

# Behold the Lamb

## Encounters with God



by Leroy Surface

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Message by: Leroy Surface

Moses had four major encounters with God on Mount Sinai, each of which were most important in his coming to “*know God*” as God would be known. His first encounter was at the burning bush where God introduced Himself as “*The God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*” In this first encounter, it was God who came seeking Moses to bring the children of Israel out of Egypt to serve and worship Him. God had “*heard the cry*” of His people and told Moses, “*I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey*” (Exodus 3:8). When Moses asked God His name, God said “*Tell them ‘I AM’ has sent you.*” Later, in Egypt, God revealed Himself as the “*El Shaddia*” (God Almighty, Exodus 6:3) of Abraham. He also revealed His “*secret name*” to Moses, which is known unto this day as “*YHWH,*” and pronounced by some as “*Jehovah*” and by others as “*Yahweh.*” God proved to the entire world that He is “*God Almighty*” when He destroyed the richest and most powerful nation on earth to deliver His “*chosen people*” from slavery in Egypt. He parted the waters of the Red Sea to let His people pass through, and He released the same waters to destroy Pharaoh’s mighty army when they sought to pursue. These were the greatest manifestations of the power of God to be seen in the history of the world. Never has such miraculous power been seen before or since that time, all of which came out of the encounter Moses had with God at the burning bush.

## Encounter # 1:

### Salvation through Deliverance

**Exodus 3:7-8:** “*I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians.*”

God came down to deliver His people out of bondage to Egypt and to bring them into the land which He had promised to their father Abraham. He chose Moses to bring them out. For this deliverance to be realized, however, Moses must “believe” God and “obey His voice” like Abraham before him. As with Abraham, God made Himself known to Moses. He introduced Himself out of a “burning bush” on Mount Sinai, and chose him as the one to bring deliverance to the children of Israel. Moses questioned God, “**Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?**” (Exodus 3:11). God answered, “*Certainly, I will be with thee.*” Moses had never “met God” until this day, so he did not “know God.” He questioned God to this effect: “*Who are you? What is your name?*” God answered, “**I AM THAT I AM! Tell the children of Israel ‘I AM’ hath sent me unto you**” (Exodus 3:14). Let every person know, it is not “*who I am,*” but “**WHO GOD IS**” that makes all the difference when God chooses a man or woman for His purpose. God chose Moses to carry His message to both the children of Israel and to Pharaoh. If he obeyed God, he would see the greatest manifestations of the power of God ever seen by the eyes of man, as God would deliver His people from the cruel hand of Pharaoh and bring them to Himself.

In order to bring the people out of Egypt, God must first break the chains of slavery that had them bound. In doing so, He destroyed Egypt with plagues until the day the Egyptians were ready to “*thrust them out*” of their land (Exodus 11:1, 12:39). His final plague was the night the death angel passed through the land to kill the firstborn child of every household. Even the children of Israel would have suffered this great loss except for the provision God made for them in the sacrifice of the “*Passover Lamb.*” They were commanded to slay a spotless lamb out of their flocks and sprinkle its blood on their thresholds and doorposts. They were to eat the flesh of the lamb throughout the night as the death angel passed through the land. God had promised, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13). They were to eat the flesh of the lamb with “*bitter herbs,*” and they were to eat “*all of it*” (Exodus 12:8), leaving nothing until the morning. They were to be fully clothed, with their shoes on their feet and their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). They were to eat the lamb “*in haste,*” because in the morning they would also leave the land of Egypt “*in haste*” (Exodus 12:33).

The next morning the children of Israel walked out of the land of Egypt while every household in Egypt mourned over the death of their firstborn child. God opened the waters of the Red Sea to let the children of Israel through, and when Pharaoh and his mighty army pursued them, God destroyed them in those same waters. God did not save His people from slavery to leave them in Egypt. The “*salvation of God*” is always through “*deliverance.*” He does not “*save*” sinners and leave them in bondage to sin. Christ came into the world to “*save His people from their sin*” (Matthew 1:21). The apostle Paul says of Christ, that He became a man, “*...that through death he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the **devil**; And **deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage***” (Hebrews 2:14-15). He delivered us who believe, from both sin and Satan through His death on the cross. Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied of such a “*salvation*” at the birth of his son, John the Baptist:

**Luke 1:67-77:** “*Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and 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; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 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, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people BY THE REMISSION OF THEIR SINS.***”

It is this last phrase that reveals the manner of our salvation that was wrought by Christ through His death at Calvary. The word “*remission*” in this place is translated from the Greek word “*aphesis,*” which is correctly defined by “*Strong’s Concordance and Greek Dictionary*” as “*freedom.*” It is the same word in every place it is used in the New Testament with the single exception of Romans 3:25 where it speaks of “*toleration for sins that are past.*” Moses first “*encounter with God*” was for the salvation of a nation.

## Encounter # 2: Grace Offered

Less than fifty days after leaving Egypt, the children of Israel were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai in Horeb, the same mountain where Moses encountered God in the “*burning bush*” about a year before. This time, however, the entire mountain “*burned*” with the same fire that was in the bush. This would be Moses’ second encounter with God on the mountain. It is commonly believed by both Christians and Jews that God brought them to Sinai to give them the law. That is not the case, however. God brought His chosen people “*to Himself*” (Exodus 19:4) in order to bring them into the covenant of blessing which He had given to “*Abraham and his seed*” (Genesis 22:16-18) over four hundred years before. It is in this second “*encounter with God*” that we will see what “*the grace of God*” truly is. Keep in mind that the law had not been given at this time. Almost twenty five hundred years had passed from Adam’s transgression until now, and God had never given a “*law*” to control His people. It was not His purpose to do so now.

