God" - Obviously, we can understand how this applied to Jonah who was a sinner and in bowels of the great fish. When the Lord would cause the fish to vomit him out on dry land, it could certainly be said that the LORD brought his life from corruption. But Christ had no corruption within Himself. Although He was "made sin," it was only by imputation (2 Cor. 5:21). He knew no sin and was totally incorruptible within Himself. But He did suffer the effects of sin as He was condemned by the law of God and as He experienced all the agony and suffering unto death that sin brings. He died and was laid in a tomb for three days and nights, and then He was raised from the dead because of the righteousness He established for His people. In that way alone, He was brought up from corruption (Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:27; 13:35). We whom God chose and justified in Christ, all for whom Christ died and arose, have been brought up from corruption legally, by His righteousness imputed to us, and spiritually by His Spirit giving us life from the dead and bringing us to faith in Christ and true repentance. We will one day be brought up from corruption totally when we are changed in the twinkling of an eye to be raised unto glory (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

(Jon. 2:8) - Jonah realized that resisting God, running from Him, was like being an idolater. This is a warning to those who try to run or hide from God, even those who ignore God. This refers to God's providential mercies, not His saving mercy, which extend to all in His forbearance of them unto death.

(Jon. 2:9-10) - Jonah realized that thinking he could run from God was like being an idolater. He turned to God with thanksgiving and sacrifice. Paying vows to God is worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. Even this act pictured and foreshadowed Christ as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His chosen people by the price of His blood (Php. 3:3). Jonah realized that God is faithful to His purpose and His promises, and that **"SALVATION IS OF THE LORD."** This realization brings God's people to glorify Him alone as He reveals Himself in Christ. Salvation is of the LORD: (1) in its conception, purpose, and planning - (Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 8:28-30); (2) in its purchase - (Isa. 55:1ff.; Rom. 3:24-26; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:12; 1 Pet. 1:18-20); (3) in its execution - (Heb. 10:10-14); (4) in its application - (John 3:8; Eph. 2:1-9); (5) in its sustaining (preservation) - (John 10:27-30; Php. 2:12-13; Jer. 32:38-40); and (6) in its ultimate perfection (completion) - (Php. 1:6; Eph. 5:25-27; Jude 24-25).

(Micah 5:1) - Micah was a prophet in Judah for 59 years, during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He prophesied in Judah, about 750 years before Christ, while Hosea and Amos prophesied in Israel, and he was a contemporary of the prophet Isaiah. His message was one of God's judgment and wrath against Israel (1:6) and Judah (4:10) for their sins and idolatry. Both Israel and Judah had failed to live up to the covenant conditions God imposed on them in which there would be blessings in the land for obedience and cursing for disobedience. Eventually, they would be driven from the land of promise and destroyed, BUT THERE WOULD BE RESTORATION, not through a human king, earthly things and promises, BUT THROUGH THE PROMISE OF GOD IN AND BY THE MESSIAH WHO WAS TO COME. In each of his messages, Micah repeated the truth of GOD'S REMNANT (2:12; 4:7; 5:3,7-8; 7:18). This remnant would be made up of God's elect out of Israel but ultimately God's elect out of all nations, spiritual Israel, brought under the headship of Christ, the Messiah-King.

(Micah 5:2) - Micah begins to speak of the future coming of the Messiah-King. This prophecy is quoted in *Matthew 2:6* when the magi were searching for the king born in Bethlehem. These wise men from the East were told that from the tiny village of Bethlehem would come forth the Prince of Peace, the Light of the world. Micah's message of sin, repentance, and restoration finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ Who is the propitiation for our sins (*Rom. 3:24-25*) and the only way to God (*John 14:6*). "Bethlehem" was a small, insignificant village in Judah. The name means "house of bread." "Ephratah" (an ancient name for Bethlehem) means "place of fruitfulness." This pictures Christ, the Bread of life, and the Vine from which all fruitfulness in salvation comes. The name "Bethlehem Ephratah" was used to distinguish it from another Bethlehem of Zebulun (*Joshua 19:15*). Its history is full of Messianic promise (*Gen. 35:16-20; 35:11; Ruth 1:19-22; 4:11ff.*). Bethlehem is also known as the City of David. The city was David's family home (*1 Sam. 16:1; 17:12*) and the place where he was anointed king (*1 Sam. 16:4-13*). Christ, the Messiah-King, according to His humanity came from the lineage of David (*Gen. 49:10; John 7:40-42; Rom. 1:3*).

Christ came forth as sent from God the Father according to the covenant of grace of which He was made Surety for His people before the world began (*Gal. 4:4-6*). He also came forth of His own will as He willingly agreed in the covenant to be Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Preserver of God's elect (*John 10:16-18; 13:1; Heb. 12:1-3*). This prophecy also speaks of His deity as He is One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is the great "I AM," the "ALPHA AND OMEGA" with no beginning and no end (*John 1:1-2; 8:58; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Rev. 1:8*).

(Micah 5:3) - "He will give them up" - The Northern kingdom was destroyed by Assyria, and the Southern kingdom was destroyed and captured by Babylon, and ultimately destroyed by Rome. This is a testimony of God's justice to punish sin where it is imputed. Consider this as a picture of our fall in Adam. God chose us before the foundation of the world, but for a time, He gave us up unto sin, death, and depravity. He let us go the way of our sin, our earning, our deserving before He revealed Himself to us in Christ. "Until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth" - Judah was to be delivered from Babylon after 70 years, but the nation would then sink into obscurity and be conquered time and time again. This was God's message to the nation of their sin, inability, and not to look for salvation in a physical nation or law covenant, but to look to the future time of the Messiah-King. This could also be a reference to the virgin birth of Christ (*Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; Mt. 1:21-23*). "Then the remnant of His brethren shall return

unto the children of Israel” - This is the remnant of God’s elect according to His grace from every tribe and nation. All of these names, “remnant” (Rom. 11:1ff.; Rev. 12:17), “brethren” (Heb. 2:9ff.; Matt. 12:48-50; Rom. 8:28-29), “children” (Rom. 9:6ff.; Gal. 3:24ff.), and “Israel” (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:14-16), refer spiritually to the people of God under the headship of Christ.

(Micah 5:4) - “And He shall stand” - This speaks of His resurrection after His death - “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:” (Job 19:25). “And feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God;” - Christ will stand for and with His sheep. He will shepherd His flock and feed them in the power of and for the glory of the LORD. “And they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth” - This is the work of God in the preservation of His people in Christ unto final glory to live forever and ever with Him (John 6:37-45; 10:27-30; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 John 3:9; Jude 24-25).

