

# Grace and Glory

Declaring unto you the Whole counsel of God

**Definite**

**Sign Posts**

**Of the End**

Paul N. Smith

**“I SAY THEN, HATH GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE? GOD FORBID ... GOD HATH NOT CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE WHICH HE FOREKNEW ... EVEN SO THEN AT THIS PRESENT TIME ALSO THERE IS A REMNANT ACCORDING TO THE ELECTION OF GRACE ... FOR I WOULD NOT, BRETHREN, THAT YE SHOULD BE IGNORANT OF THIS MYSTERY, LEST YE SHOULD BE WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS; THAT BLINDNESS IN PART IS HAPPENED TO ISRAEL, UNTIL THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES BE COME IN. AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED: AS IT IS WRITTEN, THERE SHALL COME OUT OF SIGN THE DELIVERER, AND SHALL TURN AWAY UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB: FOR THIS IS MY COVENANT UNTO THEM, WHEN I SHALL TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS ... FOR THE GIFTS AND CALLING OF GOD ARE WITHOUT REPENTANCE” --Romans 11**

One of the greatest signs of the end of the age is Israel. It has often been said that Israel is God's timepiece. We know what God expects of the nations in regard to this little nation. We can tell when the time is for this age to end. The Scriptures are quite plain in pinpointing the day of Israel's restoration. It is thrilling to learn the Scriptures concerning Israel and the nations, and then watch the signs of their fulfillment. The news media is our greatest source, of information and inspiration concerning the Chosen People of God. They are surely people of antiquity, and their destiny has been decreed by the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth. Whatever our dealings are with Israel, they must be with God.

May 7, 2007 marked the fifty-ninth anniversary of the modern state of Israel. Their story is one of the greatest nation-building epics of all time. Israel cannot be called strictly a militaristic state; yet, without one of the best small armies and air forces in the world, Israel would have been overrun by its Arab enemies by now. Instead, the Israelis have defeated their foes several times - the 1956 and 1967 victories being classics of lightning warfare.

Israel is much more than a nation noted for military victories. The people have made the desert bloom, not only with fruits and flowers but also with power plants, factories, schools, hospitals, scientific institutes, homes, highways - and human beings. Israel's birth rate of thirty-two per one thousand, compared with fifteen in the United States, shows that they have confidence in the nation's future. Fifty-five percent of the Israeli people are under thirty. It is a young virile nation, and the people are very confident of their ability to survive.

Jerusalem, situated in an unlikely spot for a major city, has now mushroomed into a bustling metropolis of more than one quarter million people.

In the office of Jerusalem's Mayor, there hangs a copy of a late sixteenth century German map showing Jerusalem as the "center of the world." Three ellipses spread out from Jerusalem the focal point, with Europe to the west, Africa to the south, Asia to the east. Thus, this ancient yet modern city is in the center of the earth, at the crossroads of all nations.

AT THE PRESENT TIME, FOR THE SAKE OF PEACE, ISRAELI LEADERS ARE WILLING TO GIVE AWAY MORE LAND TO THE VERY ENEMIES THEY CONQUERED IN PREVIOUS CONFLICTS. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert continues in his belief that Israel "needs to withdraw" from the Biblical Jewish provinces of Judea and Samaria. According to the Prime Minister, anyone who thinks Israel can continue to hold unto the provinces captured in the Six Day War of 1967 is "living a dream."

"Everyone understands that the State of Israel can't exist without a guarantee of a Jewish majority," Olmert added. Although many in Israel believe the question of Jewish majority to be a fundamental problem, recent research suggests otherwise. A major study published in 2005 revealed that the status of a Jewish majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is much more stable than previously reported, with Jews representing at least 60 percent of the total population. The data further suggests that the numbers of Arabs living in Judea and Samaria commonly referred to as the West Bank, in particular have been grossly overstated.

Olmert has intentions to run for a second term as chairman of the Kadima party, despite numerous calls for his resignation, and public approval ratings in single digits. If he is re-elected, it probably means that Israel will continue to go the way of compromise for the sake of peace. And, this is what we would expect to happen.

THE CONFIDENCE AND FAITH THAT THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL HAVE IN THEMSELVES WOULD BE VERY COMMENDABLE IF WE DID NOT KNOW THE SCRIPTURES. Their confidence is in their own abilities, and not in God. It is sad that the majority of these people do not give God the glory for the advancement they have made. It is true that they are industrious and hard-working, but it is also true that their victory in 1967 over the combined U.A.R forces was miraculous. God fought for them much as He did for Israel of old against the Philistines, and Midianites and other nations. God is the God of Israel, whether they all acknowledge this fact or not. He cannot deny His promises to them, nor will His covenant with Abraham and his seed ever be abrogated.

Some theologians would have us to believe that God has completely turned away from the Jews and will never restore them to their land. They put the wonderful prophecies of Isaiah in the past, never to have fulfillment in the future. We do not know what they do with Theologian Paul's discourse in Romans nine to eleven. There has certainly been no fulfillment of these many promises in the history of Israel, past or present. They have been blessed in a measure; and yet, their greatest time of peace and prosperity in Solomon's time, cannot be compared with their future blessings. Their restoration depends upon one great requisite - they must acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was sent from God

and that He is their Messiah. Thus far, this is a great obstacle; but time and circumstances will bring them to this decision.

The beauty and fruitfulness of this land will almost be destroyed during the terrible days of the tribulation. The great city of Jerusalem, with its centuries of history, will be surrounded by enemy forces and will be almost leveled to the ground. What warfare does not destroy, earthquakes, hail, drought, and pestilence will finish. It is frightful to read about the awful calamities that will befall this little nation. It seems that all of God's fury will be unleashed against this people. Unbelievers among them will curse God, and blaspheme His Name. They will accept the rule of the anti-Christ, and further add to the indignation of God's wrath. The two witnesses will be killed by the anti-Christ. Their bodies will be allowed to remain in the streets of Jerusalem for three days, so that all the world can see that the anti-Christ will indeed have more power than these prophets of God.

