

FREE LIFE NEWS

We pray you will have a blessed Christ-

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HEAVEN

by E. J. Turk

*"What shall we say the Kingdom of
God is like, or what parable shall we
use to describe it?"*

Mark 4:30

"Hey Dave. Get in before you catch your death." Dave climbed into the passenger seat rubbing his mittened hands together.

"Man it's cold out there," Dave said while quickly closing the door. "At least your car's gotta good heater. I'm about to freeze to death!"

"There's some hot cocoa in that thermos if you'd like some. We're a little early yet, I'll wait till you pour you some before we get going."

"Thanks," Dave said as he pulled off his mittens with his teeth. He held his bared hands up to the heater vent in the dash, "Say, this isn't the car you normally drive is it?"

"Nope." Tom said smiling, "sure isn't."

Dave gave him a curious look then poured himself a cup of cocoa as Tom gazed out through the window. A thick blanket of snow covered every lawn and roof top, and the icy trees with their naked branches showed darkly against the gray winter sky. Christmas lights flashed and glowed while silently Tom thanked God for their task at hand. As Dave sipped the steaming cocoa Tom put the car in gear and slowly pulled onto the frozen street, tires crunching snow as they went.

Tom glanced at Dave then back towards the road. "So how's everything going with you? It's been awhile since we've been able to talk."

Dave clutched his cocoa with both hands, his lips perched on the top of the cup. After a big slurp he looked at Tom. "For the most part things have been alright, I guess."

Tom thought he could hear a touch of sarcasm in Dave's response but waited to see if Dave would say more. Dave continued, "I don't know, I guess I want all the answers at the same time. It seems since I became a Christian I have even more questions, but the Bible's so big, I just don't know where to start sometimes." Dave looked away sipping his cocoa.

Tom understood what his young friend was going through. Dave was enthusiastic, and truly wanted to learn, but he was

also impatient. Tom reached over and squeezed Dave's shoulder. "You're right, the Bible can be overwhelming, but I've learned that sometimes the Lord teaches us in others ways too." Dave looked at him as Tom continued, "I've been a Christian for fifteen years now, and I won't even begin to claim that I've got the Bible all figured out. But I know, just when I need it, the Lord will teach me through experience, and it's then the Bible seems to become clearer to me."

Dave squinted at Tom, "Really?"

"Really," Tom said smiling. "What's something you have questions about?"

Dave looked at the floorboard then toward the windshield. He looked out the side window scratching his head then back to Tom. Finally He said, "What about heaven?"

"What about it?" Tom asked.

"Well, what's it going to be like? I mean, from what I read, Jesus compares it to a lot of different things, and in Revelation it's described almost like a spaceship coming down—I still haven't figured that one out."

Tom grinned thinking he'd never heard anyone describe it quite like that. Dave shifted in his seat staring into his cocoa and then said, "I know what it's described as looking like from the outside, but I want to know what it's going to be like from the inside. I mean, that's where we're going to be forever, right?" He looked back at Tom, "I'm just curious what's in store for us. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

Tom couldn't believe it. That was the very purpose he'd invited Dave to accompany him today. He swallowed against the growing lump in his throat and silently praised God for His divine providence. He looked at Dave, smiling he said, "Yes, my friend, I understand. You're in for a real treat if that's what you're wanting to know about."

They rode in silence for a few blocks as the flashing, colored lights from the Christmas displays reflected onto the windows of the car. Coming to a stoplight Tom put on the turn signal, and as soon as it was clear he made the right turn telling Dave, "We're almost there, probably another five minutes."

"Where are we going anyways?"

"You'll see."

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Heaven

Dave noticed the houses they were now passing weren't nearly as nice as the one he lived in. Although there were some Christmas displays they weren't as plentiful as they were in his neighborhood, and as they continued the houses seemed to become more and more run down. He wondered how in the world was he going to learn about heaven from being here, this place seemed to represent the exact opposite of heaven. His heart began to ache as he thought of the plight of all these poor people. Why hadn't he considered them before he wondered? He thought of the huge Christmas tree in his living room pregnant with gifts underneath. Did these people even have Christmas trees?

Dave looked at Tom in question. Tom just smiled and then nodded toward the house on the corner. As they pulled up to the curb Dave noticed a cardboard nativity scene tacked to the side of the house. A single strand of white Christmas lights outlined the front door and on the door was a cardboard wreath with "Jesus is King" written on the center. Tom got out of the car and walked around to the trunk. Dave kept watching the house. In a large window beside the front door Dave saw three small heads pop up and peer over the sill toward him. Suddenly Tom blocked his view, he was struggling with two paper sacks and was mouthing for Dave to come on. When Dave got out of the car Tom handed him one of the heavy sacks.

The snow covered yard was dotted with tiny footprints and a snowman smiled from the middle of the yard. As the two men came to the front door, they could hear children inside yelling, "Momma! Momma! Momma! Someone's at the door!"

Tom reached out and knocked then winked at Dave. After a few moments the door opened to the extent of the security chain would allow and a small dark-haired woman peered out. "Yes?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. My name is Tom Simmons, and this is Dave Jacobs, we're from First Street Church. Are you Mary Collins?"

