



Behold the Lamb
Publications

Simply Christ

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 13

*Eleven Gospel Messages from our
Weekly SIMPLY CHRIST Newsletter!*

Simply Christ

The Apostle Paul spoke of a time when Christian people would *“heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* II Timothy 4:3-4. A fable is something which is “made up.” Fables find a home in the church because they tell people what they already want to hear. Sadly, we live in an hour where the hearts of many would rather believe a fable than the record of God’s word.

You can prove almost anything by using only the scriptures which support your belief. If you really want to know if your belief is the truth, go to God’s word to see if it can be disproved

“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Matthew 15:9

by the scripture. The truth is not afraid of the truth!

The purpose of Simply Christ and other Behold the Lamb Publications is to share the gospel of Christ according to what the scriptures actually say. We are not defenders of

denomination, dogma, religious tradition, or the newest religious fad. We have set our heart to simply say what the word of God actually says.



Leroy Surface



Keith Surface

As a young man I was told by an elder minister that I should just accept what the leaders of “our movement” told us was true rather than believe

what I saw the scriptures to be saying. I chose to believe that the word of God is true. Anyone that will do the same will find the gospel of Christ to be a simple message with the power to make everyone who believes it ...free indeed!

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

Volume 13

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ITCHING EAR SYNDROME

Decades ago, an elder minister told me, “Most people do not want you to tell them what God says. They want you to tell them what they already believe but do it in a new and exciting way!” Sadly, I have often found these words to be true. People gravitate to hear those who will reassure them in what they want to be true. Such behavior comes from a spiritual condition the Apostle described as *“having itching ears.”* II Timothy 4:3.

This generation seems to crave affirmation of predisposed positions. In politics, we refuse to listen to anything which does not tell us that “our side” is good and the “other side” is evil. If the politician we support does wrong, we want to hear that it was justifiable or excusable. If the politician we are opposed to does the same, we want to hear how evil they are and how they must be punished. It is the same concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccines which followed. We will not tolerate anything except it tells us what we want to be true.

“Itching ear” syndrome is also well entrenched in the modern church. This is evidenced when you consider the multitude of prophets in the land who promise to speak only “good things” to the people. People may love to hear such a prophet, but speaking only good things is not an attribute of a prophet of God. God spoke of such, saying, *“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.”* Jeremiah 23:21. If a prophet is telling you what you want to hear it is almost certain they did not hear anything from God.

Paul told us this *“itching ear”* syndrome would cause people to forsake the truth and turn to *“fables.”* He said they would *“...not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* II Timothy 4:3-4. It is astounding to realize that the most beloved doctrines of the modern church are simply “made up.” They are just *“fables.”* I

challenge people to go to the scripture to show why you believe what you believe. If you believe “The blood of Jesus covers your sin from the eyes of God,” you will not be able to find it in the scripture. If you believe “Those who die in their sin will go to heaven if they have believed in Christ,” you will not find it in the scripture. If you believe the redeemed are still sinners who sin every day,” you will not find it in the scripture. These things are “*fables*.” They are just “made up,” but people with “*itching ear*” syndrome love to hear it.

Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed his blood to deliver you from the power and presence of sin. Romans 6:22. Anything which denies this freedom cannot be the gospel of Christ because Jesus himself told us “*the truth shall make you free.*” John 8:32. Why does this message of freedom from sin through Jesus Christ so disturb the hearts of many who hear it? The simple answer may be that it strips us of all excuse. If Jesus suffered and died to make us free, then the only reason for a person to be in the bondage of sin is either they have not heard, or they will not believe. Jesus confirms this, saying, “*the Comforter*” would “*...reprove the world ...of sin, because they believe not on me.*” John 16:7-9. “Itching ear” syndrome will always cause a person to reject “*the truth*” and choose a “*fable*,” thereby condemning themselves to continue in sin’s bondage.

Do not believe God because he has spoken something you like to hear, but rather believe God regardless of what he has spoken! If you seek to pick and choose what to believe, you will make all his word “*of none effect.*” Mark 7:13. It is important to remember that whatever God speaks, he speaks for your profit. Even his reproof is for your good. Hide his word in your heart and believe it for exactly what it says. If it breaks your heart, it will also mend it. If it tears you down, it will also lift you up. If it reproves your sin, it will also make you free! John 8:32.

MESSIAH Part 1 - ANOINTING THE MOST HOLY

When the angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet Daniel, he assured him that six things would be accomplished before a specific period of 490 years ended. These six things give us the clearest understanding of the purpose of Christ's appearing ever recorded in the scripture. Gabriel listed these as (1) *"...to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most Holy."* Daniel 9:24. The last thing Gabriel listed was actually the first to be fulfilled, that is ***"to anoint the most Holy."***

There are many prophecies of Christ given in the Old Testament scriptures. God promised the seed of woman who would bruise the head of the serpent. Genesis 3:15. Moses spoke of a prophet God would raise up *"like unto me (Moses)."* Deuteronomy 18:15. David told of *"my Lord"* who would sit on the right hand of God. Psalms 110:1. Isaiah spoke of a son God would give Isaiah 9:6, a servant who would justify many Isaiah 53:11, and a redeemer who would come to Zion. Isaiah 59:20. These and many other prophecies begin to tell the story of an "anointed" messenger God would send and whom Israel began to refer to as Messiah, or, the Christ.

Gabriel's prophecy added to this expectation. It also revealed that just as surely as Samuel poured the oil upon David's head when he was anointed King over Israel, there would be a time and occasion when *the Messiah* would be anointed to fulfill his commission upon earth.

