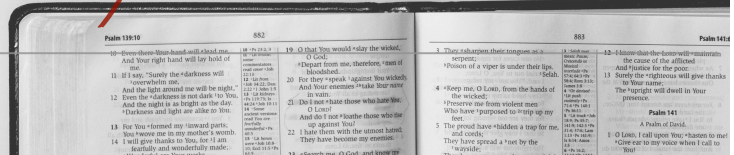


WORDS *of* TRUTH

“The Remarkable Redeemer”



Ladies Article

Eva Nell Naramore is a member of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, AL. Lord willing, she will turn 100 years old in December of this year. She has written thousands of poems, and published several books of poetry that will inspire and encourage any Christian.

Theme Articles

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The Man

Jesus Christ is the greatest man who ever lived. He was perfect in all his ways. He was everything we aspire to be. He had the highest character, the deepest forgiveness, the widest love, and broadest understanding. He had a spiritual magnetism which none could resist.

His righteousness and purity brought about his death. He was so good he angered the rich and powerful. His doctrine blinded those who closed their eyes, and deafened those who stopped their ears. He was so holy his opponents could not handle him.

With all of his perfection, pride is never a word that would describe our Lord. He humbled himself to become a man, and as a man, to suffer in all points like us, even to death by crucifixion. He knows us, loves us, and perfectly intercedes for us.

—DD

Humble Beginnings

David Dixon

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:10 ESV)

As we grow older and accomplish great things in life, it is easy to forget from whence we have come. All the things we accumulate and pile up around us block our hindsight and prevent the proper gratitude from building up in our hearts. No matter how important we become, we could never have reached such prominence without the help of others. We owe much to the people in our lives who cared enough about our success to patiently guide and intentionally instruct us in matters that would form us into the people we are today. Let us remember and give thanks for those who made sacrifices for us — our parents, teachers, mentors, and friends.

We don't all feel like overwhelming successes in life, however. Many of us feel like we have never risen above the level of life into which we were born. Our entire lives have been a struggle, and if it weren't for bad luck we'd have no luck at all. We fervently fight to climb above our status but we never seem to get anywhere. This frequently builds up bitterness and spite in our hearts to the point that we unfairly assume everyone around us is out to get us. We blame others for our shortcomings, and we pessimistically assume we will never amount to anything. In these cases, let us remember our success in life does not reflect the riches of our inheritance in heaven (Eph. 1:18). As children of God, no amount of worldly wealth or the lack thereof should be able to distract us from the assurance that our incorruptible treasure is laid up above (Mat. 6:19-21).

No matter the level of physical blessedness into which we were born, we all come from humble beginnings. Babies are helpless. We become what we chose to become. Our surroundings play a huge part in our development, but we all have to make the choices along the way that either promote success or failure in our lives. Jesus did not enter this world with every advantage life could offer. He was well acquainted with struggle from early on in life. His father was a carpenter, his mother a young woman who loved God. For the first two years of his life, Jesus lived as a refugee from his homeland. Jesus was born, not with a silver spoon in his mouth, but as it were with a hammer in his hand. He had to learn, grow, and work hard for everything he received or accomplished. Surely Jesus was blessed with a keen intelligence and a deep spiritual wisdom, yet he knew from a child that every struggle in his experience as a youth was preparing him to have the confidence and assurance he would need to fulfill the will of his Heavenly Father as a man.

As Jesus reached the age when his ministry would begin, his faith that all things would work together for good as long as he chose righteousness at every turn (Rom. 8:28) had to be firmly established in his mind. He never aspired to physical wealth or political power. And he never doubted the fact that the ultimate outcome of his work was what was best for all humanity. He knew the course that lay before him, and it was his humble beginnings that taught him the persistence, patience, faith, and compassion to achieve the will of God his Father. We know he was a student of the scriptures. We know he never spoke a false word or wished ill on any of his brethren. It was this behavior that taught him the confidence he needed to go to the cross. God required a spotless, sinless sacrifice, and Jesus knew he had to be it. It took thirty years of preparation, including years of humble carpentry work, to bring Jesus to the point physically and spiritually where he could endure the challenges of his ministry. Any lesser man would have trembled and fled from the proposition of an undeserved death on a Roman cross. Any lesser man would have held too tightly to his accomplishments, or he would have doubted his ability to hit the mark God had set for him.