(Micah 5:5-6) - “And this Man shall be the peace” - Christ is the Prince of peace Who made peace by the blood of His cross, for He is our peace (Eph. 2:14). The peace that Christ gives His people cannot be destroyed by the enemies of God. The “seven shepherds, and eight principal men” represent the whole testimony of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. “Seven” symbolizes the finished work of Christ to save His people, and this is what God’s witnesses preach. “Eight” symbolizes the new beginnings of Christ work on earth in time establishing the New Covenant, and the new birth of His people because of the righteousness He established at the cross (Rom. 8:10). Nothing will hinder or stop the salvation of God’s chosen people. They will all be brought to Christ and preserved unto glory (John 6:37-45).

(Micah 5:7-9) - “The remnant of Jacob” refers to God’s spiritual people, His elect out of all nations, both Jew and Gentile (Mal. 3:6; Rom. 9:13–10:4; 11:1-5; Gal. 6:14-16). This prophecy shows how the LORD in His wisdom and power will use His remnant (elect) among the Jews to be instruments of salvation for His remnant (elect) among the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16-17). The “dew” and the “showers” symbolize the Word and blessings of God in Christ (Deut. 3:22; Isa. 55:10-11; John 4:14). “As a young lion among the flocks of sheep” - When Christ delivers His people, it will not be a weak or temporary deliverance. His people will go forth in His strength and grace and triumph over all enemies as a young lion among sheep. This has its ultimate fulfillment in the salvation accomplished by Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, conquering His sheep. It also looks forward to the time of the peace which Christ brought to His people symbolized in the lion who will lie down with the lamb (Num. 23:24; Gen. 49:10).

(Micah 5:10-14) - This is the language of repentance of dead works and idolatry. The LORD will bring His people to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry (2 Pet. 3:9). When He reveals to His people the glory of the Person and finished work of Christ to accomplish righteousness by which He justifies us and from which He gives us life, He removes all our confidence in everything else including every thought that exalts itself above Christ and His righteousness alone for salvation (Php. 3:3-9).

(Micah 5:15) - This part of Micah’s prophecy ends with a statement of God’s just wrath against those who refuse to hearken to the Word of God, to the voice of Christ in the Gospel, but have turned a deaf ear to it, and despised it. They live and die in unbelief and shall perish in their sins. Christ, the Messiah-King, will be their Judge (Psa. 1:6; Luke 13:3,5; John 3:36; 5:28-29).

Lesson 108 - CHRIST, THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD *Nahum 1*

(Nahum 1:1) - God had sent the prophet Jonah to Nineveh because it was His purpose to bring them to repent of their evil and to serve Him. But 150 years later, Nineveh had returned to idolatry and arrogance (*Nahum 3:1-4*). God, then, sent another prophet, Nahum, to announce His judgment upon the people for their sins. This time God did not bring them to repentance, and the city was eventually conquered. As we consider Nahum's prophecy with Jonah's before him, we can consider the following - *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"* (*Rom. 11:22*). We need to understand that God is faithful both to His threats of eternal damnation upon all who continue in unbelief and come before Him without Christ, and to His promises of eternal life and glory for all who come before Him in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith. The severity of God is judgment unto damnation for all who die in their sins. The goodness of God is judgment unto eternal life by His free, sovereign grace for all who die in Christ.

"The burden of Nineveh" - *"Burden"* describes a very serious message that was heavy upon the heart of the prophet. It was a matter of life and death. This is the nature of the Gospel message of salvation by God's free and sovereign grace through the Lord Jesus Christ (*2 Cor. 2:15-17; Mark 16:15-16*). As believers, we understand the issues of God's justice, wrath, and condemnation, because we are well aware that by God's grace in Christ, we have been saved from what we deserve and have earned (*John 3:18-21; Rom. 5:6-10; 8:1,33-39*). Salvation is totally by God's grace in Christ!

(Nahum 1:2) - *"GOD IS JEALOUS"* - The jealousy of God is not the sinful jealousy or envy to which we are subject. God is jealous for His own glory, and this belongs to Him alone. God will not share His glory with another (*Isa. 42:8; 48:11*). He will not give to another that which belongs only to Him. When sinners reject, ignore, or deny Him the glory that belongs to Him in salvation, they are His enemies and can expect nothing but His just wrath. God alone is to be worshipped, and the only way sinners can worship Him in a way that glorifies Him is through the Lord Jesus Christ (*John 5:22-23; 17:1-3; Php. 3:3*).

(Nahum 1:3) - The LORD being *"slow to anger"* does not mean that He is waiting on sinners to do anything before He acts in justice or mercy. It is His *"forbearance"* (*Rom. 3:25*) showing that, in His purposes and intents, He holds back the judgment that sinners deserve. If not for God's forbearance, humanity would have been destroyed completely when Adam fell. But God had already purposed to save a people by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ, a people whom He had chosen in Christ before the world began. And one of the main purposes of His holding back the judgment of the wicked throughout time is to show His elect the necessity of salvation by His grace in Christ and the necessity of sinners fleeing to Christ for salvation and looking only to the Lord God for mercy and grace in Christ. Again - *"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off"* (*Rom. 11:22; cf. Rom. 2:1-4*). But make no mistake about this - God *"will not at all acquit the wicked."* All who live and die in their sins will stand before God under the just charge of their sins and will perish.

(Nahum 1:4-6) - God's power is unmatched in heaven and in earth. He will punish the wicked, and He will save His people from their sins. No one and nothing can stop this. Our only hope is to flee to Christ for salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. God's wrath is always just and according to truth (*Rom. 2:1-11*).

(Nahum 1:7-8) - The goodness of God does not dissuade His wrath against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. But that same goodness provides salvation full and free to all who “*trust in Him*” as they stand before God in Christ and submit to His righteousness for all salvation and glory (*Rom. 10:1-4*).

(Nahum 1:9-10) - No matter what men try to imagine or do to stand against God and justify themselves, it will not work. Men by nature stand together in opposition to Christ, His church, and His truth (*Acts 4:26-27*). Their unholy confederacy will not be victorious. God’s judgment is always successful, always right and complete. We see this in God’s wrath falling upon Christ for our sins imputed to Him - “*For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified*” (*Heb. 10:14*).

(Nahum 1:11) - This “*wicked counselor*” probably is Sennacherib, the King of Assyria (*2 Kings 18:13-16; Isa. 37:14-38*). He was bent on conquering Jerusalem, and he first attacked forty-six of Judah’s fortified cities and captured them (*Isa. 36:1*). Then they laid siege on Jerusalem. In desperation, King Hezekiah sent gold and silver as a peace offering to Assyria, hoping to appease the power-hungry Sennacherib (*2 Kings 18:13-16*). The Lord sent word to Hezekiah that Sennacherib would not step foot inside the city of Jerusalem (*Isa. 37:33*), so Hezekiah stood firm and refused to give in to the Assyrian king’s boastful threats (*2 Kings 18:28-35; 2 Chron. 32:17*). He commanded the terrified citizens of Jerusalem not to answer taunts from Sennacherib’s men outside the wall (*2 Kings 18:36*). Instead, Hezekiah encouraged the people to look to the LORD (*2 Chron. 32:7-8*). Sennacherib and his army are typical of all ungodly leaders and false prophets who stand against Christ and His people. We who believe are not to fear these sinful men. We are to look to Christ and find our peace and security in Him (*Heb. 12:1-2*).