As the last seven years of Gabriel's prophecy were beginning, a man known as Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized by John the Baptist. This event was the reason John was sent to baptize. John confirms this, saying, *"And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water."* John 1:31. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each record what happened that day as Jesus was baptized. *"And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* Mark

1:10-11. This manifestation from Heaven was a declaration to all that Messiah, the most Holy, had been anointed by God!

For years I questioned if John the Baptist was the only one to see this great event. He was not! When sharing the gospel with Cornelius, Peter refers back to the widespread knowledge of this event, saying, *“That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; **How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.**”*

Acts 10:37-38. The knowledge of this manifestation at Jesus’ baptism is likely the source of Apollos’ limited knowledge of Jesus Christ when the believers found him at Ephesus. Acts 18:24-26.

As persecution began to arise against the early church, the apostles gathered together and prayed for boldness to preach the gospel. In their prayer they said, *“For of a truth **against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.**”* Acts 4:27-28. They understood that his time of anointing was not in some distant future, but without question it had happened before the whole world on the banks of the Jordan River.

Jesus himself spoke of this event shortly after it happened. As he left the time of fasting and temptation in the wilderness, he *“returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee”* and *“came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up.”* Luke 4:16. There he entered the synagogue and read the following words from the prophet Isaiah. *“**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**”* Luke 4:18-19. JESUS then says, *“**This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.**”* Luke 4:21. This was an open declaration that he was in fact the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ!

The anointing of Jesus Christ by his Father was not just an interesting side event to his ministry. It was a declaration for anyone who had eyes to see. Messiah had come. Soon everything would change. Jesus summed it up this way, saying, *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”* ^{Mark 1:15}. God’s message is the same today. Repent, and believe the gospel.

MESSIAH Part 2 - OUR PEACE OFFERING

When the angel Gabriel delivered the prophecy of the Messiah the Prince, he listed six things which would be accomplished before the time of this prophecy ended. These were (1) *“...to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most Holy.”* ^{Daniel 9:24}. These six things give us the clearest understanding of the purpose of Christ’s first appearing ever recorded in the scripture. Perhaps the most accepted of these by a majority of Christian’s is (3) *“to make reconciliation for iniquity.”*

In this passage, the words *“make reconciliation”* are translated from the Hebrew word *“kâphar”* which means *“to cover”* and it speaks of seeking to *“make amends”* for sin. It is the word which is translated as *“atonement”* in the Law of Moses. The sacrifices which were offered each year on the Day of Atonement were seeking to make amends for the sins of the people. These sacrifices ceremoniously covered the sins which had been committed over the past year in hope that the worshippers could begin anew with a clean record before God. These sacrifices could best be described as a *“peace offering.”* They were offered hoping to bring about peace between a holy God and sinful man.

These sacrifices are pointed out in the book of Hebrews as being unprofitable because *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* ^{Hebrews 10:4}. Because of this great shortcoming, the worshipers were never changed, and another sacrifice had to be offered the next year for sins and every year

after that. Hebrews 10:1-3. The people soon accepted that they could just offer another sacrifice and everything would be alright, but God began to despise their sacrifices. He said, “...*he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood...*” Isaiah 66:3.

When Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary, he received a body and blood which has the power to “*take away our sins.*” John 1:29. He offered his body on the cross knowing that his sacrifice had the power to transform everyone who would trust in its redeeming work. Yet, even with this glorious transformation through the power of the blood of Christ, there is something which had to be dealt with before God. This something is called, “our past.”

Because of the fact that “...*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” Romans 3:23, we all needed a place to “start over” with God. We needed our own “*peace offering.*” In his mercy and wisdom, God provided the perfect sacrifice which was offered for us.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the offering of Jesus Christ “*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness **for the remission of sins that are past,** through the forbearance of God;*” Romans 3:25. The word “*propitiation*” in this verse speaks of an “*atoning victim.*” Jesus was set forth as a sacrificial lamb to be our “*peace offering*” unto God. It is very important to see that this offering is “*for the remission of sins that are past.*” “*Remission*” in this verse means “*toleration*” and “*past*” in this verse means “*have previously transpired.*” God will tolerate the sins you have already committed if you have put trust in the life changing power of the blood of Christ for your present and your future.

Somehow a great error crept into the church which says that through Christ we are already forgiven of all sins, past, present, and future. If this is true, why does Paul specify the offering of Christ for “*sins that are past* (have already transpired)? This teaching of automatic “past, present, and future” forgiveness is based purely on religious philosophy and conjecture with not an ounce of scripture to support it.

Consider the following analogy. You meet a man who had been in an adulterous affair, and as a consequence he has been put out of his home, and separated from his wife and children. Today, he is carrying some flowers and a gift. When you ask where he is going, he tells you his wife has agreed to meet and talk with him. He said he was bringing a “peace offering” and wanted to express his great remorse, hoping she would forgive his past betrayal. In this situation you cannot help but pray that all would go well and perhaps they could be reconciled.

Now let’s change the scenario. You meet the same man in the same situation carrying the same gifts. In this scenario he tells you he is bringing a “peace offering” and wanted to express his great remorse, hoping she would forgive him for his past affair along with the affair he is presently having, and the affairs he will have in the future! In this scenario it is easy to see that this man’s “peace offering” is nothing but a mockery of his wife’s graciousness.

Christ is our “peace offering” unto God. Because of him, God will forgive your past and change your present and your future. Those claiming automatic forgiveness of their future sins stand in danger of mocking the graciousness of God. Such a person should remember: *“God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* Galatians 6:7.

