

## Salvation Through The Blood And Cross Of Jesus

Jesus said, "I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. Those who eat My flesh and drink My blood have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day. My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed. Those who eat My flesh and drink My blood live in Me and I in them. As the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so those who feed on Me will also live because of Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Not as our forefathers ate manna and died, but those who eat this Bread will live forever" (John 6:53 to 58). 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is a sharing of the blood of Jesus. The bread we break is a sharing of the body of Jesus' (1 Corinthians 10:16). Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). 'This is My blood of the New Covenant, poured out for many for the remission of sins' (Matthew 26:28). 'There is salvation in no other, neither is there any other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). 'From Jesus, the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead and Ruler of the kings of the earth, to Him Who loves us and washed us from our sins by His blood. He made us to be a Kingdom, priests to His God and Father. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen' (Revelation 1:5 & 6).

Why do we need a Saviour? The scriptures say the Lord was obligated to make atonement for sin because He is our Creator and Father Who wants to save us from being lost for eternity. 'Jesus was obligated in all things to be made like His brothers so He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of people' (Hebrews 2:17). The blood and cross of Jesus go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other and they were more than His torture and death. Yes He died for our salvation but He did more than that. He became a curse to break the curses over all mankind, animals, plants and the ground. He became sin so we could be made righteous. He was wounded so we could be sin free, forgiven, righteous and be made holy. He was lashed so we could be healed. He became poor so we could become spiritually rich. He was tempted to sin three times and overcame so we could overcome temptation to sin. He was the ultimate sacrifice for our salvation, our healing and our deliverance from evil.

The power of the blood and cross of Jesus were preached widely and unceasingly by the apostles as the Gospel of faith was preached throughout the whole world within the first century AD (Romans 1:8). Proof the whole world heard the Gospel can be found in archaeology. Two thousand-year-old Christian graves have been found in North Asia, many thousands of kilometres from Jerusalem. Christian beliefs and traditions among some peoples in India, Africa, North and South America, Papua New Guinea and Australian Aborigines tell us they had once heard the Gospel but sadly strayed away from the truth, blending the true Gospel with their ancient pagan religions. The first century Gentiles pleaded with the Jews to teach them the Word of God so they could be saved, so people in the time of the New Testament were not afraid to hear about the blood of Jesus to convict them of sin. 'When the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles pleaded for these words to be preached to them the next Sabbath ... The next Sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the Word of God' (Acts 13:42 & 44). Tragically, after about three hundred years of growth, the Constantine/Byzantine church withdrew from preaching the blood and cross of Jesus to bring conviction of sin, weakening the full Gospel and bringing the once thriving, holy church down into the spiritual 'dark ages'. The Gospel became watered down to merely a nice comfortable religion without the power of the blood and has largely stayed that way. We need to revitalise the saving power of the blood, shed before and also on the cross, when Jesus was tortured then nailed to the wooden cross. The way we can discern if a church is right with God or not is to find out what they believe. False religions deny the blood and cross of Jesus. Christian churches that water down the Gospel or dismiss the power of the blood and cross of Jesus considering them insignificant, render their Gospel message a 'bloodless', 'crossless' watery Gospel, a message not fit for salvation. To be saved, we need both the blood and the cross of Jesus. If they are not being taught, the congregation cannot be saved. The only way a person can be saved from eternal damnation and be reconciled with our Holy Father is by accepting the supernatural cleansing power of the blood of Jesus and without the blood we cannot be cleansed; without the cross we cannot be redeemed.

Many people have little comprehension about the power that really is in the blood of Jesus and they do not know how to apply it to their lives. To apply the blood of Jesus we need to grasp the overwhelming enormity of the first coming of Jesus. Jesus (Yeshua) the Son of God came to earth by supernatural conception, He began the New Way of salvation, which is an extension of Judaism by first preaching and teaching about the New Covenant ratified in His blood, then dying for all humanity before being supernaturally raised from the dead which really shocked His disciples. They could not believe it when they were told Jesus had risen from His grave. Our resurrected Messiah then gave all believers a mandate to preach His Gospel the world over, to all people. Those are not insignificant events. The early church apostles loved the blood and cross of Jesus and consistently preached about both. They loved His first appearing and urged all people to think the same way. 'From now on, there is stored up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

Righteous Judge will give to me on that day (Resurrection Day), and not to me only, but to all those who have loved His appearing' (2 Timothy 4:8). People who are not saved consider the birth, powerful ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus to be foolish and too far-fetched to be real and prefer to avoid the subject of the blood of Jesus. 'The Word of the cross is foolishness to those who are lost but to us who are saved it is the power of God' (1 Corinthians 1:18).

We need to understand, comprehend and fully grasp the staggering significance of the blood and cross of Jesus. We need to know what the cross was all about and the reason for it. We need to understand why the Son of God and no one else was worthy to suffer so much and die; why His inspired teaching and His example was not enough to save mankind. People could have imitated Him, followed His teaching, obeyed His commandments and taught what He taught but His extreme death and shocking resurrection were necessary to change us spiritually. When we can accept the concept of salvation through Jesus in its entirety, God gives us a spiritual 'heart transplant' to enable us to walk in Him. "I (God) will give them a new heart and I will put a new spirit (attitude) within them. I will take the stony heart out of their chest and will give them a heart of flesh so they may walk in My statutes, keep My ordinances and do them. They will be My people and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19 & 20).

The apostles took the blood and cross of Jesus very seriously. They strongly rebuked all those who accepted Jesus then either backslid away from Him, or disregarded the blood and cross by continuing to live with sin. 'Concerning those who were once enlightened, tasted of the heavenly gift, were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the Good Word of God, the powers of the age to come and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. They crucify the Son of God for themselves again and put Him to open shame ... If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins but a fearful expectation of judgement, a fierceness of fire which will devour the adversaries of God. A man who disregards Moses' law dies without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses. How much worse punishment do you think those will be judged worthy of, who have trodden underfoot the Son of God and have counted the blood of the New Covenant with which they were sanctified, as an unholy thing and have insulted the Holy Spirit of Grace?' (Hebrews 6:4 to 6; 10:26 to 29).

Although we are born sinners and Jesus never sinned, He paid the price for our sin by laying down His life so we could be free to become righteous and be reconciled with God the Father. 'Jesus Who knew no sin, God made to be sin on our behalf, so in Jesus we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus willingly laid down – gave up His life to save as many people as are willing to follow Him. Jesus said, "I AM the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep ... I know My own and I am known by My own. The Father knows Me and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep (Gentiles) which are not of this (Jewish) fold. I must bring them also and they will hear My voice. They (Jews and Gentiles) will become one flock with One Shepherd. The Father loves Me because I lay down My life so I may take it back again" (John 10:11 to 17). 'May the God of peace, Who brought back from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight through Jesus, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen' (Hebrews 13:20 & 21). If we willingly and fully accept the blood and cross of Jesus, both of which were shed and carried by Jesus willingly, God the Father gives to us many different promises. When believers talk about the promises of God, some new Christians may not know what they are talking about, so we will explain what some of these promises are so new believers can grow in the knowledge of the blood and cross of our Lord and Saviour and apply them to their lives. These are some of the results achieved by the blood and cross.