(Nahum 1:12-14) - The LORD assured them that even though the Assyrians were settled in a self-confident victory, they would be “*cut down*,” and the “*yoke*” and “*bonds*” they had already placed upon Judah would be broken and removed. But God also said that He would remove the “*affliction*” which He had put upon Judah in using the Assyrians as instruments of judgment upon them for their sins. Though God did bring final judgment upon the Northern Kingdom through the Assyrians, He spared the Southern Kingdom. This was according to His covenant promises to Judah, Abraham, and David (*Gen. 49:10; 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:10-17*) to bring Christ into the world for the salvation of spiritual Israel, God’s elect out of every tribe and nation. It is true that, eventually, the LORD did bring final judgment upon Judah, but that did not take place until Christ was sent according to God’s purpose (*Gal. 4:4-6*). As we who are saved by God’s grace in Christ are constantly afflicted by the world, the flesh, and the devil, we need to realize constantly that Christ has already won the victory and assures us of victory because of His righteousness, wisdom, love, and power that He has engaged on our behalf (*Rom. 8:28-29*).

(Nahum 1:15) - As God gave them the assurance of the defeat of Assyria against them, He gave them the assurance of temporal salvation from their stronger enemy. This is the same that Isaiah published to Judah concerning their deliverance from Babylon later in their history (*Isa. 52:7*). The Apostle Paul applied this to the eternal and spiritual deliverance of God’s spiritual Israel, His elect, by the Lord Jesus Christ as He saved us from sin and death by His blood and righteousness for our justification and redemption, and by His life-giving Spirit to give us spiritual life and faith in Him (*Rom. 10:15*).

(Hab. 1:1-4) - Habakkuk's prophecy began with the prophet's cry over the great "*burden*" the Lord had laid upon his heart concerning the sins of Judah. Habakkuk was a contemporary of Jeremiah who also cried out to Judah. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was gone at this time, and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) was on the verge of being captured and destroyed by the Babylonians. After King Josiah, every king in Judah was evil, and the whole nation followed their evil ways. Habakkuk asked, "Why does God permit (put up with) this evil? Why doesn't He do something? Why doesn't He bring judgment upon the nation and put a stop to it?" Any time we think this way, God reminds us of three important things:

(1) God is longsuffering but not unjust. He will most certainly bring judgment against all sinners to whom sin is imputed. God reveals and glorifies Himself in judgment against all sin. He judges according to truth (*Rom. 2:2*) and will by no means clear the guilty (*Exod. 34:7*), which shows us that God's way of salvation and forgiveness is to remove the guilt of His people by placing it on Christ as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer. God's justice must be satisfied both in condemnation and salvation. For this reason, God imputed our sins to Christ, and He imputed Christ's righteousness to us.

(2) God reminds us that we are all sinners who deserve and have earned condemnation and wrath. It is only by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that any of us are not totally consumed by His wrath - "*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not*" (*Lam. 3:22*). Christ is our hiding place, our shelter, from the storm of God's wrath.

(3) No one will escape judgment (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 5:10; Heb. 9:27*), not even the saved, but the judgment of the saved has already taken place on the cross when Christ died for our sins imputed to Him, and we stand justified and redeemed before God by Christ's obedience unto death. His blood (the merit of His death as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer) has settled our sin-debt, and His righteousness (the righteousness of God) has been imputed to us (*Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34*).

(Hab. 1:5-17) - Habakkuk was perplexed that God would use a nation more sinful and idolatrous than Judah to bring judgment on His people. But God assures him that it is all well within His immutable and sovereign purpose to work all things after the counsel of His own will and to accomplish His purpose to bring Christ into the world (*Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11*). He also tells the prophet that such judgment would eventually come upon them for their sins, especially their rejection of Christ and the Gospel (*1:5; cf. Acts 13:36-41*). In *1:13*, Habakkuk speaks of the Chaldeans in comparison with the Jews, but he fails to keep in mind that God's judgment upon Judah was because of their sins. Judah deserved no more than Babylon. But in each generation of the Israelites, there was a remnant of righteous people, made so by the grace of God and based on the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to them and received by God-given faith. The only way that God can favorably look upon sinners is as they stand before Him in Christ, washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Rom. 8:33-34*).

(Hab. 2:1-4) - The prophet's name, "*Habakkuk*," means "one who embraces" or "clings." The lesson of this prophecy is that, as true children of God, we must live in this wicked world and continue in our state as SINNNERS SAVED BY GRACE embracing and clinging to Christ for our

whole salvation. When Habakkuk states, *“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH”* (Hab. 2:4), this is exactly what he was saying. To live by God-given faith is to LIVE IN AND BY CHRIST Who is the foundation and object of God-given faith. Habakkuk draws a clear line of distinction between God’s enemies and God’s children. The true children of God are not distinguished by works of righteousness that they have done. They are distinguished by the grace of God (Rom. 9:11-16) and by the faith that God has given them by which they look to and rest in the righteousness of the promised Messiah (Rom. 10:4-10).

The unbeliever’s soul *“is lifted up”* and *“is not upright in him,”* *“but THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY HIS FAITH.”* The *“lifted up”* soul describes all who are in unbelief of God’s way of salvation by His grace in Christ. They are totally driven by pride and self-righteousness, thinking that salvation is conditioned on their works and/or wills. The *“just”* (justified) are those who have been forgiven of all their sins by the blood of Christ and declared righteous in God’s sight by Christ’s righteousness imputed to them. As they, by God-given faith, received Christ, they have received Him and submitted to God’s way of salvation by grace (Rom. 5:21). To live by faith is not to live by the power, sincerity, and goodness of our believing. It is live by and rely upon the power, goodness, and merit of Christ. So, the JUST SHALL LIVE BY CHRIST as they look to and rest in Him by God-given faith.

Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to use this statement to show that both Jew and Gentile are justified before God based on the very *“righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith”* (Rom. 1:17). *“From faith”* means truth revealed to us by God the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16). *“To faith”* means truth received and believed by us in the power of the Holy Spirit Who gives us spiritual life and convinces us of the truth as it is in Christ. Paul was also inspired to use this statement in Galatians 3:11 - *“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.”* The emphasis here is that sinners cannot be declared righteous before God by their works. It is only by Christ’s merits alone, His righteousness imputed, that sinners can rightly be declared righteous in God’s sight (cf. Rom. 10:4). This phrase is also repeated in Hebrews 10:38 - *“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”* The emphasis here is on that God-given faith in Christ by which true believers persevere (continue) in the faith (cf. Heb. 12:1-2). And it is made clear that those who, by God’s grace and power, persevere unto the end are those whom God preserves in that faith that looks to and depends upon the goodness, merits, and power of Christ - *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul”* (Heb. 10:39; cf. 1 John 3:9).

