

# Catching the Vision

As we draw closer to the culmination of the vision that we have been covering in this series of articles, there are just a few more important things we must cover before we can talk about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of a divinely ordered kingdom here on earth. We have begun this overview at creation and looked at those things that are important to grasping an understanding of who God is, why He created us and what is to be our ultimate salvation from death and destruction. We have passed through a lot of history, looking at the key characters and the covenants God made with these followers of old.

In the previous issue we looked at the announcement of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, concerning the things John would preach about the coming Lord Jesus, especially the connection that Jesus would have to the house of David or the Royal line of David. We then took a close look at how this royal son born in Bethlehem would deal with sin

and how he would come to rely on his Father as he, like us, needed to be perfected and God's way of doing this was such that Jesus would be made perfect through suffering.

In this issue, very timely as we have just gone through the Easter season, our thoughts are directed to the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. It was a cruel death and it is a fair question to ask why Jesus needed to go through this painful and violent experience. How did this experience benefit us, which John tells us Jesus endured because "the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me." (John 14:31) The Article entitled *We Must See Jesus on the Cross* may help us to better understand the suffering of Jesus and how this relates to us.

But his death was only the end of his life in a body that was mortal and subject to death and a mind that knew temptation and felt its power yet he met it in an unyield-

ing manner because of the loving and obedient relationship he had with his heavenly father. Being resurrected to an immortal state, he would now go on to teach his followers the importance of obedience and what discipleship really means. We will briefly look at this in the article, *Go and Make Disciples*.

Being a disciple or follower of the Lord Jesus Christ involves day to day decisions in our lives and to make these decisions the scriptures tell us that Jesus is there to help, there to guide and strengthen and transform us into God's children. Some thoughts on this transformation process are presented in the final articles entitled *Being Transformed Into His Image*.

Please read these articles and let them guide and help you in "Catching the Vision" as we move closer to that day in the near future when that vision will become a reality.

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## *We Must See Jesus on the Cross*

Many people ask the question: why did Jesus have to die? But there's another question—why did he have to die such a painful, violent death? Why did he have to endure the hatred, violence, and persecution of his own brethren? Why was this necessary? It is hard to comprehend or understand. It was God who planned and purposed this so there must be good reason and when we get past the pain and anguish we see at least two good reasons for this suffering:

First, Jesus had to be tested and perfected to the utmost—the ultimate test.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren... Hebrews 2:10-12

(NKJV)

During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Mel-

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## **We Must See Jesus on the Cross** *(Continued from page 1)*

chizedek. Hebrews 5:7-10  
(NIV)

No one can question or doubt Jesus' complete love for his Father, complete trust in his Father, and his complete obedience to his Father. None of us has any excuse or rationalization to disobey or not trust, not love God in the same way. None of us can say that we have it harder or have endured more. There is no excuse.

The second reason has to do with us and, Peter, of all people would understand this. It was Peter, who several days after Jesus ascended to his Father, preached to those who were gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost:

"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for

death to keep its hold on him...

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear...

**"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Acts 2:22-24,32-33,36 (NIV)**

"You with the help of wicked men, crucified the Son of God." Jesus on the cross is the fullness of wickedness exposed. We can no longer justify ourselves or hide behind any excuse. It should bring recognition to each of us that we are no different—that, we, in the same situation would do the same thing. Jesus could have come to any people in any age and the result would have been the same—out of fear, jealousy, hatred would come the death of the only righteous person to have ever lived. The cross is not a pretty sight and the cross is us. We did this. In this recognition of who we truly are comes true repentance and a changed heart.

Peter would know this. He had bragged that even if everyone else

denied Jesus, he would not. But when the time came he was no better. His denials were loud and insistent. And then, Jesus, looked at him. Peter's heart was broken—he went out and wept bitterly. What had he done?

So Peter of all people knew the pain and anguish—the broken heart, when he said to the gathered crowd on that Day of Pentecost, "you with the help of wicked men crucified the Son of God". Many on that Day of Pentecost finally, also, saw themselves clearly:

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Acts 2:37  
(NIV)

Jesus, on that painful cross, brings us to the recognition of our sin, brings us to repentance, brings us to a changed heart, brings us to the intense desire to be different. And it is at this time, God, working through Jesus our Lord, starts making us into his faithful children. We cannot be God's children without going through this humbling and heart changing experience.

\* \* \*

## ***Go and Make Disciples***

Before Jesus ascended into heaven to be at the right hand of his Father, he gave a commission to his disciples, a commission that turned them into apostles:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and

make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

The disciples were told to "go and make disciples...baptizing them...teaching them to obey everything". In obedience to this command, Peter commanded the repentant people on the Day of Pentecost to obey:

## Go and Make Disciples

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Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39 (NIV)

Jesus teaches us that discipleship means following him in obedience:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain

came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." Matthew 7:21-17 (NIV)

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. Matthew 16:24-28 (NIV)

To this you were called, be-

cause Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 1 Peter 2:20-22 (NIV)

Sin, which is rebellion against God, has always been the problem. Jesus was very clear concerning the source of this sin and rebellion:

He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: "'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Mark 7:6 (NIV)

"Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come

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## Go and Make Disciples

(Continued from page 3)

evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" Mark 7:17-23 (NIV)

With repentance we receive God's forgiveness. With repentance comes a change of heart.