MESSIAH Part 3 - THE END OF SIN

The six things the angel Gabriel said would be accomplished with the coming of the Messiah the Prince were (1) *“...finish the transgression, (2) make an end of sins, (3) make reconciliation for iniquity, (4) bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) seal up the vision and prophecy, and (6) anoint the most Holy.”* Daniel 9:24. These six things give us the clearest understanding of the purpose of Christ’s first appearing ever recorded in the scripture. Perhaps the least accepted of these by most Christian’s is (2) ***“to make an end of sins.”***

This one prophetic statement has the ability to “choke” ministers from every spectrum of Christianity regardless of their background,

denomination, or theological persuasion. Both the very lascivious minister who convinces people that no amount of sin can separate a believer from Christ, and the strict legalistic preacher who believes the wrong haircut will send you to hell, seem unified against this basic truth of the gospel. Both refuse to believe that Jesus Christ went to the cross to make an end of sin in you!

All the apostles were in unison on this truth as they penned the New Testament epistles. No one is more straightforward than the Apostle John who wrote, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.”* ^{1 John 3:5-6}. Not only does John remind us that *“taking away sin”* is the purpose for which Christ came, but he also concludes that since this is the case, those who sin have not seen Christ and do not know him. That is pretty strong stuff!

The Apostle Peter assures us by the promises of the gospel, that we are made *“partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* ^{1 Peter 1:3-4}. Those who know Christ have received his divine nature, but first they are delivered from the *“corruption”* which works through *“lusts”* in the heart of those who know not God. Peter also reminds us that Christ *“...bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...”* ^{1 Peter 2:24}. Here, Peter joins with John declaring the purpose of Jesus’ crucifixion to be that Christ died so that in union *“with Christ”* we would be dead to sin and live unto righteousness. Our death in union with Christ is what makes us free from sin!

No Apostle speaks more of this great deliverance than the Apostle Paul. While it seems the entire church world scoffs, asking how is it possible for a believer to stop sinning, the Apostle Paul asks the opposite question. He wanted the gainsayers to tell him how it is possible that anyone who is *“dead to sin”* can continue to sin. He asked, *“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* ^{Romans 6:2}. Although many teachers proclaim *“grace”* to be the reason sin does not matter to God, Paul is adamant that *“grace”* is the reason sin has no place or authority in the heart or life of a child

of God. He says, *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”* Romans 6:14.

The book of Hebrews, which I believe Paul wrote, is filled with the message that Christ was manifested to deliver us from sin. It records, Christ *“...appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”* Hebrews 9:26. It also says the blood of Christ will *“...purge your conscience (your innermost thoughts and feelings) from dead works to serve the living God”* Hebrews 9:14, and sprinkle your heart *“from an evil conscience.”* Hebrews 10:22. This Apostle tells us in no uncertain terms, *“Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.”* Hebrews 13:12. Jesus shed his blood to make you holy!

Perhaps the most defining passage in all the Bible which tells us how Christ made *“an end of sin”* in those that believe, is found in Paul’s letter to the Romans. He says, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”* Romans 6:6-7. Paul is clear. The reason Christ was crucified is so we would also be crucified in union with him. This death with Christ destroys *“the body of sin.”* The word *“body”* speaks of *“the whole”* and not just a *“partial”* deliverance. This destruction of *“the body of sin”* delivers us from both the power and presence of sin in our life. This is how Christ makes *“an end of sin”* in all that believe.

The gospel is only *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes” it.* Romans 1:16. It does nothing for those who will not believe it. If you spend your life denying that Christ came to make an end of sin in you, your experience will be one of struggle and failure. On the other hand, you can believe the overwhelming testimony of God’s word, which is *“the truth,”* and be made free!

MESSIAH Part 4

GOD'S KINGDOM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

God does not make predictions. However, he does at times tell us what the future will be. A great example of this is the prophecy of the Messiah the Prince given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel. Over five-hundred years before Jesus Christ appeared at the Jordan River to be baptized and begin his earthly ministry, God told what Christ's mission would be and what would be accomplished when he came. The six things God said would happen are (1) *"...finish the transgression,* (2) *make an end of sins,* (3) *make reconciliation for iniquity,* (4) *bring in everlasting righteousness,* (5) *seal up the vision and prophecy,* and (6) *anoint the most Holy."* Daniel 9:24. Let's consider (4) ***"to bring in everlasting righteousness."***

God made a promise through the prophets of a time when Zion would overflow with righteousness. He said, *"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, **until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,** and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the **Gentiles shall see thy righteousness,** and all kings thy glory: and **thou shalt be called by a new name,** which the mouth of the LORD shall name."* Isaiah 62:1-2. What is sometimes missed in this prophecy of God establishing righteousness in Zion is that he said, *"...thou shalt be called by a new name..."* This was a declaration that this prophecy of Zion and Jerusalem filled with righteousness was not speaking of just the Jewish nation or a physical city. It is a prophecy of another kingdom which was yet to come. This kingdom began to be referred to as *"the Kingdom of God."*

Jesus spoke often of this kingdom of righteousness. As he began his earthly ministry, he said, *"The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand:** repent ye, and believe the gospel."* Mark 1:15. His words, *"The time is fulfilled,"* refers to the time given in Gabriel's prophecy of when Messiah would appear. All the promises of this glorious kingdom of righteousness were about to be fulfilled.

As we look at the prophecies of this kingdom of righteousness, we can see how the Apostles incorporated this message in the gospel

they preached. God described the inhabitants of this kingdom, saying, *“And **they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the LORD...**”* Isaiah 62:12. It is interesting to note that the Apostles referred to the believers as *“saints”* which means *“sacred”* or *“holy ones.”* Those who are washed from their sins through the blood of Jesus Christ truly are *“holy ones.”*

God gives another insight into the inhabitants of this kingdom, saying, *“**Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.**”* Isaiah 60:21. The Apostle Paul must have been looking back to this prophecy when he wrote, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”* 1 Corinthians 6:9. Although unrighteous people may fill many churches, there are no unrighteous people in the kingdom of God. In this same passage God called these righteous people *“the branch of my planting.”* Jesus reminds us of this, saying, *“Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.”* Matthew 15:13.