God has promised our **acceptance**. When Adam brought sin to mankind, the relationship between God and all of humanity was broken. God sent Jesus to bridge the gap like a mediator, so all of those people who believe in Jesus can boldly approach God the Father. Jesus was rejected and despised by His own people so believers could be accepted by the Father and by the beloved Body of Believers in Jesus (Ephesians 1:6). 'The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation' (Luke 17:25). 'Accept one another as Jesus accepted you, to the glory of God' (Romans 15:7).

God has promised us **atonement**. The blood of Jesus is very precious and not one drop was wasted. The blood of animals was once offered for atonement for sin but was not enough to cleanse us of all sin. 'All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Jesus Whom God set forth to be an Atoning Sacrifice through faith in His blood for a demonstration of His righteousness by ignoring prior sins, in God's forbearance, to demonstrate His righteousness at the perfect time so God might Himself be just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus' (Romans 3:23 to 26). Jesus is the Atoning Sacrifice for every person in the whole world (1 John 2:2) if they will accept Him.

God has promised to **bless** us. When sin entered mankind via the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, all mankind were placed under a curse of physical and spiritual death. God cursed the ground, animals, plants and we can see the result of those curses just by looking around. Jesus hung on a cross made of wood and anyone who hung on a tree was cursed, so Jesus became the curse to break the curse over all mankind so we could inherit the blessing of salvation. 'If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and you hang him on a tree, his body should not remain all night on the tree, but you will bury him the same day for he who is hanged on a tree is accursed of God' (Deuteronomy 21:22 & 23). 'Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. It is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"' (Galatians 3:13). 'Jesus went outside the city bearing His cross to the place called, 'The Place of a Skull,' which is called in Hebrew, 'Golgotha' (John 19:17). 'So Jesus might sanctify the people through His own blood, He suffered outside of the city gate. Let us go out to Him outside of the camp, bearing His reproach' (Hebrews 13:12 & 13). Although Jesus removed those curses when He died on the 'tree' – the wooden cross soaked in His blood, mankind was not automatically removed from the curse of damnation and other curses placed on us. For the curse over us to be removed and for us to receive the blessing of salvation, we must obey God's commands, we must believe in Jesus and accept His sacrifice. The curse of eternal damnation remains on everyone who rejects Jesus and they will be rejected on Judgement Day unless they repent. The crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head removed the curse on the ground and plants, but believers must pray over their land and claim the promise of the broken curse, and claim the blessings given to us when Jesus died. When believers plant a garden for food, we have the legal spiritual right to rebuke all thorns and thistles that try to take root on our land. More than that, failed crops, mildew, blight, drought and locust plagues are all from the original curse (Deuteronomy 28:22) and when we walk with God we can pray over our crops so they will produce plenty (1 Kings 8:35 & 39). That may seem a small thing to city-dwellers but if someone is farming to feed people, blight, mildew, drought, failed crops and locusts can cause real financial difficulties. It is an amazing thought, God considered farmers, both their spiritual lives and their earthly incomes to be important. This specific broken curse reveals how valuable farmers who feed the masses, are to God!

God has promised a **clear conscience** and **boldness to fellowship** with Him without fear. 'Having boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus' (Hebrews 10:19). Before Jesus came, there was no way open for Gentiles to seek God unless they joined with the Jewish people like Rahab and Ruth did and obey all the laws of Judaism. Gentiles had no hope. Since Jesus came, when we walk with God and obey the directions for good behaviour set out for us in the scriptures, we can hold our heads high and live with a clear conscience. 'The blood of Jesus, Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God to cleanse your conscience from dead (sinful) works to serve the living God' (Hebrews 9:14). 'You (Gentiles) were at that time separate from Jesus, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world' (Ephesians 2:12). 'Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness toward God' (1 John 3:21). When we surrender our lives and our sinful nature to the Lord, we can have a life free from guilt, free from a sense of condemnation and free from the fearful expectation of judgement – a feeling of unease. We become a whole new person, scripturally speaking, a new creation. 'There is no condemnation to those who are in Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Holy Spirit' (Romans 8:1). 'If anyone is in Jesus, they are a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God has promised **deliverance** from evil plus **authority** over all evil powers to all believers in Jesus. Believers have nothing to fear from evil spiritual powers. 'Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases ... Behold, I give you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the devil. Nothing will in any way hurt you' (Luke 9:1; 10:19). Many people have evil spirits, in an evil supernatural oppression, living in their minds or bodies creating sicknesses or mental illness or havoc for the person's life (Mark 5:2 to 15). Once people have committed their lives to Jesus, the evil spirits usually leave of their own will because they cannot stay in a person who is committed to becoming holy. 'The Son of God was revealed so He might destroy the works of the devil' (1 John 3:8). Sometimes a person needs to have the evil spirit forced out of them by the authority of another believer in the same way Jesus cast evil spirits out of people. That process is called deliverance. Another form of deliverance is when we are in a terribly difficult situation and God steps in and removes us from the situation or removes the situation from us. 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous but God delivers the righteous out of them all' (Psalm 34:19). We have the authority to remove evil spirits from the minds of people and from evil situations, all we have to do is use the authority already given to us.

God has promised to free us from all kinds of **fear**. 'With good courage we say, "The Lord is my Helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me?"' (Hebrews 13:6). Fear is caused by an evil spirit called the spirit of fear. The Lord never gives us fear, but instead He gives us His power to overcome it; His love because His love casts out all fear and He gives us a sound mind. 'God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind' (2 Timothy 1:7). 'There is no fear in love but perfect love casts out all fear, because fear has torment. He who fears is not made perfect in God's love' (1 John 4:18). Phobias are caused by an evil spirit

of fear. Fear of death is a terrible fear and when we have the blood of Jesus, that fear should dissolve away and we can look forward to a wonderful eternity. 'Since the children of God have shared in flesh and blood, Jesus Himself became flesh so through death He might bring to nothing the devil who had the power of death, and might deliver all people who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage' (Hebrews 2:14 & 15). 'Jesus stripped the principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross' (Colossians 2:15). Jesus defeated the devil and all his evil cohorts by triumphing over them with the blood and the cross, then He rose from the dead to triumph over death too. 'Knowing that Jesus was raised from the dead, He is dead no more. Death has no dominion over Him' (Romans 6:9). Death is an evil entity that will one day be burned in the lake of fire. 'Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire' (Revelation 20:14). After accepting Jesus we no longer need to experience any fear of any kind, and especially fear of the evil spirit of death.

God gives us **faith** which is the essence of our lives in Jesus. 'Faith is assurance of things hoped for, proof of things not yet seen'. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:1 & 6). 'The righteous will live by faith' ... 'We are made the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus' ... 'God has apportioned to each person a measure of faith' ... 'Those who doubt are condemned ... because it is not of faith and whatever is not of faith is sin' (Romans 1:17; 3:22; 12:3; 14:23). 'By grace you have been saved through faith' (Ephesians 2:8).