God is never defeated. He allows His ministers to be slain, and to be ridiculed; but He will have a greater miracle to show the world. After three days, the Spirit of the Lord will enter these witnesses and they shall stand on their feet, and then be caught up to heaven. God knows all about drama. This spectacular display of His power will be much more dramatic than if He had protected them from death in the first place. He will have the "last laugh"; and, indeed, He will always have the last laugh when it comes to the puny resistance of man. Incidentally, the two witnesses will NOT be Moses and Elijah as some people seem to think. These witnesses will have the same miracle faith and power that these two prophets had; but, it cannot be them, because they both have their glorified bodies. Moses was raised from the dead, and Elijah was translated without dying. They appeared on the mount with Jesus in their glorified state. Since they have glorified bodies, it would be impossible to kill them.

THE FIG TREE IS LEAFING, AND TELLS US THAT THE END OF THIS AGE IS AT HAND. Not only has Israel shown signs of national life and vigor, but also there are reports of spiritual life resurgent. One of the latest signs of this is in the academic field.

"ISRAELI SCHOOLS BEGIN TEACHING OF JESUS." Israel educators have smashed a major taboo, and are giving thirteen-year-old pupils their first real lessons on the life of Jesus and the growth of Christianity. In a country where many immigrants have known little comfort among so-called Christian peoples, and where some Jews still spit on the ground at the mere mention of "Yeshua," the introduction of Christianity into Israeli classrooms is striking.

The program was brought into the seventh grade some 30 years, and covers its ground in four one-hour lessons. A thirty-five-page textbook, recommended by the Ministry of Education, tells the story of Jesus tersely. It describes Roman oppression in the Holy Land, and the profusion of self-styled messiahs promising a better afterlife. Then it continues: "Into this reality, Jesus was born, little is known of His life, and less of His childhood." The textbook portrays Joseph and Mary as observant Jews who always spent the Passover festival in Jerusalem, "and it is easy to imagine how the holy places in Jerusalem were impressed upon the mind of the Galilean boy from Nazareth"

Then came “a turning point in Jesus' life, following His encounter with John the Baptist. This John appeared in Jericho, publicly proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, and called on Jews to prepare for it...”

The pamphlet quotes at length from Jesus' teachings and describes the miracles, then reaches the story of the crucifixion. “The authorities could not ignore this man claiming to be, a messiah, disrupting public order, and predicting the destruction of the temple ... Jesus was arrested by emissaries of the high priest and was brought for interrogation. During questioning, Jesus proclaimed Himself the Messiah and Son of God. Upon hearing this, the priest rent his clothes and ordered Jesus' trial by the Roman ruler Pontius Pilate ... He was sentenced to crucifixion as a rebel against the empire.”

Later, the textbook deals with Christian hatred toward Jews as supposed killers of Christ. It teaches: “The Christians blamed the entire Jewish people for the crucifixion of Jesus; and, went even further, placing responsibility on Jews for all the generations to come.”

Thank God, for this opening of the door to the Gospel. They may think to teach this subject as history only, but we know that the Holy Spirit is able to take just a portion of Scripture and with it transform a life. We are praying that these thirteen-year-olds will have their eyes opened to the Truth. It is plainly evident that blindness has happened to Israel, even as the Scriptures declare. The Orthodox Jews are the ones fighting this educational breakthrough; but they will, no doubt, be the ones who will accept this hated Man “Yeshua”.

It was the second generation of Israelites who came out of Egypt that went over into Canaan and possessed the land. Perhaps it will be these young people who will become the faithful remnant of the end-time, who will endure the tribulation and welcome the Lord when He returns to earth. The Lord will use another pair of witnesses, even like Joshua and Caleb, who will lead these people into an acceptance of Jesus Christ.

THRILLING DAYS ARE AHEAD OF US. We are not looking forward to remaining on the earth until Christ is revealed from heaven with power and glory. Whatever happens to Israel affects our stay on this earth. The sooner the promises are made good to Israel, the sooner we will go to our place in the heavens. As Paul states in Romans eleven, if the casting away of the Jews brought glory to the Gentiles, what will the restoring of them mean! It will mean peace and blessing to all mankind.

Whatever affects Israel, affects the whole world. This earth will never know peace until Jesus Christ is revealed to Israel as their Messiah. By the time that these people experience the dreadful pangs of the tribulation period, they will be ready to call upon Him. They shall see Him whom they have pierced. We do not put the blame upon the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus. God holds them responsible for rejecting His Son when He came into the world.

We Christians acknowledge that it was our sins, as well as the sins of all humanity, that put Christ on the Cross. God used the hatred of the Jews of that time to accomplish His purposes. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” - Acts 2:22, 23.

All will be forgiven when Israel acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God. Their repentance and faith will open the windows of heaven to these people. They will be made to forget their sins, and the sins of their fathers. They will forget the years of persecution and suffering that they have had to endure. The horrible nightmare of the tribulation will be erased from their minds. God shall shower them with spiritual blessings. He will cause the earth to yield as never before. The desert will blossom without any of their effort and toil. They will not need to irrigate the land any more. God will cause the latter rain to begin soaking the dry ground of Israel. He will fill the streams with life-giving water.

The greatest outpouring will be spiritual. He will send the spiritual latter rain upon the people. They will be cleansed from their sins, and will become a new creation Israel. They will experience a greater Pentecost than their forefathers did. They will become the spiritual leaders of the world. The nations which remain on the earth will come to the Jews for spiritual enlightenment. God's government will come from heaven directly to Jerusalem, and then out from that strategically-placed city to all the nations of the earth.

This causes us to rejoice, because it will be the fulfillment of Scripture. We love God's Word, and jealously guard it against all critics and scoffers. When God proves that His Word is true by bringing something to pass, then we say, “Amen!” If God's Word is true concerning Israel, then it is true concerning the Church.