"Yes, I am."

"Great. Your name and address was forwarded to us from an organization that works with needy families and you were recommended to us as a family of interest."

"What?"

"Yes ma'am, we were told that your family could use some assistance, especially during this holiday season. Do you have three children..." Tom read from a slip of paper of paper, "...Suzy, Mark, and David, ages three, five and seven?"

"Yes, but how—"

"As I said ma'am, your family was recommended to us as a family of interest, these things are for you." Dave quickly looked back and forth between Tom and the woman, his mouth gaping open. He looked down to see three smiling faces crowding into the small opening.

"Let 'em in momma," the little girl said, "they got stuff for us!"

The woman scooted her children back then closed the

door. Tom and Dave heard the chain rattle loose then the door opened all the way this time. "*C-come on in please,*" the woman said clearly bewildered. She had both of her hands at her throat clutching a small gold cross. "*W-where are you from again?*" she asked in disbelief.

Tom said warmly, "First Street Church, ma'am, from across town. It's okay Miss Collins, there's no catch."

Mary backed to a small sofa and sat down gathering her children to her. She looked up at the men with big tear filled eyes, "*This is amazing.*" *We've been praying for a miracle for so long now, I mean, things have been so hard. My husband left about six months ago taking the car and all our savings with him. And my job at the grocery store barely covers our bills...*" she looked down at her children, her tears slipping down her cheeks, then added softly, "*I mean, we didn't even set up a Christmas tree.*"

"I know ma'am. That's why we're hear. You used to attend First Street Church—"

"Yes, but it's been months!"

"I know ma'am, and I know why. Can we set these bags in your kitchen? We have more in the trunk of the car." Dave looked at Tom with just as much wonder as Mary did. Tom smiled at them both, "There's turkey and ham and all the fixin's to make a Christmas dinner here, and there's more food in the trunk along with a few more surprises."

The children looked at their mother and little Suzy asked, "Momma? Did Jesus answer our prayers?"

"Yes babies," Mary sobbed, "He sure did!"

As the day wore on Tom and Dave helped Mary and her children set up their Christmas tree. They stacked the dozens of presents that they had brought beneath it. Each labeled with the names of Suzy, Mark, and David, and Tom and Dave smiled at the children's shining eyes. Finally, as Tom told them it was time for Dave and him to go, he handed Mary an envelope containing a set of keys.

"What's this?" Mary asked eyes wide.

"Your miracle." Tom replied, "Merry Christmas."

With that he pulled out his cell phone to call a taxi. While Tom and Dave walked out to wait for their ride, Mary and her children could be heard singing praises to Jesus, thanking Him for His angels, and for loving even them, caring for their need.

As Tom and Dave rode in the back of the taxi, Dave asked, "Those expressions on their faces, the love they felt knowing all they could do was receive it..." he paused looking out his window then wiped his eyes, "...that's what heaven's going to be like isn't it Tom?"

"Yeah buddy, it sure is."

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him—but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."

1 Cor. 2: 9,10

About Blasphemy and Forgiveness

By Bud Garner Staff Writer to Free Life News

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"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come."

Matthew 12:30-32
(cf. Mark 3:28-30; Luke 11:9-10)

When Satan has lost another man or woman to Jesus Christ, he is not a happy devil. After all, he has lost another eternal roommate in the bottomless pit. Now, his tactics have to change; they change from keeping people away from faith in Christ to keeping them from enjoying their new life in Christ (Romans 6:4). Misunderstanding blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is one of those tactics. Satan has designed a set of lies to get us to believe that there is some act or set of words, which we can perform which will wipe out the truth of God's eternal forgiveness. What Jesus speaks of is beyond mere careless words but refers to much more – they refer to matters of the heart and faith in Him.

Blasphemy is a very severe word. Dictionaries tell us that blasphemies are words, attitudes, actions, or writings which are full of contempt and irreverence towards God. This is not a bad place to start. When we are obsessed with ourselves in pride and self-righteousness, we become fools and will call God a liar. We often do this out of anger, selfishness or ignorance. Jesus' own words are crystal clear about this subject; even those blasphemies against Him will be forgiven at His cross, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

But now we are at the point of having to figure out what is the unpardonable sin. Jesus clears that up for us, too. Through the apostle John, our Lord reveals what the world sin is:

"Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you ... When He [the Spirit] comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me ..."

John 16:7,8,9

Here, we discover the rejection of Christ is the only sin which is held against any man or woman. But Jesus spoke of this sin much earlier when He was with Nicodemus:

"For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

John 3:16-18

Now we can see that the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit raises the bar to the max degree. Here, it is 1) recognizing God's message of the sending of His Son to save them using the Holy Spirit as His Messenger, 2) believing the message to be true, and then for whatever motive, 3) calling the Spirit a liar concerning His testimony, even though the person knows His message is the truth. Rejecting Christ is the deadliest blasphemy of all, because it is the only sin attributable to man in God's eyes since the cross and blood of Christ has paid for all of the other sins of the world (1 John 2:2).