We desire to serve God but we need help. Jesus has given us an example to follow but to be like him, to be Jesus' disciples and love and obey God as he does, we need constant help in a process of transformation. Jesus lives and because he lives he is always able to help us. He is our High Priest helping us through temptations.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's de-

scendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:16-18 (NIV)

## *Being Transformed Into His Image*

Through the Spirit, the power of God that was given to him, Jesus leads, guides, strengthens, and transforms us into God's children. But we must stay connected to him. In a beautiful analogy Jesus teaches us this:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in

you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my

name. This is my command: Love each other. John 15:1-17 (NIV)

Meditate on these verses. How do we stay connected to Jesus? What does it mean to bear fruit? Why does Jesus want us to remain in him? What does Jesus command us to do?

After a true recognition of who we are in our hearts, after repentance with a true desire to be children of God, and after receiving God's forgiveness, there is a process of changing, that is, being made perfect. Just as Jesus needed perfecting, so do we. Paul describes the process in writing to the church in Philippi:

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the

## Being Transformed Into His Image

*(Continued from page 4)*

righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:7-14 (NKJV)

And to the church in Corinth he wrote concerning the change or transformation that Jesus, through the power of God, is bringing about in each one who turns to him:

Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken

away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:15-18 (NKJV)

Finally, listen to Paul's powerful and beautiful prayer for all those who follow Jesus:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all

we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21 (NIV)

God's plan and purpose with his creation has always been to "bring many sons and daughters to glory". It is his purpose that we should be made in his image and bring glory to him as Jesus in his life brought glory to his Father. Jesus through his total love and obedience to the Father, was perfected and then exalted to God's right hand. Through the process of our hearts breaking when we see Jesus on that cross, that the change in us, that transformation to being made in the image of his Son, can begin. It is through the constant, continual powerful work of Jesus in our lives, by our being connected to him as obedient disciples, that we are being transformed into his likeness, from glory to glory.

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Day	APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa
1	Deut 13,14	Mark 6	Judges 3,4	1 Corinth 11	Job 38,39	Psalms 59
2	Deut 15,16	Psalms 33,34	Judges 5,6	1 Corinth 12	Job 40-42	Luke 17
3	Deut 17,18	Mark 7	Judges 7,8	1 Corinth 13	I Sam 1. 2	Luke 18
4	Deut 19,20	Mark 8	Judges 9,10	Psalms 48	I Sam 3. 4	Psalms 60. 61
5	Deut 21,22	Mark 9	Judges 11,12	I Corinth 14	I Sam 5. 6	Luke 19
6	Deut 23,24	Psalms 35	Judges 13,14	I Corinth 15	I Sam 7. 8	Luke 20
7	Deut 25,26	Mark 10	Judges 15,16	Psalms 49	I Sam 9.10	Luke 21
8	Deut 27,28	Mark 11	Judges 17,18	I Corinth 16	I Sam 11. 12	Psalms 62. 63
9	Deut 29,30	Psalms 36,37	Judges 19,20	Psalms 50	I Sam 13. 14	Luke 22
10	Deut 31,32	Psalms 38,39	Judge 21 Ruth 1	Psalms 51. 52	I Sam 15. 16	Luke 23
11	Deut 33,34	Mark 12	Ruth 2-4	Luke 1	I Sam 17. 18	Luke 24
12	Prov 17,18	Mark 13	Prov 29,30	Luke 2	I Sam 19. 20	Psalms 64. 65
13	Prov 19,20	Mark 14	Prov 31	Luke 3	I Sam 21. 22	Psalms 66. 67
14	Prov 21,22	Mark 15	Job 1-3	Psalms 53	I Sam 23. 24	II Corinth 1
15	Joshua 1,2	Mark 16	Job 4,5	Luke 4	I Sam 25. 26	II Corinth 2
16	Joshua 3,4	Psalms 40,41	Job 6,7	Luke 5	I Sam 27. 28	II Corinth 3
17	Joshua 5,6	I Corinth 1	Job 8,9	Luke 6	I Sam 29-31	Psalms 68
18	Joshua 7. 8	I Corinth 2	Job 10,11	Psalms 54,55	Eccles 1. 2	Psalms 69
19	Joshua 9,10	I Corinth 3	Job 12,13	Luke 7	Eccles 3. 4	II Corinth 4
20	Joshua 11,12	Psalms 42,43	Job 14,15	Luke 8	Eccles 5. 6	II Corinth 5
21	Joshua 13,14	I Corinth 4	Job 16,17	Psalms 56	Eccles 7. 8	II Corinth 6
22	Joshua 15,16	I Corinth 5	Job 18,19	Luke 9	Eccles 9.10	Psalms 70. 71
23	Joshua 17,18	Psalms 44	Job 20,21	Luke 10	Eccles 11. 12	II Corinth 7
24	Joshua 19,20	I Corinth 6	Job 22,23	Luke 11	II Sam 1. 2	II Corinth 8
25	Joshua 21,22	I Corinth 7	Job 24,25	Psalms 57	II Sam 3. 4	II Corinth 9
26	Joshua 23,24	I Corinth 8	Job 26,27	Luke 12	II Sam 5. 6	II Corinth 10
27	Prov 23,24	Psalms 45	Job 28,29	Luke 13	II Sam 7. 8	Psalms 72
28	Prov 25,26	I Corinth 9	Job 30,31	Psalms 58	II Sam 9. 10	Psalms 73
29	Prov 27,28	I Corinth 10	Job 32,33	Luke 14	II Sam 11.12	II Corinth 11
30	Judges 1,2	Psalms 46. 47	Job 34,35	Luke 15	II Sam 13.14	II Corinth 12
31			Job 36,37	Luke 16		

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