God has promised **forgiveness** for sin. 'If we walk in the Light as Jesus is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, God's Son cleanses us from all sin' (1 John 1:7); God blots out then forgets our sin (Isaiah 43:25); our sin is taken away (John 1:29); sin is buried (Romans 4:7); sin is tossed as far as the East is from the West (Psalm 103:12). We have complete forgiveness for all sin, trespasses, transgressions, misdeeds and iniquities on three conditions. Yes there are conditions to our forgiveness. (1) We must fully accept the blood and cross of Jesus without reservation, doubt or wavering, and we must put God first in every area of our lives. Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me and does not put Me before their own family, yes and their own life also, they cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). (2) We must forgive other people for anything and everything anyone has said or done to hurt us and that forgiveness must be from the heart. If we refuse to forgive every person then there is no forgiveness for us and God will hand us over to the devil to be tormented. Jesus said, "My heavenly Father will do so to you if you do not forgive each other from your hearts" (Matthew 18:34 & 35). 'Forgive one another just as God in Jesus forgave you' (Ephesians 4:32). (3) We must be careful to never blaspheme, quench, grieve, insult or offend the Holy Spirit in any way because if we do, we will never be forgiven for that. Jesus said, "Whoever blasphemes the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark 3:29). "Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven but those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven" (Luke 12:10). 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God in Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption' (Ephesians 4:30). 'Do not quench the Holy Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Do not insult the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 10:29). We are required to seek forgiveness and reconciliation from people we have wronged, and as humans we sometimes say or do the wrong thing. A humble, genuine apology can heal a broken relationship and we are encouraged to live in peace with people as much as we can (Romans 12:18). Before we give an offering in church, we are told to make peace with anyone who is upset with us, then once the reconciliation is made, then we can give our offering. Jesus said, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and remember your brother (or sister in the faith) has anything against you, leave your gift before the altar and go, first be reconciled with your brother (or sister) and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23 & 24). In the story of Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19:2 to 10), the Lord did not ask him to restore what he had unrightfully taken from people but he chose to and Jesus was clearly very pleased. When we choose to put right what we did wrong, it pleases the Lord.

God has promised **healing** for the body, mind and emotions for those who 'die to sin'. 'Jesus bore our sins on His own body on the cross so we, having died to our sins, might live righteously by Whose stripes you were healed' (1 Peter 2:24). 'Beloved, I pray you may prosper in all things (life) and be healthy (in body), even as your soul (mind and emotions) prosper' (3 John 1:2). When people commit their lives to Jesus, they have the right, according to our confession of faith, to ask for healing and to expect divine healing from the Lord. 'Praise the Lord, Oh my soul and do not forget all His benefits. The Lord forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases' (Psalm 103:2 & 3). 'Jesus went around all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and healing every disease and every sickness among the people ... They brought to Him all who were sick, afflicted with various diseases and torments, possessed with demons, epileptics, paralytics and He healed them' (Matthew 4:23 & 24). 'All those who had any sick people with various diseases brought them to Jesus and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them' (Luke 4:40). 'Jesus came down with a crowd of His disciples and a great number of the people from all around Judea, Jerusalem, the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were troubled by unclean spirits and they were being healed. The multitude sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed them all' (Luke 6:17 to 19). Jesus did not

refuse to heal anyone. Everybody who came to Him for healing, were healed. Jesus does not refuse to heal in our day but it takes faith and trust to receive healing and many people have more faith and trust in doctors and hospitals than in Jesus' gift of healing. If people prefer to attend a medical facility and suffer painful surgery than fast, pray and seek God for healing, that is their choice. Sometimes healing only comes through fasting and prayer (Matthew 17:21) but if people do not want to spend the necessary time seeking God, then He will not stop them seeking medical intervention. There is a big difference between true healing through the stripes and blood of Jesus and being treated by medical staff in hospital. Medical intervention can be painful, degrading and stressful. Divine healing is painless, encouraging and peaceful.

God has promised **hope, joy and peace** if we remain in the power of the Holy Spirit. 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, believing in Him so you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15:13). 'Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. God did not appoint us to wrath but to the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Who died for us so whether we are awake (on earth) or asleep (in death), we live together with Him' (1 Thessalonians 5:8 to 10). 'My soul will be joyful in the Lord and rejoice in His salvation' (Psalm 35:9). 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring the Gospel, who publish peace, who bring good news of good, who publish salvation, who says to Zion, your God reigns' (Isaiah 52:7).

God has promised to **justify** us by faith in Jesus. 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus, through Whom we have our access (to God) by faith' (Romans 5:1 & 2). 'By your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). Humility, repentance and confession of our own sin, results in justification (Luke 18:10 to 14). 'Through Jesus, everyone who believes is justified from all things (like sin, guilt, shame, sickness, fear and the eternal lake of fire)' (Acts 13:39).

God has promised His children will inherit the **Kingdom of God** also called the **Kingdom of Heaven**. Jesus constantly preached about the Kingdom as being our ultimate destination. In fact He mentioned it over fifty times so teachers of the Word of God should teach people about the Kingdom as much as Jesus did. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are already there (Matthew 8:11). 'Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven' (Matthew 5:10). 'The King will say to those on His right hand, "Come blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom of God prepared for you from the foundation of the world"' (Matthew 25:34). People who reject Jesus are already in the kingdom of darkness. When we repent and turn our lives over to God, we are literally translated out of spiritual darkness into the Kingdom of Light. 'Give thanks to the Father Who made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in Light, Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love in Whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins' (Colossians 1:12 to 14).

God has promised all believers a special kind of **love**. The Hebrew word for general love is 'aebe'. Certainly God loves all creation and because of that love He sent Jesus. 'God so loved (aebe) the world He gave His only Son and whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3:16). But when we learn to truly love Jesus and embrace all He did for us, we are bestowed with a different, deeper love that cannot be explained with mere words. It is a revelation that has to be experienced to be understood. The Hebrew word is 'archm' and is a deep love with intensity. Jesus said, "One who has My commandments and keeps them, that person is one who loves Me. One who loves Me will be loved (archm) by My Father and I will love (archm) them and will reveal Myself to them ... If someone loves Me they will keep My Word. My Father will love (archm) them and We will come to them and make Our home with them" (John 14:21 & 23). 'Archm' is the deep, intense, special love the Father has only for the people who return that love, by accepting Jesus and being obedient to His commands. God will not come and make His home with people who disbelieve, who disregard or who minimise the enormous sacrifice Jesus made for us. 'From Jesus the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn of the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth; to Him who loves (archm) us and washed us from our sins by His blood' (Revelation 1:5). We read Daniel was 'greatly beloved' (Daniel 10:19) or in Hebrew, 'chmuduth' which means to be loved in a way others covet. Others want to be loved like that, similar to the way a rejected child might covet the love a favoured child might receive. Carnal Christians may one day resent and covet the 'chmuduth' or the great love the Father has bestowed only on His obedient children; those who deeply love (archm) Jesus.