And not only is the rejection of Jesus calling the Holy Spirit a liar concerning the message of Christ, but it is also calling the One who sent the message, God the Father, a liar as well. Even at the end of the life of John the apostle, he is God's witness to Jesus Christ, the Truth of God:

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him [God] a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. "

1 John 5:9-12

The foolish blasphemy committed out of anger and ignorance is forgiven at the cross (1 John 2:2), but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit concerning the Gospel is not. This is because it contains the rejection of Christ. It is a sin to call the Holy Spirit a liar and has become the sin which cannot be forgiven. To call the Spirit a liar about Jesus is to call the one who gave the Spirit a Liar - God the Father. The person is unforgiven not because he insulted God, but because he rejected God's message of salvation in His Son, knowing all along it is true. This is a horrible way to live, but some people in pride have reached this

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Looking Closer at His Creatures

The Mouse that Could Sing

“This *can't* be true,” you’re probably thinking, but it *is!* In the early 1940’s in Princeton, Texas, there really was a mouse that could sing.

An old Victorian house had been vacant for almost a year, when Walter and Allie, a young newly-married couple, decided it was the perfect house for raising the big family they hoped to have someday. However, they were not aware that this house was already occupied – by a very unusual mouse.

I met Allie many years later. She was a good friend and also a very fine artist, well-loved and admired by many aspiring artists she had taught in her studio.

She no longer lived in the old Victorian house, and Walter had died several years before, but memories of their unusual occupant were still fresh in her mind. “That little mouse created quite a stir in our lives,” Allie recalled, as she showed me some newspaper clippings of her famous pet.

Walter and Allie, and their tabby cat, Rembrandt, had barely gotten settled in their new house, when they began hearing strange sounds. They were not unpleasant sounds; in fact, the couple thought maybe a songbird had made its nest somewhere in the house. They immediately began a search; and of course, Rembrandt was only too glad to head the investigation.

Sometimes, the sound seemed to be coming from a bedroom or closet on the second floor. And other times, they were sure the creature was in their living room or kitchen. Whenever the little mouse heard them coming, she would stop singing, so it was hard to detect her whereabouts.

Then, one evening, when Walter and Allie returned from a movie, Rembrandt was in the upstairs hallway making a terrible fuss, and they were sure he must have cornered their little songbird.

Allie picked up an empty birdcage she had placed in readiness, and Walter grabbed a butterfly net; then the couple hurried upstairs. They were about to come face to face with the little singing mouse.

On reaching the second floor, they saw Rembrandt crouching in front of the hall closet door. Walter and Allie had already examined the closet interior, but had found no break in the wall big enough for even a tiny bird or mouse to crawl through.

The little mouse had entered through the space under the door; and now, because Rembrandt was right outside the door, the creature was trapped inside.

As Walter stuffed a towel in the open space, Allie picked up her resistant cat and put him in a bedroom. Then cautiously, they opened the closet door.

The little mouse had stopped her concert and was standing on hind legs in a corner of the closet. As she started to run for the door, Walter caught her in the butterfly net, and he and Allie put her in the birdcage.

The mouse and her friendly captors studied each other for a few minutes; then Allie placed some food, water and soft rags in the cage. (Later, she would add little toys, and a small tree branch, slanted upward from the cage floor to one side of the cage for play times and exercise.) She set the cage on a window seat in the breakfast nook, their favorite room. This was where they ate most of their meals, while watching the birds and squirrels enjoying the beautiful trees in their yard.

At first, Rembrandt was not at all pleased with the arrangement, but gradually, he conceded that if he had to share the window seat with a mouse, at least he could keep an eye on her (while dreaming of a spirited game of chase if she ever got out!)

The little mouse was silent for a few days; but, as she began to feel at ease with her humans and Rembrandt, she got over her shyness and started singing again the sweet songs she had sung before.

She often serenaded Walter and Allie as they ate their meals at the table near the window seat. And can you guess the favorite meal of a little singing mouse? This one was especially fond of *birdseed!*

Walter and Allie named the “songmouse” after their favorite singer of that era, the legendary Kate Smith, who helped to immortalize Irving Berlin’s stirring song, *God Bless America*.

Articles and pictures featuring Katie Mouse soon began appearing in newspapers all over the United States and even in some foreign countries. At that time, there was only one other known singing mouse in existence; her name was Minnie, and she lived in New York. As you might have guessed, Minnie was named after another famous Minnie Mouse, the girlfriend (for over 50 years!) of a mouse named Mickey.

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Knowledge of the Truth

By Ashley Cowen, Cottonport, La

I don't care how big a problem may seem, how troublesome the storms may get, there is only one answer and His name is Jesus. There are many who would try to find an answer somewhere else, but only one said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Far too many people perish without the knowledge of the truth that the true life is not found outside of Jesus and the gospel that He came to fulfill.

So at a time when darkness seems to prevail and light seems so dim that people inside (and outside) the prisons seek out life in others places. It's mandatory that we get into the Bible, which not just contains the Word of God, but is the Word of God. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word inspiration in the Greek is an interesting one—theopneustos— (Theo: God, pneo: to breathe).