Can you see that it was the “*graciousness of God*” that delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt and brought them to this mountain? God will tell Moses in His fourth encounter that He is “*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*” (Exodus 34:6). He has always forgiven those who repent and turn to Him from their wicked ways. The salvation of God, however, is more than that. The children of Israel had been delivered from the bondage of Egypt the night the death angel passed through the land. They were saved from the wrath of God against Egypt when they sprinkled the blood of the Passover Lamb. God did not save them from Egypt because they were “*worthy,*” but because of the “*obedience of Abraham,*” when he offered his son Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. God gave the “*covenant of blessing*” to “*Abraham and his seed*” that same day, saying, “*...because thou hast obeyed my voice*” (Genesis 22:16-18). God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt because of the “*obedience of Abraham,*” exactly as we who believe are delivered from sin and Satan through the “*obedience*” of Christ to the horrible death of the cross (Philippians 2:8). God brought the children of Israel to Himself at Mount Sinai, not to give them a “*law,*” but to bring them into His “*covenant of grace.*”

The “*covenant*,” which God gave to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18, is the same “*covenant of grace*” that we who are “*born of God*” are under today. It was given to Abraham in a very few words: “**By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; BECAUSE THOU HAST OBEYED MY VOICE.**”

Within fifty days after their deliverance from Egypt, the children of Israel were camped at the foot of Mount Sinai where Moses had met God about a year before. God had brought them to this place to introduce Himself to them as their God, who had delivered them out of Egypt. Having “*brought them out*,” He would also “*bring them in*,” that is, “*into*” His covenant of blessing if they would meet two simple conditions.

**Exodus 19:5-6:** “*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall 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.*”

God offered them “*grace*” and not “*law*.” The “*grace*” He offered was not to “*cover their sin*,” but to make them to **be** His “*peculiar treasure*,” His “*special people above all the people on earth*.” They would **be** “*unto God a kingdom of priests*,” and a “*holy nation*.” The secret of “*the grace*” which God offered to them is found in the little word “*be*.” God did not promise to “*see them as holy*,” they would “*be*” holy. They would “*be*” His “*kingdom of priests*,” and they would “*be*” His “*peculiar treasure*.” They would “*be*” above all people, a “*people*” such as had not existed on earth since the entrance of sin, which came through the disobedience of Adam.

## That We Should Be...

**Ephesians 1:12:** “*...that we should BE to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.*”

The first twelve verses of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians shows that God has not changed His mind. Everything God has wrought in

Christ from the beginning of the world, which He has also fulfilled through His death on the cross, has been for the purpose of God, “...that we should be to the praise of His glory.” The Greek word that was translated as “*be*” simply means “*to exist.*” From the day that God created man in His image and likeness, it has been His purpose that His people would “*be*” in His image and likeness. The “*grace*” that God gives is the grace of “*being*” such a people. The very “*existence*” of such a people on earth brings great glory, honor, and praise to God. God did not promise to “*see*” the “*ungodly as godly,*” the “*unholy as holy,*” or “*sinners as saints.*” Christ came into the world to “*make an end of sins*” (Daniel 9:24, in order that the children of God, born again of His Spirit, would “*be*” godly, holy and righteous, “*to the praise of His glory.*”

There were two “*conditions*” however to receive “*this grace* (Romans 5:2)” from God. The first was “...if ye will **obey my voice.**” They were delivered out of Egypt because of God’s promise to Abraham when he “*obeyed*” the voice of God (Genesis 22:18). It was time to see if Abraham’s descendants would also “*obey*” His voice. Keep in mind that there was no “*law*” for them to obey. In fact, God did not say to them, “*Obey my law,*” but He did say “*Obey my voice.*” As a “*kingdom of priests,*” God would speak to them in the same way He spoke with Moses, and they would obey His voice as Moses did. The church of the New Testament, which was born on the Day of Pentecost, is God’s “*kingdom of priests.*” We are told to “*walk in the Spirit,*” to be “*led by the Spirit,*” to literally “*live in the Spirit.*” In the promises of redemption, which God gave through Isaiah, God said, “*Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left*” (Isaiah 30:21). Jesus said, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:*” (John 10:27).

The children of Israel were the descendants of Abraham; they could be “*his seed;*” and “*heirs to the promise*” (Galatians 3:29) if they would “*obey*” the voice of God and “*keep His covenant.*” If so, they would be “*blessed with faithful Abraham*” (Galatians 3:9). It all depended on their response to God when He would speak to from the mountain.

The Hebrew word “*shama,*” which was translated “*obey,*” is defined by “*Strong’s Concordance and Hebrew Dictionary*” as “*to hear intelligently* (with the implication of attention and

*obedience*).” The idea that we could “*hear*” and not “*do*” the words of God is the ridiculous notion of those who pervert the grace of God. In the epistle of James, we are told “...*be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*” (James 1:22). Notice, however, that the “*word*” James speaks of is the “*engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*” (James 1:22). The words which God spoke from Mount Sinai are “*written*” in the “*new heart*” (Ezekiel 36:26) of everyone who is “*born of God*.” This is the promise God gave of a “*New Covenant*” (Jeremiah 31:33, Hebrews 8:10). It is “*written in the heart*” and not “*engraved in tables of stone*” (II Corinthians 3:3).

The “*law*,” which the apostle Paul said was “*added because of transgressions*” (Galatians 3:19) had not been given at that time. In fact, if they had received the “*voice of God*” speaking out of the fire on the mountain, the law would never have been given. The “*covenant*” they were to “*keep*” was not a “*law*” engraved in stone. It was the covenant of blessing (grace) which God had given to Abraham and “*his seed*.” If they believed what God promised to Abraham and understood God’s words to them, God would make them to “*be*” His “*peculiar treasure above all people*,” a “*kingdom of priests unto God*,” and a “*holy nation*.” The words which God spoke from the mountain would have been “*written on the fleshy tables of their hearts*” and never “*engraved in stone*.” This is the “*offering of grace*,” which God gives to those who believe the truth and trust in Him: “*that we should be to the praise of His glory*.”

The secret of the “*grace*” that God offered to the children of Israel is in the words “*ye shall be*.” The “*twisted version*” of grace that is taught today says that God only “*sees us as holy when in reality we are all sinners and must continue in sin*.” God did not tell the children of Israel that I will “*see you as being holy*,” nor did He tell them “*I will give you a law to ‘force you’ to be holy*.” He said to them, “*Ye shall be*” my peculiar treasure, and “*Ye shall be*” unto me a kingdom of priest and a “*holy nation*.” They would stand apart from all the nations on earth. They would be a people such as had never existed since the fall of Adam.