We should have confidence and assurance to face the challenges of our lives as well. Our beginnings as Christians should be as humble as our beginnings in life. After baptism, we are babes in Christ. From the moment of our conversion, every experience should be developing within us a strength to stand for what is right and an ability to endure all spiritual opposition. Jesus has given us an example that proves it is not being born wealthy that assures success in life, nor is it a difficult home life that prevents our excellence, but it is faith in God and a passionate pursuit of the good will of others that teaches us the strength of character we need to fulfill all expectations. Let us remember our humble beginnings, be thankful for the challenges that we face daily, and know that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phi. 4:13).

When Peter Preached the Gospel

Eva Nell Naramore

About three thousand souls were saved on the day of Pentecost,
After Peter preached the Gospel, when they knew that they were lost.
Then they asked, men and brethren, the question, "What shall we do?"
And it's the very same question God is asking us; that's true.

We hear, repent, and be baptized for remission of our sins,
We're filled with the Holy Spirit and our Father dwells within.
Our body is the Temple of God's gift, the Holy Ghost,
And the soul that goes back to God was bought with an awful cost.

God gave His Son to die for us on the cross of Calvary.
He paid a debt He did not owe. Proved his love to you and me.
The Gospel preached on Pentecost is the same for everyone.
If what Peter preached is still preached, work for God will be well done.

The Gospel is for our children and to all that's far away.
As many as the Lord shall call, we have work to do each day.
We are taught to work in the vineyard, while we're living here on earth,
And given a plan to go by, for the soul of untold worth.

About three thousand souls were saved, that gladly received His word,
Baptized for remission of sins. They believed what they had heard.
And they continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine.
Fellowship and breaking of bread with a new life to begin.

Praising God and having favor with the people of one accord,
Is happiness without measure, in the vineyard of the Lord.
God added to the church that day the ones that obeyed His word.
Go into all the world and preach to the lost that have not heard.



Jesus and Prayer

Mike Benson

“Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, Sit here while I go and pray over there.”

Matthew 26:36 NKJV

It’s tempting to skip to the end of the Gethsemane story, because there, in the final moments of the garden narrative, when Jesus was arrested, we often start thinking about the Lord’s Supper. But please don’t do that now. Don’t rush straight to the arrest. Back up and then slow down as you consider the text. Back up, not just to any meal, but to the time of the last meal Jesus ate with His disciples (Mat. 26:2ff; John 13ff).

In a manner of speaking, this was the condemned Man’s last meal before His execution. And what exactly was Jesus doing on this occasion with His disciples? Do a little contextual reading, and you will discover that He was talking about, among other things, and practicing PRAYER.

Watch John’s account:

“And whatever you ask in My name (PRAYER—mb), that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (14:13). “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire (PRAYER—mb), and it shall be done for you” (15:7). “And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name (PRAYER—mb) He will give you” (17:23).

Now mark in your Bible: Jesus spoke about prayer 3 times.

Then later, while the group was actually eating, Matthew records, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed (PRAYER—mb) and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks (PRAYER—mb), and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you’” (Mat. 26:26-27).

Mark in your Bible: Jesus practiced prayer 2 times.

But this redundant emphasis upon prayer didn’t stop at this meal prior to Gethsemane. After the group split up, Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the garden where He continued His prayer vigil. There He started praying again—ironically praying the same thing over and over. “He went a little father and fell on His face, and PRAYED, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will’” (Mat. 26:39). “Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What! Could you not watch with Me one hour?

Watch and PRAY, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (v. 40). “Again, a second time, He went away and PRAYED, saying, ‘O My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.’ And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy” (vv. 42-43). “So He left them, went away again, and PRAYED the third time, saying the same words...” (v. 44).

Mark in your Bible: Jesus prayed 3 times and mentioned prayer once.

If you underscore the times that the idea of, or exact mention of, prayer is used in both John and Matthew, you are hit by a veritable inspired, machine-gun barrage on this subject (8 times).

Now ponder. What was Jesus urging, and what was He practicing before, during and after the Passover/Lord’s Supper meal? PRAYER. But now, recalling our introduction, go to the garden where the arrest was about to take place. Suddenly, there is a scuffle—a fuss. Peter, in his rashness and impetuosity, whips out his blade and cuts off Malchus’ ear (cf. Mat. 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 23:50; John 18:10 for details). Jesus immediately, miraculously healed the stricken servant, and then told Peter and his peers to stop the violence.