From Genesis to Revelation God breathed through men of God and inspired them to move with action to produce deeds and words in the finished product we call the Bible. And as we too hoist up our main-sail to the wind, we will make our way to shore in these turbulent seas. Unfortunately, not everything blowing around us is of God, so we have to be particularly careful as to what we lift our sails to.

The answer is an alter, not an altered answer.

This answer began as a promise to Abraham in Genesis when God said to him, "in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed "... and in thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed My voice." (22: 17-18)

Abraham, a man of great faith, had his main-sail up and was fully persuaded that God would His promise. But can we today be just as persuaded that God has fulfilled the promise given to Abraham? We sure ought to be. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "surely blessing I will bless thee and multiplying I will multiply thee" Heb. 6: 13-14)

And Gal.3: 8 says, "And the [inspired] scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying." In thee all nations will be blessed. Notice that these two set of Scriptures refer to the one promise given to Abraham by God in Gen. 22: 17-18.

In Galatians this "promise" is called "the Gospel". The promise is the Gospel and the Gospel is the Promise. These are two words used interchangeably to refer to the same thing. So when Paul, on his first missionary journey, said to those in the Synagogue at Antioch, "and we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise {the Gospel} which was made unto the fathers —this includes Abraham—God has fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again."

Paul was saying that the Gospel was fulfilled and finalized in Jesus' death, burial, resurrection and ascension for the remission, (freeing of) and full pardon of our sins. No more prophets ever had to come again and give mankind more revelation of God. All revelation of God is in the Person of Jesus and the physical death He suffered on the Cross.

Jesus was not merely a messenger of the Gospel —He was the Gospel fulfilled. It is also clear to see the finality of the work of Jesus when we look at the order in which Adam was made. God's order of manifestation has always made an onward progression from the natural to the Spiritual. He first created Adam from the dust of the ground, (natural) then blew the breathe of Life [the wind of God] into Adams physical body to make him a living soul [spiritual].

Now look at how this was beautifully fulfilled in Jesus. Though He wasn't a created being, was on this earth for 33 1/2 years [as natural]. He died on the cross, poured out His blood on the heavenly mercy seat, and returned to earth as the Paraclete 50 days later on the Day of Pentecost [as spiritual] fulfilled as the second Adam. God does not go from natural to spiritual back to natural. That disrupts God's order of manifestation. And though all has been lost in the first Adam, all can be regained in Jesus.

First John 2:1-2 says that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation (payment) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

And since it is our sins that has separated us from God this is indeed glad tidings. [Gospel in Greek].

So no matter who you are, what you've done, how much the world seems to be against you in those dark days, the answer to

The Mouse that Could Sing - 2

It's true that a singing mouse is one of God's amazing *animal* creatures, but *every person* is much more amazing! No animal, not even a singing mouse, has been made in the very image of God Himself. And, unlike animals, God gave people a *spirit*, as well as a body and soul.

The moment you receive Jesus as your Savior, His Spirit comes to live in *your* spirit. Then you have *Jesus*, the Son of God, living in *you*. What could be more amazing? Now, that's really something to sing about!

Jeannie Thompson

***So God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him;
male and female He created them.
(Genesis 27:1)
Because we are (His children),
God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,
the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."
(Galatians 4:6)
Christ in you, the hope of glory!
(Colossians 1:27)***

Maybe some of you (maybe there is just one of you) are holding this letter in your hands who have never experienced the love of Christ which has been expressed so beautifully within these pages. Some of you are going through difficult times and don't know where to turn. The way to turn is right—*right* into the loving arms of a Faithful and Loving God, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He comes to each of us, and takes us unto Himself, no questions asked. Just come by faith, believing and confessing that He is Lord, that God raised Him from death and that He is alive today to give you hope and peace. Will you bow your heart to God and receive His Gift of forgiveness and life in the Lord Jesus Christ? He is right there, reach out to Him. *"Lord Jesus I need you, Thank you for taking away my sin, and offering to me your gift of love and forgiveness. I now receive You into my heart by faith. Thank you for coming into my heart to live in and through me."* Amen

You are loved forever and abundantly! Totally forgiven and accepted just as you are. Old things are passed away, behold all things are made new. You now possess the indwelling life of Jesus Christ.

Mitzi

STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

Questions: "This question was asked in one of my Bible Studies. If the Lampstand is so important in God's temple, why do Christians not have the Lampstand in their churches, today? "

Dear Friend, As you've said, the lampstand is incredibly important in the temple of the old covenant. But things have changed. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, we have been in the New Covenant where all things have been made new (Hebrews ch 8).

Remember when at Pentecost how the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as if He were tongues of fire (Acts 2:3)? Well not only are our bodies the temple of the Holy Spirit (the fire) (1 Corinthians 3:16), but we are permanently indwelt by Him (1 Corinthians 6:19) and therefore, have also become the lampstand of God.