**A Kingdom of Priests...** Consider that in the history of mankind until Jesus Christ there was only one man that was ordained as a “*priest of the most high God*” (Genesis 14:18). His



name was “*Melchizedek*.” So great was this man that Abraham paid tithes to him. No one knew where he came from or what became of him. They did not know his father or mother, and he had no descendants. He fulfilled his ministry as a “*priest of the most high God*” over four hundred years before the Levitical priesthood was established by the Law of Moses. Almost a thousand years later, David prophesied of Jesus Christ, saying, “*The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*” (Psalms 110:1). This spoke of the ascension of Jesus to sit at the right hand of God, where He sits today. David continued by the Spirit of prophecy to speak to Christ Himself: “*The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek***” (Psalms 110:4).

A search of the scriptures will show that there was never a priest of the tribe of Levi, or a “*high priest*” of the house of Aaron that was called a “*priest of the most high God*.” They were all ministers of the law who were to minister “*for the people*” in things “*pertaining to God*” (Hebrews 5:1), but never to “*God Himself*.” According to the Law of Moses, not even the Son of God was qualified to be a priest under that law. Jesus was not a “*high priest after to order of Aaron*,” but He is a “*high priest forever ...after the order of Melchizedek*,” which is so much better. The point I seek to make is this: God promised that every citizen of Israel would be a priest of the order that is so much better than the Levitical priesthood if they would “*obey His voice and keep His covenant*.” If the children of Israel had even listened to the voice of God at Sinai, things would have been so much different. They believed that if they “*heard the voice of God*,” they would die (Exodus 20:19). God said, “*Incline your ear (listen), and come unto me: **hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you...***” (Isaiah 55:3). Jesus said, “*The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: **and they that hear shall live***” (John 5:25). If the children of Israel had heard the words of God, they would not have “*died*,” they would have “*lived unto God*” and the six hundred, thirteen commandments which make up the “*Law of Moses*” would have never been “*added*” (Deuteronomy 5:22, Galatians 3:19). They would have been a “*kingdom of priests*,” much greater than the Levitical priesthood which ministered only in “*carnal ordinances*” that were “*imposed upon them*” (Hebrews 9:8-

10). Every one of them would come into the presence of God and speak with Him “*face to face, as a man to his friend*” as Moses did (Exodus 33:11). Their “*ministry*” would be “*unto God.*” They would have never offered another animal sacrifice, nor suffered under the six hundred and thirteen “*commands*” of the Law of Moses. God spoke of this to the prophet Jeremiah in very clear terms:

**Jeremiah 7:22-24:** “*I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.*”

For thirty five hundred years the Jews have kept the “*Feast of Pentecost*” in memory of the “*glorious day*” the “*law*” was given. In fact, it was not a “*glorious day.*” It was the day the children of Israel rejected God to obey a man. They refused to even listen to God’s voice. Three days before, God had offered His “*grace*” to the people; “*ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me ... a kingdom of priest, and a holy nation.*” They did not obtain the blessing of God because they refused to even listen to His word. Jesus questioned the Jews in John 8:43, “*Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.*” Four verses later, He told them, “*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*” (John 8:47).

The “*Ten Commandments,*” which God spoke audibly from the burning mountain, were not a “*law*” as we understand a law. They became “*The Law*” only when they were engraved in stone. God’s words were intended for the hearts of His people, but they had to be written in “*stone*” because their hearts were “*too hard*” to receive them. After the congregation refused to hear the words of God, He said to Moses, “*O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*” (Deuteronomy 5:29). The children of Israel had a “*heart problem,*” and they could

never serve God until such time as they received a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*” (Ezekiel 36:26) from God.

**A Holy Nation...** I beg your indulgence as we consider the “*Ten Commandments*” for a few minutes, not as a “*law*,” but as a definition of what God’s “*kingdom of priests*” and “*holy nation*” would be when His commandments were “*written in their hearts.*”

**I:** “*I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*”

**II:** “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*”

**III:** “*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*”

These first three “*commandments*” deal with man’s relationship with God. If the children of Israel would have had hearts to understand they would have rejoiced to hear these words. God’s first words were to introduce Himself to His people which He had chosen in Abraham: “*I am the LORD thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt.*” Moses later told the children of Israel, “*The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: **But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt***” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). God loved them: who would not serve Him? He approached them with offerings of grace and blessing (Exodus 19:5-6) upon all who loved Him and obeyed His voice. What is so “*grievous*” about these “*commandments*” that man should flee from them? Rather than “*thou shalt not,*” understand

these to say “*you will not*,” which equally satisfies the Hebrew text. “*Thou shalt not*” became a ridged commandment to a rebellious people, but “*You will not*” is a statement of fact about God’s “*special people*.” They “*do not*” have other gods; they do not make graven images to worship, and they do not use God’s name “*in vain*.”

**IV:** “*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*”

This fourth “*commandment*” deals with man’s relationship with the “*seventh day*.” Notice that it is a “*day of rest*” for all the people, for their servants, and even for their cattle. God made the heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. He has given the seventh day to man for a day of rest. Notice the words of Jesus concerning the Sabbath: “***The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath***” (Mark 2:27-28). Notice Paul’s understanding of the matter of the Sabbath: “*One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. **Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind***” (Romans 14:5), and, “***Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ***” (Colossians 2:16-17). Exactly as Christ has become our “*meat and drink*” (John 6:53-56), He is also our “*Sabbath*.” Our “*rest*” is in Christ and in Him alone (Matthew 11:11:28).

**V:** “*Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*”

The apostle Paul calls this “*the first commandment with promise*,” which promises long life even in this present world to those who “*honor*” their father and mother. In God’s “*holy nation*” the elderly, the widows, and the orphans would be cared for, not by

government's decree, but by the love and compassion of a godly citizenry. God's law, written in the hearts of His people, promises long life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come. Moses' law promised death to the rebellious children (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). If the children of Israel had heard and obeyed (believed from the heart) the words of God at Sinai on that special day, they would have become His "*peculiar treasure, kingdom of priests, and holy nation,*" and have been no need for the law of God to be "*engraved in stone,*" nor would the "*Law of Moses*" ever have been given.

**VI:** "*Thou shalt not kill.*"

This commandment and the next three (six through nine) all deal with our relationship with our fellow man. Notice this sixth "*commandment*" does not give a penalty for those who commit murder. It simply tells us, if we are God's "*peculiar treasure,*" there will be no "*murder*" among us, because there will be no "*murderers*" among us. It will not be due to harsh penalties such as Moses gave in His law (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life), but because they will be a "*holy nation.*" The "*law of God*" will be the "*nature of the kingdom,*" not engraved in stone, but written in the hearts of the people.

