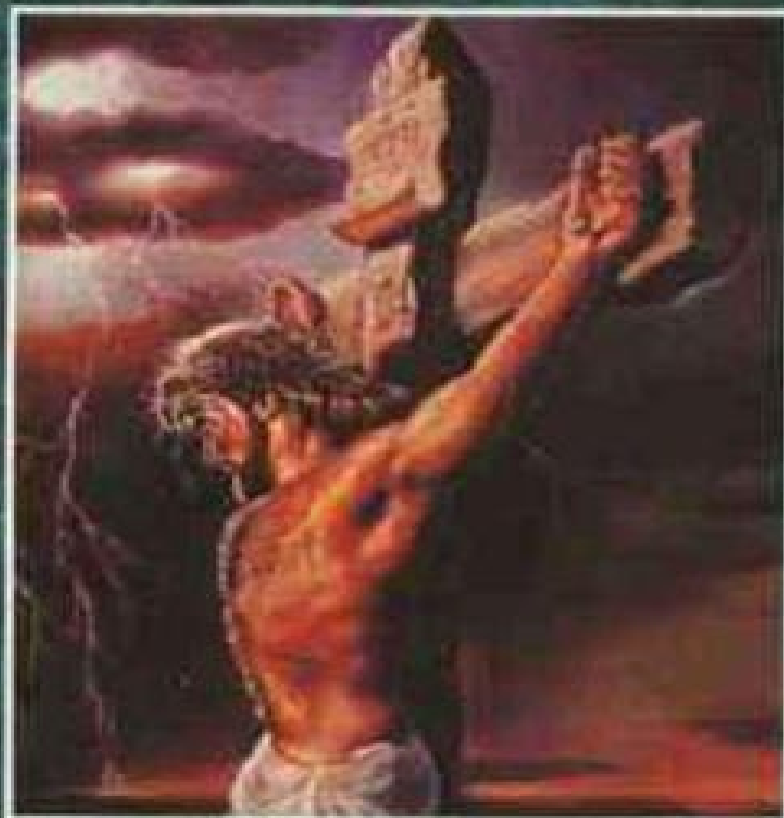


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By

Evangelist Perry Stone With additional research by **Professor Peter Michas and Robert Vander Maten**

Revelation 11, 12, 15; Hebrews 9

The spring season is an important and exciting time because it is during this season that the Jewish nation celebrates the Feast of Passover and Christians celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the most important event for humanity because it was through the Messiah's death and resurrection that we have forgiveness of sins and the right to eternal life and becoming one with almighty God through the marriage feast of the Lamb. Therefore, it seems appropriate that we take a close look at the events of Passover, 33 A.D., and gain new appreciation for what Jesus did for us at that glorious moment in time.

In order to lay the groundwork for this study, let's look at one of my favorite verses of scripture - Revelation 12:11.

vs. 11; "And they overcame him (speaking of Satan if you'll read the prior verse) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

That means that any believer in Christ can overcome the devil and any accusations, lies, disease, guilt, or anything else he tries to lay on an individual in two ways - by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. By this one verse alone we see that having knowledge about the power of the blood of Christ is vital for a Christian to live a victorious life over Satan. Therefore, the title of this Bible study is, "The Priesthood and the Blood."

The book of Revelation is an account of a vision that John had of heaven. In Revelation 11:19, John says these words:

vs. 19; "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament:"

"Testament" is an English word meaning "covenant," so John said he saw the ark of the covenant. The significant point here is the location of where the ark was seen. It was seen in the temple which is located in heaven.

Revelation 15:5-8 says these words:

vs. 5: "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

vs. 6: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

vs. 7: And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever.

vs. 8: And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power; and no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. "

Once again, the temple being referred to here as the temple of the tabernacle of the covenant where God dwells in heaven. This same type of scene also took place in the temple of Solomon as reported in II Chronicles 7:1-3 when God came down in the Shekinah cloud. The smoke of the glory! The presence of God was so brilliant that the priests could not enter into the temple because of God's glory being there. This same event also took place in Exodus 40:34 and Numbers 9:15-23 when Moses had erected the tabernacle in the wilderness.

THE ARTICLES IN THE TEMPLE

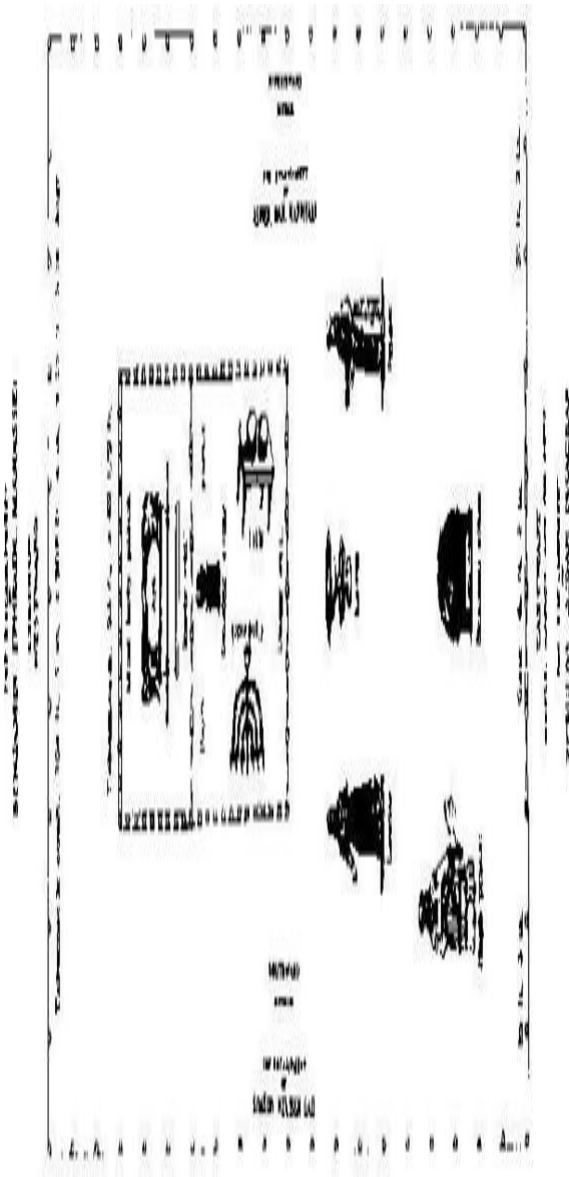
The book of Revelation clearly shows us that there was and is a temple in heaven where God dwells. It also tells us that the articles that were found in the temples constructed on earth by divine direction were also found in the temple in heaven.

Let's examine these articles, first from the Old Testament vantage point, and see if they have any bearing in pointing to the coming Messiah. There were six articles in the temple - the ark of the testament (covenant) with the mercy seat resting on top of it, the menorah, the altar of incense, the table of shewbread, the brazen laver, and the brazen altar. We cannot take time to examine them in detail because that is a study all its own, but I do want to look at the positioning of these articles to show how incredibly detailed and orderly our God is in all that He does. In Exodus 40, God very specifically dictated where these articles were to be positioned in the house of the Lord.

Exodus 40:20; "And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:

vs. 21: And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, and set up the veil of the covering, and covered the ark of the testimony; as the Lord commanded Moses."

Therefore, the ark of the testimony was positioned behind the veil in what was known as the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. The door of the tabernacle and the ark faced east.



vs. 22; "And he put the **table** in the tent of the congregation, upon the side of the tabernacle northward, without the veil.

vs. 23; And he set the bread in order upon it before the Lord; just as the Lord had commanded Moses."

vs. 24; "And he put the **candlestick** in the tent of the congregation, over against the table, on the south side of the tabernacle southward.

vs. 25; And he lighted the lamps before the Lord; just as the Lord commanded Moses."

vs. 26; "And he put the **golden altar** in the tent of the congregation before the veil:

vs. 27; And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the Lord commanded Moses."

vs. 28; *"And he set up the hanging at the door of the tabernacle.*

vs. 29; *And he put the **altar of burnt offering** by the door of the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation, and offered upon it the burnt offering and the meat offering; as the Lord commanded Moses. "*

vs. 30; *"And he set the **laver** between the tent of the congregation and the altar, and put water there, to wash withal.*

vs. 31; *And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat:*

vs. 32; *When they entered the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses."*

Even in the positioning of the articles in the tabernacle, God was revealing His Son and the purpose of why the Word was to become flesh and dwell among us, just as the presence of God would dwell among men in the earthly tabernacle. By taking a bird's eye view of these articles, one can see that they are in the position of a cross, and each article represents another aspect of the redemption plan that was to be fulfilled through the Messiah. The brazen altar represented judgment fire. Acts 10:42 says that Jesus was to be the judge of the living and the dead. The brazen laver contained cleansing water. John 4:10-14 says that Jesus is the living water that springs up to eternal life. The altar of incense represented the prayers that the saints made to God. I Timothy 2:5 refers to Christ as the one mediator. The menorah gave light in the holy place. John 8:12 describes Jesus as the light of the world. The table of shewbread held 12 loaves of bread which represented the 12 tribes of Israel. John 6:35 says that the Savior is the bread of life. Finally, the ark of the testament held the law given by God on Mt. Sinai to Moses on the tablets of stone. Matthew 5:17 tells us that Christ is the fulfillment of the law! We serve an incredible God, and Jesus is His Son!