JUST AS SURELY AS JESUS CAME THE FIRST TIME TO REDEEM HUMANITY, HE WILL RETURN TO TAKE THE CHURCH. We are not earthly people. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a place prepared for us in heaven, and that is where we long to be. In fact, we expect to be there. We believe that some of the Church will be taken before others, and we want to leave this earth just as soon as possible. We take the promise to the Philadelphia church - “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” - Revelation 3:10.  
Hallelujah

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### SOLOMON'S SONG

I am come to my garden, fair Lady of mine,  
To my garden of flowers,  
So fragrant Divine,  
Where thou art awaiting in beauty so dear,  
There to cherish my heart with thy  
Charm and thy cheer;  
With the kiss of thy mouth that's far sweeter than wine,  
I am come to my garden, fair Lady of mine.  
I am come to my garden of laughter and joy,

With its sunshine all golden  
 And naught to annoy.  
 Oh its roses and lilies! It's flowers are rare,  
 All so precious and wonderful,  
 None can compare.  
 With sweet roses of Sharon in beauty so coy,  
 I am come to my garden of laughter and joy.  
 I am come to my garden with enclosed wall;  
 As a captive to love,  
 I am held in its thrall;  
 Thou hast ravished my heart, my fair Sister, my dove;  
 In my house of best wine,  
 Thou art Queen, O My Love;  
 I will cherish thee ever, my Spouse and my All;  
 I have come to my garden with enclosed wall.  
 Chorus —  
 To my garden, my own choice Lady fair;  
 To my garden till we meet in the air;  
 To my garden, royal Queen so divine;  
 To my garden, e'en a banquet of wine.  
 Full of laughter and joy,  
 Surely naught can annoy;  
 I am come to my garden, fair Lady of mine.  
 -- Mary M. Bodie, Grace & Glory Carols

## STAND FOR THE TRUTH

Ray Quintana

**“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13)**

In Phil 1:17, Paul said, “knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel.” Are we willing to take such a stand for the truth of the Gospel? It is never so evident as when we are in a severe trial that we are called on to stand for truth. Is this really working for my good? Do we believe that He will take care of us in the trial? We must defend the Gospel by believing these things are working for our good and believing His Word for our lives.

We have the opportunity to become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him. We are not all being put into one mold. We are wrought by different means and each take shape as we go with God. The cuttings, hammerings, floods, fires, furnaces, and the lion's den, are the things that will prepare us to become joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We can be heirs of God yet lose out on the best He has for us. There is only one Man who has conquered the enemy, and He is on our side.

We must claim our riches in Christ, because there is an enemy who wants

to rob us of them all. In Ephesians 1:3, we are told that we have been blessed with all Spiritual blessings in the heavens in Christ. Our battle is a defensive battle. The provisions have been made to fight the enemy, but we must put on the whole armor of God. There is only one way to be an effective soldier of Jesus Christ and that is to wear God's armor. We can't be strong in ourselves. To be strong in the Lord pleases Him.

God gave the Apostle Paul a thorn in the flesh which was the power of Satan to buffet him from place to place. It is in our weakness that we, too, lay hold of the strength of the Lord. We cannot glorify God within our own abilities; it is as we learn the road downward and descend. "He must increase and I must decrease." We must go down in the will of God before He can lift us up. And He will not always lift us up in this life. Our day will come! This is not our day!

Has He taken you down into the valley of humility? He will make it a place of refreshing. The valley of humility becomes a well-watered garden, filled with flowers, spices and fruit. There is where we will find a place of exaltation. "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies.

We all love to see God's Hand of deliverance, the mighty power of His right hand, but there is also His left hand, the one that leads to humiliation, and can also deliver us. Remember the Red Sea. Have you crossed your Red Sea? It is always God's ability no matter how He chooses to deliver. God is always working in our lives. Ephesians 2:6 declares that He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavens in Christ Jesus. That is our position now. We don't need to reach heaven first. In God's thoughts, we are as good as there.

If we want God's best, we must stand for the truth. It is easy to go with God and agree with His Word when there is no opposition, but let the trial come and we will have to learn to stand for the truth. There are many who have turned back and gone no further. If the truth of salvation really grips our hearts, there is nothing in this world that could compare to this treasure that is in us. The truth of the Gospel out weighs everything else in 12 the universe. Even God said that He honored it above His name. Our warfare is a spiritual battle and the prize is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is faith which contends for what God has promised us.

Our warfare is continuous and relentless and yet this is how we learn to possess our inheritance in Christ. We do not have to gain something; we just have to claim what God has already given us. We need the eyes of our heart open to know what the hope of His calling is and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe. (Eph. 1:19). Lord, help us to choose the things that are ours forever. Deepen our hearts, Oh Lord! We need confidence in Him who will never fail us. To go with God, we must take up His cross. Only as the cross is in our lives will the beauty and the wealth of His Word become real to our lives. The devil cannot touch us if God does not permit him. God is working all things for our good. We are His loved ones, on the way home, and we can be joyful and glad even though we are in a far away country. The Lord will keep us along the way and give us springs of refreshing, and will make abundant grace

abound. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work"(II Corinthians 9:8).

We have many refreshing streams along this journey of life; we need only search for them in His Word and partake of them. Paul tells us, and his life was a testimony, that the shield of faith is sufficient to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. He fought with beasts at Ephesus. Every cruel device of man and Satan sought to destroy him. God didn't keep him from these battles, but protected him in those furnaces of trials. We have only a glimpse of the things that he experienced. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (II Corinthians 4:8-10).

In I Corinthians 4:9, he wrote: "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." Picture in your mind, a parade of the Romans, and in the front were all the shining floats coming down the street. Paul the Apostle was the slave in the back, chained by the neck being dragged along the parade route as a spectacle. "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are 13 strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised, (as an outlaw)" I Corinthians 4:10.

Yet Paul urges us to take that shield of faith which he carried into battle. How could a man in his right mind recommend a shield that allowed all these things to pierce his very being? He was beaten and whipped many times, yet where was this shield? Then, think of his exhausting labors. "I labored more abundantly than they all; and I labor and travail for you day and night." This labor that Paul is speaking about is the "labor of travail." It is a labor that expends to the point of extreme pain. It is labor that presses out of measure.

Paul said he was beyond strength, in so much that "we despair of our lives." Where was the shield to protect him? Then there were the failures that Paul went through. Are you going through failures? He wept when he saw the failures of the churches and individuals. Defeat after defeat and disaster after disaster littered the way of the Apostle Paul. Yet he exhorts us to take the shield of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Paul could not have been victorious, nor can we, without all this agitation. The shield of faith is not designed to protect us from the labor of travail, but carry us through these labors. Only then are we matured. We will have disappointments, but we must not let them make us bitter. We must put our faith in Christ, and seek the Lord and allow His purpose to grip our hearts through the Word of God. The value of the soul is for eternity, and much more important than our earthly circumstances.