God said his kingdom would be called *“**The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.**”* Isaiah 60:14. The Apostle Paul relates to this, telling the believers, *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven...”* Hebrews 12:22-23. Paul was confirming that this *“city of the Lord”* is in fact the church of Jesus Christ.

The glory of this kingdom is such that God promised *“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:”* Isaiah 35:9. It is shocking, but evident, that there is no devil in the kingdom of God. The *“roaring lion”* may seek whom he may devour in this world, but he cannot devour those who abide in Christ. Neither sin nor Satan have any existence in the kingdom of God. Both have been destroyed for the believer through the blood of Christ. 1 John 3:5, Hebrews 2:14.

The Pharisees also knew the prophecies of the kingdom of God, and they demanded Jesus tell them when this glorious kingdom would appear. Jesus answered them saying, *“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.**”* Luke 17:20-21. This is an astounding statement. The Greek word translated *“within”* means *“inside.”* The kingdom of God is inside of you!

God’s glorious kingdom of righteousness is in his children. Christ is this kingdom of God. We live in him, and he abides in us! Our kingdom is not known by borders, lands, governments, or religious affiliations. As the Apostle Paul told us, *“...the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* Romans 14:17. Jesus Christ truly has brought in *“everlasting righteousness!”*

MESSIAH Part 5 - IT IS FINISHED

The Apostle John recorded the last moments of Jesus’ life as he hung dying upon the cross, writing, *“After this, Jesus **knowing that all things were now accomplished**, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished**: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”* John 19:28-30.

Jesus’ final words on the cross, *“It is finished,”* speak more than just of an end to his suffering that day. It was a declaration that the entire purpose for which he came into the world was now accomplished. After his resurrection, Jesus told the disciples, *“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, **that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.**”* Luke 24:44. Every prophecy of Messiah and his work upon earth were now fulfilled.

The prophecies of Christ which were *“written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms”* can be separated into two

different categories. In one group are prophecies which were given to confirm to everyone that Jesus is in fact the Messiah whom God promised would come into the world. These prophecies spoke of his virgin birth, the events of his life, the power of his ministry, and of course his sufferings, death and resurrection. I count twenty-five different passages where the New Testament writers pointed out events in Jesus' life and connected it to prophecies, saying, "*That the scripture might be fulfilled.*" These prophecies, which pinpointed events in Jesus' life, confirmed to those who believed the scripture that Jesus truly is "*the Christ.*" ¹ John 5:1.

This group of prophecies was demonstrated when John the Baptist, who was in prison, sent disciples to ask Jesus, "*Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*" Jesus answered, "*Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: **The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.***" ^{Matthew 11:4-5.} Jesus knew that John would understand the meaning of his words because John knew the prophecy of the Christ which said, "*... your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then **the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing:** for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.*" ^{Isaiah 35:4-6.} These prophecies described the events of Jesus' life so clearly that anyone who believed God's word would be assured that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the Christ of God.

The other group of prophecies dealt with that which could not be seen with the natural eye. These told of the victory and redemptive work of Christ upon the cross. The first of these is found in God's words to the serpent when he told him the seed of the woman "*shall bruise thy head.*" ^{Genesis 3:15.} This was a promise that Satan would be destroyed by one who was born of a woman. You could not see this fulfillment with the natural eye, but the Apostle John was clear, "*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" ¹ John 3:8. The writer of Hebrews also confirms this, telling us that Christ became flesh and blood

“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Hebrews 2:14.

This brings us back to the clearest prophecy of the purpose of Christ’s first appearing ever recorded in the scripture. Gabriel told Daniel of six things which would be accomplished when Christ came. These are (1) “...*finish the transgression*, (2) *make an end of sins*, (3) *make reconciliation for iniquity*, (4) *bring in everlasting righteousness*, (5) *seal up the vision and prophecy*, and (6) *anoint the most Holy.*” Daniel 9:24.

The words “*to seal up the vision and prophecy*” is a promise that everything in the vision would be accomplished before this specific time period expired. The Hebrew word used for “*seal up*” is translated another time in this same verse as “*make an end*,” and it means “*to close up*.” Before Christ’s ministry was finished upon earth he would “*make an end*” of everything he was sent to accomplish. He would finish it all! Jesus’ last words on the cross, “*It is finished*,” were a declaration that he had not failed in any way to accomplish all that he came to do.

The work of redemption is a finished work. It is a mistake to view it as something Christ must do in the future. Paul dealt with this, saying, “*Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)*” Romans 10:6-7. Do not look to the future or even the second coming of Christ for the fulfillment of anything the prophets said Christ would do when he came. He has already destroyed the devil, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Those who believe the gospel and trust in Jesus Christ receive and experience this great deliverance from sin and Satan! Those who refuse the truth, struggle on in the darkness.

The glory and power of the gospel is not received through a religious process. Neither is it something Christ will accomplish in the future. You can be free from every work of Satan today because ***“It is finished!”***

JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY Part 1

For most of the past nineteen centuries, theologians have labored to explain the Apostle Paul's teaching on justification. Much of their effort has resembled those who might choose to study a hippopotamus through a microscope. They may see and know much about a very small part of the hippopotamus, but will never comprehend the entire animal through such a limited lens. Paul's teaching on justification in the book of Romans is a multifaceted account of the unsearchable judgments of God. *Romans 11:33*. Yet many teachers have concentrated on a singular aspect of justification and treated their narrow view as though it was the whole. Those who approach the word of God in such a manner will never know the glories and vastness of this great salvation.

