

Believe that you might have life: Introduction



"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20

JESUS CHRIST THE CENTRE OF GOD'S PURPOSE

This statement by Paul is the very **heart and soul** of the gospel. The life of Christ is a subject like no other. It is the very centre of all that we live for - the supreme motivator for us to change our lives. His life is the one thing that can help raise us above the trials and hurdles we face every day. From the beginning of the Bible, we are presented with the importance of the life of Christ, and particularly his final hours. In **Genesis 3:15** we read that the seed of the woman would come to defeat sin. Very few chapters in Genesis provide details about Creation. However, more than 12 chapters are devoted to the life of a man with whom we become **personally involved** with, particularly in his sufferings and emotional anguish. In the life of **Joseph**, God presents to us a picture of what the Bible is all about. **The Bible is about Jesus Christ.**

In **Exodus** the children of Israel prepared the Passover lamb *without blemish*. There was unleavened bread, blood on the door posts. The purpose of the law (27 chapters in **Leviticus**, 36 in **Numbers**) was to point forward to Christ. The book of **Job** has 42 chapters pointing forward to Christ's sufferings. In **Isaiah**, 66 chapters reveal that Yahweh's salvation to Israel and the nations would be fulfilled in Christ, the suffering servant. In **Jeremiah**, 52 chapters. The **Psalms** reveal in detail the mind of Christ in his life, suffering and ultimate glory. **Song of Songs** is a beautiful allegory of the love of Christ for his bride and our love for him. Prophecies of our Lord are the climax of **all the prophets**, with his life, death and resurrection culminating in him eventually bringing salvation to Israel, spiritual Israel and the nations at his second coming.

Such a substantial portion of the gospels are devoted to the last week of his life, and particular the final day. More than 13 chapters, over 500 verses. Almost 40 percent of **John's gospel** is devoted to his final day. Why is this? **Because here is revealed the most wonderful character attributes God delights in.** In Jesus Christ we see the most amazing example of purity, faith, selflessness, trust, kindness, longsuffering and love. All under extreme pressure, temptation, suffering and emotional heartache. All in the face of the worst of human hatred and hostility. This being from the very people he came to save. Truly this man is the Son of God.

ABRAHAM AND ISAAC: TYPE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

Gen 22:2 *"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering."*

Genesis 22 is one of the most emotional chapters in the Bible. It tells of the sacrifice of Christ. **Genesis 22** and **Psalms 22** should be read together. **Psalms 22** is repeatedly cited in the New Testament at Christ's crucifixion: **Mt 27:39-43; Mk 15:29; Jn 19:23-24; Heb 2:12.**

We see in Abraham a man who was willing to give his *"only son"* (**Gen 22:2,16**) and was thus able to enter into the very feelings of God Himself. The reference to his *"only (yachid) son"* in **Gen 22:2** is important, the first time this Hebrew word is used in the Old Testament. It is also used in **Gen 22:12,16**. It is used of Christ in **Psa 22:20**: *"deliver your only one"* (KJV *"darling"*). The *final yachid* in the OT is **Zech 12:10** where at Armageddon the Jews look upon **God** *"whom they have pierced"* and will *"mourn for him (Jesus), as one mourneth for his only (yachid) son"* (cp. **Jn 19:37**). God felt pain in giving His Son! Isaac is called his **only son** even though he also had Ishmael. Specifically Abraham is told to take the *son "whom he loves."* God is expressing his love for His son Jesus and the pain that was involved: **Isa 42:1; Mt 3:17; 17:5; Jn 17:23; 1 Jn 4:7**. This story is at the beginning of the Bible to help elicit from us an emotional connection with Jesus and the Father's plan of salvation.