Now don't think that one day we will be above it all and be able to handle every trial that comes our way without any problem. In Acts 27 is the story of Paul on his way to Rome by ship. They encountered a most terrible storm.. We read in Verse 20: "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken

away.” But then faith speaks in the person of Paul. “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me” 27:25. We must believe the promises of God as Paul did, and hold onto them. That's standing for the truth! Sirs I believe God! A part of the armor is the Girdle of Truth, which was a strong belt that held the armor in place. A soldier needed it to hold his sword in place. We need to fill our lives with the truth in order to be consistent. If we are fighting the good fight of faith, and running for the prize with all our heart and soul, as Jesus who set His face as a flint as He went to the cross, and as Paul said that I may win Him, we will reach that goal. (Phil 3:8.)

This belt is put on first. Why? We will never be able to put on the rest of the armor of God effectively until we know the truth. The truth is one of the most important things in a Christian's life. . We must learn the value of the truth. The devil cannot be defeated apart from the Word of God. It is God who enables us by giving us His strength and righteousness through the Truth. If we let Him have His way, He will take care of every battle. We will never be forsaken, even though we feel isolated and lonely. He loved me and gave Himself for me. No one could love us any more than that.

What if Jesus had come into this world in the robes of Glory that were His before the worlds were, in the Glory that He had with the Father? The heavens would have had to flee from Him. What would have become of you and me?

But He came like the dawning of the day, so gentle, as soft as the gentle rain, and so refreshing. He emptied Himself. He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man.

He became everything that He had never been before. He took those seven steps downward that only He could take. No one could go low enough to reach you and me except the Lord Jesus Christ. He emptied Himself for me. He didn't just become a man. He became the servant of man. He stripped Himself of everything so that He might lift us to the unsearchable riches in the ages to come, to show us the exceeding riches of His Grace. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men, and became man's servant. He was a servant to God and to man. He did always those things of His Father, but on the cross He was forsaken of man and God. He was repulsed at the very thought of sin, but He became sin at Calvary. We, who deserve to be forsaken, now by faith in Him, are guaranteed that we will never be forsaken nor will He ever cease to love us. To know the Word of God is to have a sense of glorious fellowship along the emptiest and most lonely road. Paul summed it up in Philippians 4:19: “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. So with joys or sorrows, fair weather or storms, we can know, all things work together for good to them that love God.

Regardless of the pit that this life may put us in, there is deliverance from that situation and a shining road which stretches before us. Every test is the will of God. Regardless of what it looks like, no matter how long the trial, He is working it for our good. We must realize in the darkest hour His Word is still true. When we wield the Sword of the Spirit, we are wielding God's thoughts, His plans, and His purpose. As we go out through the paths of life, in the midst of the cold, bristling heartaches of this world, we must carry the sword of promise.

When the enemy comes at us because of our weakness, our lack, we can pull out the sword of truth and say, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Then, prayer is also necessary for strength of soul. Prayer is the relationship between the soul and its resources, backed by the Word of God. To fight the good fight of faith. In prayer, we receive energy from God to win. Prayer is the love, strength, and beauty of God flowing into our lives. It fills us with completeness that comes from Him alone. We must learn that the prayer closet is the great battlefield of faith! It is the daily taking up of the cross, knowing how to cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We do not pray to make God obey our wishes, but to turn a reluctant self to God. Prayer establishes communion with God. It clears the road of our unbelief that is blocked by our own strength. Prayer prepares the way for that which only the Lord can do. In prayer we get the mind of the Lord to go into the battle. May we pray, Lord, enable us and help mine unbelief! Strings of prayer will not change God's mind. Prayer allows the lines to be opened to supply our resources from heaven. If the devil can shut these lines of communication, he will beat us. If we trust God, He will always be there, working, regardless of what it looks like on the surface.

When my heart pants for cooling streams, in the midst of the battle; so, my soul longs for His refreshing grace. My thirsty soul waits for thee, my Bridegroom. Oh when shall I behold thy face, thy Majesty Divine?

My defense shall be to run to you. When the winds are cold and the days are long, beneath your wings there is rest. Then the Lord speaks to us: "I will guide thee with mine eyes, in all thy need, fly to me. Fly to me with steadfast hope and trusting faith. Rest in my Word to you, that in my love, you are secure and blest."

Isaiah 65:24: "And it shall come to pass, that before you call, I will answer; and while you are yet speaking, I will hear". Faith leads us to the mercy seat and revives our fainting heart. Fear not, doubt not; but stand for the Truth. "I will keep you in perfect peace, as your mind is stayed on me." He is my everlasting strength. At the feet of Jesus is the place for me. There I am a humble learner, pouring out perfume of love, so rare; at the feet of Jesus is the place for me; watching and waiting, ready to go when my Bridegroom calls. I am standing for the truth!

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### MY TITLE DEED

For I stand on the Word,  
I've a Title Deed on high,  
Up on high.  
Yes, I stand on the Word,  
It will land me by and by.

## AMAZING MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH

If you feel like God can't use you, just remember...

Noah was a drunk,  
Abraham was too old,  
Isaac was a daydreamer,  
Jacob was a liar,  
Leah was ugly;  
Joseph was abused,  
Moses had a stuttering problem,  
Gideon was afraid,  
Samson wore long hair and was a womanizer,  
Rahab was a prostitute,  
Jeremiah and Timothy were too young,  
David had an affair and was a murderer,  
Elijah was suicidal,  
Isaiah preached naked,  
Jonah ran from God, , \_  
Naomi was a widow,  
Job went bankrupt,  
Peter denied Christ,  
The disciples fell asleep while praying with Jesus,  
Martha worried and fretted about everything,  
The Samaritan woman was divorced more than once,  
Zaccheus was too small,  
Paul was too religious and rigid,  
Timothy had an ulcer, and  
Lazarus was dead!

Now! No more excuses! God can use you to your full potential. Besides, you aren't the Message, you're just the messenger. In the circle of God's love, He is waiting to use your full potential.

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God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts.