God has promised supernatural **protection** for His people. When the children of Israel were reduced to slavery and asked God to free them from the bondage, as soon as they knew God had heard them, the first thing they did was worship God. 'The people believed and when they heard the Lord had visited the children of Israel and He had seen their affliction, they bowed their heads and worshipped' (Exodus 4:31). The children of Israel were completely protected from all the plagues that came on the Egyptians. God said, "I have established My covenant with them" (Exodus 6:4). God set His holy people apart, He divided them from the ungodly making an obvious distinction between the two groups, offering His people supernatural protection. When darkness covered the land, the children of Israel had supernatural light (Exodus 8:22 & 23;

9:4; 10:23; 11:7). When the plagues were almost at an end, the Lord told them about the Passover lamb and how to protect themselves by 'covering' themselves, their families and their homes by sprinkling the blood of the lamb as instructed. Without the blood, even the children of Israel did not have protection from the angel of death. Jesus is the true Lamb of God Who has taken the sins of the world away, and as the blood of the lamb protected the children of Israel from death, so too the blood of our Lamb covers our sins and protects us from eternal death and we can claim His blood to protect ourselves, our families and our property. We already know God hears us so we should live in an attitude of worship and thankfulness. The children of Israel entered into a covenant with God with the blood of circumcision to seal it. Now, Jesus has shed His blood to seal our covenant with God. The blood of the Passover lamb was offered as protection before death came, but the children of Israel were protected from the first nine plagues before they happened. Before the blood of the Passover lamb, they were protected by the blood covenant between God and Abraham. The Israelites believed in God, bowed and worshipped. From that moment onwards they were more than protected, they were set apart from plagues, sickness, pestilence, vermin, insects, storms and spiritual darkness, then when the blood came they were protected from death. Unsaved people do not have the blood protection of Jesus and are thus open to evil spiritual attack. Only God's people could claim the blood covering. When we accept Jesus, we must accept the conditions of the covenant, and God accepts His role in the covenant relationship by offering us His protection through salvation. Just being saved offers us protection and it helps if we worship Him, magnify Him and thank Him. 'Let your salvation God, protect me. I will praise the name of God with a song and will magnify Him with thanksgiving' (Psalm 69:29 & 30). There are several other passages of scripture revealing the Lord's divine protection over people who love God. For example, David, Daniel and Paul were protected from lions (1 Samuel 17:34; Daniel 6:22; 2 Timothy 4:17) but they were not protected from persecution. If we want to follow God we will all be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12) but in that persecution, we are protected from harm unless God wants us to be released from this earth (2 Timothy 4:6).

The purpose of the cross was to **reconcile** God and mankind. We will continue to be reconciled to God on the strict condition we never backslide and move away from the hope of our salvation. If people do turn away from God, their eternal salvation may be lost forever. 'Jesus has reconciled in the body of His flesh (the blood) through death (on the cross), to present you holy, without blemish and blameless before God if you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the Gospel that you heard, which is being proclaimed in all creation under heaven' (Colossians 1:22 & 23). Remember the apostles' strong rebuke to backsliders (Hebrews 6:4 to 6; 10:26 to 29). Reconciliation to God came to the Jews first then to the Gentiles. Not only are we reconciled to God through Jesus, Jews and Gentiles are now reconciled when the two were once deeply divided. Jesus achieved reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles through the blood and the cross. Jesus broke down the barrier between us and we can fellowship joyfully together as one Body in Jesus. 'Jesus is our peace Who made both (Jews and Gentiles) one and broke down the partition, having abolished in the flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so He might create in Himself one 'new man' of the two, making peace, reconciling them both in one Body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility' (Ephesians 2:14 to 16).

God has promised to **redeem** us through the blood of Jesus. Nothing and no one else can purchase our redemption and since no other person is worthy, it makes the blood of Jesus and only His blood, more precious than anything or anyone else. We can be redeemed or literally 'bought back' for the Father. When we accept Jesus as our Saviour we are responding to the call to be 'bought' or 'purchased' by His blood, and from the day we accept Jesus, we are no longer in control of our lives but we come under the blood covering and belong to God. There is no redemption without Jesus' blood (Hebrews 9:22). The dictionary gives six definitions for redeem; to buy back, to clear a debt, to convert, to buy the freedom of a slave, to save from damnation for the consequences of sin, to make good the faults and deficiencies of others. Jesus did all of these things for us. We were bought back ... 'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God. You are not your own. You were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's' (1 Corinthians 6:19 & 20). Jesus paid our debt ... 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive others' (Matthew 6:12). We have been converted ... 'I will teach sinners Your ways. Sinners will be converted to You' (Psalm 51:13). Our freedom from spiritual slavery was bought ... 'Those who are called in the Lord, being a servant is the Lord's freedom. Those who are called by God, being free (from sin) is to be a servant of Jesus. You were bought with a price. Do not become servants of people' (1 Corinthians 7:22 & 23). We were saved from damnation ... 'Jesus gave Himself for us so He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works' (Titus 2:14). We were bought to make good the faults of our forefathers ... 'You were redeemed, not with corruptible things like silver or gold, or from the useless way of life handed down from your forefathers, but with His precious blood, a spotless and pure Lamb, the blood of Jesus' (1 Peter 1:18 & 19).

God promised to **release** us from the curse of eternal damnation. Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to

proclaim release to the (spiritual) captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to deliver those who are crushed and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18 & 19). The poor, broken-hearted, captive, blind and crushed in this verse does not mean financial insufficiency, imprisoned or unseeing eyes. Anyone who is unsaved is a poor lost soul, wretched, miserable, spiritually naked and spiritually blind. 'You say, "I am rich, have obtained riches and have need of nothing," yet you do not know you are the wretched one, miserable, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire (chastened by God) so you may become rich, have white garments (washed in the blood of Jesus) so you may clothe yourself and the shame of your (spiritual) nakedness may not be revealed, and eye salve to anoint your eyes so you may see. As many as I love, I reprove and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent' (Revelation 3:17 to 19).

God has promised to **resurrect** us on the last day of this earth. 'He will rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Those who believe in Me will live (for eternity) even if they die (on earth). Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die (spiritually)" (John 11:24 to 26). 'This is the will of God. Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day' (John 6:40). Long before the last day, we are resurrected to new life in Him when we come up out of the waters of baptism. 'All we who are baptised into Jesus, were baptised into His death. We were buried with Him through baptism to death. Just like Jesus was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also walk in newness of life. If we have become united with Jesus in the likeness of His death, we will also be part of His resurrection' (Romans 6:3 to 5). 'Oh that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings becoming conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:10 & 11). 'Blessed and holy are they who have part in the first resurrection. Over these people, the second death has no power but they will be priests of God and of Jesus and will reign with Him for one thousand years' (Revelation 20:6).

God has promised us **righteousness**. 'Jesus Who knew no sin was made to be sin on our behalf so in Him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21). If we try to save ourselves or make ourselves righteous, we are in effect inferring we can do better than the blood and cross to complete the total result of salvation. That is called 'self-righteousness' or the way God describes it, 'their own righteousness' (Job 32:1; Luke 18:9; Romans 10:3). We can only be saved and made righteous by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. 'Not having a righteousness of my own but through faith in Jesus, the righteousness which is from God by faith' (Philippians 3:9). The acceptance of the blood and the demand for us to be obedient and behave righteously, surrendering completely to His Lordship bring us into great conflict with the natural 'old sinful self' that wars against the 'new redeemed self'. 'I do not know what I am doing. I do not practice what I desire to do but what I hate is what I do ... It is no more I who do it but sin that dwells in me. I know in my flesh dwells no good thing. Desire to sin is present with me and I do not find myself doing what is good. The good I desire to do, I do not do but the evil I do not desire is what I practice. I find the law to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present. I delight in God's law after the inward man, but I see a different law in my body, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my body. Oh, what a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God He can through Jesus our Lord!' (Romans 7:15 to 25). 'I died to the law so I might live to God. I have been crucified with Jesus and it is no longer I who lives but Jesus Who lives in me. That life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me' (Galatians 2:20).