**VII:** "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*"

This seventh commandment is wonderful good news for the person that is an adulterer. It is God's offering of "*grace*" to the people, not to "*cover*" the sin of the adulterer, but to take adultery out of their heart. If the children of Israel receive and believe the words of God in these ten simple "*commandments,*" God will "*pour His Spirit*" upon His "*chosen people,*" just as He did upon the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost almost fifteen hundred years later (Acts 2:1-4), and their hearts and nature would have been changed after the image and likeness of God Himself.

**VIII:** "*Thou shalt not steal.*"

Again, this is wonderful good news to the "*thief.*" Millions of men and women are in prisons today because their heart is filled with "*theft,*" and they are slaves to it. God promises that if they will "*hear His voice*" and "*keep His covenant,*" they will never steal again. When God "*changes a heart,*" it is not by a "*process.*" On the other hand, it does not happen because a person "*repeats a*

*sinner's prayer.*” Many years ago, the Spirit spoke to me that if we give a person an “*ordinance*” to be saved by, we will have to give them a “*law*” to live by. The modern church, which rejects the “*law*,” has simply given it a different name: what the Old Testament called “*law*” the modern church now calls “*principles*.” They will never be “*free indeed*,” however, even if they “*learn how*” to live for God through the keeping of principles. A woman called me in despair over twenty years ago after seeing our telecast. “*My son got saved in our church six months ago*,” she said, “*but the devil won't turn him loose*.” I don't know if she could receive what I told her or not, but I said to her, “*If your son got saved, the devil has no choice. He cannot hold one captive when Jesus has 'made them free*.” The teachers of the modern “*gospel*” do not know what salvation really is. They teach that Jesus died to “*save us from hell*.” NO! God sent His Son to the cross to “*save us from our sin*.” Sin is the reason people go to hell. All “*sinner*s” will be lost, but Christ came into the world to “*seek and save that which is lost*” (Luke 19:10), and to “*save sinners* (I Timothy 1:15) *from their sin*” (Matthew 1:21). How wonderful to know, there are no “*thieves*” in God's holy nation. All of us were sinners and law breakers, but we have been “*washed, sanctified, and justified*” by the blood of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 6:9-11), and our “*hearts made pure*” by faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 15:9).

**IX:** “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.*”

In Revelation 21:8, Jesus told John in his vision of things to come, “*...the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” Does it seem amazing that the “*fearful, unbelieving ...and all liars*” have the same end as the “*abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, and idolaters.*” Not one of these has any place in the kingdom of God. God's promise to the children of Israel if they would “*obey his voice and keep his covenant*” (Exodus 19:5-6) is, they would be His “*peculiar treasure* (special people),” His “*kingdom of priests*,” and His “*holy nation*.” None of these things listed in the first nine commandments would be found among His people. How and why this could be so is realized in understanding the tenth commandment:

**X:** *“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.”*

The tenth commandment deals with the heart of God's children. It is not a “*commandment*” to them but rather the wonderful reality of His “*kingdom of priests and holy nation;*” none of the things forbidden in the first nine commandments will even be in your heart to do them. A man of God, whom I respect very highly as a man of God, recently told me, “*I am not a sinner; I can sin, but I am not going to.*” We discussed this briefly at the time. The fact is, it is impossible for anyone to commit a sin if the sin is not in their heart to commit. A person cannot be tempted to do what is not in their heart to do. Psalms 24:3 asks the question, “*Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?*” The next verse gives the answer; “*He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart...*” (Psalms 24:4). It is impossible for a person to have “*clean hands*” if their heart is not pure, but if the heart is pure, the hands will also be clean. A “*pure heart*” is what salvation is about. Peter spoke of the conversion of Cornelius and his household, “*And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith*” (Acts 15:8-9). This miraculous salvation took place in a moment of time. Cornelius and his household believed, and God “*purified their hearts*” and “*filled them with the Holy Ghost.*” Their hearts were “*made pure*” in a moment of time, before the Holy Ghost “*fell*” upon them (Acts 10:44).

Saul of Tarsus was raised from childhood in the “*straitest sect* (Acts 26:5)” of his religion, which means he kept the law perfectly. Years later, as the apostle Paul, he testified of those years as a Pharisee: “*...concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, BLAMELESS*” (Philippians 3:6). Saul of Tarsus lived a “*blameless life*” among the Jews until the day he was condemned by the “*Tenth Commandment.*” Those around him in the Jews religion saw that he obeyed every commandment to perfection, but they could not see what was in his heart. Saul never committed adultery, but he could not get the lust for women out of his heart. He never committed “*murder,*” but he used the Law of Moses to slaughter Christians. He was not a thief or a liar, but the

covetousness of his heart was destroying him and much “*deception*” was required to hide the filth of his own heart. When he cried “*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death*” (Romans 7:24), none of his friends understood the warfare that raged in his heart. Do not be deceived: this was not the apostle Paul crying about his “*wretchedness*.” it was Saul of Tarsus while he was still a “*blameless man*” according to the Law of Moses. When he understood the tenth commandment, he understood himself: he was in fact a “*wretched man* (Romans 7:24)” and the “*chief of sinners*” because of the content of his heart.

In Matthew 20:25 Jesus briefly described how the “*culture*” of the Gentiles worked. In the 26<sup>th</sup> verse, He said, “*It shall not be so among you.*” This is the tenor of the commandments which God spoke audibly to His people; “*It shall not be so among you ...you will have no other gods ...you will not worship images ...you will honor you father and mother ...you will not kill because there will be no ‘murder’ in your hearts ...you will not commit adultery because there will be no lust in your hearts ...you will not steal because there will be no covetousness in your hearts ...you will not bear false witness because there will be no ‘guile in your mouth.’ It shall not so among you.*”

In Romans 2:14, the apostle Paul speaks of those “*Gentiles*” who “*do by nature the things contained in the law.*” Paul was not speaking of certain Gentiles who happened to be “*good people*” with a “*good nature.*” He was speaking of those Gentiles who were “*born again*” of the Spirit of God and had the law of God written in their “*new heart.*” The children of God have no need for a law “*engraved in stone*” or “*written with ink*” (II Corinthians 3:3), because God’s law, which He spoke from Sinai, is written in their heart. The law of God is the new nature of every child of God.