But let's take this a step further by looking at where else these articles were found.

We already read from Revelation 11:19 which says,

vs. 19; *"And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament..."*

In this verse of scripture, the Bible tells us that there was an ark of the testament in the temple in heaven.

Psalm 78:24; "and had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. "

vs. 25; *"Man did not eat angels' food: He sent them meat to the full."*

These verses show that there must have been bread in heaven, just as there

was bread on the table of shewbread in the tabernacle on earth.

Revelation 1:12; "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me.

And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

vs. 13; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

Here we see that there was a menorah in the temple in heaven.

Revelation 8:3; "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

vs. 4; And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."

John is showing us that he saw a golden altar of incense during his vision of the temple in heaven.

Revelation 20:9; "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. "

This is one of several examples of judgment fire being shown as being located in heaven, corresponding to the brazen altar as found in the temple constructed on earth.

Revelation 22:1; "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb,

vs. 2; in the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Just as there was cleansing water located in the tabernacle on earth, there was a river of life located in heaven.

It is vital to understand that when God ordered Moses to construct the tabernacle and gave such attention to detail, He was painting us a picture of something that He had already designed in heaven. The reason for this picture will become clear as we proceed through this study.

John goes on to describe his vision with additional detail. There is according to the Word of God (Rev. 4:3) a throne of God. The throne looks like jasper, and God sits on that throne. Revelation 1:16 says that God's glory is brighter than the sun.

I want to use an outside resource here to help us in understanding what

John was seeing. I preface this by explaining that my position using resource material outside the Bible must never contradict the Word. If it does, it is wrong and should not be given any benefit of the doubt. If it does not contradict the Word and the conclusions have been derived from careful and diligent study with an honest attempt at truth, then this information can be used to enhance but never to be a substitute for the divinely inspired Word of God.

The outside resource book that I am referring to is entitled, "The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet" by Rabbi Michael L. Munk. On page 174 it quotes Magen David as stating that the brilliance of the sun is only one seventh as strong as the primeval light which was revealed with the first act of creation mentioned in the Torah (Genesis 1) (Zohar and Sefer ha Bahir). This would mean that if the Rabbi is correct, when God created the sun, the intensity of the light on the earth diminished by one seventh compared to the light of God that was present during the creative act!

The Zohar Chadash says this heavenly light was 60,075 times brighter than the sun and is reserved for the righteous in the hereafter. Both of these sources have done extensive studies in the numerical correlation of the ancient writings to come up with their figures, and I am not versed enough to dispute them. But the reason I included this information in our study is to give us some idea of what John was looking at. And what is even more exciting is that if the Zohar Chadash is correct and this light is reserved for the righteous in the hereafter, we as believers have a very bright future!

The prophet Ezekiel also had a vision of heaven, and described God in Ezekiel 1:27 as looking like fire from the loins up and fire from the waist down. What a glorious revelation of God and His dwelling place these great men of old were privileged to see!

That's not all. The Bible also says in Revelation 4:3 there is a rainbow behind the throne room of heaven. I can only speculate as to why it is there, but the Bible says that God gave us the rainbow in the sky (Genesis 9) as a covenant sign that He would never, again, destroy the earth with water, so this rainbow might be positioned in heaven as a continual reminder of that promise.

John also said (Rev. 4:8), "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who was and Who is and Who is to come." Compare this with the vision that Isaiah describes.

Isaiah 6:1; "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. vs. 2; Above it stood

the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

vs. 2; And one cried unto another and said, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

There were also 24 small thrones that John saw in heaven (Revelation 4:4). In one of the museums in Jerusalem they have on display a model of Solomon's and Herod's temple, and in those models it shows where the Sanhedrin sat. There were 24 seats, but they were not in a straight line. There were 12 thrones on the right side in a semi-circle. And then there were 12 thrones on the left side also in a semicircle, forming a complete circle. Once again, a pattern was given on earth of heavenly things!

Who will sit on those thrones" ? Quite frankly, I couldn't find anything in the Bible on this but most Bible scholars agree as I do that twelve of these thrones will be occupied by the twelve sons of Jacob from the Old Testament who are the originators of the twelve tribes of Israel. The remaining twelve thrones will be occupied by the twelve original apostles to the Lamb. Matthias who took Judas Iscariot's place will be one of those twelve apostles.

If this idea is correct, it gives us a beautiful representation of the twelve men from the old covenant and the twelve men from the new covenant joining the promises of the old covenant and the promises of the new covenant and combining them as one through Him. Hallelujah!

Let's get back to the temple articles. Where did the blueprints for these articles come from and what were found in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and Solomon's temple? God spoke to Moses and gave the spirit of wisdom to Bezalel and Oholiab (Ex. 36:1). He told them exactly how to make every article that was in the tabernacle. Why was God so particular about how these articles were to be constructed? Before God ever created the heavens and the earth, before He ever breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, God established in His throneroom a menorah of seven branches, an altar of incense made of gold, a brazen altar with purging fire, living water, a table of shewbread, an ark of the covenant, and a temple to house these articles. The original articles were not what Moses had constructed. They were simply the patterns or replicas of what God had already made for His heavenly temple.

In Exodus 25:9 and 40, God gave very clear instructions to Moses.

vs. 9: "According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

vs. 40: "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was

showed thee in the mount (Mount Sinai)."

This same command was repeated in Exodus 26:30. God wanted to leave no doubt that it was vital that these instructions were to be carried out perfectly in order for the work to be acceptable to the Creator.

In his vision of heaven, the prophet Isaiah described the train of God filling the temple and the posts of the door moving. The doors of the temple must have been open, because if the doors were not open John could not have seen inside. John said he saw inside the temple the ark of the covenant. Notice also that he did not mention anything about a veil. In the other two temples on earth there was a veil of purple with Cherubs on it, and no one could see the ark. Only the high priest once a year could go past the veil where the presence of God dwelt on the day of Yom Kippur-the Day of Atonement. But in the temple in heaven there was no mention of a veil. This is important, and will be explained later.

Where did the ark of the covenant come from? There are some that believe it was the same one Moses had constructed about 3,000 years ago. They believe that before the Babylonians came to Jerusalem and destroyed the temple about 2700 years ago, an angel of God came down, took the ark of the covenant from the temple mount in Jerusalem, carried it up to heaven and placed it in the temple in heaven.

I personally don't agree with that, and I'll tell you why. First of all, if all the other articles of the temple were patterned after the originals, why was this one different? Secondly and more important, the ark built by Moses had dried up, corruptible blood of bulls and goats on it. The book of Leviticus tells us that every year on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, a high priest would be allowed to go into the Holy of Holies, take the blood of a bull and sprinkle it on the east side of the altar once and in front of the ark of the covenant seven times. Blood is unique among all the substances of the body, because Leviticus 17:11 says,

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. "

Life is in blood. And God would have no reason to allow tainted, corruptible animal blood to be placed in the holy temple in heaven, because even that animal blood was only a pattern of what was ultimately to be fulfilled through the Messiah. The animal blood was simply a substitute to point the world toward the Redeemer of the world - Jesus Christ.

Therefore, I believe that the ark of the covenant that John saw was the

original one that was there before God ever created the heavens and the earth. And when God instructed Moses to build the ark using a very precise pattern, God had the original already positioned in His temple in heaven.

When God made His heavenly temple and built His articles, heaven at that time was so pure it needed no blood. But after the fall of mankind, when God had in His master plan to allow us to enter and live in His presence forever, atoning blood was required in heaven. Not just any blood would be acceptable, but blood had to be taken from a perfect sacrifice that was made on behalf of the people who were about to enter heaven. Why would heaven require blood? Because when Adam sinned, blood was required to make atonement for sin in the earthly tabernacle. Only blood was acceptable for cleansing of sin.

What was the first thing God did when Adam and Eve fell? He took two animals from the Garden of Eden, killed them and wrapped Adam and Eve in the skin of these animals as a covering. God established the ground rules from the beginning to show what it would take to put mankind back into a right relationship with Him, by shedding the blood of an animal to provide for a covering for the shame of sin.