God has promised us **salvation**. Salvation means to be saved from judgement and the eternal lake of fire. We cannot save ourselves because if we could, we would be inclined to boast. We can do nothing to save ourselves and we cannot be saved by works, but once we are saved we then have to do the work the Lord prepared for us before we were saved, using the gifts and talents He has given to us. 'By grace you have been saved through faith and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not by works so no one can boast. We are God's workmanship, created in Jesus for good works which God prepared before we would walk in them' (Ephesians 2:8 to 10). We cannot buy our salvation nor can we work to earn it. Salvation is given to us solely by the mercy and grace of God and we must accept the truth of the Gospel of Jesus' death and resurrection. When we accept Jesus we need to announce it publicly. 'If you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes in righteousness and with the mouth confession is made to bring salvation' (Romans 10:9 & 10). 'The wages (result) of sin is (eternal) death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus our Lord' (Romans 6:23). Our salvation cost Jesus everything He had. He held nothing back. Salvation itself is a free gift to all who believe but there is an enormous cost to us. Using parables, Jesus made it clear there is a huge price we have to pay. Just as He gave up everything for us, so we have to give everything up for Him with no exceptions or we cannot be His disciples. 'Those who love family more than Me are not worthy of Me. Those who do not take their cross and follow after Me are not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:37 & 38). 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in the field which a man found and hid. In his joy, he sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a merchant seeking fine pearls, who having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all he had and bought the pearl' (Matthew 13:44 to 46). 'Whoever

desires to save his (earthly) life will lose it but whoever will lose his (earthly) life for My sake will save it. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own (eternal) life?' (Luke 9:24 & 25). 'Whoever does not bear their own cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple. Which of you, desiring to build a new house, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if you have enough to complete it? ... Whoever of you who does not renounce all they have, cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:27, 28 & 33).

God has promised us **sanctification**. Sanctify means to 'make holy'. 'Jesus, so He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside Jerusalem's gate. Let us therefore go out to Him outside of the camp, bearing His reproach, for we do not have an enduring city here (on earth), but we seek what is to come. Through Jesus, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips to proclaim allegiance to His name' (Hebrews 13:12 to 15). 'According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Holy Spirit, obey Jesus and be sprinkled with his blood' (1 Peter 1:2).

God has promised us **victory** to **overcome** all the obstacles, troubles, oppression and afflictions His believers will have to face. Jesus said, "I have told you these things so in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have much oppression, but cheer up! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). 'Thanks be to God Who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus' (1 Corinthians 15:57). 'You are of God and have overcome the antichrist spirit because greater is God Who is in you, than the devil who is in the world' (1 John 4:4). 'Whoever is born of God overcomes the world. Your faith is the victory that has overcome the world. They who overcome the world are those who believe Jesus is the Son of God' (1 John 5:4 & 5). There are great rewards to people who overcome difficulties. 'To those who overcome I will grant to eat from the Tree of Life in the Paradise of My God ... Those who overcome will not be harmed by the second death ... To those who overcome I will give of the hidden manna and I will give them a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows but those who receive it ... To those who overcome and those who keep My works to the end, I will give authority over the nations ... Those who overcome will be arrayed in white garments and I will in no way blot their names out of the Book of Life, and I will confess their names before My Father and before His holy angels ... Those who overcome, I will make a pillar in the temple of My God and they will go out from there no more. I will write on them the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My own new name ... To those who overcome, I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne' (Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21).

Jesus achieved all this for us by His one act of mercy, so what do we have to do in return? Many things. We must believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15). Without genuine and absolute belief in God there can be no salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13). We must believe in our hearts and speak out with our mouth, Jesus gave His blood and body on the wooden cross to atone for our sins and then God resurrected Him from the dead (Romans 10:9 & 10). We must repent because if we do not repent we will perish (Luke 13:3). True repentance is a complete change in our attitude and behaviour by submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). We can choose to repent but we cannot walk in repentance without God's help (Romans 8:26). Without repentance and showing spiritual fruit worthy of repentance, we can go no further in Jesus (Matthew 3:8; Acts 26:20). We must be baptised to openly show our desire to die to sin (Romans 6:6). Baptism symbolises the death and burial of our old lives and when we come up out of the water, that symbolises our resurrection to our new life in Jesus (Romans 6:3 & 4). Without baptism in water, there can be no forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38), therefore there can be no resurrection to new life, either on this earth or in the final resurrection to come, and since it was necessary for Jesus to be baptised to achieve resurrection, then it is necessary for His disciples to be baptised to achieve resurrection, for no disciple is above their teacher nor a servant above their Lord (Matthew 10:24). For those people who think baptism is unnecessary and refuse to be baptised, they are refusing to concur with Jesus' death, burial and His resurrection and they may be condemned for disobedience (Mark 16:16). God also desires us to be baptised in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). These voluntary actions make it possible for us to access God the Father because once we are obedient and come under the blood covering of Jesus, we have an open heaven (Matthew 3:16). After believing, repenting, baptism, being filled with the Holy Spirit, we must serve God (Hebrews 6:10), be obedient (Philippians 2:12), show spiritual fruit (John 15:8), deny ourselves and carry our own cross (Matthew 16:24), preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15), endure hardships (2 Timothy 1:8 to 10) and if the need arises, to give up our lives (Revelation 12:11). If we put anything before Jesus, He said we are not worthy of Him. Jesus is the only one Who is worthy to save us. There was nobody else in heaven or on earth worthy to wash the fallen human race and cleanse us from sin so we could be reconciled to God the Father. No one but Jesus could save us. 'They sang a new song saying, "You are worthy to take the Book and to open its seals for You were slain and bought us for God with Your blood"' (Revelation 5:9).