### **Encounter # 3: The Law Added**

Whenever a nation “*rejects God,*” nothing remains but total anarchy and mob rule. This has happened to America in the generation since our “*Supreme Court*” ruled against Christian prayers and bible readings in the public schools in 1963. In case after case the courts have ruled against the “*Ten Commandments*” hanging on the walls



of schools or “engraved in stone” at the courthouses of America, and we are reaping the bitter harvest. Within six weeks after the children of Israel refused to hear the voice of God from the “burning mountain” (Sinai), they returned to the religion of Egypt to worship a golden calf in the absence of Moses. God had called Moses to the top of the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments as they were “engraved in stone” by the “finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). Moses spent forty days with God on the mountain in this third “encounter with God,” during which God gave him the “pattern” of heavenly things of which he was to produce a carnal image under the “Law of Moses.” It was there he received the pattern of the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the holiest of holies, the vail, and many other things which he would seek to reproduce by the “hands of man” (Hebrews 8:9-11). When God spoke his law audibly to the congregation, it carried no curses, but only the great blessings of grace unto those who received it. The entire multitude of Israel rejected the voice of God with the exception of Moses and the young man Joshua, along with a very few men of the tribe of Levi, and now, His “words” were “engraved in stone” as a part of a “law” that the apostle Paul called a “ministration of death” and a “ministration of condemnation” (II Corinthians 3:7-9). This “law,” which was “added because of transgressions” (Galatians 3:19), would bring many curses upon the nation and would be enforced by severe punishment and even death to the transgressors. It would be “The Law of Moses.” Such is always the case whenever a people or a nation reject God to follow a man.

While Moses was on the mountain with God to receive the law engraved in stone, the children of Israel also rejected Moses, and built a “golden calf” to worship, saying, “This is the god which brought us up out of the land of Egypt” (Exodus 32:4). As a result of their rejection of God, God rejected them, and from that time He dealt with them only on the basis of His promise to Abraham, to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. God refused to go with them, choosing to send an angel with them; an “unforgiving angel” who would not “pardon their transgressions” (Exodus 23:20-22). This “unforgiving angel” is the actual source of the Law of Moses, which Paul said is “ordained by angels (the unforgiving angel) in the hand of a mediator (Moses)” (Galatians 3:19). God said of this angel, “Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for **he will**

***not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him***” (Exodus 23:21). Paul tells us, *“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses”* (Hebrews 10:28). Moses’ law was from the mouth of an *“unforgiving angel”* and not from the mouth of God.

So great was the rift between God and His chosen people, that Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it *“outside the camp, far off from the camp”* (Exodus 33:7). From that day, everyone who *“sought the LORD”* had to go *“outside the camp”* to seek Him at the tabernacle. When the time came to worship, only Moses and Joshua went to the tabernacle. The glory of God met them at the door, and the scripture says that God talked with Moses *“face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”* (Exodus 33:11). Moses said to God, *“...shew me now thy way, that I may know thee”* (Exodus 33:13). God answered, *“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14). Even though God refused to go with the congregation, He would go with Moses. The *“presence of God”* would be to Moses’ *“the way through the wilderness.”* Again, Moses prayed *“I beseech thee, shew me thy glory”* (Exodus 33:18). To this, God responded, *“I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee”* (Exodus 33:19). He told Moses *“there is a place by me.”* He spoke of a *“rock”* that Moses would stand upon, and promised him *“I will put thee in a cleft of the rock,”* and *“cover thee with my hand”* (Exodus 33:22). All these things which Moses experienced on the mountain with God are prophetic of Christ *“at the right hand of God,”* and of a place prepared *“in Christ,”* in *“the cleft of the rock”* for the children of God. It was from this *“place by God”* that Moses would see *“the glory of God”* and come to *“know God”* even as He would be known.

Moses had a special relationship with God for just a little over a year at this time. He had seen greater miracles than anyone who has ever lived with the exception of Jesus Christ, yet there was so much more of God to be known. The apostle Paul, who is the New Testament equivalent of Moses, found the *“riches of Christ”* to be *“unsearchable.”* Just when a person thinks they *“know God,”* they must also know *“there is more.”* The person who thinks they know all there is to know of God doesn’t know Him at all. What Moses received in this fourth encounter with God caused his face to shine

with the “*glory of God*” to the extent that the children of Israel could not bear to look upon him (Exodus 34:29-35).

## **Encounter #4: God’s Glory Revealed**

This would be the fourth and final encounter Moses would have with God at Sinai. The “*camp*” had so corrupted itself that Moses moved “*outside the camp*” to seek God. The “*camp*” had refused to hear God’s voice and would not even look upon the mountain while the glory of God was upon it. It was just a little over a year since Moses had first met God, and during that time he had seen the mighty works of God in a way that no one in the history of the world had experienced, yet he was “*consumed*” with a hunger to “*know God*” even as God would be known. The apostle Paul, the greatest of the apostles of Christ, had the same insatiable “*hunger*” to “*know Him*” (Philippians 3:8-10). He found that the “*unsearchable riches of Christ* (Ephesians 3:8)” are not “*things about Christ,*” but Christ Himself. To “*know Christ*” however, the apostle discovered that he must go “*outside the camp,*” because the “*camp of religion*” does not know Him as He would be known. In our generation, the “*camp*” of religion is filled with absolute foolishness, which is conducted in the name of God. Paul gave this prescription for finding and knowing Christ in the thirteenth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews.

**Hebrews 13:8-13:** *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. LET US GO FORTH THEREFORE UNTO HIM WITHOUT THE CAMP, bearing his reproach.”*

Moses moved outside the camp to seek God. The cry of his heart was to “*know God*” and to “*see His glory.*” God called him to come up into the mountain for the fourth time. He told Moses, “*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”* (Exodus 33:19). It was the very next day that Moses ascended to the top of the mountain, where God met with him just as He had promised.