After God gave Moses the building blueprints for the articles in the temple, God gave additional requirements of what was to happen to these articles. In Hebrews 9:21, it says that Moses was to sprinkle with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry because the Bible says,

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (of sins)." (Hebrews 9:22)

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. " (Leviticus 17:11)

THE REQUIREMENT OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

After man sinned, God decreed that because the life of the flesh is in the blood, it would have to be life for life. But God could not allow one human being to be offered up for another human being's sin. The sacrifice would be unacceptable. God tested Abraham with his son Isaac, but He refused to let Abraham offer him up on the altar. God refused to allow one human being's blood to act as atonement for another human being's sin. The reason for this is because everyone has the same kind of blood! We are all descendants of Adam, and Adam sinned.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

(Romans 5:12)

Therefore, I cannot say one life for another life. If that were true, when Abel's blood was shed on the ground, Abel's blood should have redeemed all of mankind if the only requirement was a righteous man's blood.

However, everyone looks the same to God.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. " (Romans 3:23)

Everyone is under the death penalty of sin. Everyone born on this earth, whether they like it or not, are born as a descendant of Adam and carry an inherited sin nature from him.

So God decided to allow a temporary substitute (animals) to be sacrificed, and the blood of these animals would atone for or sort of hide the transgressions of man from God. And this went on for over a thousand years.

However, God really did not want animals. God needed an Adam for the sacrifice to be acceptable. God said, "I want one sacrifice once and for all. And in that one sacrifice I'm going to make it sufficient to take care of all of the sins of every human being that would ever live." But the key to this plan is to find a sacrifice with pure blood so favored of God that when that person is sacrificed it is enough to take care of all of the sins of the past, all of the sins of the present, and all of the sins of the future.

Where is God going to find someone that can fit this description? We are all descendants of Adam, and our blood (life) has been tainted by a sin nature. Well, God had a plan before the foundation of the world. He addressed His Son and called Him Lamb. Lamb!

When Adam, the first man in Genesis, was created he began life with an adult body. He was not born like you and me. He did not come through the seed of a human being. God formed him first. He first made a body for him. When Adam's body was fully-grown, fully made, God breathed into the first man's nostrils the breath of life and the body began to live, speak, talk, and walk. The Bible says that the life of man is in the blood, so God must have placed the blood into this man's body. In the Garden of Eden, God breathed blood into Adam - sinless, perfect blood. But when he sinned the blood became tainted, and he was able to die. His death was caused by sin.

Jesus was not born like you and me, either. Jesus did not have an earthly dad. Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The heavenly Father was His Father, and the Holy Ghost conceived Him.

Hebrews 10:5; "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith (Jesus said this), 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou

prepared Me. "

A body had been prepared for the Lord. So when Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary, His flesh was formed and the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary, the same thing happened when God placed the life force into Adam's body. Overshadowed means breathed! Breathed! The Holy Ghost put blood in the body of Christ, and it was the same blood type that Adam had. It was perfect blood. It was incorruptible blood. That was blood that did not know sin.

However, there was one major difference. This blood was placed in a being that was begotten - not created. This was a being that had been in existence forever, and had simply taken on the form of man so that He could pay the redemptive price for all mankind. It was the blood of God. It was royal blood. Hallelujah!

Now Jesus has matured into a full-grown man. He's flesh. He's body. He's soul. He's spirit. And He is blood. But he is special blood. He is royal blood, and this sets Him apart from the rest of mankind.

Before Adam sinned, nothing could hurt him. God said He gave him dominion, because he was God's man. He was a created (not begotten) son of God with perfect, sinless blood. Jesus had this same divine protection over Him that Adam enjoyed. In Luke 4 when a group of people in the Lord's hometown of Nazareth tried to push Jesus off a cliff He turned around and walked right through them. Jesus was on a boat in Galilee and the gospel of Mark says the boat was full of water, and yet it didn't sink. Boats that are full of water sink, and yet this one wasn't sinking! In the middle of a storm He could say, "Peace be still," and the storm was rendered harmless. He could go to the temple and His enemies picked up rocks to throw at Him and they froze. They couldn't kill Him. They couldn't destroy Him. They couldn't harm Him for within Him was the purest life of God. It was the royal, divine blood of the Father. Jesus was the Word of God became flesh! Mary gave Him his humanity, and God gave Him his divinity.

When Jesus stood trial, Pilate said to him (John 19:10), "Do you not know that I have the authority to release you and I have the authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over me unless it had been given you from above..." In John 10:18, Jesus said, "I have authority to lay it (His life) down, and I have authority to take it up, again." There truly is power in the blood!

MARKING A PERFECT LAMB

In Exodus 12, God taught the Hebrew people the power in sacrificial blood.

When they put a sacrificed lamb's blood on their doorposts, God would not destroy those in that family. Death could not enter into the house which placed an earthly lamb's blood on its door. All Hebrew people knew about the power of lamb's blood. God instructed Israel every year to take a lamb, a special perfect lamb, go to Jerusalem and offer that lamb in the Temple and let the priests slaughter that lamb, and with that lamb's blood they will have kept Passover and it would be a reminder of the day that God overshadowed the children of Israel and passed over, defended and protected them.

The Jewish people in Jesus' time still believed that lamb's blood had the power to protect their family. The purpose of Jesus coming to earth and possessing this royal blood had to do with the slaughtering of His flesh and His body that took place on Golgotha's hill. The connection can be made in the words of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." (John 1:29)

Passover is the first of three great annual festivals. God instructed this celebration to begin the 14th day of Nisan (which is in either March or April). For seven days all leaven was removed from the house, because leaven represents sin (cf I Corinthians 5:6-8 or Galatians 5:9). A special lamb was chosen by the father of each house, and was carefully inspected for four days.

The lamb could not be sick, nor could it be blind or crippled. It must be a perfect specimen in every way.

Today in the Holy Land, six miles northwest of Shechem in the tribe of Joseph, a group of Samaritans still celebrate the Passover, using the perfect, chosen lamb. Travelling from Jerusalem toward the Judean Wilderness is a small tourist site called the "Inn of the Good Samaritan." Inside are actual photographs of a modern Samaritan Passover. Today the Samaritans worship on Mount Gerizin, where they have worshiped for the past 2200 years. Since they observe the five books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy) they keep the Passover.

The photographs show the procedure used from the beginning to the end of Passover. Most interesting is how the lamb is roasted on the fire. The lamb is first killed. Then the inside organs are removed. A small piece of wood is placed inside the lamb's rib cage to hold it open. Then the lamb is stretched to the top and the two bottom legs are stretched to the bottom of the long stick. The legs are fastened to the pole, then the lamb is roasted and later eaten.

This is similar to the way the lamb was prepared and roasted since the time of the first Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12). To my amazement, it was as though the Passover lamb was "hanging from a cross!"



Passover was a reminder of God delivering His people from bondage. The famous Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the Passover celebrations during the Roman time and estimated that in Jerusalem, in the year 65 "not less than three million" were present (Josephus, Wars, 2:280). Even the Jewish Talmud says, "King Agrippa once wished to take a census of the host of Israel. He said to the high priest, 'Cast your eyes on the Passover offerings.'" He took a kidney from each, and 600,000 pairs of kidneys were found there, twice as many as those who departed from Egypt..." (Talmud, Pes. 64b)

With crowds this large, we wonder how many were present the day Christ was crucified, since it occurred on the evening that Passover was to begin!

TWO TYPES OF "LAMBS"

In the New Testament there can be two different words translated as "lamb." One is a common lamb that is part of a flock. The word for common lamb in the Greek is "arnion" (Vines Greek dictionary, p. 647). The second type of lamb uses a different Greek word which is "amnos" (Vines Greek dictionary, p. 647). This lamb would commonly have been called the "pet lamb" during the Passover feast. This was the special lamb from the father's flock, chosen to be

offered to God at the Temple in Jerusalem. This lamb was inspected for four days prior to the Passover. The father made certain there were no physical defects or flaws on this chosen sacrifice. Jesus was not a regular offering. He was chosen by His own Heavenly Father, as you will see, to carry the family name to the cross!

Isaiah gave a 700 year preview of the suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53.

vs. 7; *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. "*

About 700 years later John the baptizer introduced Jesus as "... the lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1:19). Jesus was called God's lamb, not just because He was meek, but because He would die on Passover as the final offering for sin! Christ literally fulfilled Isaiah 53:7 when He stood trial before Caiaphas the High Priest. Jesus refused to argue His own case. He "held His peace" (Matthew 27:63).

THE MYSTERY OF THE TIMBER

Most major world religions recognize the existence of Jesus Christ. Some go as far as to proclaim Him a good man, a great teacher and others enter the arena by declaring Him a prophet similar to Moses. But they all STOP at the CROSS! The CROSS may have been a bridge between God and man, but for millions it is a knife of division that separates Christians from pagans! No emblem has been more used or abused than the shape of Christ's death tool! It has been gold plated, and diamond studded. It has been worn as jewelry and hung on the walls in the homes of peasants. This testimony of faith has been severed from historic churches, to be crushed under foot by invading armies.