When Jesus spoke of not hiding the light under a bushel (Luke 11:3), there were three meanings here. 1) The light or pride of man isn't hidden from view. So, 2) why hide the Old Covenant truth to not be afraid to share with others God's truth which they had heard from Him. And, 3) in the New Covenant as the body of Christ, Jesus goes wherever we go, so we should not be afraid to share the gospel of God's grace in Christ, but also share His life which is light: " In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4).

Your fellow lampstand in Jesus,

THE BELL

I KNOW WHO I AM

I am God's child (John 1:12)
 I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
 I am united with the Lord(1 Cor. 6:17)
 I am bought with a price(1 Cor. 6:19-20)
 I am a saint (set apart for God). (Eph. 1:1)
 I am a personal witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)
 I am the salt & light of the earth (Matt.5:13-14)
 I am a member of the body of Christ(1 Cor 12:27)
 I am free forever from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1-2)
 I am a citizen of Heaven. I am significant (Phil.3:20)
 I am free from any charge against me (Rom. 8:31-34)
 I am a minister of reconciliation for God(2 Cor.5:17-21)
 I have access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18)
 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)
 I cannot be separated from the love of God(Rom.8:35-39)
 I am established, anointed, sealed by God (2 Cor.1:21-22)
 I am assured all things work together for good (Rom. 8: 28)
 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)
 I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph. 3: 12)
 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)
 I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15: 1-5)
 I am God's temple (1 Cor. 3: 16). I am complete in Christ (Col. 2: 10)
 I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). I have been justified (Romans 5:1)
 I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1). I am God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10)
 I am confident that the good works God has begun in me will be perfected (Phil 1: 5)
 I have been redeemed and forgiven (Col. 1:14). I have been adopted as God's child (Eph
 1:5)
 I belong to God
 Do you know
 who you are!?

My dear friends,

If you prayed the prayer of faith on the previous page, you have become a child of the Living God, and you can study the above Scriptures to learn who you are **in Christ**. You have a new identity, and as you find these verses in your Bible, underline them and memorize them so you can know who you really are. **In Christ** you *have* everything you need for life and godliness. You *are* hidden **in Christ** with God. You *have been* justified. You *are* a redeemed and forgiven person. You *have* the righteousness of God **in Christ**. Everything you are and have is found **in Jesus Christ** and His finished work on the Cross. He says "you will find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart."

God bless you as you search for Him and find Him, your life will never be the same. Trust me, I know, I've been His Child since 1964.

Mitzi

Rejoice

By: Ricky Lowe, Jr. _ _ _ PPCJ

I have often thought, "How Great it must have been, when after 3 days, Christ Jesus, (for the first and only time in all of history) rose from His tomb and was resurrected from death to life." It is often extremely hard to even fully grasp the significance (importance) of this victorious event and what it meant for the future faith, hope, love and destiny of mankind.

The interest and curiosity of this moment and the occurrences of it were suddenly (passionately) burning inside my being; as though not even fueled by my own intentions. But instead, that of the Holy Spirit. And it came to me; to say this:

There are messages in God's word! In His Story! Secrets never before revealed to man until Jesus (the Son of God) came with the living truths and revealed them to us.

A message was passed to me concerning the 27th and 28th chapters of the Book of Matthew. This is the location of the actual documentation of what happened when Jesus rose from the tomb in which His dead body was placed after His Crucifixion.

Let's take a look at it! Refer to Matt. 27: 62-65

In reading this passage, you will find that it explains how the religious officials, who were against Jesus were worried. Saying to Pilate, "*He said, after 3 days I will rise.*" (Matt. 27: 63) Therefore, Pilate ordered guards to watch over the tomb of Jesus.

Matt. 27: 66 — **So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.** So now, with the tomb secured, let's look ahead into Matt. 28 to see what, then, took place.

Matt 28:2— **and behold, there was a great earthquake; for an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it.**

So first we have the earthquake! I myself am a native Texan, and I have never experienced an actual earth trembling earthquake. Although there have been a lot of circumstances in my life that have really shook things up! For instance, the day I lost my physical freedom and was arrested. I found myself incarcerated here in the Palo Pinto County Jail. Unable to reach out and hold my 4 year old baby girl and 6 year old son in my arms anymore. Once again, locked up because of an eleven year Methamphetamine addiction. So even though I've never experienced your typically heard of earthquake; with all that's happened I definitely feel like my own personal earthquake has been off the rector scale, to say the least! Have you been through an earthquake? If so, what kind was it? And most importantly, what did you do? They've been known to be very disastrous; like the one in California years ago. Just like California called for help and relief, so did I! I called upon my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Psalms 86: 7—In the day of my trouble I will call for You, for You will answer me.

Now back to Matt. 28:2 **"After the earthquake. For the an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it."**

My first thought upon mentally picturing this event happening was, WOW! That's awesome, an Angel came down from Heaven and rolled that stone away from the entrance of Jesus' tomb so Christ could come walking out of it! Is that cool, or what? I would of loved to have been there to behold that moment through my own eyes!