**Exodus 34:5-7:** *“And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, FORGIVING INIQUITY AND TRANSGRESSION AND SIN, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”*

God had promised Moses, *“I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee”* (Exodus 33:19). There is more to a name than just an identity. Today, many people who do not *“know God”* argue about the *“name of God.”* Some say it is *“Jehovah;”* some say it is *“Yahweh;”* some hold to the Hebrew consonants, *“YHWH,”* but I know Him as *“my Father in heaven”* (Luke 11:2). The true God is identified as *“The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Any *“god”* or religion that denies *“the Father and the Son”* is antichrist (I John 2:22). That said, we can have the *“identity of God”* correct and still not know Him. This was Moses’ fourth time to meet God on the mountain, and this is where he finally came to *“know God.”*

**“...And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God...”**

After identifying Himself to Moses as *“The LORD, The LORD God,”* which *“names”* Moses already knew, God gave His true identity, saying:

**“...merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...”**

There were many *“gods”* that people worship, but none of them can be either *“merciful”* or *“gracious,”* because they are not gods. They are only images made by the hands of man that cannot hear or see, or speak. They cannot love, nor can they hate, because they are the

inventions of man. The reality is, however, that many who call themselves “*Christians*” do not know the God Moses met at Sinai. Most people believe He was an “*angry God*” that had to be appeased by blood offerings; a god who looked for an opportunity to destroy the people. They do not understand that until the children of Israel rejected God at Sinai, they were under the “*graciousness of God,*” who intended to bring them into His “*covenant of grace.*”

Paul warned the Corinthians about those who would come into the churches, preaching “*another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit.*” Sadly, it was Aaron, Moses’ brother and the first “*high priest*” of Israel, who brought the golden calf before the congregation and introduced it as “*...the gods which have brought you out of the land of Egypt.*” He made a public proclamation, “*Tomorrow is a feast unto the LORD*” (Exodus 32:1-6). It was Aaron who called the golden calf by the name of “*The LORD.*” If you can’t trust the “*high priest*” and brother to Moses, who can you trust? It is necessary that you “*know God*” for yourself. You will find Him first in the scriptures and come to know Him through fellowship with Him in prayer and worship.

Aaron introduced the golden calf as Jehovah (or, Yahweh if you please). The congregation, having rejected the “*voice of God*” six weeks before, did not know the difference. When Elijah challenged the entire nation of Israel before the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, He said to them, “*How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him*” (I Kings 18:21). The scripture says, “*And the people answered him not a word.*” They honestly did not know who God is. The prophets of Baal had worshiped their “*god*” with their sacrifices and rituals, and the priests of Israel had done the same. There was nothing in either camp to “*prove*” who the true and living God is. This had continued for generations before God sent Elijah, whom He introduced as “*one of the inhabitants of Gilead*” (I Kings 17:1). Elijah had never been heard of until the day he stood before King Ahab to say, “*As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word*” (I Kings 17:2). He was probably a laughing-stock for a period of time, but after several months passed without rain in the land they began to wonder who this man “*Elijah*” was. The king sent out several search teams

to find Elijah, all of which failed in their efforts until the day God told Elijah to show himself to the king. The time had come for the people to know who God is.

There are basically two camps in the church today. It has been that way for centuries, however. By whatever name you call them, one is the “*legalist*” and the other is the “*lascivious*.” Neither of these “*know God*” as He introduced Himself to Moses: “*merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...*”

**“...keeping mercy for thousands...”**

According to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 7:9, God actually said, “*...keeping mercy for thousands of generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments.*” His “*mercy*” is not limited to “*thousands of people,*” but to as many as will love Him and hold to His words, His mercy is forever. When the glory of God filled the temple at its dedication, all the people shouted, “*...the LORD is good, for His mercy endureth forever*” (II Chronicles 7:3).

**“...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”**

God is, and always has been a “*forgiving God.*” We can comprehend that He “*forgave*” men like David and Samson, men whom He had chosen for special purposes, but God also forgave the most wicked among the people if they repented and turned to Him. Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “*Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will ABUNDANTLY PARDON*” (Isaiah 55:6-7). God was not only a “*forgiving God*” before Jesus died on the cross, but He would “*abundantly pardon*” those who forsook their wicked ways and turned to Him. The following is the record of God’s dealing with two of the most wicked of kings in Israel’s history:

**I Kings 21:25-29:** “*But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.*”

*And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, **Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.***”

Ahab was the most wicked of kings in the history of Israel. He filled the land with altars to Baal, killed the prophets of God, and tried continually to slay the prophet Elijah. When the word of the LORD came to Elijah concerning God’s judgment against Ahab and his wife Jezebel, Ahab humbled himself before God. He *“rent his clothes, put on clothes of sackcloth, and fasted.”* God saw this and spoke to Elijah, *“Do you see how Ahab humbles himself before me?”* God changed His mind concerning the judgment, but Ahab reverted to his old ways and later died in battle at the word of the prophet Micaiah.

**II Chronicles 33:9-13:** *“So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.”*

Manasseh was the wicked son of the godly king Hezekiah, who had purged the land of idols during his reign. When Manasseh became king, he set about to restore everything his father had destroyed, filling the land with idol worshipers once more. What Ahab was to the northern kingdom of Israel, Manasseh was to Judah and Jerusalem: the most wicked among their kings. God sent prophets to warn Manasseh of pending judgment, but he refused to change his ways until the king of Assyria *“took him among the thorns, bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.”* In his affliction, he humbled himself before God, and God heard him when he prayed. God forgave Manasseh, brought him back to Jerusalem, restored the kingdom to him, and he served the LORD for the rest

of his days. Certainly, Manasseh became a testimony to the “*mercy, grace, longsuffering, and goodness*” of our God, who “*forgives iniquity, transgressions and sin.*”

**“...and that will by no means clear the guilty...”**

This phrase strikes at the heart of one of the more popular doctrines of our day. I heard a world famous preacher explaining justification by faith to his followers. He said, “*The moment a sinner expresses faith in Jesus, God declares them to be ‘not guilty.’ Not only does He declare them to be not guilty, but He also declares that they are ‘innocent,’ and that they are ‘perfect.’ Nothing has changed except the way God sees the person who has believed. They are still a sinner, they will continue to sin, but God will never judge them for their sins because they ‘believe in Jesus.’*” Consider this teaching for a moment. God, on the basis of “*faith,*” declares “*the guilty*” to be “*not guilty,*” declares “*the guilty*” to be “*innocent,*” and further declares the same guilty person to be “*perfect.*”

