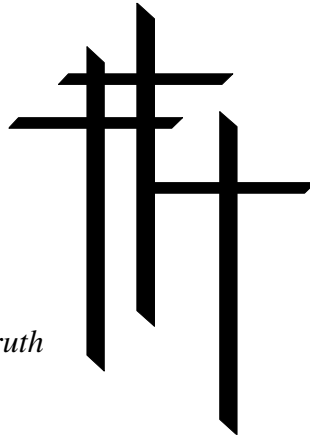


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

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THE HOPE ...

By John LaVier

THE HOPE OF THE SINNER

In Ephesians 2:12 the unregenerate man is described as “having no hope.” However, though the unsaved man is hopeless, yet there is hope. But his hope of heaven and eternal life is not in some fancied worth or work of his, but is found alone in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many have a false hope. Some trust to their character, morality, honesty or good deeds, but

none of these will suffice, for God says, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” The man who hopes to find favor in the sight of God because of any merit of his own is doomed to disappointment.

Others realize in some measure their sinful condition, but turn to some system of religion to afford them a standing before God. To Israel of old God said, “And Lebanon is not

sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering.” To all who trust in any religious effort, or put confidence in anything other than the blood of Christ, God still says, “Not sufficient.” A man may perform a multitude of rites and ceremonies; he may be baptized, partake of the bread and wine, and observe holy days and Sabbath days; he may hope that any or all of these will save his guilty soul, but all is to no avail. The Word declares: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

There is only one hope for any sinner, and that is in the One who died on Calvary’s cross for the sin of humanity, Who was buried and rose again, Who now lives as the one and only Saviour at God’s right hand. If the sinner will trust in Jesus Christ and rely alone on His precious blood and finished work, then he will have a hope. The hope of the believing

sinner is “the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due season.” All that the sinner needs is Christ. Nothing more than Christ is needed, but nothing less than Christ will suffice. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for their is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

We see Israel today as a people scattered and peeled, but is there yet hope for this once-favored nation? Romans 11:1 provides the answer. First comes the question, “Hath God cast away His people?” This question is followed by the divine answer, “God forbid.” Then comes the statement of the following verse: “God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew.” Though now for a season they have been blinded and forsaken of God, there is still for them a glorious future.

Israel’s hope is ex-

pressed in the words of the Spirit-filled Zacharias, who prophesied, saying, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David ... that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:68-73).

The above words of Zacharias were uttered by him at Christ’s first coming. The nation, though, did not receive Christ. Therefore, the fulfillment of Israel’s hope was postponed, and now awaits the second coming of the Christ. When He appears again the second time He will come as Israel’s Deliverer, to save them from their enemies and from the hand of all that hate them. “There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom. 11:26). All Israel will then

be saved. They will be planted again in their own land, and Christ Himself will be in their midst on David’s throne ruling and reigning in righteousness.

The hope of Israel is the kingdom of the heavens established upon earth, with Israel in a place of supremacy. The nations today are in confusion because they are headless, but when the kingdom is here Israel will be at the head, and no longer the tail, and Israel’s Messiah will be King over all the earth.

No fact is more clearly taught in the Scripture than that of Israel’s regathering and restoration. “Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock” (Jer. 31:10). Just as surely as the scattering was literal, so surely will the gathering be literal. Israel will be gathered out of all the nations whither the Lord has scattered them, and will yet dwell in the land promised by God to Abraham and his seed after him.

Israel must first go through the awful time of great tribulation foretold by the Saviour, during which God will purge out their dross. Thus they will be prepared for the place of headship and responsibility which is to be theirs in the kingdom. They will be saved out of this time of Jacob's trouble when Christ returns as the Rider on the white horse. They will then look on Him whom they pierced and the nation will be converted. Israel's conversion will result in the conversion of the world. All nations will be blessed through Israel. "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23). Then the fulfillment of the prophetic Word: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee ... And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This is Israel's hope.

THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH

While Israel's hope awaits fulfillment, God is calling out the Church, the One Body of Christ. Israel has the hope of the coming kingdom, its center to be Jerusalem and its King the coming Messiah, and even beyond that they have the better hope of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, with the names of the twelve tribes on the gates thereof. There is, however, reserved for the Church an even more glorious hope. Already God sees us, as members of the One Body, seated in the heavenlies in His Son. "He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We are already there insofar as God is concerned. We are there positionally in Christ our Head, and some day we will be there actually. "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious

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(Continued from page 3)

body.” We look for the Saviour, and to be conformed to His image; to have a glorious body like unto His, a body sinless, deathless, incorruptible, clothed with beauty and splendor. This is the hope of every saint of God: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

In the opening verses of Colossians 3 we are told: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Israel’s hope is in things on the earth. The Church’s hope is in things above. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, and these heavenly places are “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

The Church is “looking for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ.” We wait to hear His voice, to be caught up to meet Him, to be like Him, to be for ever with Him. When Christ our

life thus appears, we shall appear with Him in glory. Who can tell what is in store for the Church, then all glorious, and without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing? Then we shall be with Christ far above, at God’s right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. Then in the ages rushing toward us, and to worlds as yet unborn, God will show forth in us, the Church, the exceeding riches of His grace. We will have an eternity of bliss in which to magnify His Name and to be to the praise of His glory. Even now as we contemplate the realization of our hope, it should make us sing above all the trials of life, knowing that any sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Now blest in heavenly places,
in Christ at God’s right hand;

And filled with all His fullness,
complete in Him to stand.

Sing to the praise and glory,
of Him who thus hath shown,

Such gracious love and mercy,
to call us for His own.

Resurrection Hope

*Oh that my words
were now written!*

*Oh that they were
printed in a book!*

*That they were
graven with an iron
pen and lead in the
rock for ever!*

*For I know that my
Redeemer liveth, and
that He shall stand
at the latter day
upon the earth:*

*And though after my
skin worms destroy
this body, yet in my
flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for
myself, and mine eyes
shall behold, and not
another; though my
reins be consumed
within me.*

—Job 19:23-27

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

By Gregg Bing

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” (1 Cor. 1:18)

The cross is almost universally recognized as a symbol of Christianity, yet few people understand its true significance. When Paul speaks of the “message of the cross,” he is not concerned with the cross as an object or symbol, nor is he concerned with merely the historical facts of Christ’s crucifixion.

The Greek word for “message” is *logos*, which is most often translated “word.” A “word” is used to express or convey a thought, idea, or concept. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as the Word in John, chapter 1, because He is the expression of God. We read in John 1:18: “No one has seen God at any time. The

only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him,” or led Him forth so He could be seen. Jesus told His disciples: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The “message” or “word” of the cross refers to the meaning or significance of Christ’s death on Calvary. While the figure of a cross might symbolize Christianity to the world, most people have never trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior. They are perishing, which means they are spiritually lost, separated from God because of their sins. To them, the message of the cross is foolishness; it makes no sense, has no real meaning. Whereas, to those who have placed their faith in Christ and His finished work on Calvary, the message of the cross is the power of God to save them from their sins.

What is the “message of the cross”? In 1 Corin-

thians 1:23-24, Paul addresses three key aspects of the cross which we need to consider if we are to understand its true meaning.

“But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Paul’s opening words are: “We preach Christ crucified.” The first area of consideration is Christ ...

The Person on the Cross

When Jesus entered the area of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” They answered Him, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” (Matt. 16:13-14)

Most people today would respond much like the Jews of Jesus’ day. They might acknowledge Jesus as a great teacher, a religious leader, even a

prophet of God, but, in their minds, He was still just a man! As we contemplate the Person on the cross, it is vital that we understand Jesus was so much more than this; He was, as Simon Peter boldly declared, “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16).