Now mull over exactly what Jesus said:

“Or do you think that I cannot now PRAY to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels” (Mat. 26:53)?

Wow.

Mark in your Bible: No prayer!

Please don’t miss this! What was Jesus talking to the disciples about around the time of that last meal? He was talking about PRAYER (i.e., asking of the Father). What was Jesus doing at that last meal? He was PRAYING (i.e., thanking the Father). What was Jesus doing after that meal while in the garden? He was PRAYING over and over again (asking His Father). Jesus’ life and ministry was saturated in prayer. And yet, here in the garden, WHEN HE COULD HAVE PRAYED ONCE AGAIN, WHEN HE COULD HAVE summoned the host of heaven to stop the cross, WHEN HE COULD HAVE PETITIONED His Father’s intervention, He didn’t pray.

He could have, but He didn’t.

The one prayer that Jesus could have uttered, that would have effectively stopped Calvary in its tracks, never left His lips. And why didn’t He pray then? Because He had already prayed, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will...”

What Shall I Do Then With Jesus Which Is Called Christ?

Ryan Frederick

“And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews?”

Mark 15:12 KJV

Jesus stood before Pilate as an innocent man. There was no proof of any wrong doing that had come before Pilate. There was only an angry mob of Jews and Jewish leaders who hated Jesus and wanted Him gone. Pilate offered to release either Jesus or Barabbas, as was customary. Barabbas was a notorious prisoner. Shockingly, they chose Barabbas to release, further proving their hatred of Jesus. This then prompted Pilate to ask in Matthew 27:22, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” Their answer...“Let Him be crucified.”

Although this question was asked to those present on that day, and subsequently answered by them, it is not just a question for those first century Jews. Pilate was very fearful of the position in which he found himself. John 19:8 tells us that upon hearing that Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God, Pilate was “the more afraid.” The question of what to do with Jesus is not a question that should be answered lightly. Knowing that Jesus is the Son of God, it should cause us all to be fearful and answer that question soberly and with a great sense of responsibility. Before we do that, let us first notice how others answered this same question.

The Jews were fortunate enough to have the Messiah come through their lineage and appear to them in the flesh. However, the Bible reveals that they rejected Jesus. Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 53:3 tell us that Jesus was refused, rejected and despised. In Luke 17:25, Jesus said about Himself that He must be “rejected of this generation.” Just as the Jews rejected Jesus, there are many today who will reject Him as well.

Jesus had an earthly family when He took on flesh. One would think that someone’s own flesh and blood would believe him and back him. With the brothers of Jesus, this was not so. In John 7:1-9, John reveals, “For neither did His brethren believe in Him” (v. 5). His own brothers ridiculed Him. There are some today who would treat Jesus such as this. When they are faced with what to do with Jesus, they do not believe, they ridicule.

Through Jesus’ ministry on earth He had His chosen apostles and those who were His disciples. They followed Him wherever He went and did whatever He asked. So when Jesus needed them the most, at His trial and crucifixion, what did they do with Him? Matthew 26:56 tells us, “Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled.” They had the opportunity to really make a stand for Him and be loyal when the stakes were high. Instead, they forsook Him. There will be some today that will forsake or leave Him when the going gets tough as well.

What about His specific apostles? There are two of whom we think most often when it came to Jesus’ most pressing hour. Peter, one of the most vocal of the twelve, was right there when everything went down. What Peter did at that moment is recorded in all four gospel accounts. When Jesus stood on trial, Peter did exactly what Jesus had predicted that he would do. He denied Him (Mat. 26:69-75). There may be some today who are followers of Jesus, but then abandon Him because of pressure from others or the world. Judas was also one of the twelve, and yet Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Mat. 26:14-16, 47-50). Perhaps some today will betray Jesus by trading Him for some type of personal gain.

The Roman soldiers had the responsibility of seeing to Jesus for His scourging and His crucifixion. However, they decided to have a little fun with Him in the process. They mocked Him as they had charge over Him. All four gospel accounts record their despicable actions. They put a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns upon Him. They put a reed in His hand and mocked Him as they said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Mat. 27:27-31). Sadly, there are some today that will mock our Lord. Even more sad is that some of those might even be Christians.

Finally, we see that those crucified with Him and those in the crowd blasphemed and reviled Him. As if all of the other reactions were not enough, those in the crowd as well as the robbers crucified alongside of Him got in on the act (Mat. 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32; Luke 23:39). There are some today as well that would speak evil of our Lord. When faced with the decision of what to do with Jesus, some will also blaspheme and revile Him.