(Hab. 3:17-19) - Chapter 3 records Habakkuk’s prayer to the LORD God for revival. He concludes it by showing the proper response of man under the sovereign power of God. He recognized his own weakness and low standing before the God of all majesty and power. This is where the LORD brings us all when He brings us to bow to Christ as our hope of salvation, righteousness, and eternal life. The *“fig tree”* is Judah in all of its failures throughout the Old Covenant. In spite of Judah’s failures, the prophet proclaims, *“Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* It reminds us Job who said, *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him”* (Job 13:15). He concludes with words of faith and worship acknowledging that the LORD God alone would save and establish him. The ultimate fulfillment of this desire and prayer can only be found in the Lord Jesus Christ in His righteousness and in the life that He gives unto His people. The hope of Israel was not in the law or in the elements of the law but in Christ to come. Truly, the justified shall live by and in Christ.

Lesson 110 - CHRIST - RESTORER OF GOD'S REMNANT *Zephaniah 3*

(Zeph. 3:1-8) - Zephaniah prophesied in Judah of God's judgment upon Jerusalem and the nations. The holy city had become "*filthy and polluted*," a place of idolatry rather than worship of the true God. God assured them that the whole earth is moving toward judgment (3:8; cf. Acts 17:31; Heb. 9:27).

(Zeph. 3:9-13) - The prophet began to speak of the salvation of God's remnant, elect from all nations, whom God chose and gave to His Son before the world began. These are the justified who are so by His grace based on the redemptive work of Christ Who restores them to His kingdom, gives them spiritual life, and calls them to Himself. They are people of a "*pure language*," the language of God's grace in the Gospel of salvation conditioned on Christ. It glorifies God, exalts Christ, and humbles the sinner. This language evidences that they "*call upon the name of the LORD*," which is sinners seeking mercy in Christ, through His blood (3:9). A "*suppliant*" is one who comes with a need, begging to have that need fulfilled. From all over the world, God's people will come begging for mercy in and by CHRIST CRUCIFIED! They will come pleading the blood of Christ, submitting to His righteousness imputed and received by God-given faith (3:10). Verse 11 is not saying that those who come to God in Christ are not sinners and do not need to be ashamed and sorrowful over their sins. But all who stand before God in Christ will not be ashamed in the sense of condemnation and eternal wrath because Christ will bear their sins on the cross and finish the work. He will work out a perfect righteousness for His people which God has imputed to them, and they stand before Him justified (Rom. 9:33; 10:11). And Christ will "*take away*" all who, in their pride, refuse to bow to His sovereign rule and way. The "*afflicted and poor people*" describes sinners under the conviction of the Holy Spirit so as to see their spiritual need and poverty, to see their need of God's grace and mercy in Christ (3:12). They all will be brought to "*trust in the name of the LORD*" (cf. Luke 18:13).

Verse 13 speaks of God's remnant, restored unto Him by Christ, the Redeemer and Restorer. When the Lord speaks of His remnant, it is always His chosen, redeemed, and restored people "*according to the election of grace*" (Rom. 11:5). They "*shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies*" - This is not to say that they are not sinners who yet fall short in themselves and in their works of the perfection of righteousness that can only be found in Christ and His righteousness imputed. It is also not to say that, even as sinners saved by grace, they do not have the capacity to tell lies and sometimes do, which is a remaining corruption of the flesh. But in Christ, their sins and iniquities are not imputed to them and cannot condemn them. By God's grace and power, they have been made "*servants of righteousness*" (Rom. 6:17-18), which means they believe, rest in, and follow Christ for forgiveness and righteousness. They are truthful before God about their sins and that if God were to judge them by their works, they would be condemned forever (Psa. 130:3; Lam. 3:22). They do not speak the lies of false religion and false gospels, but, as they are led by the Spirit, they speak that which is right and truthful concerning how God is just to justify the ungodly, how God saves sinners in and by Christ. They shall feed upon God's Word and lie down in the green pastures of His salvation and His Word in Christ (Psa. 23).

(Zeph. 3:14-20) - Here is the song of the remnant of God's grace. This is Zion, the church of Christ, which has good reason to sing from the heart, because of the coming of Christ and the great work He has accomplished for us. "*Jerusalem*" below had brief times of rejoicing, but this is ultimately the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:25-31; Heb. 12:22-24). The rest of the world is under the wrath of God. But "*the Lord hath taken away thy judgments*" - By the work of

His free and sovereign grace, Christ, our great God and Savior, has taken away our judgments by taking our judgment upon Himself.

"He hath cast out thine enemy" - Satan is the great enemy and accuser of the brethren, but on the cross Christ has cast him out (*John 12:31; Rev. 12:9-11; Rom. 8:32-39*).

"The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee" - Christ is the heart and life of the church collectively, and He dwells in the hearts of His people by His Spirit and His Word.

"Thou shalt not see evil anymore" - This is obviously not speaking of physical Israel, for they saw evil the rest of their days. This is spiritual Israel who are safe in Christ and within the realm of God's sovereign goodness and protection (*Rom. 8:28*).

"In that day" - This is the day of the LORD when Christ would come to redeem and restore the remnant. The LORD shall speak peace to His people and encourage them to continue looking to and following Him. *"The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty!"* - CHRIST IS GOD WITH US, and He is omnipotent (*2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25*). *"He will save"* His people from their sins, and He is not willing that any of His remnant should perish but that all of them be brought to repentance (*Matt. 1:21,23; John 10:11-30*). *"He will rejoice over thee with joy"* - As a bridegroom rejoices over His bride, the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, rejoices over His people (*Isa. 62:3-5; 61:10*).

It is His glory to *"rest in His love"* for His elect (*1 John 4:10*). This is His redeeming love that insures the eternal salvation of all the objects of His love and is secured by the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Surety, Substitute, Redeemer, and Restorer of His people, the elect remnant. It is love that brings rest because Christ has finished all the work required to insure the salvation of the remnant (*Isa. 53:10-12; Dan. 9:24; John 19:30; Heb. 4:1-11*).

"He will joy over thee with singing" - This last phrase of *Verse 17* begins the song of our Savior as He is exalted and glorified in our salvation by God's grace in Him. Notice how the LORD makes certain that we understand that salvation is of Him and by Him and not of us and by us. He states this in the six *"I WILL"* statements that follow:

"I WILL gather ..." - This is the salvation, restoration, and calling of the remnant unto Himself under the preaching of the Gospel in the power of Christ by the Holy Spirit. These are such as have been made *"sorrowful"* over their sins and who have born the reproach of sin and depravity so that they have been brought by the Spirit to hunger and thirst after righteousness in and by Christ (*Matt. 5:6; John 16:9-11*). They will bear the reproach of sin and bondage no more because Christ has borne it for them.