Two Sides of Justification

Contrary to its usage in theological circles, there are two simple ways justification can be applied to a person or situation. The first is to show someone or something to be righteous. If in a criminal trial, the defendant is found to be not guilty, he or she has been justified by the legal process. They have been cleared of wrongdoing. However, if a guilty person is declared innocent, this is not justification, but rather a miscarriage of justice. God confirmed this absolute truth of justification when he told us that although he would *"forgive iniquity and transgression,"* he ***"...will by no means clear the guilty..."*** *Exodus 34:7*.

David helps us understand this first manner of justification in his repentance after his great sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. He told God, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."* *Psalms 51:4*. This last statement is more understandable as Paul quoted it. He wrote, ***"That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."*** *Romans 3:4*. David was saying to God, "You are justified in whatever judgment you choose to pass upon me because of my sin, and you will be found guiltless when your decisions are

judged.”

The second manner of justification is only revealed after a person or situation is found to be unjust. Justification, in this situation, is the remedy for unrighteousness. Nothing that is unrighteous can be justified without curing its unrighteousness. To call something righteous which is not righteous, is, quite simply, just a lie. An unjust scale is only “*justified*” when it is adjusted to show the correct weight. The unjust accounting book is not “*justified*” until the mistakes in the ledger are corrected. In the criminal justice system, justification can take the form of punishment, reformation, or even court mandated acts of restitution. We need to remember that human remedies are always limited in their ability to correct an unjust situation. God’s ability is not.

The Whole World Found Guilty

The first 2½ chapters of Romans set the stage for revealing the “*justification*” God provides in the gospel. In these chapters, the nation of Israel and the Jewish people are proven to be equally as sinful as the Gentiles. Paul asks, “*What then? are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*” Romans 3:9. Paul uses the record of the scripture to prove this, and concludes, saying, “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty before God.***” Romans 3:19.

Since all the world was found guilty before God, the first manner of justification cannot apply. True justification cannot show the guilty to be innocent. To do so would be unjust in of itself. For this reason, our justification takes the form of the remedy. It is what God did to cure the unrighteousness of fallen humanity. This remedy is what Paul called “*the righteousness (justice or justification) of God.*” Romans 1:17.

JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY Part 2

What does God do with an entire world that has been found guilty in the court of Heaven? Will his justice call for damnation; or will it demand redemption? This “part 2” of “**Justifying the Ungodly**” begins to take us through the many aspects of God’s justice as he chose to redeem fallen humanity.

Through the Redemption

The Apostle Paul begins his revelation of justification with these words: ***“But now the righteousness (justification) of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness (justification) of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”*** Romans 3:21-24. With the words “*through the redemption,*” Paul lets us know that our justification required the shedding of Christ’s blood and his death upon the cross. This simple truth reveals a difference between the justification of men like Abraham or David as compared to what a born-again believer in Jesus Christ receives.

The scripture tells us that those who believed God, but lived before Christ came “***...all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them...***” Hebrews 11:13. The word of God also says “***...these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us...***” Hebrews 11:39-40. These men and women who trusted God, went to their grave in faith, but without the glorious work of redemption which we now walk in. It was only after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ that they received it also. What Abraham received was wonderful, but Paul tells us what we receive is “***much more***” Romans 5:9 because they were not justified “***through the redemption.***”

Forgiveness

The second aspect of our justification deals with the sins of our past. Paul describes these as *“those things whereof ye are now ashamed.”* Romans 6:21. Many of us wish we could change yesterday’s actions, but we cannot. How can we have a future with God when the truth of sins already committed rise up against us in condemnation? Paul gives the answer, telling of *“... Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness (justification) for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;”* Romans 3:24-25. There are three Greek words in the original text which are very important for us to understand correctly. The Greek word translated *“past”* means *“have previously transpired.”* These are the sins which we have already committed. Another Greek word which was translated *“remission”* means *“praetermission, that is, toleration.”* *“Praetermission”* is *“to pass over without making mention.”*

The third Greek word was translated *“propitiation”* and speaks of *“a sacrifice victim.”* Jesus was offered as a *“sacrifice victim”* for a *“peace offering”* to God, so that our sins which *“have already transpired”* would be *“passed over”* by God and he would *“make mention”* of them no more. This is what we call *“forgiveness.”*

It is important to note that Paul specifies *“sins that are past”* and not *“present and future sins.”* Forgiveness of past sins does not mean you can sin with impunity. Jude refuted this sort of thinking, warning of *“ungodly men”* who were *“turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness...”* Jude 1:4, which speaks of viewing God’s grace as a license to sin without eternal consequence. As we will see later in Romans, these confessed and forsaken sins are the only sins that Christ’s blood will cover. This *“passing over”* of past sins comes to us *“through faith in his blood.”* Romans 3:24.

By Faith

The third aspect Paul reveals of our *“justification”* through Jesus Christ is that it is *“by faith.”* He says, *“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”* Romans 3:28. This idea of *“justification by faith”* was rejected by those who trusted in the Law. If God received someone because of faith, all

their labors under the Law were in vain. The caused the message of *“justification by faith alone”* to be highly offensive to these who had worked so hard to *“justify”* themselves. Luke 16:15.

Paul reached back almost eighteen hundred years to lift up Abraham as precedent for *“justification by faith.”* Although Abraham was indeed *“justified by faith,”* his justification was different than ours because he was not justified *“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”* Even so, he serves as an undeniable example of how God received a man who believed him even though he did not come by the works of the Law. The statement that *“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness”* Romans 4:3, tells us that God considered Abraham’s faith to be both a righteous virtue and an act of righteousness. God valued the fact that someone believed and obeyed his voice more than he valued all the religious works of men.