How could a piece of rugged cedar wood, about eight feet tall cause such irreparable division on this planet? How could God die on a tree? Furthermore, WHY would God allow His only Son to die that way? The answer is SUBSTITUTION. An innocent man died in place of the guilty. There was no other way!

The emblem of the cross appears throughout the early scriptures.

1) At God's instruction the blood of the Passover lamb was applied on the top and the two side posts of the door. Many believe the mark on the door was in the shape of the Hebrew letter "tav," which is the 22nd letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In King Solomon's time the shape of the letter "tav" was similar to our English letter "X." In Christ's time, the letter changed its shape and in modern

Hebrew it now looks similar to a small letter "n" in the English alphabet.

2) The holy articles in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness were positioned in the shape of a cross (see the first section of this book).

3) In Ezekiel 9:4 and 6, a special angel carrying a special pen and inkhorn, marked the righteous men on their foreheads for protection. An early church father, Jerome, believed the mark was the shape of an "X" (cross) similar to the Hebrew letter "tav."

4) The brazen serpent which Moses hung on a "pole" was referred to by Christ Himself in John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up..."

Christ could compare His death to the serpent on the pole for several reasons.

1) A serpent has always represented sin (cf Genesis 3:15). If Christ represents a lamb why did He refer to the brass serpent? II Corinthians 5:21 says,

"For He hath made Him (to be) sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

The apostle Peter said, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree..." (I Peter 2:24)

People looked to the brass serpent AFTER they were bitten by poisonous vipers. Those who "looked to the serpent" were cured of the plague. Likewise, those who would look to the suffering of Christ, and would believe upon Him would be cured of the plague of sin and death!

2) The law of Moses taught, "Cursed is the man that hangeth upon a tree." (Dent. 21:23) Paul then related this law and told us WHY Christ went to the cross. Galatians 3:13 says,

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

Christ carried the sins of humanity to the cross. The TREE was a sign of the curse. Religious Jews in Paul's time familiar with the "curse of the law," could not understand how a man dying on a cursed tree could forgive sins. The answer is that He was made a curse and carried the curse with Him, and by doing so freed us from that curse (see Colossians 2:14-15).

TORTURED TO DEATH

Crucifying criminals was known to the world many years before Christ, but none used this torture tool more effectively than the Romans. The Jewish historian Josephus reported in his writings various incidents regarding

crucifixion.

Among Josephus' records is Antiochus IV who crucified those Jews at Jerusalem who would not relinquish their faith (Ant. 12:256). He mentions two thousand rebels who were crucified by Quintilus Varus (Ant 17:259). Felix was known to crucify both rebels and zealots. He also crucified anyone he suspected of collaborating with them (Wars 2:241). During the famous siege of Jerusalem, Titus had all the Jewish prisoners crucified on the walls of the city of Jerusalem at a rate of up to 500 a day (Wars 5:449-452). In one instance 800 Pharisees were crucified while their wives and children looked on (Ant. 13:380-381).

Historical records could swim in the blood of past victims of crucifixion. Yet, no single death carries more historical weight than the day a tall, suntanned Nazarene hung between heaven and earth! All history revolves around the day that God, man and the devil were in agreement... and that was the day Christ was crucified.

Man said He must die. His fiery proclamations and common teachings were drawing mass crowds throughout the region. He was a political threat to Rome and a religious threat to the Pharisees and Sadducees. Man said, "Kill Him."

The devil said He had to die. Pigs were drowning by the thousands in a Galilean lake. Dead, religious church members were given eternal life in once lethargic synagogues. Screaming maniacs were putting on new clothes and going to church. Jesus was bad for the devil's business and the devil wanted Him dead.

And God said He must die. But not for the same reasons. God said, "I want man back. He is my beloved creation. I want the power of sin destroyed. God said, "Jesus, You have to die." Jesus accepted the Father's will in the garden where He said, "...not My will but Thine be done," (Matthew 26:39). And the Lamb went to slaughter.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INSCRIPTION

One seemingly unimportant item which was reported in the gospel of John made the religious leaders very angry at the crucifixion of Jesus. The inscription written by Pilate and nailed to the cross caused a great deal of anxiety within the ranks of the Scribes and Pharisees. There is an astonishing discovery to be found in the inscription on the cross which will reveal the reason for their anger.

When a Jewish family arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover, they would either purchase or bring with them a bronze name tag. This name tag had the family name written on it. They would tie a bronze rope or thread to the bronze name tag and hang it around the neck of the "pet lamb." Each father desired that God would know their family was observing the Passover, and that the lamb that

bore their family name was being sacrificed for them. All of the events of the Passover feast deal deeply in types and shadows that point directly to Jesus as the Passover Lamb for the world, but what could this name tag possibly have to do with the Lord and His crucifixion?

Part of the answer is found in the gospel of John, but we must understand Jewish procedure to piece the whole picture together. In John 19:19-20 it says that Pilate had written an inscription and placed it on the cross above the head of Jesus. The Bible says it was written in three languages. The phrase as it was translated in our English Bibles was "Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews." It was originally written in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The Romans would read it in their native tongue of Latin, the Jews would read it in Hebrew, and anyone else could read it in the common language of that day which was Greek.

The literary custom of the scribes of those days would be to take the first letters of the words in a phrase and put them together to see if there would be a hidden meaning from the arrangement of these letters. This custom dates back at least to the time of the Babylonian captivity of the Jewish nation.

The Roman Catholic Church used this ancient custom by placing four letters on their crucifixes which are "INRI." These are the first letters of the four words of the inscription on the cross as they appeared in Latin.

"IESVS NAZARENVS REX IUDAEORVM"

The name "Jesus" in Latin is not spelled with a "J." It is spelled with an "I." So the first letter "I" represents the name of Jesus. The second letter "N" is the first letter for the word "Nazareth" in Latin. Then "R" Rex, is the first letter for "King," and finally "I" would be for the "J" in the word "Jews." Those are the first four letters of the four words in **Latin "INRI."** And since the Roman Catholic religion uses Latin in their services, it only stands to reason that on their crucifix they would use these four Latin letters.

They had the right idea according to Jewish religious customs, but used the wrong language in discovering the phrase within the inscription that sent the scribes in a panic. In Israel, when a Jewish child visits other churches to learn about their religions and enters a Catholic church, it makes no sense to them to

see a crucifix with an "I.N.R.I." on the cross. If the Catholic church would have translated the inscription from the Hebrew language, the meaning of the inscription would be a testimony to the Hebrew people today, and not a matter of so much confusion.

The inscription on the cross was written not only in Latin, but also in Greek, and Hebrew, and when the scribes put the first letters together to find out

the hidden meaning they would naturally use the Hebrew words because that was their language. When we translate the inscription from the Hebrew language, we can soon learn why the scribes almost passed out and their blood pressure went up at the crucifixion site. Remember, John said, "This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city..." (John 19:20)

TRANSLATING THE HEBREW INSCRIPTION

The religious services at the Temple would be conducted in the Hebrew tongue. Hebrew scribes were responsible for copying the law as well as coding and classifying the matters pertaining to scriptures. Christ, during His ministry was continually at conflict with the scribes.

The scribes, standing at the bloody cross would have read the inscription in Hebrew. Since the New Testament was written in the Greek language, we must translate the inscription from the original Greek text back to the Hebrew. The phrase as it appeared on the cross in Greek was written like this:

IHZOTE 0 NAZflPAIOI 0 BAlIAETE TQN
IOTAAIQN

The Greek letter o is called an omicron and can be translated a variety of ways into either "of," "the," "and," "a," etc. It seems like a very insignificant word, but it makes all the difference in the world when finding out what made the scribes so upset. Our English translators translated it as "the," but Reverend Peter Michas (who is a Greek and speaks Greek) went back into the Lidell and Scott Dictionary of Greek words to see if this translation was correct, because there was suspicion of more being there than met the eye.

There are pages and pages of ways to translate the omicron in the Greek language, but when Professor Michas came to about the fifth page, the Lidell and Scott showed him that it could be translated as "and" and gave him an example that proved that this was the way it should be translated in this particular case.

In the ancient Acropolis of Zeus in Pergamus (Pergamus was the seat of Satan according to Revelation 2:13) there was an inscription written to Zeus in Homeric Greek and the phrase was written like this:

ZEYΣ-Ο-ΠΕΡΓΑΜΩ-Ο-ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ 0 ΘΕΟΣ

The Lidell and Scott translates the phrase like this: "**Zeus of Pergamus and King and god.**" The similarities between the way this phrase was written and that of the inscription on the cross of Christ which was written by Pilate is

undeniable. Pilate, being a Roman and highly educated was very well versed in the pagan beliefs of the day, and certainly knew about the inscription given to Zeus in the temple of Pergamus. This was a title of praise given to the highest of the Greek and Roman gods - Zeus. Apparently, Pilate took this same phrase, reworded it, and by doing so made this sign on the cross not so much of a mockery of Christ as it was a tribute to this amazing Galilean.