God told Moses that he would “*forgive iniquity, transgression, and sin,*” but He would “*by no means clear the guilty.*” If the “*guilty*” turn to Him and repent from their ways, God said He would “*forgive them,*” and even “*abundantly pardon them,*” but He told Moses He would never say that the “*guilty*” are “*not guilty;*” nor would he declare the “*guilty*” to be “*innocent,*” much less “*perfect.*”

**“...visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation...”**

Has anyone ever told you that you may be suffering under a “*generational curse?*” Such a thing is utterly impossible for one who has been “*born of God,*” yet I have had many over the years ask me if I could lift a “*generational curse*” from their life. I always ask them “*Why do you hate God?*” and the response is always the same, “*I don't hate God.*” If you don't “*hate God,*” you cannot have a generational curse upon you. In His second commandment God said, “*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation OF THEM THAT HATE ME; And shewing mercy unto thousands OF THEM THAT LOVE ME, and keep my commandments*”



(Exodus 20:5-6). “*Generational curses*” are only upon those who “*hate God.*” The mercy of God is upon all of those who “*love Him.*”

## Why Did Christ Come?

It is strange indeed when the doctrine which the modern church calls “*grace*” pits the Father against His Son, and the Son against His Father. Does it seem incredible that I would say such a thing? Consider what I say for a moment: have you heard that the blood of Jesus “*covers*” your sins so God can’t see them? This is the same God who was forgiving and pardoning sins for thousands of years before Jesus was born to Mary. Why would the Son of God suddenly find it necessary to “*hide from God*” that which He has promised to “*abundantly pardon?*” Have you heard that Jesus died on the cross to “*take the punishment for your sin?*” Again, this is incredible! God has never sought to “*punish*” sinners. Instead, He sent the prophets to turn them from their sins, with the promise that He would both forgive and pardon. God is longsuffering, and He always has been. He has never “*punished*” a single person who turned to Him in repentance, because He is also “*merciful and gracious.*” I often hear that Jesus “*paid the sin debt.*” Who did He pay it to? To Satan, or to God? Christ came as the “*seed of the woman*” to “*bruise the head of the serpent*” (Genesis 3:15). The apostle Paul said that Christ “*...through death, destroyed he that had the power of death, that is the devil*” (Hebrews 2:14). The apostle John said the Son of God was manifested “*to destroy the works of the devil*” (I John 3:8), so who did Jesus pay the sin debt to? If you say it was God who required a “*payment*” for sin, why would He require His sinless Son to pay our debt for sin? The idea that God, who has forever been a “*forgiving God,*” would hold the human race hostage for a ransom that had to be paid by the death of His own Son seems very strange indeed to me. Did God send His only begotten Son to deliver the people out of the clutches of God Himself? How absurd! The “*sin debt*” has not been “*paid:*” it has been “*forgiven.*” It was Satan who held the people captive to sin, but he was not “*paid,*” he was “*destroyed.*” Isaiah understood these things through the visions he received from God:

**Isaiah 14:12-17:** *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. **They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; THAT OPENED NOT THE HOUSE OF HIS PRISONERS?**”*

The apostle Paul quotes Psalms 68:18 as a prophecy of Jesus Christ: *“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, **he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men**”* (Ephesians 4:8). Christ delivered the captives when He *“led captivity captive.”* The prophet Isaiah prophesied of Jesus Christ, saying, *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, **to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound**”* (Isaiah 61:1). In Colossians 2:15, the apostle Paul gives a little more insight to the victory Christ won at Calvary: *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* Jesus Christ was the *“victor”* and not the *“victim”* in His death on the cross. It was *“through death”* that he both destroyed the devil (Hebrews 2:14), and reconciled us to God (Romans 5:10). Jesus Christ is the victor, and it is God who *“gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (I Corinthians 15:57).

## Why Did Christ Die?

It is commonly believed that Jesus had to die on the cross for our sins to be forgiven. How then did God forgive those in the Old Testament who repented and turned to Him? Keep in mind that God introduced Himself to Moses as a *“forgiving God.”* It is evident that Christ, who was eternally with God from the very beginning, came into this world for another cause. The angel Gabriel announced that *“cause”* well over five hundred years before the birth of Jesus.

**Daniel 9:24-26:** *“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the TRANSGRESSION, and to make an end of SINS, and to make reconciliation for INIQUITY, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself...”*

This is a prophecy about one called “*The Messiah*” in the Hebrew language, which is the same as “*The Christ*” in the Greek language. The prophecy tells of a 490 year time period in which “*The Christ*” would come at the beginning of the last seven years. The promise of God was that Christ would “*finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.*” Nothing in this prophecy of Christ speaks of a “*covering for sins,*” because the blood of animals was sufficient for that purpose. Nothing was said about “*forgiving sins,*” because God had forever “*forgiven sins*” for everyone who turned from their sins to serve Him. The reason Christ came into the world was something so much better. It was the “*better thing*” that is “*prepared for us,*” according to Hebrews 11:40. Christ came into the world to “*take away*” the sin of the world. He came to “*make an end*” of the “*iniquities, transgressions and sins*” which God had been “*forgiving*” over and over throughout the centuries of time. It was for these same three things that Christ came into the world: “*to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity*” and to “*bring in everlasting righteousness.*”

## **Did Christ Die in Vain?**

**Galatians 2:21:** *“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”*

**Galatians 5:4:** *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”*

**I Corinthians 1:17:** *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”*

When God offered grace to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6), the result of receiving that “*grace*” is found in the words of God to them, “*Ye shall be.*” God’s grace to man is not to take sinners to heaven. It is not to cover sinners to hide them from the wrath of God. His “*grace*” is still found in the words “***Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me...ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.***” These words speak of a state of existence: “*You shall exist ...a kingdom of priest ...a holy nation.*”

The apostle Paul used the same language in Ephesians 1:12: “***That we should be to the praise of His glory.***” The words speak of the “*state of existence*” of the children of God. It is not what we “*do*” for God that brings great glory to Him nearly so much as what we “*are.*” If those who openly profess “*we are all sinners*” should be able to “*do mighty works in His name,*” yet Jesus has “*promised*” to say to them at the last, “*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, for I never knew you*” (Matthew 7:22-23). They had “*prophesied in His name,*” they had “*cast out devils in His name,*” and they had “*done many wonderful works in His name,*” but they were also “*workers of iniquity,*” which Christ can never accept. God’s purpose in the atoning death of Jesus Christ is to “*have a people*” whose “*existence*” will bring great glory and praise to Him.