Abraham’s faith was the basis on which God chose to give him such great promises. Paul presses on with the precedent set in Abraham showing that the promises of God do not come because of keeping a religious Law. He says, *“For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”* Romans 4:13. Paul uses this precedent discovered in Abraham to show why redemption is only given to those who believe gospel, even as Abraham believed the promises which God gave to him.

JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY Part 3

As we continue with the Apostle Paul's revelation of the multifaceted work of justification, we see that it continues to get richer and fuller with each verse. Paul began by showing that justification comes through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and it brings forgiveness for our past sins. He then shows that it can only be received by faith. In **Part 3** we will discover how God uses justification to reach those who were deemed unreachable.

God Justifies the Ungodly

Paul makes a very revealing statement when he writes of God *“who justifieth the ungodly.”* Romans 4:5. This is different from the example of Abraham's justification. The *“ungodly”* in this passage speaks of the blatant sinner. It is the person who has walked without regard to God or his word. Yet, there are two great examples of God *“justifying the ungodly”* found in the scripture. The first may surprise some because the *“ungodly”* person is none other than Israel's King David.

Although David was a *“man after God's own heart”* when God chose him to be king over Israel, there was a period in his life when he was far from being such a person. David not only committed adultery, but his attempt to cover up his sin included having Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed. David continued to hide his guilt until God sent the prophet Nathan to confront him. It was only after the horror of his sins were exposed that David began to humble himself before God in true repentance.

As David's heart broke over depths he had sunken to, he acknowledged his sin before God. He was torn apart, knowing that the blood of an innocent and honorable man was upon his hands. David cried, *“Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God...”* Psalms 51:14, and *“my sin is ever before me.”* Psalms 51:3. David knew he was in no condition to approach God with any claim of righteousness. For him to even offer a sacrifice would have been insulting unto God. He told God, *“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”* Psalms 51:16-17.

Paul uses David in this condition as an example of God *“justifying the ungodly,”* He quotes David from Psalms 32 where we see what God looks for in the ungodly that causes him to justify them. David wrote the following:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned

into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Psalms 32:1-5.

When David attempted to cover his sin and “*kept silence,*” God had no regard for David or his prayers. Only when he acknowledged his sin unto God and ceased his attempts to hide it from men did God forgive him. Those who teach automatic forgiveness are lying to you. In David’s words we discover that without anything to offer God other than a broken and contrite heart, the ungodly can find favor with God.

David did not come with sacrifices and religious works. Instead, he humbled himself in true repentance and called upon the LORD. His “*faith,*” which came from a broken and contrite heart was the only “*righteousness*” David could offer unto God. Yet, this was exactly what God was looking for. This is why Paul said, “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” Romans 4:5. This means that his “*faith,*” which issued from his “*broken and contrite heart,*” was a true “*sacrifice of righteousness*” unto the Lord. Psalms 4:5, 51:19.

David was not redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, but he did find that God would forgive his transgressions and cover the horrible sins of yesterday. His great iniquity would not be counted against him because in “*godly sorrow*” II Corinthians 7:10 he offered the only thing God is willing to receive from an ungodly person.

Jesus confirms this justification of the ungodly in the account of the Pharisee and the publican in the Temple. While the Pharisee boasted in his own goodness, the publican “*...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. This penitent sinner had the same “*broken and a contrite heart*” that David spoke of. Jesus said, “*this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...*” Luke 18:14. Those who approach God with religious works rather than a “*broken and contrite heart*” will always be rejected of the Lord, but God is always willing to “*justify the ungodly*” if the

ungodly are ready to turn from their wickedness and trust in Jesus Christ.

Peace with God

The next aspect of justification as revealed by the Apostle Paul is *“peace with God.”* Paul said, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”* Romans 5:1. This speaks of a cessation of hostilities. It means the war between us and God is over. In verse 5 Paul says, *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...”* Romans 5:5. Again, Paul told the Colossians, *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled...”* Colossians 1:21. Sin in your heart and mind causes you to be an enemy of God. In fact, Paul tells us *“...the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”* Romans 8:7. As we will discover in later statements by Paul, the things which made us an enemy of God are dealt with in this redeeming work of justification. Through Jesus Christ, our war with God is over!

JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY Part 4

In parts 1-3 of *Justifying the Ungodly*, as we followed the Apostle Paul through the various aspects of our justification, the things he spoke of very much resemble the justification those like Abraham and David experienced. Now Paul begins to speak of treasures given to us through the justifying power of Christ that the patriarchs *“were persuaded of,”* but could only *“see afar off.”*

Hebrews 11:13.

Entering this Grace

As Paul continues revealing the various aspects of our justification, he shares how it brings us into a new spiritual arena, saying, *“...we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...”* Romans 5:2.” The words *“this grace”* speak of a specific *“grace”* which was unknown to the patriarchs such as Abraham, Moses, or David. The Apostle Peter told us the prophets *“who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you...”* knew *“this*

grace” was something that was “*not unto themselves*” I Peter 1:10-12, but would come with “*...the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.*” I Peter 1:10-11. This is where the riches of the glory of Christ truly begin. It is through entering “*this grace*” that a person is transformed from sinner to saint, from unrighteous to righteous, from children of Adam to sons and daughters of God.

If we are to comprehend “*this grace*,” we must understand the two manners of justification involved in our redemption. The first is “*justification by faith*” Romans 5:1, which brings us into “*justification by grace.*” Romans 3:24. “*Faith*” is a virtue which proceeds from the heart of a person and reaches upwards to God, whereas, “*grace*” proceeds from God and reaches downward unto us. Our faith does not make us to be new creations, but “*justification by grace*” does! When God accepts our faith in Christ as a “righteous sacrifice” (*faith counted for righteousness*), he responds by sending his grace upon us. This is where our transformation takes place. “*By grace are you saved (delivered), through faith...*” Ephesians 2:8. Faith and grace are partners in our salvation.