But in reading further ahead I realized that the Scripture didn't mention Jesus coming out from the tomb. So I looked deeper into this passage: Matt.28:2— **And behold there was a great earthquake for an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it.**

Now wait a minute! Couldn't the earthquake had just as easily caused this stone to roll aside or tremble away from the tomb entrance? After all, God caused the earthquake! And

instead of sending the Angel He could have caused the stone to be removed by the earthquake. But, God didn't do it that way! He done it all His own unique way so that we would have this message we are receiving.

You see, the stone had to be rolled back! Other than a large rock; some other definitions of stone are as follows: (1) The hard case of the kernel (seed) in some fruits. (2) A hard mass forming in body organs. In example #1, in order for that seed to ever grow, the stone (hard case) covering it must absorb water (in where it weakens the outer & feeds the inner) so that the life of the fruit plant inside can break through it's shell-like surface and grow, reaching beyond the surface of the ground, into the sun light. Of course, before all of this, it would have had to be buried. Sort of like meeting it's own little grave or tomb, but not being dead inside of it. As a matter of fact, being fully alive inside it just patiently waits for that stone casing to crack so it can experience what it's like to grow, form, mature and at last, truly live the life it was intended to live from the very beginning, beyond it's stone case, that for awhile, guarded and protected it (sealed it in) The time has to come when that seal (guard is broken).

Looking back at Matt. 27:66 —**So they went and made the tomb secure sealing the stone and setting the guard.**

The sealing of that stone and the setting of that guard had to be broken! And so it was!

Now example #2 of the definition of stone is "a hard mass growing in body organs", such as a Kidney stone. I've never had one myself, praise God, but my Step-dad did. And in this specific situation, he can testify that in order to get well again, you have to pass this sort of stone as well. And according to his description of it, that passing was extremely painful. But the after-effect was surly a relief so great. Although it had to happen, and so it did. He feels much better these days as is completely healed.

Rejoice cont from page 8

Alright! Moving right along! I think it's clearly relevant that by now you can easily see why the stone had to be rolled back.

So what happened after the Angel of the Lord rolled back the stone from the entrance way of Jesus' tomb? Well, in Matt. 28: 2 it clarifies that the Angel did indeed sit on top of it.

That's right, He rolled the stone back and then sat on top of it!

The fact that after the Angel rolled the stone back and then sat on top of it really hit home with me! You see, when I was younger I'd go hiking out in the woods, along the Brazos River Valley surrounding Palo Pinto County, TX. I loved climbing steep hillsides and rock cliffs. The highest and most challenging peaks I reached the tops of always gave me a bird's-eye view of the surrounding under-lined landscape and often breath-taking scenery of the country side and river valley below for miles around. As far as I could see. I'd immediately get this over-whelming feeling of accomplishment inside of myself. As though I were a conqueror and had defeated (over came) every one of those mountains, that at that time were under my feet as I stood on top of them.

So please understand, that when that Angel of the Lord sat on top of that stone all those years ago, knew a great battle had been won! Conquered at last! And therefore, just as I did in my youth, the Angel sat on top of that stone and basked in the glory of it. The glory of God, it truly was and still is!

John 16:33 — " **These things I have spoke to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"

Romans 8:37— " **yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved (loves) us.**"

Rev. 6:2—" **And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow. And a crown was given to Him, and He went out conquering and to conquer.**"

My fellow believers, this is all great (glorious) news! And

now I'd like to look with you at the first spoken word of our Lord and Savior upon His resurrection. You'll find it in Matt.

28:9— **And as they went to tell His disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying "REJOICE"**

Therefore, we (you and me) (all of us) should also rejoice! The stone had been removed, and through Christ we too are victorious over death. Through Him we have the gift of everlasting life.

What stone is in your life? What stone is holding you back or keeping you trapped inside of a lifeless, dark and cold tomb? (spiritual death instead of true life).

Well, if you've accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then guess what? There is no stone! That's right!!! It's gone, rolled back and you're sitting on top of it smiling because you are more than a conqueror in Christ. How did we move that stone? We didn't! Jesus did!! That's good news! I hope this message has cleared up for you, as it has me, why God sent a Angel to remove that stone then sat on top of it instead of allowing it to be simply shook away by the earthquake alone.

And the reason's why the Scripture uses the actual word "stone" instead of what we would of referred to it as, out here in the country where I'm from, "a big ole rock." the further definitions of a "stone" should have cleared up as well.

And now looking back on a quick review; let's remember these events because they mark one of the greatest feats in all the history of life-as-a whole here on earth.

- 1) **Earthquake:** Surely you can relate
- 2) **Rolled back the Stone:** The stone's gotta be rolled back. There's a stone blocking a lot of people from the true life Christ intended them to live! Accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior is the first step to rolling back that stone! After that, with a straight connection to the Father, you can pray for any and all other stones barricading you in, to be removed.
- 3) **Set on top of the Stone:** Like an Angel, victorious conquering! Basking in the Glory of God!
- 4) **Resurrection of our Lord Jesus:** Death was defeated, and through Christ, we too, shall defeat and triumph over

death and pass into Eternal Life. Let's not forget the first word spoke by Christ Jesus after this: " **REJOICE**"

May God bless you abundantly. I pray you have chosen Christ to roll back your stone, no matter what your stone or earthquake has been.