Jesus is the Christ, Israel’s promised Messiah, anointed by God to sit upon the throne of His father, David (Luke 1:31-33). What the Jews did not seem to understand was that the Christ, who was prophesied throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, is also the very God of glory. The week before He was crucified, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question which proved this very point.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? They said to Him, The Son of David. He said to them, How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The Lord said

to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?’ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son? And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.” (Matt. 22:41-46)

The Scriptures clearly teach the deity of Jesus Christ. There are many declarations of this fact throughout the Scriptures (Tit. 2:13, Heb. 1:8-11). There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Matt. 8:17, Luke 24:44, John 19:36). On two separate occasions, the Father testified of Jesus, saying, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17, 17:5). Jesus Himself asserted His deity on numerous occasions (John 8:58, 10:30, 14:9). He also demonstrated He was God through His wisdom and knowledge, even at twelve years of age (Luke 2:46-47, John 2:23-25). The many miracles, wonders, and signs Jesus performed were

clearly things that only God had the power to do: calming the winds and sea with His command, healing all manner of sickness and infirmity, feeding 5000 families with a young boy’s lunch, even raising the dead, including Lazarus, a man who had been dead four days. Jesus’ perfect, sinless life (Heb. 4:15) is amazing proof that He was truly Immanuel, meaning “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Jesus’ unique birth, being born of the virgin Mary, also confirms He was “the Son of God” (Luke 1:34-35). His birth is often referred to as the incarnation because Jesus, the eternal Word of God, “became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Why is the deity of Jesus so important? Why is this truth such a vital part of the message of the cross? The answer can be found by considering Jesus’ purpose for coming into the world.

Jesus did not come just to be a great Teacher, though He was the greatest teacher who ever lived. Jesus did not come just to help people by healing their diseases and casting out demons, though He certainly did so. Jesus did not come just to provide a great example of how to live, though His life, in many respects, provides a wonderful example of how we should live (Phil. 2:5-8). God the Son took upon Himself a body of flesh and became a Man so He could die; specifically, so He could die for our sins.

All of us have sinned, therefore we fall short of the glory of a holy and righteous God (Rom. 3:23). In His just judgment, God declares the payment that must be made for our sins is death (Rom. 6:23a), for “without shedding of blood there is no remission (forgiveness)” of sins (Heb. 9:22). The Old Testament sacrifices pictured God’s requirements for an acceptable substitute for sin: an animal (lamb, goat, ram, bull) that was “without blemish” (Exo. 12:5, Lev. 1:3). Yet those animal sac-

rifices could only cover sins temporarily; they could never take away sins completely (Heb. 10:1-4). A better sacrifice was needed, but the offering had to be “without blemish” or sinless. Only God is sinless, so only God was qualified to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of men. But God is a Spirit and has no blood to shed. This is why God the Son “became flesh;” so He could shed His blood and die on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. John the Baptist declared Him to be, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Peter described the wonderful work the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross for us with these words:

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18)

Christ was willing to suffer the death of the cross

because it was the only way He could “bring us to God.” He has “reconciled us to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20).

If Jesus was just a man, like you or I, His death on the cross would have had no power to reconcile us to God. The message of the cross is not a religion; it is not a creed or a doctrinal statement; it is not a philosophy or a system of works. The message of the cross begins with the Person who died on that cross, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Next month: we consider a second aspect of the meaning of the cross:

“The Price of the Cross.”

(Continued Next Month)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.

— 1 John 1:1

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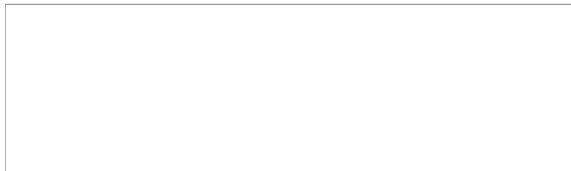
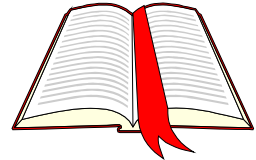
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