"Behold, at that time I WILL undo all that afflict thee" - On the cross, Christ dealt with all that afflicts us - sin, Satan, the curse of the law. In time, all enemies will be put down forever and ever.

"And I WILL save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out" - Just like Jacob was made lame in order to heal him, so will all spiritual Israel. Just like man by nature is alienated from God as we were driven from the Garden in Adam, we will be gathered together in one (*Eph. 2:12ff.*).

"And I WILL get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame" - This *"praise and fame"* is not for ourselves but for the glory of God as we are trophies of His glory and grace in Christ Jesus our Redeemer and Restorer.

"At that time WILL I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you" - This refers to Judgment when the remnant will be made known before the whole universe as the people of God and sinners saved by His grace in Christ. *"For I WILL make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD"* - Again, this is our name as we are married to Christ - THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (*Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16*). All praise to the God of all grace and glory in our salvation.

Lesson 111 - CHRIST, THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS *Haggai*

(Hag. 1:1-2) - Haggai was a prophet to the restored remnant of Judah who returned to Jerusalem from the 70-year captivity in Babylon. His name means “festive” or “festival of the Lord,” and marked that the return of the nation to Jerusalem was to be a celebration of worship and praise to the Lord God of Israel. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all sent back to Jerusalem as God’s prophets. Haggai and Zechariah returned with the first group under Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest. Malachi came in the second group under Nehemiah. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther give us the historical record of the return. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi give us the prophetic record of the return.

When the people arrived in Jerusalem, they found the city in ruins and the temple totally destroyed. The Lord sent them back to rebuild, first, the temple (re-establish worship), and, second, to rebuild the city. They began the work to rebuild the temple and in two years laid the foundation. This temple was smaller than Solomon’s temple, but the work went rapidly, then, they quit working for three reasons: (1) They were disappointed that in their eyes it was not as grand as Solomon’s temple; (2) they wanted to build houses for themselves; (3) they had opposition and hostility from Samaritans, outsiders, who wanted to get involved. The project began in 536 B.C., and it was abandoned for 15-16 years. The Lord sent Haggai and Zechariah to urge the people to continue to build the temple (*Ezra 5:1-2*).

(Hag. 1:2-11) - Haggai’s message was that nothing should cause us to neglect the glory of God in salvation by His grace through Christ. He described the vanity of life without God, without Christ. Even though this second temple was not as impressive as Solomon’s temple, and even though it was lacking (no Ark), it still represented and typified the glory of God in the salvation of sinners by the blood of Christ, our great High Priest and the Lamb of God slain for our sins and to establish righteousness for us. Herein is the glory of God as He provides in Christ all that we need for salvation and eternal glory.

(Hag. 1:12-15) - Here we see the power of God in bringing the people to repentance and inspiring to get on with rebuilding the temple and reestablishing the worship of God. Here is a picture of salvation for the people of God: Zerubbabel is a picture of Christ our King; Joshua is a picture of Christ our High Priest; and Haggai is a picture of Christ our Prophet. The remnant of the people (the elect of God) “*did fear before the Lord.*” They came to respect and revere God in their thoughts and hearts. This is a picture of sinners being brought to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works.

(Hag. 2:1-4) - A month later the work on the temple stopped again, because the people became discouraged as the present temple seemed so plain and small compared to Solomon’s temple (*Ezra 3:12*). Again, the people missed the fact that the glory of the temple was not in physical beauty but in the presence of the LORD and the glory of the Lord as the temple typified the Person and work of Christ.

(Hag. 2:5) - The continued presence of the Lord was not wrapped up in the building but in the promise of the EVERLASTING COVENANT OF GRACE all conditioned on the promised Messiah. Its glory was all about Christ in His glorious Person and the glory and power of His finished work on Calvary to bring forth righteousness by which God justifies His people by imputing Christ’s righteousness to us.

(Hag. 2:6-9) - This is a prophecy of the Messiah. Again, the beauty of the temple was in what it pictured in the coming of Christ and the salvation of His people, the true, spiritual temple

of the Lord. This shaking is God intervening and interjecting Himself into the world and speaks of the entrance of God in human flesh into the sinful realm of men. This would mean the abolishment of the Old and the establishment of the New Covenant. It would mean the removing of something not stable and bringing in of something that cannot be shaken (*Heb. 12:25-29*). All of this would be fulfilled in the coming of Christ (*Heb. 10*). Notice in *verse 7* how the Messiah is identified as *“THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS.”* It is not that all people of all nations would desire Him as LORD and SAVIOR. By nature (as we are born spiritually dead and depraved), none of us desire Him. We desire our own way of salvation which is a way of death (*Prov. 14:12; 16:25*). But this means that God’s elect in all nations, Jew and Gentile, will be brought by God to desire Him as their one and only Lord and Savior. They will be brought to see their need of salvation by God’s grace, their need of righteousness which they cannot produce, their need of forgiveness by His blood. And they will be brought to see that their need can only be satisfied in the glorious Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*Matt. 5:6; cf. John 14:6*). *Verse 9* speaks of Christ Himself and His church. The glory of salvation of sinners by God’s grace in Christ far exceeds the earthly and temporal glory of any earthly temple (*2 Cor. 3:1-11*).

(Hag. 2:10-19) - Haggai’s question for the priests had to do with the laws of cleansing under the Old Covenant. Remember, the law was given to expose their sinfulness unto death and to drive them to the Lord for mercy as revealed in the blood sacrifices which all pictured Christ. This issue of cleanliness was intended to show them their need of cleansing by the blood of atonement for which the temple was to be built. The temple was a visible testimony to the uncleanness of all men by nature and the only way a sinner can be made clean - THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST! In *verses 15-17* the prophet tells them to consider the temple itself from its very foundation. Our cleanness and acceptance with God are to be found in the Person and work of Christ that was portrayed in all the sacrifices and the priesthood connected with the temple. *Verse 19* describes the promise of future blessings that can only be realized by the coming of Christ, the accomplishment of His work of righteousness for His people.

(Hag. 2:20-23) - Haggai’s conclusion was addressed to *“Zerubbabel,”* the governor, who is a type of Christ, the King and Governor of His people. In Zerubbabel, the line of Judah and of David was preserved according to the promise of God that Messiah would come through them according to the flesh. *“I will shake the heavens and the earth”* - This is God intervening and interjecting Himself into the world by the coming of God the Son in human flesh without sin. It involves Christ’s work of dying on the cross, putting away the sins of His people, establishing the righteousness by which God justifies His people, overthrowing the kingdom of Satan, and calling His people from all over the world unto Him as their one and only Savior and Lord (*John 12:31-32; 16:8-11*). Christ will prevail over all His enemies!