Jesus demanded we deny ourselves and pick up our cross if we want to be His disciple. He denied Himself all pleasure of life to bear our sin. Denying ourselves is the easy part of this demand. Denying oneself could mean God wants a smoker to quit smoking; a drinker to give up alcohol; a single person marriage and



children if God wants them to remain single to serve Him fully. Some people who came to the Lord wealthy may lose it all if they give up their jobs to serve the Lord full time and choose to live by faith. Some people are denied a comfortable life. Those things can be overcome fairly easily. Carrying a cross of suffering is something very different. It means to suffer alongside Jesus if we want to live for eternity with Him. 'The Holy Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit, we are children of God and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus, if indeed we suffer with Him so we may also be glorified with Him' (Romans 8:16 & 17). The cross of Jesus was a rough prickly, splintery wooden cross, covered in tiny shards of wood and was extremely heavy. It was not a smooth, sanded down cross, all polished and lightweight as portrayed in pictures or images. For a while Jesus carried His own cross but when He collapsed under the weight of it, weakened by all He had already suffered, a righteous Jewish man named Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus carried the cross for Him (Mark 15:21). If we desire to follow Jesus and be His disciple, we will be given a 'cross' situation of some kind to carry and there is no escaping that. Each individual person has their own cross of suffering. The cross of suffering is not a pleasurable situation in the same way Jesus' cross was not pleasant for Him. Sometimes we too, will collapse under its weight, especially if we have been through a lot of suffering. A prickly 'cross' is not a pleasant experience and can sometimes be quite miserable. Sometimes a cross situation may last a short time. Sometimes it lasts a lifetime but if we want to follow Jesus, we must pick up that cross of suffering and carry it. If we refuse, then Jesus said we would not be counted worthy. Jesus said, "Those who love parents or children more than Me are not worthy of Me. Those who do not take their cross and follow after Me, are not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37 & 38). Anyone who thinks Christian life is easy, does not know what true discipleship is all about. True disciples do not have a prosperous, happy, clappy life. They identify their lives with Jesus' suffering, live a life of denying themselves the pleasures of life so they will have a greater resurrection (Hebrews 11:35 to 40).

What did Jesus go through to achieve our salvation? He gave up His family, His home and a long life. We should study the Word of God, both Old and New Testaments to gain knowledge of the horrendous suffering Jesus went through for us. Reading Isaiah 53:2 to 12; 'He (Jesus) grew up before God as a tender plant and as a root (of holiness) out of dry ground (many Jewish people had lost their faith and Judaism had become a dry religion). He has no form or comeliness. When we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him (Jesus was not handsome). He was despised and rejected by men. A Man of suffering and acquainted with disease (He healed the diseases of all who came to Him). He was despised as one from whom men hide their face and we did not respect him (even His own brothers mocked Him). He has borne our sickness and carried our suffering yet we considered Him plagued, struck by God and afflicted. He was pierced (stabbed and nailed) for our transgressions. He was bruised (beaten and whipped) for our iniquities. The punishment that brought our peace was on Him and by His wounds (lashes, welts) we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. Everyone has turned to his own way and God has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all (all mankind). He was oppressed yet when He was afflicted He did not open his mouth. As a lamb led to the slaughter and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth. He was taken away by oppression and (our) judgement and as for His generation, who considered He was cut off out of the land of the living and stricken for the disobedience of My people? They made His grave with the wicked and with a rich man in His death although He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased God to bruise Him. He has caused Jesus to suffer. When God makes His soul an offering for sin, Jesus will see His spiritual offspring. God will prolong Jesus' days and the pleasure of God will prosper in Jesus' hand. After the suffering of Jesus' soul, He will see the Light and be satisfied. My righteous Servant will justify many by the knowledge of Himself and He will bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great and He will divide the spoil with the strong (believers) because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors yet He bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors'.

We cannot underestimate or minimise what our Lord went through on our behalf. When we read what the Roman soldiers did to Jesus, we will be able to assume they were wickedly deranged. In our modern age we would likely call them psychopathic, sadistic, sociopathic or criminally insane. They were insanely cruel without any remorse or empathy for the victim. No normal person in their right mind would be able to do to another human being what the Roman soldiers did to Jesus. We can only imagine how Jesus' mother felt, watching what they were doing to her beloved Firstborn Son and not be able to do a thing to help Him. Mary was warned when Jesus was just a baby she would suffer sorrow, "Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul" (Luke 2:35). Jesus said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38). We can only imagine what Jesus went through even before He was arrested, because He knew all these utterly terrible things were going to happen to Him. Knowing these things should make us understand why Jesus asked God three times to take the 'cup of suffering' from Him if at all possible. 'Jesus went forward a little, fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible let this cup (of suffering) pass from Me, nevertheless, not what I will but what You will" ... A second time He went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cup cannot pass from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done." ... He left them again, went away and prayed a third time saying

the same words' (Matthew 26:39, 42 & 44). Anyone facing such horrendous agony would become distressed.

Jesus was so distressed and anxious about the crucifixion, God sent an angel to comfort Him. We can only wonder what the angel said to Jesus to comfort and strengthen Him. 'An angel from heaven appeared to Jesus, strengthening Him. Being in agony of spirit He prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground' (Luke 22:43 & 44). This condition called Hematidrosis only happens under extreme physical, emotional stress or fear. It begins with a severe headache accompanied by nosebleeds as blood oozes from mucosa and the sweat glands on the skin. Modern medical diagnosis says this is a, 'Severe depressive disorder'. The blood vessels that feed the sweat glands constrict under the pressure of stress. As the stress increases, the blood vessels dilate to the point where they rupture. The blood oozes into the sweat glands causing droplets of blood mixed with increased perspiration but it usually happens in small areas on the body like on the face or hands. Sometimes it can break out in a few areas at once but it does not happen all over the whole body and is not prolonged. The effect on the body is weakness and dehydration but these effects cease when the Hematidrosis eases and the person has taken fluid. There is no pain attached to this temporary condition except for the preceding headache. Jesus must have been in a terrible emotional state for this to happen but the Hematidrosis would not have lasted long.

When Luke stated the sweat dropped onto the ground, indicates the bleeding only happened on His face and hands because only His face and hands were uncovered. Jesus would have been wearing warm winter clothing because the weather was cold (John 18:18). The scriptures say Jesus was wearing at least five garments that were shared between the soldiers (John 19:23 & 24). The soldiers only cast lots over the seamless linen undertunic called a coat, vest or an ephod (Leviticus 16:4). In the summer months, the linen tunic could be worn like modern men sometimes wear just a singlet on a hot day. Jesus would have worn men's linen trunks. Jewish men wore linen underwear; white linen trunks reaching from the waist to the knees, underneath their long linen ephod (Exodus 28:42). He would have worn a normal blue linen robe to cover the ephod (Exodus 28:31) similar to the robes Middle-Eastern men wear today. He would also have worn a hooded woollen knitted cloak to keep His body and head covered and warm (Deuteronomy 22:12). Jesus may have worn sheepskin or sealskin shoes (Ezekiel 16:10), probably with knitted warm sock-like items made of wool to keep His feet warm. It was winter when Jesus was crucified and the weather was cold so logically He would have been wearing more than just a seamless undergarment and light summer thongs as He wore at His baptism which took place 3½ years earlier, in the summer (Mark 1:7). The reason the seamless garment was mentioned in the Gospels, was to prove the crucifixion was foreseen and prophesied about in detail hundreds of years earlier, to prove our Messiah, really is the Messiah, because everything that happened to Jesus was foretold (Matthew 26:56; Psalm 22:18). Jesus knew He was about to be crucified, so it is not logical for Him to have gone without the normal set of clothing, which included two items of linen underwear; the trunks and the tunic. It is not once written in the Bible Jesus was naked on the cross, and drawings of crucified men during that time in history does not show them to be naked. That is a conclusion people have come to because they assume Jesus only wore the seamless undergarment because that is the only item of clothing individually mentioned and they do not know their Bibles well enough to realise men wore underwear or that the seamless garment was not an item of outer clothing. Besides all this, it is written Jesus was wearing His own clothes at the crucifixion. Initially, His clothes were stripped off Him (Matthew 27:28), then they put His own clothes back on Him before they led Him away to be crucified (Mark 15:20). After He was crucified, while He hung on the cross, they removed his blood-soaked outer garments and distributed His clothing among them then cast lots to see who would get the seamless tunic. Once Jesus was nailed to the cross it would have been impossible to remove His trunks without tearing them off and the soldiers did not want to tear His clothing.