Saved from Wrath

In showing yet another aspect of justification, Paul reminds us of the love of God who gave his Son to redeem us, saying, “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*” Romans 5:8. This is a wonderful truth, but there is more! Paul's next words are, “***Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.***” Romans 5:9. Paul assures us that this great reconciliation through the blood of Christ not only gives us peace with God today, but deliverance from God's wrath in the day of judgment. Yet, as if this were not enough, Paul's next words tell us to hold on to our seats because things are going to get even more glorious.

He made us Righteous

It is at this point the Apostle Paul jumps right into the heart of the gospel message. He begins this next aspect of justification with

the words **“And not only so...”** Romans 5:11. With these words Paul is telling us there is still more to come in his explanation of justification. There is *“much more!”* He says, *“And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”* Romans 5:11. This is more than *“remission of sins that are past,”* more than the *“righteousness of faith,”* more than *“justifying the ungodly,”* more than *“peace with God,”* and more than *“saved from wrath.”* The Greek word in this verse which is translated as *“atonement”* means *“exchange,”* which is *“an act of giving one thing and receiving another in return.”* In the next ten verses, Paul tells us what this *“exchange”* is all about.

To show the full work of justification, Paul takes us back to the fall of humanity into sin. He reminds us that *“...by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* Romans 5:12. He uses this knowledge to demonstrate what the purpose of Christ’s sufferings was actually all about. Adam’s act of disobedience which brought us all down into sin, is presented as a sort of pattern to explain how Christ’s act of obedience upon the cross lifts us up into righteousness.

Paul shows that as Adam gave us sin and death, Jesus Christ brings us the *“gift of righteousness.”* He says, *“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of **the gift of righteousness** shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”* Romans 5:17. In truth, Jesus Christ changes everything Adam brought upon us. Paul speaks of how *“by the righteousness of one (Jesus Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* Romans 5:18. There is a free gift which completely changes the person who believes upon Christ. Paul calls this change *“justification of life.”*

What does *“justification of life”* mean? In his next words, Paul explains this for all to see clearly. He says, ***“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”*** Romans 5:19. The great *“exchange”* in the atonement is that God gave his Son to die upon

the cross. In “*exchange*” he received a people who are delivered from Adam and his sin, and through the power of the blood of Christ are “*made righteous!*” Do not be deceived into thinking this is just a theological pronouncement or “just the way God sees you.” No! Those who are justified by grace are made righteous in the same manner that those born of Adam were made to be sinners. Only an unrighteousness accountant would declare an unrighteousness ledger to be just. And only an unjust God would declare an unrighteous person to be righteous. Redemption does not just declare us to be righteous; it makes us righteous! Paul confirms this to the believers at Corinth, saying, “*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might **be made the righteousness of God in him.***” II Corinthians 5:21. God’s people are a righteous people!

JUSTIFYING THE UNGODLY Part 5

In **parts 1-3 of Justifying the Ungodly**, as we followed the Apostle Paul through the various aspects of our justification, the things he spoke of very much resemble the justification those like Abraham and David experienced. In **parts 4 & 5**, Paul begins to speak of treasures given to us through the justifying power of Christ that the patriarchs “*were persuaded of,*” but could only “*see afar off.*”

Hebrews 11:13.

Sin Destroyed

Just when we think Paul’s explanation of God’s justification cannot get any richer, it does! In this next aspect of God’s justification, Paul shows us how it was all accomplished. In this single passage, we learn more about the purpose of the cross than in all other passages combined. Paul writes, “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.*” Romans 6:6-7. This passage tells us exactly how God’s work of justification makes us righteous. It is not through a process or program. Neither is it through religious

effort or the wisdom of men. It is the simple yet powerful work of the cross of Christ.

Paul told us what every believer must know.

- (1) ***“Our old man is crucified with Christ.”*** The old man is the sinner. It is the ungodly. It is who you were before you were born of God's Spirit.
- (2) ***“that the body of sin might be destroyed.”*** The *“body of sin”* is the entire sin nature you received from Adam. It is not just tamed or controlled. It is destroyed in the death of Christ and our death with him through faith. In the moment we are crucified with Christ by faith, sin loses its dominion and we are *“made free from sin.”* Romans 6:22.
- (3) ***“that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*** Those who through faith are united with Christ in his death, cease to serve sin. That old *“sin master”* is destroyed and they become *“servants of righteousness.”* Romans 6:18. This is not accomplished through a process. *“Henceforth”* means *“from this point forward,”* or *“from now on.”* The word *“should”* is not in the Greek text, but was added by translators, and was not intended to express possibility, but purpose. The reason we needed to be crucified with Christ was so we would no longer serve sin.

Sometimes the Bible translators hide the greatest of truths from us. In Paul's next words, *“For he that is dead is freed from sin”* Romans 6:7, the Greek word translated as *“freed”* is *“dikaioō.”* In thirty-nine of the forty places *“dikaioō”* is used in the KJV Bible, it is translated as *“justified,”* *“justify,”* *“justifieth,”* *“justifier,”* and *“righteous,”* but in this one verse it is mistranslated as *“freed.”* The accurate translation of this verse reads, *“He that is dead (with Christ) is justified from sin.”* Paul is clearly stating that only through our crucifixion with Christ, which destroys the body of sin and delivers us from its power and presence, are we justified from sin.