Verse 23 speaks of Zerubbabel as a type of Christ. The name *“Zerubbabel”* means *“sown in Babylon.”* In His human nature, and even though He Himself was not, and never would be, a sinful man, Christ was sown (born) into the fallen, sinful, and cursed world. Zerubbabel was the son of *“Shealtiel”* whose name means *“I have asked of God.”* Christ is the gift of God to His people, and in and by Him, we have the gift of salvation, righteousness, forgiveness, and eternal life (*John 3:16; Rom. 8:32*). A *“signet”* is a seal whereby something is marked (identified). Christ is that One whom God the Father has sealed (*John 6:27*). He is that One by whom all the blessings of grace are sealed to His people in regeneration, by the gift of his Spirit (*Eph. 1:13*). Christ is Jehovah’s Servant and Signet, the seal of the covenant and the *“the express image”* of the Father (*Heb. 1:1-3*).

(Zech. 3:1) - Zechariah's prophecy was God's Word to the people not to look to themselves for salvation, but look to Christ, the promised Messiah, Who would come and redeem the elect of God, both Jew and Gentile (*Zech. 13:1*). This is stated in visions that God gave to the prophet. One of these visions involves Joshua, the high priest, standing before the LORD being judged for his sins. This is a vision of the power of God in the salvation of sinners by His grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this vision, Joshua the high priest stands before the Angel of the LORD. As the high priest of Israel, Joshua is a type of Christ Who is the eternal high priest of SPIRITUAL Israel (*Heb. 2:17; 4:14-16; 7:26; 8:1*). The Angel of the LORD is Christ Himself as the Advocate of His people (*1 John 2:1-2*). Satan stands at His right hand to "*resist*" (accuse) Joshua. What is Satan's accusation against Joshua and, in essence, the people whom Joshua represents? It is that they are all sinners who deserve to be put to death and condemned.

(Zech. 3:2) - Joshua remains silent (*Rom. 3:19-20*), but he has an Advocate - Jesus Christ the Righteous. The LORD here is Jehovah (God our Savior). This is the God of the covenant of grace Who determined to save His people through Christ upon Whom all conditions of salvation were placed. And Christ raises two points of Gospel truth to rebuke Satan: (1) "*The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee*" - This speaks of God's sovereign, electing grace wherein, before the foundation of the world, God chose a people to save in Christ (*Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:8-9*). (2) "*Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*" - This speaks of the great redemption Christ accomplished on the cross when He went under the fiery wrath of God and redeemed His people, Jew and Gentile, from their sins (*Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:18-21; Rev. 5:9*).

(Zech. 3:3) - "*Filthy garments*" is a metaphor for the sin of all people by nature as fallen in Adam and as born spiritually dead and depraved. "*Filthy*" is most disgusting - "excrement covered." Man's best before God is as a filthy garment (*Isa. 64:6; Luke 16:15; Php. 3:7-9*). Being "*CLOTHED*" with "*filthy garments*" is a metaphor, not just for the sins of God's people, but for their sins IMPUTED (charged) to Christ as their Surety. Remember, Joshua stands here as the representative of Israel. Before the world began, God chose His beloved Son to be the Representative and Surety of His chosen people, placing all responsibility for their salvation upon Him (*Isa. 9:6-7; 22:21-22*). Christ knew no sin in Himself, but He was "made sin for us that we would be made the righteousness of God IN HIM" (*2 Cor. 5:19-21*).

What a marvelous truth is taught here in this courtroom scene showing how salvation is first and foremost a legal matter. God must be just in all His dealings, including salvation, with sinful men. His holiness, righteousness, and justice must be honored. This is the heart of the Gospel - how God can be just and still justify the ungodly (*Job 9:2; 25:4-6; Rom. 4:1-8*). This is what the temple in Jerusalem was all about - Christ dying on the cross for the sins of His sheep imputed to Him, and His accomplishment of their redemption by His blood, the establishment of righteousness by which God has justified them all and from which He gives them spiritual life in the new birth.

(Zech. 3:4) - "*Take away the filthy garments from him*" - This describes the successful work of Christ as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's elect. He paid their debt in full with the price of His blood! He satisfied God's justice and purged their sins away (*Heb. 1:3; 10:14*). "*Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee*" - This is God's work, not man's. This is not a potential cleansing (waiting on a response from the sinner) but actual cleansing - clearly the sovereign work of God. God will not and cannot charge their sins and iniquities to them because they were all charged to Christ Who purged them away by His obedience unto death (*Rom. 8:33-34*). "*I will clothe thee with change of raiment*" - In His obedience unto death,

Christ worked out a perfect righteousness which God has imputed to all of His people. They stand before Him forgiven of all their sins by the blood of Christ and declared righteous in His sight by Christ's righteousness imputed to them. This righteousness imputed to us is declared under the metaphor of wearing a garment (*Isa. 61:10-11; Matt. 22:11-12; Rev. 19:7-8*). This was, and is, a legal matter in the court of God's justice, and it cannot be reversed!

(Zech. 3:5) - Those who argue against imputed righteousness claiming that salvation is "more than a legal matter" have no valid argument. Salvation IS more than a legal matter, but our justification before God is totally a legal matter. Salvation does not stop with the legal issues. It also provides spiritual life for God's people whereby they believe in Christ, repent of dead works and idolatry, and persevere in faith unto glory. Christ's righteousness imputed to us is not only the ground of our justification; it is also the power from which the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance by the new birth (*John 12:32-33; 16:7-11; 17:1-4; Rom. 8:10; Gal. 3:26-29*).

The "*fair mitre*" is a pure turban or diadem, which was part of the high priest's garments. It had a gold plate inscribed with the phrase "*HOLINESS TO THE LORD*" (*Exodus 28:36-38*). This indicates how the Holy Spirit brings us to a saving knowledge of Christ as the Lord our Righteousness (*Rom. 1:16-17; 10:4-10*). "*Clothed him with garments*" refers to the priestly robes that picture the garments of Christ's righteousness imputed and all blessings of salvation (*Isa. 61:10*). The Gospel truth of being clothed by God in righteousness runs from *Genesis* (*Gen. 3:7,21*) to *Revelation* (*Rev. 7:13-14*).

(Zech. 3:6-7) - The Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua to walk in God's ways and keep His requirements by looking to and following Christ (*Heb. 12:2*). This is all regulated by the Gospel promise and commands to walk having our hearts established with grace, knowing that we are safe and secure in Christ (*Rom. 8:1,33-34*). Joshua, as all believers, would then be able to discern God's family and continually come to the throne of grace boldly and freely through Christ (*Heb. 4:14-16; 10:19-22*).

(Zech. 3:8) - This shows how the high priests were types of Christ. "*Men wondered at*" means "men of type" or "of a sign." They all represented someone greater than themselves, and this was Christ - God's "*Servant the Branch*" (*Zech. 6:12; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15*). It is an amazing act of God's providence and power that in spite of their captivity, He would not let this earthly priesthood die until Messiah would come. When Christ finished His work that priesthood was abolished forever (*Heb. 7:11ff.; 9:1ff.*).