In Ephesians 1:4-11, Paul relates things that God did in order to receive His eternal purpose. Verse 11 tells us the children of God are “*...predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will...*” And what is His will? “*...that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*” The “*grace*” which God offered at Sinai would have totally transformed the children of Israel if they had received it. He would have “*written His law in their hearts* (Hebrews 8:10)” instead of in the tables of stone. He would have poured His Spirit upon them as He did on the hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost. These “*hundred and twenty*” were those who “*first trusted in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:12), and they became, in a moment of time, God’s “*peculiar treasure,*” His “*kingdom of priests*” and His “*holy nation.*” Whenever a person “*trusts in Christ*” to receive the grace of God as it truly is, they are transformed into an existence (a new creation) that will be “*to the praise of His glory*” (Ephesians 1:12).

Ephesians 1:13: *“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise...”*

Have you *“heard the word of truth?”* What is it that you have trusted your eternal soul to? There can be no salvation outside of *“the word of truth.”* Millions of people have been brought into the churches on the basis of a *“lie:”* the promise of a *“covering for sin.”* Christ came into the world to *“take away our sins”* (I John 3:5).

Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews, *“...if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). A few verses later, He said to those who professed to believe on Him, *“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:31-32). Have you, since you *“believed on Jesus,”* heard *“the word truth”* that Jesus said will *“make you free?”* Jesus said that those who *“believe on Him”* will *“continue in His word,”* and they will *“know the truth, and the truth will make them free.”* Sadly, those same Jews that professed to *“believe on Jesus”* protested loudly, *“What do you mean ‘make us free?’ We are Abraham’s seed and have never been in bondage to any man”* (John 8:33). I hear that same cry of protest coming from many professing believers and even ministers today; *“What do you mean by ‘free from sin? We are ‘believers,’ but we are still sinners. We will continue in sin until Christ comes the second time to ‘make and end of sin.’”* Jesus answered the Jews with words that cannot be misunderstood by any honest hearted person; *“Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin”* (John 8:34). Christ the creator came into the world to *“make you free from sin”* if you will simply believe the truth and trust in Christ to do it in you. What more can I say that will cause you to believe?

**Hebrews 13:9:** *“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”*

Millions of people trust in doctrines that leave them in bondage to sin and Satan, and in a lifetime struggle trying to change their lifestyles. The problem is not in what they *“do”* nearly so much as in what they *“believe.”* Believing the truth will make the believer *“free”* from both sin and the law to serve God in *“newness of spirit,”*

*and not in the oldness of the letter”* (Romans 7:6; see Luke 1:74-75). There are those doctrines, many of which are considered to be “*orthodox,*” which will hold those who believe them in bondage to sin all the days of their life, only to die a tormented death, hoping God will receive them. Our salvation is more than that. Very recently a young minister confided in me concerning the death of his pastor a few years ago. This pastor was a good man who preached love and forgiveness, but denied that Christ died to make us free from sin. The day before he died that night, he called for his young associate, only to tell him, “*I don’t believe God will accept me.*” Of course the young man prayed with his pastor, seeking through the scriptures to give him some “*peace*” to die in, but consider the terror in the heart of a man that has led congregations of people for over fifty years with that gnawing doubt in his heart that can only grow worse with age. God has promised us “*confidence*” in the Day of Judgment, “*...because as He is, so are we in this world*” (I John 4:17). Such a glorious state cannot be “*earned*” in a lifetime of service: it is the “*gift of grace*” to those who will believe the truth and trust in Christ alone. If you believe you are always a sinner, you will die a sinner, in your sin. If you believe that Jesus is “*the Christ*” who came into the world to “*make an end of sins*” and “*bring in everlasting righteousness*” (Daniel 9:24-25), and if you know He did it to perfection through His death on the cross, you will receive His “*gift of righteousness*” (Romans 5:17). Please understand that I am not teaching a “*positional*” doctrine that tells “*what we are in Christ*” when our “*reality*” is very different. Please understand, whatever you are “*in Christ*” you will be on Main Street, on your job, or on vacation. We are speaking about realities and not the “*fables of religion*” (II Timothy 4:3-4).

There are those things which a person may believe that will make the suffering and death of Jesus Christ to be “*in vain*” for them. First, we know that His death on the cross can do nothing for those who do not believe and trust in Him. Second, His death will be “*in vain*” for those who trust in “*the wisdom of words.*” For all too many, the “*gospel*” has become nothing more than a “*philosophy of life.*” There are those who believe that Jesus died to “*take the penalty for sin*” and as a result, they can “*continue in sin without penalty;*” for those, Christ died in vain. For a person to trust their eternal fate on such a doctrine is so very foolish. How can you prove

that what you believe is the truth? It is a doctrine that is never once “spoken” in the scriptures. Instead, it was formed out of the philosophy of man hundreds of years ago, but also hundreds of years after the last of the eyewitness apostles had died. If a person waits until the last judgment before they discover they have “believed a lie,” it will be too late to change their mind. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that Christ would come to “make an end of sins” (Daniel 9:24). He told Joseph, the husband of Mary, that Jesus would “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the nation as “The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Sixty years after Jesus died on the cross, the apostle John said, “We know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not” (I John 3:5-6). Again, John said, “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). Those who believe that “Jesus” is “The Christ” of eternity who came into the world to “make an end of sin” in the hearts of the people can absolutely know that their faith is true. First, it is the message of the scriptures, from the prophets of the Old Testament, to the apostles of Christ in the New Testament. An even greater personal witness, however, is that which we used to sing about; “Praise God, my sins are gone.” The “sin” that once destroyed us has been taken away by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. We have entered into rest in Christ without the constant struggles with sin that is so common to man. We know that it is so because our “sin” is gone, and we have it no more.

**Ephesians 2:8-10: For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.**

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