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## EDITOR'S REFLECTIONS:

**“But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and Godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Day of God . . . But we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” II Peter 3.**

The Middle East is like a volcano ready to erupt at any time. The western nations are lining up behind either the Arab countries or Israel. The scene is being set for the great holocaust soon to come. Only enlightened Christians are aware of the dangerous times ahead. Thank the Lord! Our eyes have been opened to the Scriptures concerning these End Times, and we are looking for the Lord Jesus Christ to catch us away very soon. There is nothing left to be fulfilled before that first trumpet sounds, and the overcomers will be taken out of this world.

Not only do we see nations lining up for that final conflict, but the weather seems to be out of control also. There are droughts in one part of the world and devastating floods in another. Millions of acres of forests have been destroyed by out-of-control fires, ruining the ecology for years to come. Mankind is out of control, and nature is following.

The signs of the end are many, and clearly defined. While Israel and her antagonistic neighbors talk “Peace,” they are preparing for war. Israel has recently built up its military might in the Golan Heights, while neighboring Syria has its army on high alert. And, for the first time in 30 years, Syria has opened a strategic border road to civilian traffic, which causes some Israeli officials to worry that this could help guerilla attacks against Golani Jewish communities.

The feeling among some world leaders is that Haifa, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are facing an eminent threat from Iran. Former House Speaker, Newt Gingrich said recently that “three nuclear weapons will result in a second Holocaust.” He expressed his opinion that “Israel is in the greatest danger of Arab attack for the first time in 40 years. The Far East has also taken sides, a report has been made that North Korea is helping Iran to prepare an underground nuclear test, similar to the one it carried out last year. And, so it goes.

Meanwhile, the majority of people are oblivious to the great threat of a conflict, the likes of which has never been seen before. Everyone seems to be caught up in their own interests, whether its religious activity, or his own selfish desires. They are truly asleep.

The full overcomers who will reign with Christ, as aware of the times we live in, and they have been preparing themselves to leave this world before that terrible day arrives. This will be the Message of Heaven: “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready” (Revelation 19:6-7). Are we ready? There isn't much time left to prepare.

## **LABOR DAY CONVENTION**

Saturday, September 1 at 10 A.M. through noon,  
Monday, September 3, 2007. This three-day meeting will  
be a time of rejoicing and great fellowship, and will be held at:

**GOSPEL FELLOWSHIP**  
13001 Grandview Road  
Grandview, Missouri

For further information, contact  
Pastor Gene Hawkins (816)618-3306 -- (816)582-9873

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“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the  
Spirit: speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual  
songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

## **THE MAJESTY OF DIVINE GRACE** *Displayed In Five Mothers*

**Gene Hawkins**

**“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.” -  
Matthew 1:1**

Matthew begins his record with the genealogy of Jesus and portrays Him as the King, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In this article, we will find that there are five mothers in this record that we would think to be unsuitable for that honor. The Law decreed death for some of them, but the majesty of Divine Grace not only set aside this fate, but gave them a distinct place in the lineage of the Savior.

The first mother is named in Verse 3: “Judah begat Phares and Zara of Tamar. ..” This history is found in Genesis 38, when Judah married a woman of Canaan. To this union were born three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. Er took Tamar to wife and was slain by the Lord because “he was wicked in the sight of the Lord” (38:7). Onan, the second born, refused to marry Tamar and raise up seed unto his brother, which was according to the Law, and God also slew him because of his disobedience. Shelah should have been given to Tamar, but Judah, undoubtedly fearful that he would suffer the same fate, insisted that Tamar go back to her father's house and wait for him to come of age. He had no intention of giving his last son into her hands, and thus when Shelah was grown, Tamar saw that “she was not given unto him to wife” -38:14.

Tamar took things into her own hands and put aside her garments of widowhood and donned the attire of an harlot. She laid wait for Judah as he went to shear his sheep. His wife had died, and when he saw Tamar, we read: “He thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face.” She asked him

what he would give her for her services and Judah promised her a kid from the flock.

Three months later, Tamar realized that she was with child, and when Judah heard it, he decreed that she should be burnt with fire. However, Tamar had already insured her own protection. When Judah promised her a kid of the goats, she had asked him for a pledge of his good intentions, and he gave her his signet, bracelets and staff. When he went to give her the kid, she was nowhere to be found. Now, Tamar steps forward and said, "By the man whose these are, am I with child: and she said, discern I pray thee, whose are these, the signet, and the bracelets and staff. And Judah acknowledged them, and said, She hath been more righteous than I; because that I gave her not to Shelah my son. And he knew her again no more" (38:25-26).

It was Tamar's sin that brought her into the direct lineage of Christ. This lesson is not, as some of Paul's day declared, "let us do evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8). Rather, it teaches the lesson that all men must learn: it was not our righteousness that brought us to Christ, but rather our sins. Judah and Tamar both meet the requirements of Divine Grace, and both confess their sin. This is still the pattern today; as there are no depths to which man can sink where the Grace of God cannot reach.

Natural reasoning would say that God should have made a fresh start and continue the line through Shelah, but the record is clear and the pattern established that Grace is to be exhibited. We read that Judah knew Tamar no more, and there is no record that she married again, but she is firmly established in the Tribe of Judah as the mother of Pharez.

The lineage through Pharez continues with Salmon who 21 "begat Booz, or Boaz of Rachab" (Matthew 1:5). This is Rahab, the harlot, who hid the spies when they went into the land of Canaan. The unalterable truth is that she was a harlot, a liar, a deceiver, and yet this woman is recorded in God's hall of fame in Hebrews 11. Both Paul and James call her a woman of faith, commending her for her deceitful actions in protecting the spies. Let's remember, God does not ordain what she was or what she did, but He saw her faith which reached beyond her sinful state and laid hold of God's Grace. Rahab was willing to follow the very simple request to put a scarlet thread in her window. Again, natural reasoning would scoff at the idea that her dwelling would be spared when all the rest of Jericho was demolished, just because this tiny bit of fabric was displayed.

Rahab was already convinced of the majesty of God and the display of this scarlet cord is evidence of her faith in the blood of the Lamb. Joshua 6 records that she chose to dwell among the inhabitants of Israel after the day of judgment, "even unto this day" (6:25). Rahab illustrates the beautiful truth for all who will follow her example of faith, regardless of their past - "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). Little is written of this mother after these events, but her son, Boaz, became a prominent figure in Israel. It would not be foolish speculation to assume that this mother of faith did pass these lessons of Divine Grace on to her son, because he, too, went beyond the decrees of the Law to exhibit profound grace to the next mother recorded.