(Zech. 3:9) - Messiah the Branch is also "*the stone*" set before Joshua (*Dan. 2:34-35*). Christ is the foundation and cornerstone, the Rock of the church (*1 Cor. 3:10-11; 1 Pet. 2:6-8*). "*Seven eyes*" is Christ as the all-seeing Foundation Stone. Like the high priests of old, the names of God's elect are engraved upon His shoulders (i.e. their salvation conditioned upon Him alone) and His breast (His heart as He loves them with a perfect love) (*Exod. 28:9-12,21*). "*And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day*" - This is the great day when Christ purged our sins away by His death on the cross as Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people (*Heb. 10:10-14*).

(3:10) - This was a symbolic reference to Israel under the peaceful and prosperous reign of Solomon (*1 Kings 4:20-25; Micah 4:4*). But this is mainly a prophecy of Christ and the rest, peace, and prosperity of the kingdom of God (Spiritual Israel) under His reign (*Matt. 11:28; Heb. 4:9-11*).

(Zech. 13:1) - In Zechariah 12 - 14, Zechariah prophesied of a future day of salvation for God's chosen people among the Jews (the remnant of grace). This would be the days initiated by the coming of the Messiah to do His great work of redemption for His people and which would result in His bringing them to faith in Christ and repentance of dead works and idolatry - *"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"* (Zech. 12:10). This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth, and it is the fruit of the righteousness that Christ produced in His obedience unto death on the cross where He died as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of His people. This is the righteousness that God has imputed to His people and from which He gives them spiritual life and brings them to glory. As soon as a sinner has Christ revealed to him and in him by the Spirit of grace, he looks upon the Savior he has pierced and is made to mourn for his sin; and as soon as the sinner looks to Christ and mourns, he is comforted.

Here in Zechariah 13, the prophet speaks of the day when the ground of salvation for God's people would be realized and established in history in *"the fountain opened,"* which is Christ shedding His blood *"for sin and uncleanness"* of His people, *"the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."* And he speaks of the day when Christ's sheep experience the reality of redemption, justification, forgiveness, and cleansing in their souls. This could not mean the physical inhabitants of physical Jerusalem based on the sacrifices of animals - *"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"* (Heb. 10:4). It refers to the spiritual inhabitants of the heavenly Jerusalem, which includes God's remnant from the Jews but also God's remnant among Gentiles (Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 6:14-16). This fountain has been opened for all who believe on Christ. To them, He is the fountain of life and living waters (Psa. 36:9; Prov. 14:27; Jer. 17:13; John 4:10-14; Rev. 21:6).

(Zech. 13:2) - About seventy years before this prophecy, the Lord brought an indictment against the people - *"For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (Jer. 2:13). That evil state had continued on unto Zechariah's day. Idolatry and false prophecy were the two main ways the people of Israel were led astray from God. God would not only provide a fountain to cleanse (righteousness imputed), but He would also cleanse His true church of idolatry and false prophecy by bringing His people to repentance from dead works and former idolatry (2 Pet. 3:9). Using figurative language, in these verses Zechariah describes the blessed consequences of sinners being cleansed in the Fountain of Christ's blood. Spiritual Jerusalem, the city and kingdom of God, will be cleansed of all idolatry, false prophecy, and unclean spirits. Although the true people of God are still sinners saved by grace, and although, while in this flesh, they still have to fight evil within themselves, by His sovereign grace and power, the Lord God has brought them to faith in Christ, to believe the true Gospel wherein Christ is revealed in the glory of His Person and the power of His finished work. God has brought them to repentance of idolatry and dead works, and the tenor of their lives is to live and move by the Spirit of God Who brings them continually to look to Christ for all salvation, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, eternal life, and glory.

(Zech. 13:3) - Under the Old Covenant law, false prophets and false priests were sentenced to death (Deut. 18:20), and even their natural family members were to be the first in carrying

out this sentence (*Deut. 13:6-10*). Thank God, we are not under the law! We do not advocate the stoning of rebel sons, or the execution of false prophets. Yet, we must and do side with God against His enemies, even if His enemies are our nearest kinsmen (*Matt. 10:34-38; Luke 14:26-27*). Grace experienced in the soul creates such an attachment to and love for Christ, His interest, His Gospel, His glory, His Church, that the enemies of the Gospel become our enemies and are disowned by us (*Psalms 119:104,128; 139:21-22*). Those who oppose our God, oppose the Gospel of His grace, and oppose His Son shall perish under the sword of His justice; and we acknowledge that they should.

(Zech. 13:4-5) - These verses speak of the conversion of some false prophets. God will bring them to repent of their greed, lies, and deception. They will cease to wear the “*rough garment*” of animal skin trying to show themselves to appear like the true prophet Elijah. False prophets, like the Pharisees (*Matt. 23:28*), are concerned more with outward appearance, but God’s true prophets know that the only garment that means anything to God’s people is the imputed righteousness of Christ. So, some who had been false messengers would be ashamed of their message. They will put away the clothing of the prophets (a robe of coarse hair) and earn an honest living, such as tending cattle. This was fulfilled in those scribes and Pharisees that afterwards became believers, and said, with Paul, “*Beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (*Php. 3:2-3*). Consider Paul’s conversion as an example (*Php. 3:7-9*).

(Zech. 13:6) - A more accurate translation is “What are these wound between thy hands,” referring to the chest, or the heart. It is one who asked the converted false prophet, “What has happened to you?” “*Wounds*” could then mean the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in slaying sinners by the law in order to bring them to Christ for spiritual and eternal healing (*Psa. 127:1-2; Prov. 27:6*).

(Zech. 13:7-9) - This speaks of the Person and work of Christ, God’s Shepherd, who is also the LORD’s “*fellow*” (equal) as He is the Son of God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. This is the same truth as stated in *Isaiah 53:10* that It was God the Father Who gave the command to strike the Shepherd. Putting His Son under His wrath, based on our sins imputed to Him, is God’s way of being both just and Justifier. Christ was no victim of circumstance or at the mercy of religious, political, or military power. It was the planned, ordained work of the LORD God, prophesied by Isaiah hundreds of years before it happened. This was God’s victory, not Satan’s or man’s triumph, and it is the victory of all of His sheep.

Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. Christ quoted this phrase as recorded in *Matthew 26:31* as referring to Himself and in reference to the scattering of His disciples during His arrest and suffering. There is also a sense in which the disciples were a type of God’s elect in Israel as a whole in being scattered throughout the world and this being God’s way of bringing His elect among the Gentiles into the kingdom. *Verses 8-9* shows how that a remnant will be saved out of Israel, and God will bring this remnant through the fire (temptations, trials, persecutions), and they will be made known by their being brought by God to call on His name (*Rom. 10:13-17*). God will reveal Himself to His people in and by the Lord Jesus Christ as He is identified and distinguished in the Gospel (*Rom. 1:1-4,16-17*). The LORD God “*will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God*” - This is covenant language in which God in grace has united Himself to His people through the Lord Jesus Christ, based upon the merit of His righteousness worked out by His obedience unto death - the Fountain opened.