Jesus bid many to come follow after Him. He bid His apostles to come and follow after Him (Mat. 4:19; 9:9). He bid the rich young ruler to come after Him (Mat. 19:21). He told His disciples to take up their cross and follow Him (Mat. 16:24). This is what He wants — for you and I to become His disciples. Jesus wants us to be obedient followers of His, denying ourselves and taking up our crosses, dying to self. The choice that was set before those that we read about in the gospel accounts is the same choice we must make today.

What will you do with Jesus? As the song goes, neutral you cannot be. Will you crown Him or crucify Him (Heb. 6:6)? Will you forsake Him or follow after Him (Luke 9:23; John 6:66-69)? Will you revile Him or revere Him (Luke 23:39-41)? Jesus said to those of the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Jesus stands at the door of your heart and knocks. Will we ignore His presence, or will we open to Him and confess as Thomas did in John 20:28, “My Lord and my God!”?



JESUS IS THE LAMB

Ted Burleson

[Editor's note: *This article appeared in the January 2007, edition of Words of Truth. Bro. Burleson was the preacher at Sixth Avenue and the editor of Words of Truth at the time. He is now the preacher at the Hamilton Church of Christ in Hamilton, AL.*]

Isaiah wrote in chapter six of his book, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth." Isaiah is saying that Jesus was slaughtered like a lamb because we're like sheep who have gone astray.

Luke 22:7 refers to the killing of the Passover lamb, which is something God had commanded the Israelites to do. Jesus is our Passover lamb! He died for us! Paul wrote to the Roman Christians that God demonstrated His love for mankind by sending His Son to die for all of us while we were still sinners. We're going to need to make some preparation before we die because if we die in our sins we are lost. Jesus, in John 8:24 said, that if we do not believe in Him, we will die in our sins. We need Jesus' sacrifice. If we die in sin, we're not going to heaven.

The answer to man's sin problem is the answer John gave to his followers when he saw Jesus walking toward him. He said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). If you really want to go to heaven, the place where the Lamb is the light, when this life is over, you must allow the Lamb of God to completely take away your sins and your guilt.

Everyone deals with guilt. All of us have been less than pure; our actions aren't always righteous. Our spirituality sometimes shrivels up like a leaf. We feel our sins will sweep us away. Paul said that all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Some of us are imprisoned to sin. Because we know better, some of us are miserably wallowing in guilt.

Judas, the one who sold Jesus to His enemies, obviously couldn't live with the guilt of his actions, so he hanged himself rather than face the guilt. He didn't have to do that. Jesus died for those who nailed Him to the tree just as much as He died for me. If He died for those Roman soldiers, He also died for Judas. Judas didn't see it that way and called it quits because of a heavy, stifling guilt.

Think about new Christians with me for a minute. New Christians are alive and excited about their new life, but

like a child learning to walk, they're unsure of which steps to take. Satan tries to enter their lives like he did Judas' life. When they succumb to Satan and give in to his way, they feel guilty and unworthy. They look around at those who are spiritually mature, who feel very little guilt because they are guilty of very little, and then they compare themselves to mature Christians and feel even worse. They need to realize that God still loves them and that the blood of Jesus is still shed for them. The forgiveness of their sins only requires the cleansing blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

In his vision of heaven, John saw saved people gathered before God's throne in white robes. When he asked who they were, he was told, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). The only way to overcome Satan is by the cleansing blood of the Lamb!

Guilt can be constructive or destructive. Guilt is constructive if it motivates us to correct our behavior and attitudes. Then we've turned our guilt into something productive. Guilt is destructive when we allow it to make us dirty, shameful, and worthless but refuse to do anything about it. Jesus, the Lamb of God, takes away the sin, and the guilt associated with the sin, of the world. It is important to you and me that Jesus is the Lamb of God because we want to go to heaven when our life on earth is over. I'm thankful that Jesus is the Lamb of God because the only freedom I have from my guilt and sin is available in His cleansing blood.

Our relationship with others is going to be greatly affected by our relationship with Jesus, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. I hope that you have a wonderful relationship with Jesus. I hope that you spend eternity in heaven when you leave this life in death. But never forget that there are those around you that need to know Jesus, the Lamb of God, just as much as you need to know Him. What does your great relationship to the Lamb mean to the lost people around you?