“Boaz begat Obed of Ruth” (1:5). Ruth is generally referred to as “Ruth the Moabitess.” Such an one as she was not allowed to enter the congregation of Israel - “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD forever” (Deuteronomy 23:3). Her story records another triumph of the truth of Grace, which is that Grace supersedes the Law and disregards the opinions of men.

A man whom Boaz called “such an one” has first claim to Ruth, but he refused the opportunity, as also did the Law. He said, “Lest I mar mine own inheritance” (4:6). Many Christians today have been disdained because of their association with others, but Divine Grace reaches beyond outward appearance, and always acknowledges faith in that one. Ruth had chosen this path while yet in the land of Moab as she emphatically declared to Naomi, “Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (1:16). She did not have one thing to base her decision on, except Grace through faith. God honored that faith in giving her life. She also became the great grandmother of David.

It was this David who “begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.” Although her name is not given here, we know her as Bathsheba, her Canaanite name being Bathshua, and she came into this place under a great cloud of wrongdoing. The phraseology, “Her that had been the wife of Urias,” is interesting, for the record is quite clear that God did not accept the fruit conceived by David and Bathsheba while Uriah was yet alive, nor was she recognized as David's wife until after that first child was dead. Herein is another great lesson of Divine Grace. Paul tells us in Romans 7:3: “So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.” This verse declares that our old man (nature) must be in the death state before He can accept any fruit from our new union with Christ.

Some years ago, a man wrote to me who could not see the glorious teaching of Eternal Life, and neither could he ignore the decree of the Law regarding adultery. He could in no way explain the Grace of God displayed to David, which Paul emphasized in his discourse on being justified by faith alone. Therefore, this brother concluded that David really did not commit the sins of adultery and murder at all, because God intended that he should have Bathsheba all along. Such foolishness defies not only the decrees of the Law, but also David's own testimony of his ungodly actions, from which both he and Bathsheba endured great consequence.

In our text, however, it is the Grace of God which is so gloriously triumphant; for after David's deep repentance and the deaths of both Uriah and this firstborn son, Solomon is born, and the Scripture records that “God loved him.”

There is an interesting change in the lineage of Christ at this point. Matthew's genealogical record is traced through Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, because all the genealogies of kings are given through their fathers, and thus the line is traced through Solomon. However, according to Jeremiah 22:30, the Lord said, “Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no

man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." This was written of "Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah," a direct descendant of Solomon and it is here that the royal blood-line through Solomon ends.

Natural reasoning might conclude that this would be the perfect time to bring Jesus into the world through a "more righteous" woman. God could easily have accomplished this through David's Jewish wife, Abigail. But, Bathsheba had another son, named "Nathan," and it is through him that Jesus actually came. His record is found in Luke's Gospel, which traces Jesus' genealogy through Mary. The fact remains that Bathsheba is still the mother of record, once again illustrating the Majesty of Divine Grace.

Finally, we come to Mary, the mother of the Man, Christ Jesus. She is in great contrast to the rest of these mothers, for she is the only Jewess. She is also the only one whom God pronounced a virgin, an absolute requirement of Scripture. We hear Grace loudly singing her song in Luke 1. "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God ... To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored" (1:26-28). Mary was "highly graced," and had a tremendous honor imparted to her. At this time, she was completely baffled by such a salutation from an angel, and is further confused by the announcement that she is going to be the mother of Jesus. She answered, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The angel answered her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" -- 1:3 1-35.

That "Holy Thing" is the reason the virgin birth was imperative. David declares in Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Such is true of all natural births. This does not mean that bearing children is sinful. Rather, it means that the Adamic sinful nature is passed down from generation to generation, and none can escape it. It was necessary for Jesus to be born of a virgin, and the Holy Seed implanted within her womb by the Holy Ghost. I John 3:9 boldly announces: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Let's rejoice that this Message applies to us, as a new creation in Christ Jesus, but it is first and foremost true of Jesus Himself. He proved the validity of such Truth, and it is that Holy Nature that is implanted in us spiritually, just as it was literally placed in Mary's womb by the Holy Ghost.

Mary, according to God, is "highly favored" or "graced," but it is evident from the outset that she and Jesus lived under a cloud of suspicion for the rest of their lives. Joseph was going to put her away privately, because he did not want to make her a public example of someone playing the harlot. Jesus also endured the taunts of critics as they accused Him with statements like: "We be not born of fornication. We have one father, even God" (John 8:41). The implication was that they were sons of God, but Jesus was born of fornication. Thus, it is Mary who is accused of the same background which was displayed by the other four mothers, though it surely is not so in her case.

Mary's powerful Message of Grace continues in Luke 1:48-53: "For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden . . . For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and Holy is His Name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with His arm ... He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent away empty." This is the song of Grace, who not only performs her works when there is a need, although such a state is REQUIRED if her message is to be fully proclaimed. Today, we need not search for ways to enhance her beauty. We need only, as all these women did, acknowledge our state and welcome God's Grace that is offered.

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## NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD

**"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Anointed, who has blessed s with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in the Anointed." (Ephesians 1:3)**

We have every right to claim all the elements of Christ's victory at Calvary, because of the fact of redemption. We can also claim the authority which that victory brings. Jesus stripped principalities and powers by His ascension into heaven. The Christ in us does the same today as we exercise our redemption rights to the heavenlies. Paul said, "All things are yours" (I Corinthians 3:21-22), so we can appropriate them. Jesus said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). This same power is at our disposal. Why? Because as Sons of God we have been given the same privileges as Jesus possesses. Are we not seated in the heavenlies in Christ? Then, heavenly authority is ours over all opposing forces that could ever be arrayed against us in the cosmic realm. We triumph over them in every battle and are able to rout the enemy. This is our authority in the heavenlies.

Did not our Apostle Paul say, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ"? (Romans 5:17). This is our earthly authority granted to us as a new creation. Again, Paul said, "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men ... the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ... in fleshly tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3). Notice who wrote that Word in our hearts - the Holy Spirit! The word, "Christian" means "another Christ." We need to see ourselves as God sees us, and then maybe there would be less bickering and fighting, and fewer divisions among us. That is a sobering thought; worthy of meditating upon for a while. The word "Christian" also carries the thought of the Word of God being reproduced in the committed believer. Doesn't that make you feel like shouting?