It must be remembered that Pilate's wife had a frightening dream and warned Pilate not to have anything to do with this man. Pilate washed his hands publicly of all "guilt" of the crucifixion (Matthew 27:19), and announced that Christ was an "innocent man" (John 18:38). To demonstrate Christ's innocence, Pilate acted out a part of the law of Moses with which all religious Jews were familiar. If an "innocent man" was slain near a city wall, and none claimed responsibility for the death, the elders of the city were to take a heifer and go to the nearest city. Before the city elders, they were to wash their hands and cut off the heifer's neck. This would keep judgement from falling on the town. There was a divine punishment pronounced against those that shed innocent blood.

When Pilate washed his hands, the religious scribes understood the meaning of this act. He was saying, "I will not be responsible for His blood." That is when the multitude cried out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

As you will discover, Pilate's true feelings about Jesus may have been hidden in the inscription above the cross.

THE "TETRAGRAMMATON" OR THE HOLY NAME

Now that we know the intent of the author, we know that the omicron must be translated as "and" and we can go back and reconstruct the phrase in Hebrew exactly as it appeared on the cross.

יְשׁוּעַ הַנָּצְרִי וּמֶלֶךְ הַיְּהוּדִים

Remember. Hebrew is read from right to left. So, when the first four letters of the Hebrew are placed together, they look like this:

Remember. Hebrew is read from right to left. So, when the first four letters of the Hebrew are placed together, they look like this:

יהוה

Now, for those that do not know what that is, I will write it phonetically in the English language. First the inscription on the cross:

Now, for those that do not know what that is, I will write it phonetically in the English language. First the inscription on the cross:

"Jesus of Nazareth, And King of the Jews" - English

"Yehoshua Hanatzri Vemelech Hayhoodem" - Hebrew

"Jesus of Nazareth, And King of the Jews" - English "Yehoshua Hanatzri Vemelech Hayhoodem" - Hebrew "YHVH"

"YHVH"

YOD (י) HE (ה) VAV (ו) HE (ה)

YOD(1) HE(7VVAVO)HE(ri)

In the Old Testament, the letters "YHVH" represent the holy, unspeakable name of God, called by scholars the tetragrammaton (which is Greek meaning a four lettered word)! When we add vowels to these four Hebrew letters, in English it spells JEHOVAH! Hallelujah! God put His family name on the cross to show that this was His chosen lamb!!

The first letter of the first word is "Y." The first letter of the second word is "H." The first letter of the third word is "V." And finally, the first letter of the fourth word is "H." Instead of reading INRI in Latin, the scribes read in Hebrew "YHVH"! This may mean absolutely nothing to you, yet, these four Hebrew letters spell the sacred name of God found over 6,000 times in the Old Testament scriptures! This is God's personal name! JEHOVAH! By writing this inscription, Pilate wrote the holy name of God upon God's lamb!

Jesus was marked for all the Passover participants to see! He was the final sacrifice hanging upon the pole. In fact, while God's favorite lamb was being executed, the priests at the Temple were preparing for the ritual of offering thousands of lambs for the people.

When the religious leaders read the inscription, they came to Pilate and said, "Change it! Change the wording and say 'He said He was the King of the Jews.' That way the name of God would not be found on the cross. This man was crucified for the sin of blasphemy. He made Himself equal with God! If you leave the inscription like it is, you are telling everyone that this man is God which is the very reason for His crucifixion!" However, this was the one item during the whole trial about which Pilate stood his ground. His reply was, "What

I have written I have written" (John 19:21-22).

God had put His name on His lamb for the whole world to see! The Jews had been bringing Passover lambs to the Temple with their bronze name tags and were saying, "God, see our name. This lamb is for our family." God hung His Son on the highest hill in Jerusalem to tell all mankind, "See My name. It is Passover, Jews. You are taking your lambs to the Temple. When the blood is flowing in the Temple from the Passover lambs of the people, My Son's sinless blood will be flowing for the redemption of mankind so you can once again have direct fellowship with your Creator."

THE MYSTERY OF THE THREE CROSSES

Each aspect of the crucifixion is a scene from the past; a type from the old law being acted out--fulfilled by Christ Himself. For years I have pondered the thought, "Why were there three crosses? Surely there is a spiritual significance or a mystery hidden in the three crosses."

Jewish history as outlined in the Mishna (Jewish religious law) may give a clue that will bring new light on why there were three crosses.

When the Temple existed, a special time called Yom Ha Kippor, or the "Day of Atonement," was observed each year. In preparation, the high priest would separate himself from his family and from the Israelites for seven days in a chamber at the Temple. On the special Day of Atonement, he came forth dressed in four linen garments which were the following (Leviticus 16:4):

1. A linen robe with long sleeves which also draped to the ankles.
2. A linen belt which tied around the waist.
3. A pair of linen breaches.
4. A linen turban which fit around the head, covering his hair.

Notice that the priest removed his royal vestments: the gold crown engraved with the name of God, the breastplate of gold with the 12 precious stones, the

Urim and Thummim, and the purple garment, to wear linen clothes. According to Jewish tradition, since Israel sinned with the golden calf, God would not permit the high priest to enter the holy place carrying gold upon him lest PRIDE enter his heart! During this important occasion, the high priest would offer special animal sacrifices for himself, the other priests and Levites, as well as for the entire population of Israel.

On this day GOD would decide if He would forgive the sins of the nation. The entire day was spent in fasting and in reverence to God. Another Jewish

tradition holds that when the priest entered the Temple, the sound of the Cherubim's (holy angels) wings could be heard beating against each other. Upon entering the Holy of Holies the sound ceased. The angels were waiting on God's verdict-was Israel going to be forgiven or held guilty for their sins. When in heaven, God covered their sins, then the sound of the wings was heard, again, in celebration of God's favor.

Ezekiel described the sound of the Cherubim's wings being heard "even to the outer court as the voice of the Almighty speaketh" (Ezekiel 10:5). He also saw the "glory of God departing from the threshold of the house" (Ezekiel 10:18). We know that Cherubim were special angels which guarded the entrance of the Garden of Eden after man's fall (Genesis 3:24). There were two gold Cherubim on the lid of the ark of the covenant, and two very large gold Cherubim place in the holy place in Solomon's temple (11 Chronicles 3:10-12). Angels were no doubt concerned about man's destiny with God. Paul said that "...the angels desire to look into these things."

Once the priest entered the holy place with the bulls blood, he sprinkled the east side of the ark of the covenant seven times (Leviticus 16:4). Without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness of sins!

THE THREE RED THREADS

During this important moment, the high priest would bring two goats before him. Each goat must be identical in age, size, color, etc. The priest would "cast lots" to see which goat would be burned on the altar and which goat would be the "scapegoat." Reaching his hand into a small wooden box, he lifted a gold engraved marker which said, "For the Lord." Immediately the goat designated "for the Lord" was marked with a long piece of scarlet thread around its right horn. This goat would die on the altar!

The other goat was marked for "Azazel." There has been much speculation as to the meaning of "Azazel." The word is used in Leviticus 16:8-10. The use of goats for "magical purposes" can be found in secular history. In Babylon, during the feast of Akitu (the New Year) a goat was substituted for a human being to the goddess of the abyss called Ereshkigal. The Hittites used to send a goat into enemy territory because they believed it would carry a plague there.

The goat Azazel (the scapegoat) had a scarlet thread tied around its neck. The high priest then laid hands on the goat, thus transferring the sins of all Israel onto the goat. A man then led the goat outside the east gate, across a ramp (in the Temple times) and toward the Judean wilderness. According to some commentaries, the goat was taken to the wilderness where it was pushed off the

cliff and it died. God did not want the sins coming back into Jerusalem, so the goat was destroyed, never to bring the sins back, again!

Since it is a belief that demonic spirits hang out in the dry places such as a desert (Luke 11:24), this goat called "Azazel" was actually another name for Satan. The idea was to get rid of the evil by banishing it to its original source (Encyclopedia Judaica; Azazel; p. 1002).

A third red thread was attached to the door of the Temple gate. When the goat died in the wilderness, the red thread on the Temple door was said to turn white. Upon seeing this, Israel knew GOD had accepted their sacrifices and the sins were forgiven. Perhaps this is what Isaiah meant when he said, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

There were three red threads used on the Day of Atonement. The first was tied on the horn of the goat "for the Lord." The second was tied around the goat "for Azazel," and the third turned white on the Temple doors when God saw the sacrifice was completed.