This Greek word *“dikaioō,”* which is used so often by Paul to explain the working of God's justice in redemption, has a twofold

meaning. The first meaning is *“to make or render right or just.”* The second meaning is *“to show to be right or just.”* It is both a shame and an evidence of blindness that most Bible teachers (and even Bible dictionaries) always use the latter definition and ignore or hide the first. They often do this in an effort to convince us that justification declares the guilty to be innocent, disregarding the fact that this is the one thing God said he would never do. God told Moses that although he would forgive *“iniquity and transgression, and sin,”* he *“...will by no means clear the guilty...”* Exodus 34:7. God will forgive the guilty, but he does not declare the guilty to be innocent. His justification takes *“the guilty”* and, through the work of the cross of Christ, transforms them into *“the righteous!”*

Alive with Christ

As Paul continues showing the vast riches of justification in the gospel, he takes us to our resurrection with Christ. He says, *“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:”* Romans 6:8. Not only are we delivered from sin through the death of Christ, but we are made alive *“to walk in newness of life”* Romans 6:4 through the resurrection of Christ. This also is the work of justification. Paul confirms this, saying, *“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”* Romans 8:10. Paul did not say *“the body is sinful,”* but rather *“the body is dead because of sin.”* With the entrance of sin through Adam, the human body became *“dead”* in regards to doing the works of God. It must be quickened by the infilling of the Holy Ghost. Romans 8:11. What is powerful in this passage is Paul’s statement *“...but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”* Righteousness, which is God’s justice, is the end result of justification. This work which began with the forgiveness of past sins, concludes with us being made alive in spirit through the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.

Conclusion

Certainly, there are more aspects of God’s *“justification”* I have missed in these five articles. Yet, even what we have seen is amazing and overwhelming. Consider that in this single work of

justification, God forgives sins that are past, justifies us by faith, justifies the ungodly, gives peace with God, brings us into this grace, saves us from wrath, makes us righteous, destroys our “body of sin,” and gives us the life of Christ within. As if all this were not enough, Paul tells us there is something else offered to those who have been justified through Jesus Christ. This second work is called “glorification,” and is accomplished by the baptism with, and indwelling of, the Holy Ghost. Paul says, “...and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Romans 8:30. It is little wonder Paul concludes the eleventh chapter with these words:

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Romans 11:33.

FELLOWHEIRS

In response to a recent Simply Christ article in which I referred to God’s promise of a “*New Covenant*,” I received an email from a brother who asked, “Weren’t the promises you quote for the Jews? How do you justify applying to we Gentiles in the 21st century?” I certainly appreciate this question and believe its answer should be understood by all.

Many of the promises of redemption were spoken in such a way that it would seem they are given exclusively to the natural children of Israel. One example is the promise of the “*New Covenant*” where God said, “***But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.***” Jeremiah 31:31-34. Another example is the promise of God giving us a new heart and spirit. He said, “***Therefore say unto the house of Israel ...A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...***” Ezekiel 36:22-26. With such statements tying these promises to Israel, is it then true that these promises can only be fulfilled upon the natural seed of Abraham? The Apostles’ answer to this question was a resounding “Absolutely not!”

In his epistle written to the Gentile churches, the Apostle Peter addresses this question head-on as he writes of the prophets who spoke of the grace which would come to us through *“the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow...”* He says, *“Unto whom it was revealed, that **not unto themselves, but unto us** (the church) they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven...”* ¹ Peter 1:10-12. Peter is clear that the glorious promises which were brought about through the sufferings of Christ are extended unto us all.

An example of this “extension of promise” is found in God’s promise to Israel at Mt. Sinai. He said if they would obey his voice and keep his covenant they would be *“a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”* ¹ Exodus 19:5-6. Because of their unbelief, Israel never obtained this promise, but Peter declares it to be fulfilled upon the Gentile believers, saying, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: **Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God...”**”* ¹

Peter 2:9-10.

The Apostle Paul also addresses this issue in a straightforward manner. He writes to the Gentiles, saying, *“...at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and **strangers from the covenants of promise**, having no hope (expectation), and without God in the world:”* ¹ Ephesians 2:12. Because the covenant promises were spoken directly to Israel, the Gentiles had no reason to expect that these promises would ever belong to them. They were *“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel”* so they had no covenant and no promise. Paul’s next words tell us how all of this changed. He writes, *“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”*

Ephesians 2:19.

Paul was sent to unveil a great secret which he called *“the mystery of Christ.”* He tells us that this mystery *“...in other ages*

was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;" Ephesians 3:5. This mystery was of such a nature that the preaching of it enraged the Jews, provoking them to envy and anger. Acts 13:45, Romans 10:19. What was this great mystery?

In the next verse, Paul explains the mystery which had been hidden from Israel's understanding for over fifteen-hundred years. It was ***"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:"*** Ephesians 3:6. There is not a separation between Jews and Gentiles in the redemption because both are made to be *"of the same body."* Paul says that Christ has *"...broken down the middle wall of partition between us."* Ephesians 2:14. All the covenant promises of redemption which were spoken to Israel are now also extended to the Gentiles. We are made *"fellowheirs"* of the promises.

Paul confirms this to the Gentile believers at Galatia, saying, *"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* Galatians 3:29. God accounts Abraham's seed to be those who believe the gospel of Christ. It is to these, Jew or Gentile, that he gives the promises which were made to the fathers. For this reason, Paul refers to this *"one body"* Ephesians 4:4, the Church, as ***"the Israel of God."*** Galatians 6:16. This is the great mystery which was *"hid from ages and generations"* Colossians 1:26, and today is still a mystery to many.

In closing, I recall a recent conversation in which someone shared how unacceptable it was for a lay-person to question the ministers which he worked among. I spoke firmly to this person and said, ***"Question everything we say! Measure it by the word of God. If it is the truth, we have no reason to fear being questioned."*** I encourage our readers to question everything they read, hear, believe, or teach, and let it stand or fall based upon the record of God's word.

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