Here is more. In John's Gospel we find these fantastic words, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:3). That refers to Jesus who was the Word from a past eternity. That same living person, Jesus, the living Word, is being reproduced in us today. Do you relate to the significance of that? It means we also are the Word of God; of course all this in Christ. This is not

claiming Deity; it is asserting our privileges as spirit beings. Being sons of God means we are a part of God! Do not be afraid to tread upon new ground as you walk in the heavenly land and possess your redemption blessings. This is one of those blessings mentioned in the Scripture at the beginning of this article.

Here is more -- "that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me" (John 17:23). These are the words of Jesus as He prayed for His followers. Do you believe them? Then you realize God loves us as much as He loves Jesus. Four times in John 17 Jesus refers to the believers as being one with Deity even as He and the Father are one. That is heaven and earth-shaking news, that we are one with the Father even as Jesus is. Now that is something to shout and dance about wouldn't you say! Because of this, He will not withhold anything from us that is of spiritual benefit. God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Remember, 26 we are not sinners anymore; we are sons, with all the same rights and privileges that Jesus has. Wow, that is some truth! Our only limitation is the unlimited, omnipotent God. The real us is God in us in the person of Christ. What condescension! Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches. We are one with Him and in Him. "That they may be one in us" said Jesus to His Father (John 17:21). When God sees us He sees Jesus. When God sees us He sees His Word on display in the believer. How much of that Word will be reproduced is up to us as we exercise the faith of God. How can we believe anything less than this since the shed blood of Jesus has provided such glorious blessings. I say 'go for it.'

--Jack W. Bannister

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If a task is once begun,  
Never leave it 'till it's done.  
Be the labor great or small,  
Do it well or not at all.

"I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished  
the work which Thou gavest me to do."

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## THE STORIES OF LUKE

### MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS - Part 3

Ty Robinson

*"AND THE lord SPAKE UNTO Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days: according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised, and she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days: she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled." (Leviticus 12:1-4)*

*“And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.”*

Jesus is eight days old, and if you study the above verses closely you will notice that Mary and Joseph were still in Bethlehem. The number eight has several meanings, one of which is NEW CREATION. In his study book on LUKE Brother Hawkins notes symbolically “...that God can only accept that which is eight days old, or that which is of the new creation.” Another way of looking at this is that Jesus Christ came into this world, in part, to put an end to the law, and He was the only one who could fulfill, or, bring to an end the age of the law. There is a Greek word which describes this completion, “teleo,” which Jesus cried out on the cross in JOHN 19:30 when He said: “It is finished.” ROMANS 10:4 tells us: “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, symbolizing a NEW CREATION. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: (NEW CREATION,) old things are passed away: behold all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17). Later in GALATIANS 6:15 the Apostle Paul also writes: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” Believers are a NEW CREATION in Christ Jesus.

According to LEVITICUS 12:1-4 forty days were required to pass after the birth of Jesus before the days of Mary's purifying would be fulfilled. Then we read: “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord: (As it is written in the law of the Lord, every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;). And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” The distance from Bethlehem to Jerusalem is about ten miles, a distance which could easily be traveled in one day.

The kind of sacrifice required according to the law is found in Leviticus 12:6-8: “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring; a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles or young pigeons: the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean.” So we see the law plainly states that when a mother bears a son, after forty days are completed she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and in addition, a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering. However, in the event that the mother was too poor to bring a lamb of the first year, then she could bring two young pigeons, or two turtledoves, and use one for the burnt offering and the other for the sin offering. Mary could only afford a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Jesus was the only One who could ever choose His parents, and He chose to come into this world, poor. “For

ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

The "law "of the Lord" (LUKE 2:23) is found in EXODUS 13:2: "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." "Behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law. Then he took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of they people Israel. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel: and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea. A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (25-35).

Simeon means "hearkening", and he was listening to the voice of the Lord. He was also looking for the coming of Jesus, called: "the consolation of Israel." Simeon was in rare company, for not many in his day were looking for the coming of the Messiah. Not much different today is it? How many believers are looking for the soon coming of our Lord and 29 Saviour Jesus Christ? Not many. Simeon was giving special attention to the voice of the Lord, through the Holy Ghost, which was upon him, and the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon who Baby Jesus was. Mary and Joseph already knew, and they marveled at the Holy Ghost-inspired words of Simeon, which are a prophecy found in verses 29-35. Simeon also spoke of Jesus' death and resurrection in these verses, facts which you may study out further on your own.

Simeon also prophesied to Mary in verse 35... (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,).... We know this came to pass as she stood beside the cross some thirty-three years later, but it came to pass in another sense, way before then. We will see how that was later in this lesson.

"And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Some translations have Anna living eighty-four years after her husband died, making her over a hundred years old! Anna means "grace" and when you think about it, how ageless is grace? God's grace is endless, and reaches down to the lowest of the low and to the most helpless of the helpless and brings salvation. TITUS 2:11 expresses it like this: For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..... Furthermore, HEBREWS 7:25 states in part: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" Anna saw this

salvation in the infant Jesus and. ..."gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned unto Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth." Jesus grew up in Nazareth and as we pointed out in our last study, that is where the wise men of MATTHEW 2 found him some two years later. (Matthew 2:23 and LUKE 4:16 point out that Jesus grew up in Nazareth)

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." The 30 phrase "the grace of God" is one of those statements that goes exceeding abundantly above all that we may ask or think. Brother Hill even noted this in the margin of his Bible, writing "what a wonder!" Certainly the exceeding abundance of the "grace of God" was upon Him, and once we accept Jesus as our personal Saviour the exceeding abundance of that grace is upon us also. Truly, what a wonder!

Next we read of Jesus as a twelve year old, which is also another of those exclusive stories of Luke. "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. (Study EXODUS 11 & 12 to see how the feast of the Passover was instituted.) And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast."