The terrible torture and death of Jesus began when His close but greedy friend Judas Iscariot betrayed Him for money. Jesus knew He was going to be betrayed and for how much because it was prophesied about. 'Yes My own close friend in whom I trusted, who ate bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me' (Psalm 41:9). 'I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter' (Zechariah 11:13). 'Jesus was troubled in spirit and said, "One of you will betray Me." ... John asked Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it." When Jesus had dipped the piece of bread He gave it to Judas Iscariot' (John 13:21, 25 & 26). What upset Jesus was the way in which He was betrayed. Judas was a close friend and close friends kiss on the cheek. It was a friendly kiss on the cheek by His close friend that betrayed Him and that upset Jesus so He made the comment, "Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Then the prophecy regarding the blood money was fulfilled. 'They took the thirty pieces of silver ... and they bought the potter's field' (Matthew 27:9 & 10).

Herod and the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus and humiliated Him. 'Herod with his soldiers humiliated Jesus and mocked Him' (Luke 23:11). When we are persecuted, mocked and humiliated by evil people we can remain silent, remembering how Jesus was humiliated and mocked yet He remained silent. Jesus was

bound up and falsely accused (Matthew 27:2 & 12). Our accuser accuses us before God day and night (Revelation 12:10) but Jesus took the accusations on our behalf so we can be free from guilt. He was bound with ropes so we could go free from bondage. Jesus suffered the awful humiliation of being accused of being guilty of sin when He was guiltless and sinless. He knew He was going to die that way so His believers could have eternal life. Jesus said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14 & 15). 'When Jesus was cursed, He did not curse back. When He suffered, He did not threaten but committed Himself to God who judges righteously' (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus did not utter a word when He was mocked, taunted, slapped and punched around but trusted the Lord God. That silence both impressed and enraged the authorities. 'Jesus held His peace. The high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God" ... They spat in His face and beat Him with their fists, and some slapped Him' (Matthew 26:63 & 67). 'Jesus stood before the governor who asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "So you say." When Jesus was accused by the chief priests and elders He answered nothing. Pilate said to Him, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?" Jesus gave him no answer, not even one word. Pilate greatly marvelled'" (Matthew 27:11 to 14).

The Romans invented a dreadful lash on which they sometimes tied sharpened pieces of bone, glass, metal or stones. It is not known if one of these whips was used on Jesus or not because the Bible does not tell us but we do know He was thrashed, giving Him stripes across His back for our healing. The Hebrew word for the lashing is 'bch' akin to 'birch' or 'welt' so Jesus was given 'welts' with a 'birch' for our healing. There is no verse telling us there were sharpened pieces on the lash and Luke, who was the physician, did not mention it and since he went into detail about other things he would have mentioned it. However, it is still possible such a cruel whip was used on Jesus because it was the mode of so-called punishment meted out to men before they were crucified. They could not have used the 'cat o' nine tails' because that was invented by the British armed forces about 1695 and did not exist in Jesus' day. The birch used by the Romans was a plaited rope made of rough, thick, woven sacking-like strands, cut down to size then partially unravelled so each one of the three strands of rope became a whip. It was made like that to cause the victim intense stinging pain. The roughness of the material would have been enough to tear the skin if the victim was flayed many times. Two Roman soldiers would take turns whipping their victim. In the winter when the weather causes the skin to become cold and more sensitive, would have increased the sense of agony, and we know Jesus died in the winter months. Sometimes the Romans used leather whips. The severe agony and blood loss of their scourging could cause a victim to be overcome by shock and pass out but we know Jesus was not overcome by shock because He was conscious and coherent right up to the moment of His death. Some people believe Jesus suffered broken ribs due to the beatings and whipping but the scriptures tell us not one of His bones were broken. The Jews used forty lashes to punish their wrongdoers but Romans had no such restraint so Jesus could have been lashed many times. We can only imagine the severe pain Jesus experienced when His painful flayed back was tossed down onto the rough wooden cross. Just thinking about it is enough to make one flinch.

Jesus would have suffered terrible pain and lost more blood when His beard was torn out of His face so He was marred beyond recognition and then the soldiers spat on Him. 'I gave My back to the strikers and My cheeks to those who plucked off the hair. I did not hide My face from shame and spitting' (Isaiah 50:6). 'Many were astonished. His appearance was so marred, more than any man and His form disfigured more than the sons of men' (Isaiah 52:14). Blood would have dripped down His face when the terrible crown of thorns was rammed onto His head. The Hebrew word for the woven crown of thorns is 'shsrhrth' translated 'wreathen'. In ancient times a woven circular wreath was buried with the deceased. 'The Roman soldiers wove a wreath of thorn branches into a crown and put it on His head and a stick in His right hand. They kneeled down before Him and mocked Him saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They spat on Him and took the stick and struck Him on the head' (Matthew 27:29 & 30). When the Romans struck Jesus on the head after the thorns were placed there would have driven the wreath or 'crown' of thorns deeper into His scalp. We can only imagine the pain that caused.

Thomas said, "Unless I see the print of the nails in His hands and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" ... Jesus said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger and see My hands. Reach here your hand and put it into My side. Stop being so unbelieving but believe" (John 20:25 & 27). 'You were dead through your sin and the uncleanness of your old nature. Jesus made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our sin, wiping out the written charge (of judgement) against us and He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross' (Colossians 2:13 & 14). Every deed we have ever done is written down in God's holy Books. 'Judgment was set and the Books were opened' (Daniel 7:10). 'I saw the dead the great and the small, standing before the Throne (the Great White Throne of Judgement), and the holy angels opened Books. Another Book was opened which is the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to the things written in the Books, according to their works' (Revelation 20:12). When Jesus was nailed to the cross, the judgement of sin written against us according to the Law condemning us to spiritual death was nailed to the cross with

Him. The huge Roman nails made holes in His hands big enough for Thomas to poke his finger through. The nailing to the cross was unusual because men were usually tied to the cross by thick ropes, but it was all part of God's eternal purpose for our total redemption. Jesus was pierced in His hands, feet and side for our transgressions.