Jesus is the only one who can bring you through the earthquake unharmed and victorious over death. Jesus is the only One who can roll back that stone! I can see you now, with Angel wings smiling ear to ear as you are sitting on top of your stone with any remembrance of the earthquake suddenly gone.

Now that's Good News! Christ be with you.

STRAIGHT ANSWERS TO BIBLE QUESTIONS

Question: "What would likely occur if a non-believer of the Holy Bible, an unregenerate person, attempted to practice the presence of God in like manner of Brother Lawrence as related in the book, 'The Practice of The Presence of God?'"

Dear Friend, Although I have not read the book, righteousness is not possible for any man attempting to imitate God. Scripture is very clear. Our very best, compared to God is like comparing a spotless operating room to the input of a sewage treatment plant: "Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you" (Psalm 143:2).

In fact, self-righteousness is the evidence of pride; the root which is at the rejection of Jesus Christ: "When He [the Holy Spirit] comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me [Jesus Christ]" (John 16:8-9).

Any man who attempts to become righteous by his own merit must fail because righteousness for a human being is impossible. The fact he believes he can raise himself to God's level is proof alone of this. Righteousness is only possessed by God, so it can only be given to a person as an act of God's grace through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ: "but to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness," (Romans 4:5).

Wandering

By: Ronald Keith Lang (Bama)

I heard an interesting sermon on the topic of the 40 years in the wilderness that the Children of Israel went through. It was about the fact that the Lord watched over them and how not even their clothes or shoes wore out. But the part that caught my attention was the fact that it took 40 years to make a 2 week trip. As I continued to think about it, the guys that I was incarcerated with came to my mind. How they kept going up for Parole and being denied, how they would tell me about things they were waiting for and ,but it wasn't coming through.

One guy especially came to mind, that kept telling me he was going up for parole and how he had all his paper work and church papers in order ready to show the Parole Board. Yet, his life was not lining up to the paper trail he was collecting. Church certificates were trophies to impress the Parole Board, but not done in sincerity of heart. One day when he asked me about this, I told explained to him that the Lord revealed to me that he had a head knowledge of religion and not a love for Christ. Well, because of my honest in the situation, I suddenly became Satan in his mind and he rebuked me, and said that I wasn't a Christian. He told me that he would make it out before me and "then I would see". The sad part is he is still incarcerated, being turned down by the Parole Board once again and is blaming everyone, even the Church.

Then I thought of the children of Israel and how they spent 40 years wandering in the Desert, because they were looking for the wrong thing. They kept looking for what God would give to them instead of just serving God and allowing Him to bless them. People serve God for the things in life they want because they are "supposed" to serve Him and complain all day about how God isn't blessing them. Isn't that a lot like the Children of Israel?

Are there things in your life that your are waiting for the Lord to do for you instead of just serving Him out of love for Him? I can't help think of the scripture that says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and he will give you the desires of your heart". Are you wandering in the desert right now? I have found out one thing in my life, which is when you serve God for Who He is, and not for what you want, He will give you everything you desire.

Since my release the second week in June, '07 God has blessed me in ways I didn't even think possible. He has placed people in my life and has given me opportunities . I will share just one with you. I was planning on being in Texas as soon as I was released, but because of problems with paperwork, I couldn't leave Louisiana. Yet, God knew the entire situation and placed me in a position to earn a really nice F150 extended cab truck, for doing some work on a friends house. Fresh out of Prison , you need a ride, and God blessed me with a super nice one,

fully loaded with all the extras. It has been like that since my release, not that there hasn't been problems, but God continues to give me favor and Grace in the eyes of Parole and Probation Officers, as well as many other people. God has more than met my every need...yet that is not why serve Him. I serve an awesome God.

If you find that you have been wandering in the Desert of life long enough, isn't it time you got serious with God? Take the time out to simply talk to Him,...ask Him is that the reason things have been working out the way they have. Isn't it time to get serious with God...about the fullness of Christ? I pray that you will get serious and that you would allow Him to fulfill your life as He has my own. Or, maybe you don't even know God and want to.. it just takes a sincere and honest heart... to realize that you are a sinner and that the wages of sin is death. To realize that Jesus came into this world to pay that price by dying in your place...out of His love for you. Would you ask Him into your heart today?

I pray that each and everyone of my Brothers and Sisters in Christ are basking in the goodness of the Lord. If not, then write in and let us know. Whatever problem you might be going through, let us know so we can pray for you and with you. For that same love that Christ had to give up His life for you, is now in the hearts of all of us who have asked Him into our lives.

May the Lord keep you in His most tender embrace.

About Blasphemy and Forgiveness from page 3

have reached this level. Sadly, many never return from it.

To counter the "father of lies," we must be know and be confident in this – the power of the blood of Christ has purchased our eternal forgiveness:

"But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Hebrews 9:11-14

No matter where you are or what you have or haven't done, it does not change the facts.