THREE CROSSES AND THREE RED THREADS

The idea of WHY three crosses are in the crucifixion story can now be understood. Three men are dying.

- *JESUS was dying as an offering "for the Lord."

- *A THIEF died rejecting Christ and he went to hell.

- *Another THIEF "changed" while on the cross and his scarlet sins became white as snow.

The three red threads tell us about the three different persons hanging on the cross. One is a sacrifice for the Lord, one dies and is given over to demons (in hell) and the other one changes while "hanging" on a piece of timber, just as the red thread on the Temple door turned white!

It is understood by Jewish writings that the Jews understood the words of Isaiah 1:18 to refer to the scarlet thread and that they expected it to turn white, in terms of that promise. It is said that it did so in the time of Simon the Just, but no change was perceptible in it for forty years before the destruction of the Temple by Titus (Mishna de Sabb; Die: cap 9 sect. 3). History records the destruction of the Temple by Titus in the year 70 A.D. Most historians agree that Christ began his public ministry on or near 30 A.D. Perhaps without realizing it, the Mishna reveals something interesting - namely, that about the time of Christ's ministry

the red thread on the Temple door never turned white, again! The reason was because the Lamb of God would now make our sins "white as snow" through His own blood!

The priest sprinkled the blood seven times on the ark of the covenant. Jesus shed His blood from seven different parts of His Body.

1. On His FACE when His sweat became blood.
2. On His HEAD when they placed a crown of thorns on His head.
3. On His BACK when they beat Him with a whip.
4. On His LEFT HAND when the spike was driven into the flesh.
5. On His RIGHT HAND when the spike was driven into the flesh.
6. On His FEET (which were nailed together).

On His SIDE when the spear pierced Him.

Judas sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver. Was this number 30 a coincidence? We must remember that each event of the crucifixion can be found hidden in the patterns of the Old Testament law.

The purpose of Jesus' death was to redeem sinners. Christ was going to bring forth a CHURCH consisting of people from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. This Church would be His BRIDE that He would present to His father at a great wedding supper (cf. Revelation 22:17; Revelation 21:9). Since the BRIDE of Christ consists of all believers who are born again of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13), then we had to be redeemed back to God. We were redeemed by the BLOOD of Christ.

The law of Moses gave the exact amount for the redemption of a woman:

Leviticus 27:4, "And if it be female, then thy estimation shall be THIRTY shekels."

About 600 years before Christ, the prophet Zechariah predicted the exact amount that Judas would offer to betray Christ;

Zechariah 11:12; "...So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

vs. 13; And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Judas fulfilled this prophecy to the detail. He returned the thirty pieces of silver, hung himself and a field was purchased with the money (Acts 1:17-19). God's plan for our salvation was so interwoven in the feast, the sacrifices and the hidden typology of the law and prophets, that once someone begins to see the pattern develop, it becomes undeniable that Christ was and is the true Savior of the world!

DURING THE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS

Jesus cried three words that were reserved for the high priest... "It is finished!" With this groan from the timber came a reaction in three worlds. A large VEIL in the Temple measuring 80 feet high, 20 feet wide, and 18 inches thick served as a partition between God and man, but this was cut in half by the hand of God when Christ died. God wanted OUT and sinners wanted IN!

The universe went into total revolt. Thick darkness hovered over Jerusalem's rolling mountains and the people who just moments before were yelling,

"Crucify Him," were now "smashing their fist against their chest." Sin-hardened Roman soldiers were making a confession of faith at the completion of the execution, when one said, "Surely this was the Son of God." Disciples were hanging their heads in fear, broken and wounded. Their King was dead. The Man who could walk on water seemed to be unable to control His own destiny. To the fearful followers of Christ, their world would never be the same.

The reaction in heaven itself is a mystery. The scriptures reveal that angels ministered to Christ at His temptation (Matthew 4:11), in Gethsemane's garden before His death (Luke 22:43), and were present at His resurrection (John 20:12). The Father knew the END of the story! This strategic moment was planned "from the foundation of the world!"

"... Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2).

Before Christ's crucifixion, when men died, their spirits descended to the lower parts of the earth. There are huge caverns and places carved deep beneath the earth. Both the righteous and the unrighteous went there, but they abode in separate compartments. The righteous went to a large area called "Abraham's bosom," and the sinners went into a large compartment of fire called hell (cf Luke 16:19-31).

Jesus had predicted, "As Jonah was three days and nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of Man must be three days and nights in the heart of the earth." When Christ "gave up the Ghost" (Matthew 27:50), His spirit went into paradise, where righteous men had waited for thousands of years for their redemption from that place!

No doubt, Abraham, the father of the faithful was present when the spirit of Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth! Paul mentions this in

Ephesians 4:8-9;

vs. 8; *"Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.*

vs. 9; *(Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also DESCENDED FIRST into the lower parts of the earth?...)"*

For thousands of years, the spirits of righteous men, upon death, were taken to this underground paradise. Christ, upon His death, descended to this huge underground vault to "preach to the spirits in prison!" For the first time, Abraham saw "his seed" that God had promised him! Isaiah saw the "virgin born" Son of God (Isaiah 7:14).

Jesus conducted a three day evangelistic crusade right near the very gates of hell! What sermon did He "preach" to those men who had died under the covenant of Abraham? Remember, the law of Moses provided forgiveness for sins by the blood sacrifices "covering" the sins. Men's iniquities were "hid" from God. I believe Jesus preached a message on His sufferings and on His blood! Christ had brought an eyewitness with Him, a former thief on the cross, the first mortal man to be forgiven by the blood of Christ! Christ had told the forgiven thief, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise!"

As you will see, when Christ resurrected, many saints came out of the earth with Him and many were seen in Jerusalem.

WHAT SATAN SAW

I Corinthians 2:6; "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world, that come to naught:

vs. 7; *But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:*

vs. 8; *Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."*

The "prince of this world," Satan (Ephesians 2:2) is not an all-knowing creature. His power is released in disobedient men. Yet, his knowledge of God's eternal purpose was hidden. In fact, it was hidden to the prophets, although revealed in "bits and pieces." The fullness of this mystery was made known to Paul (see Romans 16:25-26).

The powers of darkness were unaware of what was actually occurring on the day of the crucifixion!

Psalms 22 gives several prophecies concerning Christ's crucifixion. It begins with "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?" It continues in vs.

7,

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying,

vs. 8; 'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him...'"

David went as far as to predict the gambling for Christ's garments.

*"They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.,,
(Psalm 22:18)*

Within this prophetic chapter, there is a most unusual verse of scripture.

Psalm 22:12. "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round."

Most scholars apply this passage to the wicked and cruel men standing around the cross. I believe the meaning is much deeper. The Hebrew word "bulls" in this passage is the word "abbiyr" which means "angel, mighty one, stout." It implies a very strong spirit. The land of Bashan, in Moses' time was very heavily populated with a famous race of giants. One such race is mentioned in Deuteronomy 3:1-8, with a leader named Og. While Bashan was a fertile land for raising famous cattle, there were no literal cattle or bulls present on mount Calvary. The second meaning of the "bulls of Bashan" would be the strong evil spirits that worked in the men.

The bulls of Bashan may be a cryptic reference to the powers of darkness that encircled the cross, adding to the torment of an already suffering Messiah. Jesus had said, "...the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). Christ knew the forces of darkness would battle against Him, but they would have no control over Him in any form! Whether this was an attack by demonic spirits or the spirits of wicked men who railed against Him, the "bulls of Bashan" added to the mental torment.

The pressure on Jesus can be seen in the Garden of Gethsemane, where as He prayed His "sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). He was in "agony." The Greek word here is "agonia" which means a bitter struggle. Christ was struggling with the "will of God." The Son of God was about to face death, something God had never experienced.

Satan did not understand the plan. This plan was HID with God and later revealed to the apostles. As far as Satan was concerned, his battle with Jesus was over. Little did Satan know that it was only beginning!

MEANWHILE IN A GRAVEYARD

Heaven was watching, Satan was content and the lower parts of the earth

were listening to preaching from the spirit of Jesus. Meanwhile at the crucifixion site, two rich men, secret disciples, are preparing for the physical burial of Jesus.

Joseph of Arimathea, according to Jewish tradition was a tin trader and one of the three wealthiest men in Jerusalem. He was also an "honorable counselor" (Mark 15:43) which meant he was a member of the well-respected Sanhedren, consisting of 70 of the most notable men in the nation. Joseph had the political power to ask Pilate for the body of Jesus. Pilate had no idea how Joseph or Nicodemus felt about Christ. Nicodemus came "by night" secretly to speak to Jesus. Many believe that Nicodemus owned the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus went often to pray.