MATTHEW 13:55 & 56, and MARK 6:3 tell of the fact that Jesus had four brothers and more than one sister. How many of them were born by the time Jesus was twelve years old we are not told. Perhaps all of them were born by the time of this story. Needless to say these younger siblings of Jesus demanded the full attention of Mary and Joseph. With this thought in mind we continue reading what happened after the feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. "And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him." Imagine the emotions of Mary, and Joseph too, realizing that they had lost track of Jesus. And we must ask, how could this have happened? Simply put, Mary and Joseph got caught up with the cares of this life, the taking care of their younger children, and perhaps even babies, all of whom demanded their attention, and in the process they lost track of Mary's firstborn son Jesus, who was the most important person who ever came into this world, and Mary and Joseph simply lost track of Him! Our life is nothing without Jesus, and the Apostle Paul declared, "Christ, who is our life...." (Colossians 3:4). Think about it, but don't be too hard on Mary and Joseph without first examining yourself, and realizing that perhaps the cares of this life may have overtaken you too, and brought you to the point where you have lost track of Jesus Christ in your life at one time or another. Mary and Joseph soon found that Jesus didn't move, but rather they had moved away from Him.

Again, how could this have happened? Realize that" Jesus doesn't demand our attention, and He didn't demand the attention of Mary and Joseph either. Was He ever a problem child for them? No, if ever there was a perfect child it was Jesus. Mary had the only child "who knew no sin!" (See 2

CORINTHIANS 5:21.) But with her focus on the cares of this life, and not putting Jesus first in everything, Mary, and Joseph too, lost track of Jesus. In essence, like the saints of Ephesus in REVELATION 2:4, they had left their first love.

“And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the last place that they looked, which was the temple, the place that represents the temple of the Lord. No doubt Jesus had been there for three days. Note who it was that was asking the questions. Twelve year old Jesus. And who was giving the answers? Twelve year old Jesus. Jesus wasn't just asking the kind of questions that He as a twelve year old could answer, but rather He was asking the kind of questions that a scholar would ask to provoke learning in His students. Jesus was here, in fact, being about His Father's business, and was educating the scholars, and yet He was doing this in a spirit of humility and gentleness. If you really study this, and think about it, Jesus' humble and meek character was on display here. Look, and behold the Lamb of God! Jesus was also about to give a scholarly lesson to His Mother, which she never forgot from that day forward.

“And when they (Mary and Joseph) saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” For three days Jesus has been asking questions which no one could really answer, and then giving the answer. Now He asks His Mother two questions, which only she could answer in her heart.

The first question Jesus asks his Mother, (and these are the first recorded words of Jesus in scripture); “How is it that ye sought me?” In tender and gentle way, yet with firmness, Jesus asked Mary to stop and think for a moment. Who was it that sent the angel Gabriel to you and told you that thou are highly favoured, the Lord is with thee? Who was it that let your cousin Elisabeth know that you were blessed among women? Who was it that sent angels to the shepherds, and the shepherds to you on the night of my birth and made it known to you that I was indeed the Saviour? Did not Simeon prophecy of me when I was forty days old, and tell you that I was the Redeemer? Did not aged, gracious Anna tell you the same thing also? Did not the wise men acknowledge that I am the King of the Jews? How is it that ye sought me? I wasn't the one who was lost. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (LUKE 19:10). Mother, you of all people know who I am. “Know ye not that I must be about My Father's business.”

Recall when Simeon prophesied to Mary ... “(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,)”?... We know that Jesus is called “The Word of God.” (Revelation 19:13) HEBREWS 4:12 tells us: “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” This sword gently pierced through Mary's own soul that day when Jesus asked His Mother those questions.. From that day

forward she never again lost track of Jesus. She grew closely acquainted and very familiar with Him, and knew by the time of JOHN 2:5 that He could solve any problem, thus when there was no wine at the wedding, she told the servant, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, Do it."

We too should pause here for a moment and consider how it is with our own soul. Have we lost track of Jesus? How many people have come our way and told us of our Saviour, our Redeemer, and our Lovely Lord? Is Jesus asking: How is it that ye sought me?

"And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Young people! Note that Jesus was smarter than his parents, yet he didn't argue with them, and showed them the utmost respect, and submitted Himself to their authority, and was always obedient unto them, and continued living under their authority for eighteen more years!

This story of Luke has been about Mary the Mother of Jesus, but the center of attention has been Jesus. Without Jesus, Mary was nothing. We too, are really nothing without Jesus. Mary paid close attention to Jesus 3 the rest of His life, and the rest of her life. How do we know this? "But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." How did Luke know what Mary pondered in her heart? There is no way Luke could have known what was going on in Mary's heart, except years later Mary telling him. How did Mary come to the point where she could express what she had pondered in her heart these many years? No doubt, when the disciples were gathered together, waiting for the advent and in-filling of the Holy Ghost that Mary was able express her thoughts. And how do we know this? This is part of the story that Luke wrote concerning Mary, but it is not found in the gospel of LUKE, rather this part of the story is found in ACTS 1:14.

Recall that Mary was at the cross of Jesus -- JOHN 19:25-27: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home" The reason Jesus gave the care of His Mother over to the Apostle John instead of one of His half brothers was because at this point in time His brothers were not yet believers. Study JOHN 7:3-5 and see that His brothers didn't yet believe in Him.) By the time of ACTS 1:14, penned by Luke, we find that Jesus brothers did believe in Him, and we read: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother Jesus, and with his brethren" A few days later on the day of Pentecost all of these that were in one accord in prayer and supplication were "filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (ACTS 2:4.). Reading between the lines we can see that Mary the Mother of Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, and in time, revealed to Luke all of these wonderful things she had for so many years been pondering in her heart! Who told Luke all of the wonderful things we have studied found in

LUKE chapters 1 & 2? It had to have been Mary the Mother of Jesus.

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Yesterday He helped me,  
Today I'll praise His Name,  
Because I know tomorrow  
He'll help me just the same.

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## **CO-WORKERS WITH CHRIST**

God might have committed the Message of the Gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But, in His infinite love He chose to make us coworkers with Himself, with Christ and the angels, that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry.

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- The real tragedy of life is not in being limited to one talent, but in failure to use the one talent.
- Only people who do things get criticized.
- Worry is like a treadmill. It can wear you to a frazzle, and you still don't get anywhere.
- Some people are making such thorough reparation for rainy days that they aren't enjoying the sunshine.