(Mal. 4:1) - At this time, the temple had been rebuilt according to God's commandment, but the people were still in unbelief and rebellion. This showed itself in three areas: (1) False professions of faith with no heart for truth - due to the corrupt priesthood - priests taught the people to dishonor God's altar (way of salvation) (*Neh. 13:7-9, 29; Mal. 1:6-8*); (2) Compromise of God's glory and truth - embraced idolatry and formed alliances with heathen nations around them (*Neh. 13:23-27; Mal. 2:10-16*) - resulted both in mixed marriages, mixed language, and a disregard for God's law; and (3) They robbed God by not supporting the temple and the priesthood with their tithes (*Neh. 13:10-12; Mal. 3:8-10*). Malachi, whose name means "My [God's] messenger," declared that God's judgment would come upon them for their sins. God will punish all sinners to whom sin is imputed.

(Mal. 4:2) - In every age, regardless how dark and sinful, God has always had (and has) a people who believe in and are true to Him, faithful to serve Him. No matter how small that group is, it was (and is) always GOD'S REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE (*Rom. 11:1-6*). The salvation of this remnant was (and is) by God's free and sovereign grace based on the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is identified here as **"THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS"** (*cf. Rom. 9:11-16*). This book of *Malachi* concludes the Old Testament and emphasizes the theme with the prophecy and proclamation of the salvation for sinners, not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles, founded in and upon the glorious Person and finished, successful work of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the bright and morning star and the light of life (*2 Sam. 23:4; Psa. 84:11; Isa. 9:2; 60:1-3, 19-20; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 21:23-24; 22:16*). It is as simple as this - Everything connected with salvation (light, life, and righteousness) is found in Christ (*John 14:6; 2 Cor. 11:3*). It is found in:

WHO CHRIST IS - God manifest in the flesh, the Word made flesh Who dwelt among us, and the light of the glory of God (*Matt. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:6; 1 Tim. 3:16*).

WHAT CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED IN HIS OBEDIENCE AND RESURRECTION - As Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people, given to Him before the world began (*2 Tim. 1:9-10*), Christ paid in full the sin-debt of His people imputed to Him and accomplished their redemption, working out righteousness which God has imputed to them and by which they are justified before God. God is just to justify them based on Christ the Sun of Righteousness (*Isa. 45:21-25; 53:10-12; Matt. 1:21; Rom. 3:24-25; 8:33-39; Heb. 9:14; 10:14*).

WHAT CHRIST PROVIDES FOR HIS PEOPLE IN SALVATION - As the Sun of Righteousness, Christ did not make salvation a possibility for those sinners who would believe or meet other conditions to empower His work. He made salvation a sure thing for those for whom He died and arose again. All for whom He died and arose again are guaranteed spiritual life, faith, repentance, and perseverance unto glory. HE COMES **"WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS."** Going forth and growing up **"AS CALVES OF THE STALL"** metaphorically describes sinners saved by grace having been given new life by the Holy Spirit and going forth and growing up in the grace, strength, and newness of spiritual life (*cf. Isa. 30:26; John 1:4; 6:37-45; 8:12; 12:31-32; 16:7-11; 17; Rom. 8:31-39; Eph. 1:3-14; Gal. 4:4-5; Heb. 2:9-17*).

WHAT CHRIST COMMANDS - The life we live as sinners saved by grace is to be guided by the word of our Lord and Savior and not by the words and opinions of men, and it is to be motivated, not by law or rewards, but by grace, gratitude, and love (*Matt. 4:17, 19; 5:16; 6:19-21, 33; 7:15-16; John 14:15; 21:15-16; Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 4-5*). All of His commandments are found in the New Testament epistles, and these cited are just a few examples.

(Mal. 4:3) - When the Sun of Righteousness comes, He will expose the darkness of sin and unrighteousness, and He will judge the wicked condemned for their sin (*John 3:18-20*). It said that the same sun that melts wax hardens clay. The same Sun of Righteousness Who will melt the hearts of His people and cause them to mourn for sin and seek Him for salvation will harden the hearts of sinners who refuse to repent. As stated, God's judgment of wrath is upon all who are found without Christ, without being washed in His blood and justified in His righteousness imputed (*John 3:36*). There is nothing but wrath for sinners to whom sin is imputed. There is nothing but grace and glory for sinners to whom righteousness is imputed (*Psa. 32:1-2; Rom. 4:1-8; 2 Cor. 5:21*). To them, the Lord will give "*beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified*" (*Isa. 61:3*).

(Mal. 4:4) - When the Sun of Righteousness comes, He will not put His people back under "*the law of Moses,*" but He will remind them of the sins and failures of the people under that law and how they could not find righteousness and life by their works under that law. The law was given to show them their sins and the impossibility of salvation by their works (*Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19*). Its pictures and types revealed salvation by God's grace through Christ, the Sun of Righteousness (*John 5:39-47; Luke 24:27,44-49; 2 Cor. 3:12-18*).

(Mal. 4:5) - The unbelieving Jews mistakenly believe that this refers to "*Elijah the prophet*" personally, and that he will come back from the dead in that "*great and dreadful day of the LORD.*" But this prophecy does not refer to Elijah personally. It refers to John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets right before Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, comes into the world. Whereas Moses represented the law, Elijah represented the school, office, and message of the true prophets of God. In the Old Testament, they pointed sinners to look to the future for salvation by the grace of God in the promise of the Messiah (*Luke 9:28-36*). John the Baptist was part of this school, office, and message of the prophets (*Matt. 11:7-15; 17:9-13; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:13-17*). He himself was the subject of this Old Testament prophecy (*Mal. 3:1-5*).

(Mal. 4:6) - This is the promise of uniting families spiritually in the Gospel under the headship of Christ, but it also speaks of the "*fathers,*" meaning the patriarchs, such as the faith of Abraham (*Gal. 3:26-29*). Of course, we know that the Gospel will also divide families (*Matt. 10:21,34-39*). But both Jew and Gentile will be united into one family by God's grace in Christ (*Eph. 2:11-22*). "*Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" - With the assurance of the coming of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, Malachi was inspired by the Holy Spirit to end God's revelation in the Old Testament on a very positive note - The promise of eternal life to all who believe in Christ. But there is still a strong warning to all who refuse to believe in and embrace Christ for all salvation, forgiveness, righteousness, eternal life, and glory. It is the pronouncement of God's curse, His just wrath, upon all to whom Christ is not the Sun of Righteousness. Without Christ's righteousness shining forth upon us as God has imputed it to us, and shining within our hearts as God has given us the light within our hearts that we would believe in Christ and unto righteousness, we would all be under God's curse and be damned forever. But there is hope for sinners, and that hope is in Christ, the Sun of Righteousness and in Him alone - "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (*Rom. 10:4*).