THE WHOLE LIFE OF CHRIST WAS ONE OF SACRIFICE

"Christ's sacrifice was like no other. It was total. It was the sacrifice of himself. There was nothing left except the undying record in the mind of God and the lifeless body in a garden, in a tomb where never man lay. The animal under the Law bore little resemblance to the offeror. The sacrifice of Christ was 'from the midst of his brethren', one of us, and not something 'other'. But this was a willing sacrifice, which itself knew what was required and brought it to lay it at God's altar by no law, no priest, no precedent, no forerunner. It was not a sacrifice only at Calvary. It was a sacrifice from the beginning, and continued throughout the whole of the life of Jesus, and came to its triumphant end when the Lord expired. This sacrifice was totally different from any other sacrifice in human history; it was such as to excite wonder, trembling, thankfulness and tears, and kindle in other hearts shame, repentance and the unspeakable joy of forgiveness... This was the surrender of human will in every way, and it was God's will done willingly and totally in human flesh for the first time since Adam and his wife were expelled from Eden." (Harry Tennant, *The Testimony*, May 2000)

JESUS CHRIST IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES

Types and allegories in Scripture are recorded so we may enter into the feelings of Jesus Christ and his Father. These stories are to help us appreciate God's plan of salvation **emotionally**. The study of types and allegories should therefore move us **personally**. The whole Old Testament teaches of Christ whose **life is interwoven through every book** as the pinnacle of all God's purpose with humanity. **The whole Bible is a revelation of Jesus Christ.** Every book has themes which centre on Christ as the most important feature of each particular book. These themes start in **Genesis 1-3** and conclude in the final chapters of **Revelation**. Brother Harry Tennant (in *What the Bible Teaches*) comments on this:

"The words which Christ would speak were known to God before Christ was born. All who heard the teaching of Jesus were impressed by both the manner and content of the message (**Mt 7:28-29; Lk 4:22**). The exquisite beauty of what he had to say was matched by the unflinching love, holiness and righteousness which he displayed. He fulfilled in an unforgettable way an Old Testament description: *"His mouth is sweetness itself; He is altogether lovely"* (**Song of Songs 5:16** NIV). No wonder that Peter, at a time when others were forsaking Christ, was constrained to exclaim: *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*" (p.104)

THE APOSTLE JOHN

He was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the younger brother of James. "John" means "Yahweh has been gracious". He records himself in his gospel as being *"the disciple whom Jesus loved"*: **Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20**. His family were on good terms with the high priest: **Jn 18:16**. His mother Salome ministered to Jesus with other women: **Lk 8:2-3; Mt 20:20; 27:56**. It appears John's mother Salome, was sister to Mary the mother of Jesus: **Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40, 16:1; Jn 19:25**. This means John was Jesus' first cousin. Jesus called John with Peter, Andrew and James when they were fishing: **Mt 4:18-22**. Jesus called them to become "fishers of men".

With Peter and James, John was selected to view the resurrection of Jairus' daughter (**Mk 5:37**), the transfiguration (**Mt 17:1**), to hear the Olivet prophecy (**Mk 13:5**); and to be with Jesus in the garden (**Mk 14:33**). John was the disciple who was particularly close to Jesus. He sat next to Jesus at the last supper, reclining with his head lovingly resting on his Lord: **Jn 13:23-25**. In that position he asked Jesus to reveal who would betray him. He was later entrusted with caring for Jesus' mother Mary. For Jesus to do this, John must have been a highly suitable person to take Mary into his own home and care for her: **Jn 19:26**.

John was a man of great energy and zeal. He was given the title of "Boanerges" meaning "Son of Thunder": **Mk 3:17**. An example of this is in **Lk 9:54**. He also, with James, asked that each of them could sit on Christ's right hand in glory, for which he was gently corrected: **Mk 10:35-37**. He was however a man who had a great loyalty for his Lord and a sympathy for others: **Jn 13:23**. At Jesus' trial, John came to the aid of Peter: **Jn 18:15-16**. John was the first apostle to believe Mary Magdalene's account of the empty tomb: **Jn 20:2**. John also wrote three epistles which are like an appendix to John's gospel, with over 100 connections.

At the end of his life, John received the grand climax of the Bible in the book of **Revelation**. Here he reveals the love that Christ has for all the ecclesias. John describes himself as *"your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ... for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."* **Rev 1:9**. John showed the love of Christ towards his brethren and this is seen by often addressing his readers as *"little children"* (**1 Jn 2:1,12,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21**). Jesus addressed his disciples in this way when Judas left the upper room to betray him. This is an expression used nowhere else in the Gospel accounts, but in **Jn 13:33**. John appreciated the love of Christ in his life and this had a life changing impact on the way he lived. So too with us.