Had Joseph NOT obtained the body of Jesus, the body could have been removed by the Romans and carried to the Valley of Hinnom. This deep canyon was located on the west side of the city, and was a place where garbage, animal manure, dead animals, and other unwanted "trash" was thrown.

In the New Testament, when Jesus speaks of hell it is the Greek word "Gehennah," which means the Valley of Hinnom. A continual fire was burning in this valley. No doubt, a foul odor ascended above it. Not far from here is where Judas hung himself.

A criminal who died accused of "blasphemy" could be thrown into Gehennah, and at that moment he would be burned to ashes. This was NOT the plan of God. David the prophet and king had written, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:31)

The influence of Joseph may have saved the body of Jesus from being destroyed by wicked men. None of the disciples were present to claim the body. They had all fled. Now two "secret" disciples came public with their belief in the Lord just at the right time!

Over 100 pounds of linen and spices were purchased and smeared over the corpse. Fresh linens were purchased in which to wrap the Lord's body. Joseph allowed Christ to be buried in his own new tomb, which was a cave with a large stone to cover its entrance (as were most tombs in the Roman time). Why would Joseph allow Christ to use his tomb? I believe Joseph knew he would get his grave back... and that Jesus would come back to life, again!

At the very moment that the Passover lambs are being offered by the priest at the Temple, God's spotless pet lamb breathes his final breath and cries, "It is finished." These three words are the very words the priest would say at the completion of the Passover ritual. Christ knew the final sacrifice had been made

(John 19:30).

GUARDING A DEAD MAN

Three worlds were reaching to the death of Jesus. The hallowed halls of the eternal heaven, the home of the King, were waiting with anticipation for the third day to arrive. It would be the day that would change the world.

The lower parts of the earth were reeling and rocking, as Jesus preached to the righteous men in paradise, proclaiming to them the new covenant of His blood.

The guards standing at a dead man's grave, curiously wondered why they were commissioned to watch over a corpse.

The prophet predicted that His "body would not see corruption." Normally by the end of the third day the body begins to corrupt. But remember, BLOOD causes the corruption along with the moisture in the body. When the centurion thrust a spear into Christ's body, out came "blood and water." When a person is bleeding to death, the water from the organs often go to the area where the bleeding is occurring. By Christ's body being emptied of both blood and water, the organs were in a better condition NOT to deteriorate or corrupt, as with a person who would be buried with the blood still in their body!

What actually occurred at the moment of the resurrection was recorded in the ARCO FILE. These large scrolls were in a monastery in Turkey, when, in the late 1800s a gentleman received special permission to translate them to English. A section is a supposed letter from Pilate to Caesar concerning the burial and resurrection of Jesus. Here is how the story unfolds.

"...I sent him to the captain of the royal guard, Milchus, to tell them to take as many of the Jewish soldiers as he needed to place them around the sepulchre. Then if anything should happen they could blame themselves and not the Romans.

When the great excitement arose about the sepulchre being found empty, I felt a deeper concern than ever. I sent for Milchus who told me he placed his lieutenant, Ben Ishem, with 100 soldiers around the tomb. He told me that Ishem and the soldiers were very much alarmed at what occurred there that morning. I sent for this man Isham and he related to me as near as I can remember the following circumstances.

He said at the beginning of the fourth watch (3:00 AM) that they saw a soft and beautiful light over the sepulchre. At first they thought the women had come to embalm the body of Jesus as was their custom, but he could not determine how they had gotten through the guards.

While these reflections were passing through his mind, behold the whole place was lighted up, and there seemed to be CROWDS OF THE DEAD in their grave clothes. All seemed to be filled with ecstasy while all around was the most beautiful music he had ever heard, and the place seemed to be full of voices praising God.

At this time there seemed to be a reeling and a swinging of the earth so that he turned sick and fainted and could not remain standing. He said the earth seemed to leave from under him and his senses left him so he knew not what occurred. I asked him what position he was in when he came to himself and he said he was lying on the ground with his face earthward... "

The fourth watch, which begins at three in the morning was a time Christ often resorted to prayer (Mark 6:48). We know the guards fell down as dead men and there were many dead saints seen walking through Jerusalem AFTER Christ rose from the dead.

Matthew 27:52; "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

vs. 53; And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. "

Not knowing what had occurred, several women, very close to Christ's ministry were arriving early in the morning, at the rising of the sun (Mark 16:2). Their concern was moving the large stone (which may have weighed up to four tons) away from the cave (Mark 15:4).

When they arrived, the body was missing but angels were waiting!

A SPECIAL MISSION INTO HEAVEN

As Mary stood without the sepulchre weeping, Jesus stood near her. For some strange reason she did not recognize Him. Was it because; 1) she was weeping so intensely, her eyes were blurred; 2) her eyes were "holden" like the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, where they didn't know Him (Luke 24:31); 3) Christ was dressed in such a manner she did not recognize Him?

Mary thought she was talking to a gardener that perhaps kept the ground at this garden tomb, owned by the rich Joseph. There is a point of interest that always intrigued me at this moment in the story. It involves the garments of Jesus.

Christ was crucified nude. This was part of the "shame" of public execution on the tree. When Joseph prepared the body of the corpse, there were no "clothed" places on the body, as Jesus was wrapped in new linens (very similar

to the mummies in Egypt). At His resurrection, the grave clothes were seen by John INSIDE the tomb.

John 20:5, "And He stooping down, looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; vs. 7, ...and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. "

When Mary saw Christ, He was clothed. Where did He receive the clothes that he was wearing? They were not His grave clothes. Neither were they buried with Him in the tomb. There can only be one logical answer. The clothes Christ was wearing were brought by an angel from heaven! Since Jesus was now our High Priest, He had to have the special linen garments required by the priest to wear. Remember what the scripture teaches, that things in heaven needed to be purified with blood!

When Mary saw Christ He was on His way into heaven to perform the ritual of applying His blood to the heavenly temple articles once and for all! This is why He spoke to Mary and said,

John 20:17; "...Touch me not (or don't delay me); for I am not yet ascended to My father: but go to My brethren and say unto them, I ascended unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

Jesus was about to ascend back to the Father. As the priest on the Day of Atonement put on four pieces of linen clothes, I believe Jesus, the newly appointed High Priest, had on the linen pants, belt, robe and headdress, that the priest was required to wear. He had to fulfill all of the law! He was going to "ascend to the Father" to complete His mission of purging the heavenly vessels of ministry.

Not only did the Holy Spirit provide the garments, but when Jesus Christ was bleeding both during His beatings and when He hung on the cross the Holy Spirit was gathering His blood. Somehow this truth was perverted in Europe when they created the story called the Holy Grail. In this story, Joseph of Arimathea was supposed to have been standing under the cross with the communion cup from which Jesus drank, catching His blood. Now there are 6,000 men in Europe that say they are guardians of the holy grail. This is a corruption of the truth that the early Church knew really happened. The Holy Spirit gathered Jesus' blood in a vessel, took this vessel back into the holy place of heaven and waited for the eternal High Priest to come and carry out His mission. Hebrews 9:11-12 and 21-25, uses the comparisons of the two temples and very clearly shows us what Jesus accomplished.

*vs. 11; "But **Christ being come a High Priest** of good things to come, by a*

greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;"

vs. 12; "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Paul continues to explain this event of Christ taking His blood into heaven itself, when he writes:

vs. 21; "Moreover he (Moses) sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

vs. 22; And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

*vs. 23; It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; **but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.** "*

*vs. 24; "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, (that means Herod's temple) which are the figures of the true; **but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:***

vs. 25; Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others."

He only needed to offer His blood once. John didn't see a veil in the heavenly temple because it had been removed just as it had been ripped in half in Herod's temple. Access to the Father was no longer restricted. The blood of the perfect sacrifice for humanity as presented by our High Priest removed the barrier between holy God and sinful man.

And because the blood of Christ is incorruptible and time is no more in Heaven, I believe that even though it has been almost 2,000 years since Calvary, in the temple in heaven there is an ark and there is still the red blood of Christ on the mercy seat that is as wet and fresh and alive as the day it was placed there by the eternal High Priest. When we understand this, we can now understand why we are living in the age of grace, because the blood of Christ is continually, perpetually making atonement for our sins. Christ's blood that has provided payment for our right to have access into the presence of God still has life in it. It still contains the resurrection, life-giving power for those that believe and put their trust in it.

And when we get to heaven and walk into the heavenly temple, we will be able to see the blood that gave us the right to be there. We will see the blood that saved us. We will see the blood that paid for us to have the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We will see the blood that set people free from cocaine, from drugs, from

prostitution. The blood of Jesus is still there, still active, still alive! Praise God! Hallelujah! That means when the devil goes to accuse the brethren (Revelation 12:10), his case is dismissed for lack of evidence! Now when Satan says to the Father, "I enticed Perry Stone to sin against You, so he has no right to have an eternal home in heaven in Your presence. I saw this one that You call Yours sin.