The principle is that our relationship with the Lamb of God affects the way we look at our fellow human beings. Because of his relationship to Jesus, Philip taught the eunuch. Because of her relationship to Jesus, Dorcas clothed the widows. Because of his relationship to Jesus, Paul loved Timothy. Our love for the Lamb results in our love for one another.

What can you do to improve your relationship with Jesus Christ as well as to encourage others to have a relationship with the Lamb of God? **First**, surrender your sins to the blood of the Lamb of God. (*continued on page 7*)

(continued from page 6)

Hanging on to our sins when Jesus gave His blood to wash them away makes about as much sense as refusing to allow someone to pull a splinter out of a place we can't reach. Why would we refuse the cure if we know we've got the curse? The blood of Jesus ran down the tree on Calvary. According to John, the blood of the Lamb is available to cleanse us from all sin! Which sin is so precious to you that it is worth missing heaven for? Which guilt do you enjoy to the point of risking eternal torment? Who is preventing you from accepting the cleansing blood of the Lamb? If you are refusing the blood of the Lamb, who are you preventing from accepting the cleansing His blood offers? If our hearts are not right with God, even though we've been washed in the blood of the Lamb, it alters our relationship with God and with His children.

Secondly, when you sin, as all of us do, remember that Jesus forgives the guilt when He forgives the sin. Forgive yourself when Jesus' blood has cleansed your sins and guilt. Turn your guilt into something constructive; let it motivate you to become more like Jesus. The people around you are certainly not perfect. They have to depend upon Jesus' blood for cleansing, and they will not be in heaven unless they depend upon the blood of the Lamb.

Thirdly, don't just be concerned about yourself, but concern yourself with others. No person is an island. We all have to depend upon someone else. When we're sick, we depend upon medical personnel. When we're traveling, we're driving upon roads that someone else

built. If we're students, we depend upon someone to teach us. When we're employees, we depend upon someone to pay us. When we're lost and full of guilty sin, we must depend upon Jesus, the Lamb of God, to take away our sins and fervently encourage those we influence to do the same.

God wants to wash away your sins. He wants you to be with Him forever in heaven. He wants to take away the guilt that burdens your soul. He wants to teach you to love Him and to love those around you. If you want to be with the Lamb, then trust and obey Him with your life. If you are separated from the Lamb of God, then you are guilty of not taking advantage of Jesus' blood which takes away sin! If you are united with the Lamb of God, then, thank God, you are free from the guilt associated with sin because you are no longer the slave of sin and Satan!

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ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: Should we refer to the preacher as reverend?

ANSWER: There are a number of reasons why referring to the preacher as reverend is unscriptural, which we will note. Many refer to Psalm 111:9, and make the argument that since the word “reverend” is found only one time in the Bible, and since it is said of God, then we should not call anyone “reverend” because that designation belongs only to Jehovah. While I admire the attitude, the reasoning is not sound. It is true that the word “reverend” appears only one time in our English translations, but the Hebrew word from which it is translated is found numerous times in the Old Testament, and is often employed in description of God’s people. They were to be holy, set apart, reverend in their manner of living. This argument in and of itself fails to condemn the usage of the title “reverend.”

However, there are still numerous Biblical principles upon which we stand in opposition to using the title “reverend” to refer to the preacher (or any other person for that matter). First of all, the idea of calling the preacher “reverend” only serves to further a class distinction between the “clergy” and the “laity,” which distinction is foreign to the Scriptures. There are no class distinctions in the church of our Lord. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). As a preacher, I am grateful that so many respect and esteem the work of a preacher. Some have taken that too far, however, and have separated the preacher from the rest of the congregation. Honor and respect the work we do (for those who preach the gospel are worthy of that honor), but consider us as you would any other member of the congregation.

Second, calling a preacher “reverend” is a clear violation of the Lord’s teaching in Matthew 23:8-10. One who would covet a title of preeminence clearly has missed the very heart of Christianity. Greatness in the kingdom of God comes not from the accolades of men, or the titles thrust upon us or taken upon us, but by humility and service. Wearing a title such as “reverend” or “father” smacks of arrogance. It creates unholy division, whether realized or not. Let us be content with the approbations of a Heavenly Father who loves us and wants us to live eternally with Him. Let us find joy in wearing the name of Christ alone!

—Patrick Morrison