Turn to page 11

All Of Me

From Gracehead.com Trent

My mind belongs to Jesus. My heart belongs to Jesus. My body, my hands, my feet, belong to Jesus.

With my mind, I understand that Jesus is the Son of the Living God, the God Who rules over all and that He gave His life that I might live in the presence of the Living God eternally. With my mind, I meditate upon God's Word both night and day as every thought is captured in Christ. However, if my knowledge of God is all that I have, all that I live by, God's Word becomes dry and useless in me, reduced to Biblical facts and principles. God's Word demeaned to the level of the product of human intellect. It is not enough to give only my mind to Jesus. I must also give my heart to Jesus.

The emotions of my heart give depth to the written Word in me. It is my heart that convinces me of the reality of all that I read in the Bible and of all that I hear preached according to the Holy Spirit. It is my heart that received Divine Love from my Father and enables me to Love Him above all others in return. It is my heart that is filled with the devotion that binds me to God forever. Yet, if I give Jesus only my heart, I've no boundaries and will follow its emotional lead to disaster if I have not also given Him my mind. It also is not enough to only give him my mind and my heart and relegate Jesus to the world of the abstract of thought and feeling. I must also give Jesus my body.

My body is the earthly temple of the Living God. In me, and others called according to His purpose, God chooses to dwell through the Power of the Holy Spirit. This temple is a holy place and must be maintained with reverence. My feet are to move me according to God's Will and take me where He desires that I go. My hands are to do the Work of God as He directs me daily. This direction from God by the Holy Spirit is given through my mind and heart that already belong to Jesus. If Jesus did not live in my heart and if God's Words were not written upon my mind, my body would move naturally to its own accord and never realize the holy purpose for which it had been created.

All of me belongs to Jesus and this is what it means to obey. Full obedience from those God has called out of the world in Christ Jesus is what the Father desires. He will accept nothing less for it is required in order to fulfill His purpose. His purpose is to His Glory and for our benefit.

Jesus, take all of me. Claim that which you already own that to my joy, my purpose be fully manifest and You be fully glorified in me. All to the Glory of God the Father. Amen.

About Blasphemy and Forgiveness

For those who are alive in Christ, you possess the total forgiveness of God and cannot 'unsave' yourself no matter how many foolish and selfish words you say

But for those who continue to fight and reject the Messenger and the Author concerning the Word of Life, you remain condemned. But God has not given up on you, even though you may have given up on Him ... "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). The truth of the Holy Spirit has reached your heart many times. Let this be the day that you receive His testimony and enter into eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Continue to encourage each other and share the Lord Jesus. There are many people out here praying for all of you to grow in Christ in spite of your circumstances. Your friend in Jesus, Bud

is accounted for righteousness," (Romans 4:5).

A man like this has fallen into the same prideful trap of sin that Satan did. Satan thought he could match the glory and power of God - and fell from heaven. This kind of man thinks he can match the righteousness of God - yet fails to realize he is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). As Jesus told Nicodemus, this person needs a new spiritual life which is alive to God (John 3:1-18). And this new life is only found in Christ through faith in Him: "For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!" (Romans 5:10).

Many times, these kinds of people only have what Peter called an appearance of godliness, but are deniers of any power to act in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:5). If this person is truly seeking righteousness, he will ultimately stumble greatly or recognize his failure. Then he will come to an important decision; he will either turn to God and be directed to Christ by the Holy Spirit, or pridefully reject God altogether and become obsessed in unrighteousness.

Your fellow child of God in Jesus,
Bud

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*“Let the peace of
God rule in your
heart” Col.3:15*

Sharing the lessons I have learned about the faithfulness of God in difficult times.

For me, the issue is grasping the height, width, length and depth of God’s love for me. That’s where everything starts.

The more I understand how much God loves me, the more I’m able to trust Him to cause all things to work together for good. Doing that takes the pressure off of me and my circumstances and puts it on Jesus. That act calms my heart and quiets my soul. Now, I’m able to think properly and listen to Jesus’ lead.

It all comes back to knowing God loves me perfectly, and whatever the problem is, came through Him first. Knowing He will cause it to work together for my good enables me to respond with thanks rather than fear and anger.

Usually, it takes the Holy Spirit working with me to respond with thanks, because most of the time, if not always, I respond in the flesh first, at least mentally; then the Spirit gets hold of me, reminds me who I am – a born-again child of God, who is loved perfectly by his Daddy. Then I’m able to begin thinking proper thoughts as I respond with thanksgiving.

Even when I blow it, which is not quite as often now, God’s Spirit enables me to go the person I offended and apologize, and try to make things right, which is very important in here when you come in contact with the same people all the time. God is always faithful, even when I am not.

I’m so very thankful that His love and faithfulness is unconditional and not dependant on any thing I do! I’m going through a difficult time right now, which is one reason I’m writing this letter. It reminds me of the faithfulness of God, and this is just the opportunity to apply what He has taught me.

Thank you for the opportunity to share what Jesus is doing in my life. Hope all is well.
Keep your eyes on Jesus.

Your friend in Christ,

Joe Cushman— WV.