I accuse him before You and condemn him as guilty."

And the High Priest (our Mediator) will say to the Father, "The great accuser is wrong, Father. That sin that he committed has been paid for. By the word of his testimony, Perry has accepted that forgiveness, and there is the blood which you accepted as payment for the sin, so it can no longer be admitted as evidence against him!" Hallelujah! It's covered! My sin has been covered!!

THE SAINTS IN GLORY

Therefore, now that the way has been opened by Jesus the High Priest, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished, as Paul was referring to in I Corinthians 15. As a matter of fact, I can even show you in the Bible what happened to all those saints who were trapped in sheol paradise waiting for Christ to set them free.

In Matthew 27:52-53, the Bible mentions the bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep having been raised after the resurrection. The Bible says they came out of their tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. When did these saints go to heaven?

In Acts 1, Christ gathered His disciples together one final time on top of the Mount of Olives for last minute instructions and encouragement by promising them the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a short while. Then in verse 9 it says that He was lifted up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The word "cloud" in that passage is the same Greek root word that is used in Hebrews 12:1 where it refers to a great cloud of witnesses, and this is the same as the Hebrew word that is used in Joel 2 when it refers to the armies as swarming locusts. Paul is telling us that Jesus was sent up in a cloud of saints - not a fleecy, white, rain cloud.

As further proof, Acts 1:10 says that two men (it didn't say angels) in white apparel stood beside them,

vs. 11; "Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven. "

Revelation 19:14 tells us that He is coming back with an army. Therefore, if He is not coming back alone and the two men told the disciples that He was

coming back in the same way they saw Him go, then He must not have gone to heaven alone! What a sight that must have been!

Both Greek words used in these passages of scripture are singular nouns and are used as a cloud of men. It means a cloud of battle or thick cloud of something in flight (P. 1171 of the Lidell and Scott dictionary of Greek words). The Greek word that was used for "cloud" in Acts 1:9 (nephele) is a feminine gender, whereas the Greek word that was used for "cloud" in Hebrews 12:1 (nephos) is a neuter gender. In Hebrews 12:1, the writer is talking about both believers and non-believers (neuter) who can bear witness to the events that took place while the Lord was alive. In Acts 1:9, the word "cloud" is referring strictly to those who are a part of the Bride of Christ (feminine) as they enveloped Him and ascended with Him into heaven when he lifted off from the Mount of Olives.

Heaven is a holy place. Vessels in the heavenly temple needed to be purged because SIN originated at the very throne of God when Satan attempted to lead a rebellion of angels against God. Heaven was defiled by the presence of sin. This sin did not corrupt God Himself, but all things by the law are cleansed with blood (Hebrews 9:22). The priest under the law took blood and sprinkled the altar, the ark of the covenant and the book of the law. Christ, no doubt, went through the same procedure and sprinkled His blood upon the holy vessels of ministry in heaven. By this blood we now have access to the throne of God!

Notice how Jesus is NOW dressed. John saw Christ in a vision in the year 95 A.D., over 60 years after the resurrection. John recorded this vision in Revelation 1:13,

"And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps (breast) with a golden girdle (belt)."

This is a picture of the High Priest of heaven!

Jesus has entered into the heavenly temple, and by His blood, has given you and me the right to approach God! We don't need to pray to saints who have died, or rely on the prayers of an earthly mediator. The Bible says:

"For there is one God, and ONE mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" (I Timothy 2:5)!

There is only ONE true priest to God and that is Jesus Christ. You can pray anywhere and at anytime, without the aid of a human man, because Jesus will hear you pray directly. This is why He died!

JESUS THE "MARKED MAN"

All covenant men are marked. Abraham bore on his body the sign of the

covenant. All male children, descendants of Abraham, carried a scar of circumcision all their life as a token of their blood covenant with God (Genesis 18:10-14).

Throughout all eternity Jesus Christ will carry the SCARS on His body of His suffering. When Christ rules on the earth in the future, people will see the scars in His hands and ask, "Where did you get those wounds?" The Lord will answer, "In the house of My friends" (Zechariah 13:6).

When we have a new glorified body, we will not be blemished with physical defects of physical scars on our bodies. Why should Christ carry the marks on His body? Remember, when Thomas was doubting he placed his hand into the side of Christ. As his hand went between the ribs, Thomas screamed, "My Lord and My God!" Thomas had touched the HEART of God (John 20:26-30)!

Those scars are the ETERNAL EVIDENCE of a proven event! When the angels are judged, Satan will never stand before the jasper throne and DENY the fact of the crucifixion. Knowing Satan's ability to lie, he would deny the crucifixion ever took place. Yet, when Christ steps forward and holds His hands before a condemned world at the great white throne judgment, all men who did not repent will SEE WHY they are judged and condemned. The scars are the PROOF of the crucifixion for all eternity. Jesus is a "marked man." All covenant men must be marked.

HOW TO APPLY THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Revelation 12:11; "And they overcame him (Satan) by the BLOOD OF THE LAMB, and by the world of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Older Christians used a phrase called, "pleading the blood." When dealing with a demon-possessed person or a strong spiritual opposition they would say, "We need to plead the blood," or "I plead the blood over this situation." Isaiah 43:26 says, "Put me in remembrance: let us PLEAD together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."

God is a judge. We present our CASE before Him and if we have sinned and plead "guilty" He can forgive us. If we throw ourselves upon the mercy of the Judge, He will move on our behalf. When dealing with Satan we must understand the power of the blood of Christ.

In the time of the Temple, two lambs were offered each day; one in the morning and one in the evening. This is interesting because these are the two most important times of our day. In the morning, the enemy would like to ruin

our entire day. In the evening we are preparing to rest. The enemy would desire to distract our rest if possible. A BLOOD OFFERING was prepared in the morning and in the evening.

We no longer go to a temple for worship, because our "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 3:16). We MUST attend church and be ministered to by a pastor, but we do not offer BLOOD offerings as was once required. How then do we overcome Satan by the BLOOD of Jesus?

We can apply the blood of Christ by our confession. "They overcame (Satan) by the blood of the lamb AND by the WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY..." In order to be born again, we must confess our sin to JESUS and by FAITH in His blood we are forgiven. Then we must CONFESS that we are saved.

Romans 10:10; "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Confession does not mean going to a priest and telling him what you have done. Only JESUS can forgive sins. Jesus is our High Priest!

After having repented of our sins, we must CONFESS the BLOOD OF CHRIST over our life.

"Confess" or "confession" simply means admitting to guilt. Everyone is guilty before God, and everyone needs to be "redeemed" or "bought back," so we can once again be God's property. The blood of Jesus Christ has the power to:

- 1) Redeem the lost.

I Peter 1:18; "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

vs. 19; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

- 2) Cleanse from sin.

Colossians 1:14; "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

- 3) Provide access to God.

Ephesians 2:13; "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. "

- 4) Grant peace with God.

Colossians 1:20; "and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things

in earth, or things in heaven. "

5) Clear the conscience.

Hebrews 9:14; "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

God has offered us a NEW COVENANT (Luke 22:20), whereby the Son of God has fulfilled the law for the salvation of mankind.

OLD COVENANT

Law Written on Tablets of Stone

Burnt Incense for Prayers of the Nation

Access to God Through a Priest

Forgiveness From Animal Blood

NEW COVENANT

Law Written on Your Heart

Prayers are Stored in Heaven

Direct Access Through Jesus

Forgiveness From the Blood of Jesus

By knowing this connection between the Priesthood and the Blood, we can understand why we can plead the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, or for other needs that we have.

Now we have a better understanding of why this is called the age of grace. The blood is laying on the mercy seat in the temple in heaven before the Father continually making atonement for us. We are living in a perpetual state of Yom Kippur. It is the most exciting time for anyone in which to be living, because of the overcoming power that we have over the devil through this blood atonement. The price has been paid. The transaction has been complete. The contract has been signed in blood, and the party of the first (God) has already written it in His testament that He will agree to go into partnership with anyone who wants to enter into this contract with Him. Have you accepted the terms of the agreement? The terms are the following:

Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. "

John 3:16; "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I John 5:11; "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

vs. 12; He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

vs. 13; These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. "

You don't have to guess with your eternity. Accept the forgiveness that Jesus gave for all of us at Calvary and through His resurrection. Settle your eternal future today if you haven't already done so by asking Jesus Christ into your life, and giving your heart to him. For those of you who have done this, give copies of this book to others who need to understand what Jesus did for them, and then write me to let me know about the results. Call your pastor for prayer and follow-up work. The time is short and the fields are white with harvest. Join with me and thousands of others in getting the word out to tell a lost world about this great gift of grace that Jesus has given to us. Amen!