It is time to stop and think for a moment about what Jesus suffered; anxiety so intense it caused Hematidrosis. He was betrayed by His close friend for money then denied by His disciple. He was rejected by His own people and mocked by His own brothers then abandoned by the rest of the disciples. He was humiliated, mocked, spat on, beaten, flogged, had thorns rammed on His head, His beard was ripped from His face marring and disfiguring Him beyond recognition. He suffered severe loss of blood. His joints were dislocated. His bones were exposed which means His flesh was torn off. He was tortured and left so badly injured, His heart became weak. He was forced to carry a heavy, splintery cross then He was nailed to it. He suffered from terrible thirst then He died. After He died, He was then stabbed. Imagine the agony, anxiety and fear He went through. These verses were written about Jesus. 'I am poured out like water. All My bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax as it has melted within me. My strength is dried up like baked pottery. My tongue sticks to the roof of My mouth. You have brought Me to the dust of death. Dogs (evil men) have surrounded Me. A company of evildoers have enclosed Me. Like a lion, they pin My hands and feet. I can count all of My bones. They look and stare at Me' (Psalm 22:14 to 17) ... and it was all for us.

The gash in Jesus' side was large enough for Thomas to put his hand in. When Jesus died and His loving heart ceased to circulate the blood, the red blood and creamy white serum would have separated, so when the Roman soldier gashed His side, the blood plus the white serum poured out and it was witnessed by many people. 'One of the Roman soldiers pierced His side with a spear and immediately blood and water came out. He (John) who saw this has testified and his testimony is true. He knows he tells the truth so you may believe. These things happened so the Scripture might be fulfilled, "A bone of Him will not be broken." Another Scripture says, "They will look on Him Whom they pierced"' (John 19:34 to 37; Psalm 34:20; Zechariah 12:10). 'Who are they who overcome the world, but those who believe Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus came by water and blood, not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. It is the Holy Spirit who testifies, because the Holy Spirit is the truth. There are three who testify; the Holy Spirit, the water and the blood and the three agree as one' (1 John 5:5 to 8). To explain, 'A bone of Him will not be broken', when Jewish men were crucified they had to be taken down before nightfall (Deuteronomy 21:22 & 33). When tied to the cross, the suffering men would raise themselves up by pushing down on their feet to breathe more freely. To hasten the deaths of the crucified, the Roman soldiers would break their legs to prevent them from raising themselves up on their legs to breathe and they would then suffocate. Jesus was already dead when the soldiers got to Him so His legs were not broken. 'It was Preparation Day, and so the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a special one because it was Passover), the Jews asked of Pilate their legs might be broken so they might be taken away. Therefore the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Jesus but when they came to Jesus and saw He was already dead, they did not break His legs' (John 19:31 to 33). Not breaking the Sacrificial Lamb's legs ties in with the Passover lamb. 'The lamb will be eaten in one household. You will not carry anything of the flesh out of the house, neither will you break a bone of it' (Exodus 12:46).

While on the cross, bleeding and in obvious pain, Jesus was conscious and able to think clearly. He asked His cousin John to take care of His mother Mary (John 19:26 & 27). Jesus chose the exact time of His death. 'Jesus cried out with a loud voice and gave up His Spirit' (Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37). 'Jesus, crying out with a loud voice said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit!" Having said this, He breathed His last breath' (Luke 23:46). We know Jesus was fully coherent right up to the moment He died because He was able to deliberately say things to fulfil prophetic scriptures written by the ancient prophets. The following verses confirm this. 'All this happened so the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled' (Matthew 26:56). 'My God, My God why have You forsaken me?' (Psalm 22:1). After suffering for many hours, just before Jesus died in pure agony He cried out in Hebrew with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani?" That is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). 'They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people yet to be born, for He has done it. It is finished' (Psalm 22:31). 'In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink' (Psalm 69:21). 'After this, Jesus saw all things were now finished and so the Scripture might be fulfilled He said, "I am thirsty." A vessel full of vinegar was set there so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it at His mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar He said, "It is finished." He bowed His head and gave up His spirit' (John 19:28 to 30). The evil men who tortured then murdered Jesus were able to break His body but they could never break His soul or His spirit. When we are persecuted for righteousness sake, we should also have the strength of spirit to see it through, even if our bodies are broken. It is His shed blood and the extreme suffering Jesus endured before He died on the cross that gives His followers the strength to endure even the worst kind of persecution. 'They overcame the devil because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony. They did not love their life even when facing death' (Revelation 12:11). When we suffer we know we are suffering for Him just like He

suffered for us. 'It has been granted to you on behalf of Jesus, not only to believe in Him but to also suffer on His behalf' (Philippians 1:29). The cross and the blood of Jesus gives us salvation and most wonderful of all, we are ushered into the Kingdom of God but only on condition we continue to walk with Him faithfully from the time we are born-again until we are taken home.

When we think about the extremes the Roman soldiers went to, to inflict as much pain and suffering onto Jesus as they could, it may make us wonder why. Why would they nail Jesus to the cross instead of tying Him to it? Why did they whip Him so many times? Why the crown of thorns when other crucified men did not suffer that? Why did they stab Him even after He was dead? The answers to these questions are in the scriptures. Jesus died to save mankind, that is true. Jesus broke the curses over mankind, that is true. But more than that, Jesus stripped the devil and the forces of darkness of all their power and now humans, who were hopelessly lost and spiritually weak, are not only saved but also have been given authority over all the power the enemies of God once had. 'Jesus stripped the principalities and powers. He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross' (Colossians 2:15). The deranged men who tortured Jesus were influenced by the forces of darkness because the Man they were attacking was to them just a Jewish troublemaker, but the devil knew He was the Son of God and wanted to destroy Him. That reveals to us how foolish the devil is because he did not realise the death of Jesus would only last a couple of days before He was resurrected and would bring the devil's power to an end in the lives of His followers. Jesus told His disciples He would be raised on the third day but the devil did not seem to comprehend that and did all he could to stop salvation coming to mankind through Jesus. How foolish the devil was to assume he could destroy the eternal purposes of the Living God. The death of Jesus was part of God's eternal plan for our salvation and this plan was kept secret right up until Jesus was resurrected. 'God made all mankind see the mystery which for ages had been hidden in God, Who created all things through Jesus, with the intention through the assembly (early church and the heavenly community) the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places according to the eternal purpose He accomplished through Jesus our Lord' (Ephesians 3:9 to 11). When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus; His blood shed before and during the event of the cross, and walk in His Light, then we can claim the protection of the whole spiritual armour of God (Ephesians 6:10 to 17). Unsaved people do not have the weapons of warfare and are thus under the control of the devil and suffer accordingly. Genuine believers in Jesus can have all God has for them.

When we do accept the blood of Jesus as being the only way to be saved, we reap eternal rewards. What is ahead of us is awe-inspiring and breathtaking. It should fill us with excitement and amazement. We yearn to be there. People have spoken correctly when they say we are homesick for a place we have not yet seen. 'You (all genuine, obedient believers in Jesus) have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to countless multitudes of angels, to the general heavenly assembly (angelic beings) and the assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven (born-again believers), to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect (through suffering and death), to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant and to the blood of cleansing that speaks of a more gracious message than that of Abel' (Hebrews 12:22 to 24). When we are all finally in heaven, we will share the privilege with millions of other believers from all over the world, from all through time, from ancient to modern days. 'I (John) looked and behold, a great multitude no man could number out of every nation, tribe, peoples and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice saying, "Our salvation is from our God Who is seated on the Throne and to the Lamb!" ... They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb so they are now before the Throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple' (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14 & 15).

Amen and God bless you.

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